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## African Storytelling Comes Alive At Annual Film Fest

By: Stephanie Simon

*The 16th Annual African Film Festival opens April 8th at the Walter Read Theater. NY1's Stephanie Simon filed the following report.*

On a continent where oral history is its own art form, it's no wonder storytelling is revered.

The 16th Annual African film festival at Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theater offers an exciting glimpse at modern storytelling from Africa and the African diaspora.

"The directors works are presenting a mosaic of stories discussing the past, the present, and also foretelling the future of the transition taking place in Africa," said African Film Festival founder Mahen Bonetti.

The theme of this years festival is "Africa in Transition." The film "Behind the Rainbow" looks at South Africa's transition to democracy 15 years ago.

Lupita Nyong'o is one of several emerging female filmmakers from Kenya. Her new documentary "My Genes" examines the plight of albinos in her homeland.

"So it asks the question what is it like to be white in a black world, from a black culture. The film is an intimate portrait of 8 people with albinism particularly one woman, Agnes," said Nyong'o. "She deconstructs the story of her life as she constructs a traditional bag that she makes. despite being blind."

Mamadou Niang's film looks at the rise and fall of a legendary Senegalese boxer.

"It is the narrative of the life of the first African boxing champion in the world who is very little known who came to American at age 28. So it is story of sports of passion of race of immigration," said Niang.

"Battling Siki" as he was known, was shot and killed in Times Square in 1925.

"He was buried at a Queens cemetery for 67 years until I have been able myself to have him disinterred and buried back in Africa in Senegal, so that is how intimately I am with this," said Niang.

The first half of the film festival takes place at the Walter Reade Theater, the second half takes place at the end of May at BAM in conjunction with Dance Africa.

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Visit [africanfilmny.org](http://africanfilmny.org)

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