

# **TAZZLA INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

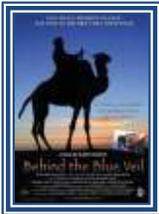
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## **AMAZIGH FILM FESTIVAL 2017 PRESS RELEASE - May 8, 2017**



This year marks the 9th celebration of the Amazigh Film Festival which was founded in Los Angeles, California by Helene E. Hagan, President of the Tazzla Institute for Cultural Diversity, Inc. in 2007. The festival was supported from the start by The Hagan Law Firm of Palo Alto, the Amazigh Cultural Association in America (A.C.A.A.), the Department of Cultural Affairs of the City of Los Angeles, and the BMCE Bank Foundation of Morocco, and more recently by the Amazigh Cultural Network in America (A.C.N.A.). It partnered with Women in Film International for several years in Los Angeles. The headquarters for the Amazigh Film Festival and Tazzla Institute will be moved to the San Francisco Bay area as of May 15, 2017. This year, the festival will take place in the fall in Boston, and in 2018, we are planning a substantial celebration of the tenth anniversary of the festival in the Palo Alto/Stanford area, California.



The mission of the Amazigh Film Festival is to promote and celebrate the autochthonous Amazigh culture of North Africa (Berber and Tuareg) in the United States, through films and documentaries representative of the Amazigh cinematic output about the Oasis of Siwa in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, the Canary Islands, the Sahara desert, Mali, Niger and Burkina-Faso. A number of these Amazigh productions have been shown by our festival as U S Premieres. The festival has showcased outstanding pioneers of this cinema from Algeria (Azzedine Meddour, director of Baya's Mountain), director Mohammed Abazzi (Itto Titrit) and documentary producer Izza Genini of Morocco. The Festival has consistently supported the work of young producers and directors, to name but a few: Dr. Wassim Korbi (Tunisia), Hacene Zennia (Berbers of Djurdjura) and Said Nanache (Souls in Exile) both of Algeria, Ahmed Baidou ("Aghrabou" - Souss Valley, Morocco) and Ithri Irhoudane ("Dreamweavers" - Middle Atlas, Morocco). Other outstanding productions have been featured during our festival such as the Canadian/Moroccan productions of Roger Cantin "On Native Lands" and Caitlin Rodger's "Timnadine Songs", as well as Swiss and German films "Footsteps in Africa" and "Asshak" and Robyn Simon's US documentary "Behind The Blue Veil".



In 2010, the Amazigh Film Festival participated in the francophone day of the International Film Festival of Los Angeles which took place at the famous Egyptian Grauman Theatre of Hollywood with a short Burbank Video Production and the presentation of a film, "Les Barons", by Helene Hagan. In 2012, we held a special screening of "Zohra, a Moroccan Fairy Tale" at an additional venue, the Electric Lodge of Venice, California. In nine years of its existence, the Festival has been presented at the Barnsdall and Autry Theatres of Los Angeles (2008-2014), at the Culture Project Auditorium of New York (2013) and the Marran Theater of Lesley University in Boston (2016).



The Amazigh Film Festival opened in 2008 with a 26 minute presentation titled "Amazigh Rebirth" produced by Dounia Benjelloun of Morocco, receiving much applause. Each and every year, from its inception, the Amazigh Film Festival has opened the event with such splendid documentaries produced by Dounia Benjelloun, Sand Hill Productions and Dounia Productions, each one superbly photographed, two of them directed by the famous heir of French painter Auguste Renoir and film maker Jean Renoir, Mr. Jacques Renoir. Several of those have been the recipients of numerous international awards. We are particularly grateful to Dounia and her mother Dr. Leila Meziane Benjelloun for their encouragement and financial support. Tazzla Institute itself created a special award to recognize the work of outstanding individuals as "Amazigh Cultural Ambassadors", which was given to Rachid Bouksim, Director of the Issni N' Ourgh Amazigh Film Festival of Agadir, Morocco, to Fattah Abbou and Mohamed Oualou (Aza musicians, Santa Cruz, California), Dr. Wassim Korbi of Tunisia for his documentary "Azul" and to Dounia Benjelloun, a remarkable Amazigh Cultural Ambassador and film producer.



Each year, the festival has also exhibited the work of a variety of Amazigh artists and musicians to accompany the film screenings, enriching the context and the definition of Amazigh identity and culture through such outstanding artists as painters Hassan Moumene (High Atlas of Morocco) and Abdallah Aourik (Souss Valley), Tuareg musicians of Niger (Tidawt group), Aza band of Santa Cruz (Atlas, Morocco), the songs and lively performances of Fellah Ouddane (Kabyle of Algeria), the black and white photography and video of Nourredine El Warari (Souss/Casablanca and Los Angeles); our 2012 film festival featured the superb Tuareg silver artistry of Moussa Albaka of Niger.



This festival was made possible by the active participation of a number of volunteer assistants to whom we owe gratitude: Djezaia and Beau in 2008 (Kabyles of Algeria), Hakim Zakane (Kabyle - 2010-2014), the participation of Chafina Bendahman (Rif, Morocco), of beautiful and kind actress Anna, and her husband Jason (Middle Atlas, Morocco) in 2012, and of Mindy Kanaskie (2014) all in Los Angeles. Volunteers

provided by the American Cinematheque of Los Angeles and MAYA (Moroccan Youth Association of L.A.) also helped during the festival. In New York and Boston, Zouhir Naghala and A.C.N.A. members have taken charge and headed the work.

The 2017 ninth annual presentation of the Amazigh film Festival is presently being programmed. Soon, we shall post more precise information about its program on our web site , <https://www.laaff.org/> - Already retained is the Dounia Production yearly contribution, *The Nomadic Bride of Merzouga* (Morocco, 2017), a documentary on the Tuaregs of southern Libya (2017) , two interesting short films, *Tassanou Tayrinou* (Morocco, 58 minutes - 2017 documentary by director Kamal Hachkar who will be present to discuss his cinematography of recent years) and two Algerian productions. The program is still under review and will be firmed up by July 1. Date and location of the event will be also available at that date.

We are looking forward to your participation and presence at this Amazigh Film Festival USA.

Helene E. Hagan, Executive Director  
Zouhir Naghala, Film Festival Manager, Boston  
Rachid Bouksim, Artistic Director  
Chafina Bendahman, Assistant to Director