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Berlinale FILM CAPSULE: For Ahkeem (Levine,Van Soest, 2017): USA

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

Jeremy S. Levine and Landon Van Soest presented *For Ahkeem*, a new documentary, at the 67th Berlin International Film Festival in Forum. *For Ahkeem* attempts to address and capture a young, black womanâ??s life pathway from footage accumulated over the course of approximately two years. In doing so, Levine and Von Soest limit a wider lens.

For Ahkeem tracks a roughly seventeen year-old African-American female, Daje, from the north side of St. Louis, Missouri, an area of the city notorious for its gun violence and innocent killings from drive-by shootings. The film is predominantly direct cinema.

Daje comes across as a rather representative, angry, militant teenager of the area. Daje has been expelled from school for the final time and has to make an appearance in juvenile court. The judge has read Dajeâ??s not-so-promising juvenile record and decides to give her a refuge of last resort â?? an alternative school he started. Itâ??s an offer Daje canâ??t refuse despite her best efforts.

Itâ??s here Daje transforms from adolescent girl to young woman. With help from the staff and support from family and friends, Daje blossoms into a confident, independent young woman. As her graduation nears, Daje struggles with math, yet manages to overcome her obstacle and proudly receives her diploma. Sheâ??s persevered pregnant and birthing a child with another alternative schoolmate she felt was nice to her and to whom she could talk with and confide in.

Levine and Van Soestâ??s focus successfully captures the trajectory of young African-Americans in the North St. Louis ghetto, in my opinion. Footage from Michael Brownâ??s mother shouting into a camera shows the passion this cultural segment possesses. As Michael Brown graduated high school so did Daje. The tragic life of Michael Brown need not be repeated in Dajeâ??s son Ahkeem. Efforts from community leaders allow troubled youths a way out. But, itâ??s not a one stop cure all.

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Tags

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