

500 YEARS LATER... MORE THAN A FILM

By Wanuri Kahiu

500 Years Later is more than a film but rather a transcontinental discussion between some the greatest and most articulate thinkers of the African global nation. The film deals with the position of the African Diaspora 500 years after the forced migration of Africans from the continent. The sensitive direction of Director Owen 'Alik Shahadah and perceptivity of Writer M.K. Asante Jr., get to the crux of the problems that continue to affect the melanin race of people despite their background or national affiliation. Interspersed between the learned words of cultural activist Dr. Maulana Karenga (Founder of Kwanzaa), Writer Dr. Francis Cress Welsing (Isis papers), Amira Baraka (poet and activist), Dr. Molefi K Asante (Father of "Afrocentrity"), Andrew Muhammad (Author "Hidden history), among others, are conversations with laypeople who reflect the conflicts of racial inequalities in their own lives. The film is tied together by an array of images from the coast of West Africa, to the city pulse of London, to the shores of Barbados and the environs of America with haunting melodies by composer Tunde Jegede that pluck at heartstrings and sing the audience into a realization of their past and present self.

"500 Years Later" is not a film to be watched twice, three, or even five times, instead it is a timely audiovisual reference book that illuminates the challenges of continental Africans and that of the Diaspora. The poignant symbology that separates the chapters



and the clear messages from the cast reveals new information with every frame making it a film as relevant as a dictionary on global Pan-African thought. "500 Years Later" is a work of courage that should be instituted in schools, churches and community centers urging leaders and children to play a more active role in the growth of a stable foundation for future generations to stand.

The film goes past explaining the problems of people by incorporating within it a glimpse of hope into the future. It is an apt dialogue between laymen, scholars and philosophers about the similarities of experience born from a segregated and demoralized kind of man. '500 Years Later' serves not only as a healthy reminder of the strength of the global African but also a caution against the defeatist nature that has sunk beneath the barrier of skin. A quandary that can only be erased with time, patience and education, ensuring a stronger kind and race of Human that will transcend the definition of color and nationality and ultimately embrace the beauty of differences and learn from the undiluted knowledge of ancestors.