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Earth Month 2023 Event Recap: Rhythms of the Land Screening

Blog by Benazir Baig



[‘Rhythms of the Land,’](#) a multimedia documentary film, was screened during the 2023 Earth Month events at The New School. Present at the event was the director, Dr. Gail Myers, filmmaker and cultural anthropologist. The event was curated and moderated by Mike Harrington, Director of Sustainability Engagement, and Dr. Kristin Retnolds, Chair of Food Studies in the Schools for Public Engagement.

The screening drew a large audience, including students, professors, and film enthusiasts at Wollman Hall on The New School campus.



This compelling documentary film attempts to restore the washed-out footprints of the challenges faced by Black Americans in their many pursuits, including the labor they put together to bring food to the tables of many. The film curates the extraordinary tales of hardship and resilience that the interviewees in the film faced in trying to own and cultivate land in the United States of America. Rhythms of the Land ultimately aids in preserving oral histories that would otherwise fade. They fondly recount the resourceful ways of their grandparents, from saving watermelon and using red pepper in hot water to keep ants away. Some shared stories of cooking for lots of people, but magically, there was always more than enough

food. Even when money was tight, there was always plenty to eat.

Many interviewees believe the energies of their ancestors come alive through these food experiences, and they make the utmost efforts to preserve their traditional practices. Their narratives offer poignant insights into the discriminatory practices that continue to exist.

Nevertheless, amidst these systemic challenges, African Americans showcased unwavering resilience, tightly bound by their sense of community and shared expertise in cultivating sustenance.



The film employs a multimedia approach, seamlessly weaving together interviews, archival photographs, animation, and excellent sound design. These testaments are given life through

sketch animation to take the audience on a visual journey of their stories. The filmmaker also interviews the new generation of sharecroppers, gardeners, and weavers and documents their hopes and aspirations for the future of their livelihood. These visual elements and the filmmaker's narration help weave these stories together. Beyond the visuals, the sound design is intriguing too. The film is infused with jazz melodies and choir-inspired tracks, capturing the very essence of the film- an exuberant celebration of the remarkable lives of these individuals.



Drake Reed of the Tishman Center effectively captured the impact and spirit of the event through photos of participants of the screening. Through "The Rhythms of the Land" this cinematic endeavor

triumphs in illuminating narratives
that have long lingered in
obscurity, amplifying the voices of
those who, against all odds, have
triumphed through perseverance.

You can watch the trailer [here](#).



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