



Harlem Premiere of “Homegoings” Packs the Apollo

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1,000 enthusiastic audience members filled the Apollo Theater on Friday, June 21, 2013 for the Harlem premiere of “Homegoings,” Christine Turner’s debut feature documentary about Harlem-based funeral director Isaiah Owens and African-American funeral traditions. Included in the crowd were multiple generations of the Owens family and people from as far away as South Carolina who were featured in the film.

The evening included a live performance by the film’s composer, violinist Daniel Roumain, who was accompanied by members of The Harlem Chamber Players, Ashley Horne, Monica Davis and Lawrence Zoernig. Following the screening, Moigantsi Kgama, founder of ImageNation Cinema Foundation, moderated a question-and-answer session with Ms. Turner; Mr. Owens; Stanley Nelson, legendary filmmaker and co-founder of Firelight Media; and Cynthia Lopez, Executive Vice President of the POV series on PBS.

The Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone was proud to partner with Firelight Media, POV and the Apollo Theater to present the event. Ms. Turner, who directed and produced the film, is a participant in the Producers Lab at Firelight Media, which received support for the development of the Producers Lab through UMEZ’s Cultural Industry Investment Fund. The Owens Funeral Home is one of the many small businesses in Upper Manhattan that has received loan financing from UMEZ. This unique intersection of UMEZ investments presented an ideal opportunity to showcase UMEZ’s work in action.

The event included a survey to gather information on audience interest in documentary and independent films. Over 230 people responded, and three lucky attendees received gift certificates for their participation: Louis Alvarez, Nathan Sany, and M.W., all of New York, NY.

“Homegoings” made its national broadcast premiere on Monday, June 24, 2013 to launch the 2013 season of PBS’ POV series. The film is a co-production of POV’s Diverse Voices Project, with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. It is a co-presentation with ITVS and the National Black Programming Consortium (NBPC).

The evening at the Apollo was presented in partnership with other media organizations in Upper Manhattan, including The Futuro Media Group, ImageNation Cinema Foundation, Manhattan Neighborhood Network, and the National Black Programming Consortium, in addition to WNET and WNYC. The event was free to the public.

ABOUT UMEZ

The mission of the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation (UMEZ) is to sustain the economic revitalization of all communities in Upper Manhattan through job creation, corporate alliances, strategic investments, and small business assistance.

The Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone was created by legislation authored by Congressman Charles B. Rangel and signed by President Clinton, along with other such zones in different parts of the country with \$100 million. In Upper Manhattan and the South Bronx, both New York City and New York State added to the pot of money and incentives to encourage investment in one of New York’s most distressed areas. To date, we have invested over \$220 million of public funding and leveraged over \$1 billion of private capital in the Upper Manhattan community.

ABOUT THE CULTURAL INDUSTRY INVESTMENT FUND

UMEZ’s CIIF celebrates Upper Manhattan’s rich past while creating new legacies. The work of the CIIF is two-fold: community building through a cultural and economic lens; and, a marketing of place that repositions Upper Manhattan as one of New York City’s primary cultural districts. The goals of the CIIF are sustaining the local economy by promoting development, revitalization and tourism; making strategic cultural investments; and, strengthening the cultural ecosystem. CIIF seeks to fund service organizations that can significantly position and promote local arts and culture as an integral component of cultural history, contemporary art production, and the local cultural industry and economy; build the artistic and administrative capacity of local arts and cultural players; provide technical assistance; develop programmatic links and collaborations with other groups in Upper Manhattan, city-wide, and/or nationally; and, service the arts across disciplines.

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