

**1-Please, Can you tell us a little about your biography? You're a teacher, a writer, and a sociologist. How Did it happen for you to be in the movies?**

I'm a professor at the University of Pennsylvania. I began teaching at the University of Pennsylvania after I received my PhD in 1988. I received my PhD from the University of Chicago. As a demographer, I saw it was very important for me to develop relationships with African scholars. So, after being in the University of Pennsylvania for 3 months I went to teach my first course in Africa. I took leave and I went to teach at the University of Makerere in Uganda. They had just opened their university back up and so we went there and we talked on a course of how to do demographic research and how to do a demographic paper. Now, for me it was very important because I feel that my vocation is to be an educator and I think a vocation is very different than a job, because a job you have to do because you have to eat, unless you're independently wealthy, which I'm not. Therefore I do have to work in order to eat, but I wanted to work in a line that was my vocation and my vocation is to teach. I love teaching I think that's what I can do well and I can do it well for the world. And I think I can help our understanding of life by my teaching and I think that by doing that I can help make the world a better place. So when was I was given the opportunity to become a host in a television show in the United States I seized that opportunity. And that was back in about 2001. And after doing that for a few years I determined that film, that movies, images and videos is a very powerful way to educate people. And so I determined that I'd figure out how to use films to educate people about the large issue that I'm interested in. And so I began to then think what kind of film that I would want to make. And that time I made a list of five films and I have done the filming for two of them, and what you saw was the first one, which is African Independence. And my idea with that film is that when we look around the world very few people know anything about Africa and they know even less about half of the things about Africa. So I wanted to make a film about something that I thought was positive that was mainly done by Africans for Africans and that's Africa in the film. We hear a lot about African corruption, we hear a lot of about African poverty, we hear a lot about Africa's inability to solve its own cure, its own diseases, solve its own health problems. But we very rarely hear about how Africans are engaged in activities which make Africa a better place for everyone.

And African Independence is such an act and I think it's so important because it generates a very different conversation and right now we've just been circulating with films in film festivals and it has created a very powerful conversation. Once people's been giving me awards for this film, which I happen to receive the awards, but also because it has served as a vehicle for stimulating a different kind of conversation about Africa. And we need a different kind of conversation about Africa. I am not denying that there are problems in Africa. Poverty is a problem. War is a problem. Diseases are problems. However, at some moment we have to sit back and say how Africa attack this problem and what has Africa done to prove that Africa can solve this problem. And this is one of the things, which is the Independence movement. So, making these films is another way for me to help enhance the quality of education that people have about Africa.

**2-Please, Can you tell us about your next project?**

My next project is on black people in Latin America. I'm going to come over the next two years and spend as much time as I can, which is all the time, in Latin America. And I'm going to start off in Peru, Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia, and then the last part of it, I'm going to spend, that way I'll be able to learn Spanish while I'm there. And then I'll come the last seven or eight months and spend it in Brazil.

**3-Are you involved in what type of projects besides movies?**

Right now I'm the Chair of the Sociology department. I founded the Center for African Studies. I created the center about ten years ago at the University of Pennsylvania. Someone else directs the center now, because, in essence, my current project is making films. My next film project is a film project in Latin America, where I'm looking at the black population of Latin America. And I'm trying to understand their fights for rights. Who are they? I mean, what does that mean to be a member of African Diaspora in Brazil? Or in Ecuador, or in Peru? What does it mean? And what does it mean for the people that are there? And what does it mean to turn to their fights for political rights?

**4-The Federal government in Brazil has some affirmative actions and is thinking about solutions such as racial quotas to help minorities and to provide them benefits in universities and government jobs. How do you consider this kind of action?**

The first kind of affirmative action is that action which prevented the black population from entering the spaces in which there is now affirmative action. And so, now, at this late day to come and offer affirmative action to black people, it's small talking as to what is needed. And setting the quota; the quotas are usually always too low, because how are you going to ever undo the disadvantage of people who suffered some form of discrimination? And who knows? They could have been a very early stage where they were prevented from getting something because of attitudes towards them.

**5-Do you think people oppose this type of action?**

I think the people who oppose it are the people who are losing the privilege and they need to be "educated". If they understood what affirmative action will achieve, then they would support it. People who have pre-judged an entire people based on the way they look, based on the color of their skin are definitely a "problem". The other people just need to be educated and they need to come to understand what's better for society, what's better for the world.

**6-We have inaugurated our African Center here at UFMG as a cooperation between universities. What's your opinion about it?**

I think it's very important to have centers of African studies, because when the modern university was created they had history, philosophy, literature, humanities, all of these things which are have evolved. Now we have sociology, economics. But all of these things were really white supremacy. So, in that context, now Africa's humanity is not only recognized but it's

elevated. And that's because African studies has come a long way from where it's started. And so, the potential of African studies is to help us all understand our humanity even if we're not African. Because what type of human is it that doesn't recognize the humanity of Africa? So, a center is fundamental, and the future of the world has a lot to do with what happens now.