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Ghett'a Life film a powerful tale of the Jamaican struggle

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Chris Browne, revered filmmaker, made Ghett'a Life to tackle political corruption in Jamaica with a captivating story

With a title like Ghett'a Life it was hard to not expect the overdone film plot of life in the ghetto from director and producer Chris Browne's film, showing as part of this year's CaribbeanTales Film Festival. But Browne's fresh outlook on life in the inner city slums turned out to be a pleasant surprise.

The film follows Derrick a high-strung teenager and his struggle to pursue his dreams of being a world famous boxer when he has his community, his family and his best friend against him. Ghett'a Life not only touches on the violence and poverty in Jamaica's inner city, but also the politics behind it all. Browne's focus on the politicians is brave and exposing of the corruption that goes on behind closed office doors. Politicians who are supposed to do what is in the best interest of the community are portrayed as tyrants who are vote hungry and purposely ignorant to what goes on in their communities in this film.



Ghett'a Life screened at this year's CaribbeanTales Film Festival

"The whole scenario of Jamaican politics is so ridiculous, but it's so true," explains Browne. "When you work in those inner cities and garrisons, those people are so committed. I wanted to find out how you could change the mind of one of those committed people. This situation, where there are two political parties where they can't cross the street and they hate each other is so old-fashioned, but it is a reality for some in Jamaica."

Browne's approach to being honest about the country's corrupt politics was made easy by having supportive investors.

“I had investors who didn’t really trouble me; they weren’t creative and just wanted to know where their money was. I liked that I had a lot of the responsibility on me.”



Singer Andrea Lewis (right) came out to support the Ghet'ta Life after party

Browne also used politics and sport as a metaphorical outlet. Sports traditionally represent team work and cooperation with each player coming together for the purpose of one goal that is to win. Politics is on the other side of the spectrum representing two or more sides that are always in constant divide not willing to work together or compromise. These two themes metaphorically represented Jamaica in its current state and the place it needs to get to.

Shooting the film in Jamaica, with its funding being raised in Jamaica and a full cast of Jamaican natives, the film was authentic and honest.



Karen Robinson played mom to main character Derrick in Ghet'ta Life

“My favourite part was being an acting coach to the kids,” explained Karen Robinson, the actress that played Dawn, Derrick’s mother in the film. “To see eager and willing minds soaking that information up and seeing they wanted to learn, I loved the relationship I was able to establish with them.”

As for the future of the film Browne is not trying to push for its release into the mainstream theatre.

“My approach is not to put it in mainstream because mainstream isn’t going to take it. It’s really just targeting the Jamaican communities in New York, London, Toronto, those areas. If it goes beyond that, that’s wonderful, but right now I just want to focus on the Jamaican communities.”

Words by: Symone Nelson + Photos by: Adrian McKenzie

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