

I Am Not Your Negro: Film Review

Written by Kam Williams

Tuesday, 07 February 2017 00:31



Oscar-Nominated Documentary Inspired by James Baldwin's Unfinished Manuscript

When novelist/social critic James Baldwin passed away in 1987, he left behind an unfinished opus entitled *Remember This House*. The 30-page manuscript assessed the plight of African-Americans in the United States while specifically reflecting upon the assassinations of three civil rights icons: Malcolm X, Medgar Evers and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

With *I Am Not Your Negro*, director [Raoul Peck](#) (*Lumumba*) fleshes out Baldwin's musings, cinematically, into a searing indictment of the United States as an unapologetically-racist nation. Narrated by Samuel L. Jackson, the movie has been nominated for an Academy Award in the Best Documentary category.

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The focus of the film never strays far from Baldwin, nimbly alternating between archival footage of the fiery figure challenging the status quo and Jackson's readings from Remember This House and his other writings. Again and again, we hear him question the depth of the country's commitment to reverse the damage inflicted upon the Black community by generations of slavery, lynchings and Jim Crow segregation.

For example, he asserts that most Caucasians are perfectly comfortable relegating African-Americans to a second-class status. He even goes so far as to refer to them as morally-blind monsters for seeing Blacks as sub-human. Until that attitude is eradicated, Whites will never recognize that "I am flesh of their flesh."

Baldwin concludes that "The story of the Negro in America is the story of America." Therefore, with Black and White fates inextricably linked, "It's not a question of what happens to the Negro. The real question is what is going to happen to this country."

Given the precarious state of race relations, the late visionary's prescient insights perhaps prove more timely, posthumously, than in their own day.

Excellent (4 stars)

Rated PG-13 for profanity, mature themes, violent images and brief nudity`

Running time: 95 minutes

Distributor: Magnolia Pictures

Note: The film will be available on DVD as of May 2nd 2017

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About the author of this article: Kam Williams is a syndicated film and book critic who writes for 100+ publications around the U.S., Europe, Asia, Africa, Canada, and the Caribbean. He is a member of the [New York Film Critics Online](#),

the

NAACP Image Awards Nominating Committee

, and

Rotten Tomatoes

. He is a contributor to [TheLoop21.com](#)

, [eurweb.com](#)

and so on. He is also a columnist for our webmag

www.megadiversities.com

. One of his interviews made the cover of

Heart and Soul

magazine last fall. One of Kam Williams' interviews with Spike Lee is included in the 2002 book entitled

Spike Lee: Interviews (Conversations with filmmakers)

. This book collects the best interviews of Lee. Some of Kam Williams' articles are translated into Chinese, French and Spanish. In 2008, he was Voted Most Outstanding Journalist of the Decade by the

Disilgold Soul Literary Review

. In addition, he has been honored at the U.N. (for BMORENEWS GLOBAL FORUM ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT) on June 15th 2012 by the Foundation for the Support of the United Nations (FSUN). Williams is an erudite Attorney who holds a BA in Black Studies from Cornell University, an MA in English from Brown University, an M.B.A. from The Wharton School, and a J.D. from Boston University. Recently, he was featured on this website:

<http://www.caribbeanlifeneews.com/stories/2015>

. Kam Williams is a member of the Bar in NJ, NY, CT, PA, MA & US Supreme Court bars. He lives in Princeton, (New Jersey) with his wife and son. Kam Williams can be reached at

kwilliams@megadiversities.com

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