

September Free Movie Series Continues with “I Am Not Your Negro”

It is that time of year before foliage when the trees look tired from a long hot summer. A blight has attacked a stand of maples on Church Hill Road making them look especially tired. While we are blessed to be in this beautiful state with the lowest nationwide number of cases, there is also a general COVID fatigue even as we grow accustomed to masks, social distancing, and ubiquitous hand sanitizers.

There is also a level of angst as students return to college, elementary and high school campuses. I am anxious about our college sophomore and high school junior being on a campus surrounded by peers outside our family pod. I am simultaneously reminded that this anxious, fearful feeling is for parents of non-white kids compounded by the ever-present fear of friends and family being subjected to racist attacks and police violence.

I can't walk in the shoes of an African-American grandmother, mother, sister or aunt, but the small fraction of parental fear and angst I have about this virus has at least made me conscious of the scope of their day to day struggle to protect their own from *both* the virus and systemic racism. When I grew up, “the talk” I received from my mother and older siblings was about safe sex, not what you need to do if you get pulled over by the police or are bullied by white peers. Even with “the talk” black youth are not safe. I will never be able to fully comprehend or even totally appreciate the overwhelming pressure of living under the threat of racial violence. That said, I wonder whether this virus has given me—perhaps given us all—an inkling of what it is like to live an endangered life.

I just finished reading Bryan Stevenson's powerful non-fiction work *Just Mercy*, which focuses on the plight of Walter McMillian, a black man whose life and community were devastated by his six years on death row for a crime he did not commit. With gut wrenching statistics woven around equally tragic anecdotes, Stevenson's book made me face up more fully than I think I ever have before to the injustice engrained in our society of which we are all a part.

Stevenson writes:

“...the true measure of our commitment to justice, the character of our society, our commitment to the rule of law, fairness, and equality cannot be measured by how we treat the rich, the powerful, the privileged, and the respected among us. The true measure of our character is how we treat the poor, the disfavored, the accused, the incarcerated and condemned.”

Now what, you might ask, “does this have to do with Pentangle Arts?” My answer: I believe it is the work of arts presenters, to hold a mirror up to society and create opportunities for creativity and inclusivity that allow us to see our world from more of its endlessly varied perspectives.

In this COVID moment our programming opportunities are rather limited. In screening the documentary, *John Lewis: Good Trouble*, and this weekend's screening of *I Am Not Your Negro* (the 2017 Oscar nominated documentary narrated with James Baldwin's unfinished work on the American civil rights movement, as read by actor Samuel L. Jackson) we hope folks remember the horrors and hopes of our past, their connection to our present and their implications for our future.

As we ponder the state of the nation and our collective role in making systemic changes, we also understand the need to reflect, to sing, and to safely gather and find joy in each other's socially distanced company.

With that in mind be sure to head to the lawn at the North Chapel on September 18th for our last Music By the River concert featuring Jay Nash. The lawn opens at 4:30, the concert begins at 5:30. Pre-registration is at pentanglearts.org/event/jay-nash.

On September 19, we will screen local favorite ***Downton Abby***, a film so well known it does not require an introduction!

We close the September movie series on September 26th with the 1997 award-winning film ***Good Will Hunting*** starring Matt Damon, Ben Affleck, and Robin Williams, who won the Oscar for Best Supporting Actor. Affleck and Damon won the Oscar for Best Original Screenplay.

All movie screenings begin at 7:00 pm. The lawn opens at 6:00 pm. Be sure to bring your blankets, chairs, and a picnic!

As always, we urge folks to support Pentangle Arts during this difficult time so that we can return full force with programming to engage and entertain audiences of all ages. Online donations can be made at www.PentangleArts.org, checks made out to Pentangle Arts can be mailed to 31 The Green, Woodstock, VT 05091, and cash can be dropped off at our September outdoor events! We are enormously grateful for continued community support!