

PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

TITLE: MAMA C: URBAN WARRIOR IN THE AFRICAN BUSH

RUNNING TIME: 54 min High Def Video Copyright 2012

PRODUCER: JOANNE HERSHFIELD, PERENNIAL FILMS 919.260.1835

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SYNOPSIS

"Mama C: Urban Warrior in the African Bush" tells the story of Charlotte O'Neal—or Mama C as she is known—poet, musician, visual artist, spoken word artist and ex-member of the Kansas City Black Panther Party. Mama C, whose life was formed growing up in the artistically and politically vibrant atmosphere of the African American community in Kansas City, KS, has lived for past forty years in the Tanzanian village of Imbaseni in the shadow of Mount Meru.

Mama C speaks the dialect of black culture in the 1960s and Kiswahili, the lingua franca of East Africa. As a high-school student in the 1960s, she took part in community activism and Civil Rights work, leading a protest at her high-school to force the school administration to recognize the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King. She joined the Kansas City Black Panther Party as one of the youngest members and married Pete O'Neal. In 1971, Mama C and Pete joined Eldridge Cleaver and Black Panthers in exile in Algeria. A few years later, they moved to Tanzania to join African-American and international revolutionary expatriates who came to participate in President Julius Nyerere's project of nation-building.

For almost forty years Mama C and Pete have remained true to what they see as the ideals of the Black Panther Party through their commitment to community organizing and human rights. Their home in Imbaseni is a multi-acre compound that includes their own house, the headquarters of the United African Alliance Community Center (UAACC), a children's center that is home to twenty-two children they have informally adopted as part of a program they call "Leaders of Tomorrow's Children," a school room where people from the community come to take classes in English, computer skills, and art, as well as a recording studio and art center.

This compelling film explores Mama C's decade's long project of coming to terms with who she is—an African American raised in Kansas City, KS, the “jazz-capital of the world,” who has lived most of her life in Africa, the place from where her ancestors were forced to make the “middle-passage.” When she first arrived in Tanzania she tried as hard as she could to “fit in,” wearing khangas, carrying my babies on my back, basket on my head, chewing sugar cane sticks.” As she writes in one of her published poems, “In my freshly-landed, just-got-off-the-boat enthusiasm of living in Africa, I tried to blend, to melt, homogenize, disappear, erase, the essence of what made me who I am, an African, who grew up in and was molded by the ‘hoods’ of America, and I almost lost myself, self.”

Mama C has retained and enriched that self by articulating her life-long political commitment to “peace, unity, and love” through the music she writes and performs; the poetry or “spoken word” pieces she composes, and the art she creates from fabric and found items. Mama C performs her music and poetry all over the world and many of her art pieces are held in museums and private collections in the United States and Africa. Through her art, performances, and music—a fusion of jazz, traditional African music, and hip hop, Mama C speaks of a “new revolution” that is informed by “tribal wisdom, not tribalism” to a young generation of Africans and Africans in the diaspora.

30 word synopsis:

A former member the Kansas City Black Panther Party. Mama C, a poet, musician, artist, and community activist, has lived for over forty years as an “urban warrior in the African Bush” in the Tanzanian village of Imbaseni.

The story of musician, artist, and political activist Charlotte O'Neal's struggle to come to terms with who she is—an African-American who has lived most of her life in exile in Africa, from where her ancestors were forced to make the middle-passage.

200 word synopsis:

Mama C: Urban Warrior in the African Bush explores Charlotte O'Neal's decade's long project of coming to terms with who she is—an African American raised in Kansas City, KS, the “jazz-capital of the world,” who has lived most of her life in Africa, the place from where her ancestors were forced to make the “middle-passage.” When she first arrived in Tanzania she tried as hard as she could to “fit in,” wearing congas, “carrying my babies on my back, basket on my head, chewing sugar cane sticks.” As she writes in one of her published poems: “in my freshly-landed, just-got-off-the-boat enthusiasm of living in Africa, I tried to blend, to melt, homogenize, disappear, erase, the essence of what made me who I am, an African, who grew up in and was molded by the ‘hoods’ of America, and I almost lost myself.” However, as the film will show, Mama C has retained and enriched that self by articulating her life-long political commitment to peace, unity, and love through the music she writes and performs; the poetry or “spoken word” pieces she composes, and the art she creates from fabric and found items.

