

PREVIOUS STORY

Environmental Film Festival opens today

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## Free Dominican Film showcase Friday night at GALA

BY HOLA · MARCH 17, 2016

Friday night, as part of the DC Environmental Film Festival, three films from the Dominican Republic Environmental Film Festival will receive a special presentation at the GALA Hispanic Theatre in Columbia Heights.

The Mar. 18 Dominican Night “festival within the festival” is a new addition this year to what has become a perennial springtime affair bringing environmental films from around the world to venues around the District.

*(Read more about other Spanish-language films in the festival)*

(español abajo)



The Dominican Republic Environmental Film Festival, or Muestra de Cine Medioambiental Dominicana, was founded in 2011 by the Caribbean nation’s then-president, Leonel Fernandez, says Natasha Despotovic, the festival’s director

and director of “Value of Life,” one of the three films to be presented at GALA. It is an initiative of the Global Foundation for Democracy and Development in the U.S. and its sister organization, la Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo, according to its website, and seeks to foment local and international discussion around economic development and environmental issues.

Topics of the films go beyond environmental awareness and celebrations of nature’s unique creations to focus on how people and other species can share the planet more harmoniously, Despotovic says.

“We are a foundation that focuses on exchange and development for the Dominican Republic and Latin America,” she says. “Because we work on different aspects of sustainable development, we started the environmental film festival to promote environmental awareness. This year we prepared the sixth edition, with the objective of focusing on sustainability and visual media in Dominican Republic and share it with the world.”

Since inception, the Dominican festival has collaborated with environmental filmmakers and festivals, Despotovic says. The films are first presented in an opening showcase at Dominican Republic, which also features Green Globo awards (Premios Globo Verde Dominicano) aimed at rewarding excellence and motivating the country’s young filmmakers in production areas such as cinematography, scriptwriting and directing. This year’s winning films will be featured at the Dominican Night on March 18. The films are “Value of Life,” “7 Grams” and “Biosphere Reserve.”

“Biosphere Reserve,” is a series short documentaries about the Dominican Republic’s Jaragua-Bahuro-Enriquillo Biosphere Reserve. “7 Grams” uses the Hispaniolan Emerald, one of the world’s smallest birds, to explore tough decisions about conservation, while “Value of Life” features the island nation’s plentiful natural resources and explores the importance that economic development take into account the value of this “natural capital.” The GALA screenings will mark the U.S. premieres of all three films, according to the festival.



Latin American cinema usually centers in social and cultural issues and realities unique to the region but of interest to the world, Despotovic says. That’s true, she says, of these films, as well.

“There is great international interest to know stories from different places. Dominican Republic doesn’t have a lot of experience, there aren’t that many filmmakers, our topics are different from Washington’s topics regarding awareness, education, even cinematographic production. We have learned that there is a great national interest and there is not one topic, as small as it can be, that is not of international interest in a community as close as the Latin community,” Despotovic says.

The Dominican festival is a member of the Green Film Network, an international environmental films organization that supports 30 film festivals facing similar challenges.

“We all go through trouble when fund raising. A positive aspect is that this kind of film festivals is not very expensive because of the variety of formats and options to present,” she says. “However, we look for strategic partners that assume a share of costs. Financing is always tricky. We turn to embassies so they bring their countries’ filmmakers, also corporations who want to help the environment by providing us with funding. We make efforts here and there, each one brings a little bit to the project.”

Bringing a short film to life is a process that requires patience, dedication and a great effort, but has the power to move audiences with the stories taking place in remote places but, in the end, affect us all.

Through a visual art such as cinema, these stories come to life. Not only do they impact the audience; they inspire people to actively participate in taking care of the environment we rely on for life.

### Dominican Night at DC Environmental Film Festival

LINK: <http://dceff.org/event/dominican-night-at-the-dc-environmental-film-festival/>

March 18, 2016, 7:00 p.m. at GALA Hispanic Theatre

FREE. Reservations required: <http://dreff.bpt.me/>

—Brenda Huerta

### CONTACT US

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We’d love to hear from you!

### EVENTS

Dolores Huerta at the National Portrait Gallery on

ZOOLIGHTS, POWERED BY PEPCO on November 28, 2014

5:00 pm

8th Annual DC Community Heritage Project Showcase on December 9, 2014 6:00 pm

Gliese 229 Guitar Duo on

December 16, 2014 6:45 pm

Documentary: Miguel Angel Blanco’s assassination and the Spanish perception of ETA terrorism on December 18, 2014

12:00 pm



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