

AMAZIGH FILM FESTIVAL USA PRESS RELEASE



June, 2021

The Amazigh Film Festival USA (L.A.A.F.F.) is pleased to announce that Helene E. Hagan, the Executive Director of the festival and Rachid Bouksim, of the Festival International Issni N Ourgh du Film Amazigh (F.I.N.I.F.A.) and Artistic Director of L.A.A.F.F. have been invited to participate in an international Conference held by the Department of Film Studies, University of Saskatchewan, Regina, Canada, in order to examine “Transnational Screen Media Practices: safeguarding indigenous cultural heritage” which will take place on June 24-26, 2021 as a virtual colloquium.

The discussion will involve a number of personalities, headed by Keynote Speaker Ahmed Boukous, Rector of the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture of Morocco, (I.R.C.A.M.) as well as several academic film experts. Helene Hagan, a cultural anthropologist from Stanford University, founding director of The Tazzla Institute for Cultural Diversity, will represent the Institute and its annual film project, the Amazigh Film Festival USA. She will speak on two panels about the role of film festivals in the transmission of various important cultural and linguistic Amazigh issues pertaining to Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, the Canary Islands, the Sahara, Niger and Mali. Hagan’s participation will also include the topic of human rights, as presented in the films she furnished the Conference. Among those are the authorized English versions of the documentary “On Native Lands” (Ni Sauvage, Ni Barbare) directed by Roger Cantin (Canada-Morocco, 2008), and the “Amazigh Revival” (Dounia BenJelloun Producer, Jacques Renoir Director 2008), as well as her own television productions of “Amazigh Identity” (First Amazigh World Congress, Canary Islands, 1998) and “Heart of the Sahara” (Helene Hagan Producer and Issa Ag Mohammed, Narrator and Videographer, Mali, 2004).

L.A.A.F.F., which was created in 2007 by the Tazzla Institute, affirms the African autochthonous origin of the international Amazigh Cultural Movement that is presently taking its modern identity through history, archeology, anthropology and linguistics: in Algeria and Morocco, in particular, the central issue to examine is if one can profess other cultural identities than a political Islamic one, which, in fact, smothers all cultural diversity. The official discourse of the state is Arabic and the established religion is Islam, an arabo-islamic nationalistic tendency which has hampered cultural pluralism in Morocco since 1956, year of Independence from French Protectorate, by its postcolonial national construction of a single unique Moroccan identity.

A special topic of interest to Helene Hagan is a debate over the term which circulates widely through international publications and events, used in numerous ways, of "Maghreb Arabe" or "Al Maghribi Al Arabi" to designate North Africa as the westernmost region of the Arab world. This term falsifies the geographic location of North African countries, and dismisses their aboriginal designation as "Tamazgha", term adopted by most Amazigh activists, a name which anthropological research found already existed at the time of ancient Egyptian civilization to designate the vast area between the Nile River and the Atlantic Ocean. (Helene Hagan, "The Shining Ones: Etymology of the Amazigh Roots of Ancient Egyptian Civilization", Xlibris, 2000).

In collaboration with Rachid Bouksim, of Amazigh Film Festival of Agadir, Morocco, and Artistic Director of Amazigh Film Festival, USA, who will be also present on the first panel, Helene Hagan will sustain some of her comments through references to several of her Amazigh mentors in Morocco, Dr. Mohammed Chafik, dean of the Amazigh movement in that country, Hassan Id Belkhassam, attorney and founder of the Tamaynut Association, United Nations representative and international leader of several African groups, distinguished cinematographer and pioneer of the Amazigh film in Morocco Mohamed Abbazi, and Rachid Raha, anthropologist and esteemed colleague. Dr. Chafik, Attorney Id Belkhassam, and foremost film maker Mohamed Abbazi appear in the documentary "On Native Lands" as well as Lahbib Fouad, or Yeschou, I.R.C.A.M. artist and author who recommended the film to us in 2009, and who stars as one of the protagonists. We sincerely salute their monumental work in the defense, promotion and preservation of Amazigh values and cultural heritage.

This June event will be the 2021 virtual contribution by the Amazigh Film Festival USA to the international domain of the Amazigh Film in North America, Europe and North Africa.

Indian Wells, California