DIRECTOR BIO:

Joanne Hershfield's films have screened at international film festivals and copies are held in over 200 university libraries in the United States, Canada, and Australia as well as by non-profit agencies. Among her films are *These Are Our Children*, a moving portrait of the challenges facing children and families in contemporary Kenya, *Men Are Human, Women Are Buffalo*, a compelling film that combines interviews and shadow puppetry to tell five moving stories about domestic violence in Thailand, and *The Gillian Film*, a moving portrait of her daughter, an exceptional young woman with developmental disabilities.

SELECT FILM AND VIDEO PRODUCTION CREDITS

PRODUCER/DIRECTOR/EDITOR: *These Are Our Children*, December 2010. Festival Screenings: Special Mention, Philadelphia Documentary & Fiction Festival Annual Program Without Frontiers, June 2012; San Diego Black Film Festival, January 2012; Best Feature Documentary, Athens International Film and Video Festival, April 2011; COMMFEST Global Community Film Festival, Sept 2011, Toronto, Canada; In the permanent collections of over 50 universities, libraries, and community organizations. Distributed by New Day Films.

PRODUCER/DIRECTOR/EDITOR: *Men are Human, Women are Buffalo*, December 2007. Festival screenings: The 4th Film Festival for Women's Rights, Seoul, South Korea, 2010; The 5th Anniversary of GiRL FeST, Hawaii, 2008; Non Violence International Film Festival, Ontario, Canada, 2008. In the permanent collections of over 50 universities, libraries, and community organizations. Distributed by New Day Films.

PRODUCER/DIRECTOR/EDITOR: *The Gillian Film*, June 2006. Director's Citation Award, Black Maria Film Festival, 2006. Participant in the Film/Video/Visual Group Artist Exhibition at the Asheville Art Museum, NC, March 31 – July 9, 2006. Asheville Film Festival, November 2006. Sprout Film Festival, 2008. BOSI Film Festival, Budapest, 2010; ABILITYFEST, 2011. In the permanent collections of over 100 universities, libraries, and community organizations. Distributed by New Day Films.

CO-PRODUCER [with Jan Bardsley], DIRECTOR, EDITOR: *Women in Japan: Memories of the Past, Dreams for the Future*, June 2002. Broadcast UNC-TV, Fall 2003; Maori TV, Spring 2004. In the permanent collections of over 50 universities and libraries in the U.S. and Japan including UCLA, Northwestern, Sarah Lawrence, University of Minnesota, and Georgetown. Self-distributed.

CO-PRODUCER/CO-DIRECTOR, EDITOR [with Penny Simpson]: *Nuestra Comunidad: Latinos in North Carolina.2001*. Festival screenings: San Diego Latino Film and Video Festival, Fall, 2002; Hot Springs Documentary Film and Video Festival, Fall 2002; New York Independent International Film and Video Festival, Summer, 2002. Broadcast UNC-TV, Fall 2003; Spanish Television, Spring and Fall 2003. In the permanent collections of over 100 universities, libraries, and community organizations. Distributed by New South Productions.

CO-PRODUCER/CO-DIRECTOR, EDITOR [with Susan Caperna Lloyd]: *Between Two Worlds: A Japanese Pilgrimage*. October, 1992. Regional Showcase, Third Wave International Women's Film and Video Festival, 1993; Bronze Apple, National Educational Film and Video Festival, March 1995. Special Screening, Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting, April, 1995. In the permanent collections of over 100 universities, libraries, and community organizations. Distributed by Berkeley Media (formerly UC Berkeley Media).