

L'Applause, the Louisiana Black Film Festival Honors Marquetta Cheeks
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The River Road African American Museum in conjunction with Louisiana's Old State Capitol Museum are pleased to announce a unique month-long historical and educational event, poster exhibition and film series in celebration of Black History Month 2007.

For the first time in the history of Louisiana, a multi-faceted event has been created to honor and celebrate people of color in the film and theater industry. The River Road African American Museum's founder Kathe Hambrick has developed the first film series of its kind in Louisiana which honors the rich cultural heritage of blacks in the American theater and film industry. Louisiana's Old State Capitol has partnered with the River Road African American Museum to present and sponsor the event, titled "L'Applause, the Louisiana Black Film Festival." L'Applause includes a premiere gala, awards ceremony honoring individuals in film and theater, a vintage poster exhibit, as well as a matinee film series, all held at the Old State capitol from February 12-March 12, 2007. Several award-winning Hollywood film and theatre stars will be present in Baton Rouge for the L'Applause gala reception.

According to Hambrick, "L'Applause has been created by the River Road African American Museum and brought to the state of Louisiana in coordination with the Old State Capitol Museum to provide a rare glimpse and historical examination of black screen images dating back to the 1930's."

The museum exhibition features 25 vintage movie posters and four Sunday movie matinees from February 12, 2007 to March 12, 2007. This program offers insight into the portrayal and progress of blacks in the American film and theatre industry. The posters and movies chronicle the long journey of this country's first African American stars, including Dorothy Dandridge, Sidney Poitier, Harry Belafonte, Pearl Bailey, Spencer Williams, Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Lena Horne and Paul Robeson. Each forged a role for black entertainers that countered or reinforced stereotypes while creating a thriving, independent culture in American cinema and theatre.

The Honorary Chairperson for the February 16 L'Applause gala reception, screening, and awards event is Julie Belafonte, wife of Harry Belafonte. The L'Applause reception is sponsored by the Baton Rouge Area Convention and Visitors Bureau. Joining Ms. Balafonte are the recipients of the first annual L'Applause outstanding achievement and contribution to film or theater awards, including: Lynn Whitfield, Valerian Smith, Douglas Turner Ward, Wendell Pierce, Marquetta Cheeks, and Rachael Emanuel.

Entertainment for the gala reception will feature Keisha Lenoir and Louisiana actors of the Lenoir Dinner Theater and Noire Dreams Talent Agency, including a rendition of Carmen by Ms. Lenoir, founder of Baton Rouge's newest dinner playhouse, Lenoir Dinner Theater.