

Hello Everyone! Dear Friends!

First I would like to say thank you. I would like to thank Prof. Donald Muldrow Griffith for his invitation and for providing me with the opportunity to address a few words to you.

Furthermore I would like to thank him for leading me to an understanding and hence a conclusion, by providing me with his example.

This year the *Black International Cinema Berlin* is taking place for the 23<sup>rd</sup> time.

23 years ...

23 times planning, 23 times organizing, 23 times debating, 23 times convincing, 23 times fundraising.

I am sure; this has meant a lot of work and problems for him.

What's the benefit? For how long shall he be able to continue with such an enormous effort? Where will this lead?

Do you have any idea?

I think I understand Prof. Griffith's point ... his motivation. He is following his firm conviction, maybe his purpose. And he is doing that with

insistent consequence.

This is the only reason why we have gathered on this day, at this place ... why we will watch movies and documentaries, exchange our opinions, get to know each other.

His consequence has created this unique space ... for us.

In the program you will find a quotation:

*YES, I CAN*

This is a quotation by *Sammy Davis Jr.* before his career actually started. But this quotation expresses exactly the necessary consequence/discipline in order to achieve something extraordinary.

*YES, I CAN*

Unfortunately we never know whether we are going to succeed, no matter how hard we try, or how consistent we are. Though sometimes insistent consequence can end in a miracle; as we have seen in the case of *Muhammad Yunus*, founder of the *Grameen Bank* and Nobel Peace Prize winner.

This is exactly the conclusion Prof. Griffith helped me to realize. And this vital conclusion is demonstrated by our gathering on this day and at this place.

insistent consequence

So once again, thank you Prof. Griffith. And I would like to add

*YES, HE CAN.*

This year's *Black International Cinema Berlin* is fostered under the headline

*Diverse and Together - A Complexion Change*

*Diverse and Together* ... this is exactly how we sit here, how we live in this wonderful city ... and *diverse and together* is the world of nowadays, the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

*Diverse and Together* ... this statement has a very special meaning in Germany, in Berlin on this day ... on this date. Until the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1945 there was no "together" for people who had been considered to be "different". They were murdered, industrially extinguished through labor and destroyed through pseudo-medical examinations or sterilized.

Since the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1945, Germany has pursued a new direction ... the road to a democratic society. And we are still on that road. Even though every day we can state the question of freedom, the question of equal opportunities within a society will be answered differently by the conditions of people who are "different" ... "different" from the majority.

If society is treating people who are considered to be "different" – different from the majority, the whole society will be drifting into a state of injustice, a state of no freedom. Furthermore one day, the

majority is in danger as well to become a part of one of these discriminated against groups.

Consequently, it is in every society's best interest, to stand for a maximum of equal opportunities for everyone, in order to achieve or maintain a just & free society.

Minorities are "different" in comparison to the majority. They are often unknown ... like an unknown being. Their lives, their everyday challenges, their perceptions, their emotional states.

So what can we do?

At this point I see the main significance and importance of the *Black International Cinema Berlin*.

Tonight and during the next days, we will have the occasion to see the world - and I mean that literally - through the eyes of Black filmmakers and artists. We will directly and indirectly get to know their lives, their everyday challenges, their perceptions, their emotional states.

And we will conclude that we ... all together ... are still far away from a just, truly free society ... within the so called "free world".

But ... don't be afraid ... even though truth hurts ... sometimes.

I am deeply convinced that we are *diverse and together* on the road to a just society. Maybe this will be an everlasting road, which demands from us that we do the right thing ... every day ... with

insistent consequence

I mentioned the date of today, the 8<sup>th</sup> of May and its historic importance especially for Germany. But other countries, other nations have their historic milestones as well.

Only one example:

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1955, *Rosa Parks* was arrested in *Montgomery Alabama* because she refused to move to the back of the bus ... because she refused to be treated "different" from the Caucasian majority.

*Rosa Parks* did the right thing ... like many others before and after her on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1955. Many had to pay a very high price for this purpose.

That reminds me of a statement by a great man. During an interview he was asked: "What price are you talking about, Sir?" And he answered: "The price of freedom is death."

Unfortunately the statement seems to be true. This year on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, we were remembering the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the assassination of *Dr. Martin Luther King*. He was 39 years old.

But many have followed his and other heroes paths with  
insistent consequence

They have not reached that mountain ... maybe not yet.

But in that country, which arrested a woman for "crossing the colour line" only 50 years ago ... we see now a brilliant young man ... son of an African father and a Caucasian mother ... who is calling out to us:

YES, WE CAN.

**Diverse & Together**  
**A COMPLEXION CHANGE**

**XXIII. Black International Cinema Berlin/Germany, Warsaw/Poland & USA 2008**  
**May 8-12**

**Movimiento Cinema**  
Kottbusser Damm 22  
Berlin/Kreuzberg

Production & Direction:  
**Fountainhead@ Tanz Theatre**  
**THE COLLEGIUM – Forum & Television Program Berlin/Magdeburg/Wolfsburg**  
**Cultural Zephyr e.V.**  
in association with  
**Classic in Black**  
**Institute for Cultural Diplomacy**  
in co-operation with  
**Foundation Diversity Forum, Warsaw/Poland**

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"I may not make it if I try, but I damn sure won't if I don't..." – *Oscar Brown Jr.*  
"Mankind will either find a way or make one." – *C.P. Snow*  
"Whatever you do..., be cool!" – *Joseph Louis Turner*  
"Yes, I can...!" – *Sammy Davis Jr.*  
"Yes, We can...!" – *Barack Obama*