

KARINAFILMS PRESENTS

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FINDING THE GOLD WITHIN

By Karina Epperlein

Feature-length documentary follows six young Black men, mentored since sixth grade, through their first three years of college

Award-winning filmmaker Karina Epperlein's latest documentary film had its World Premiere at the **Mill Valley Film Festival**, received the **John Michaels Award** from the **Big Muddy Film Festival**, screened at the **Cleveland Int'l Film Festival**, The New Parkway Theater in Oakland, as well as at the **Black Male Summit** at The University of Akron. ***Finding the Gold Within*** had extensive screenings in the San Francisco Bay Area again in 2015, and is being shown nationwide at festivals, conferences, high schools, hospitals, criminal justice centers, and at university and college campuses (see below), often with the protagonists' appearances, panels, sparking deep conversations.

Finding the Gold Within addresses what it means to be young, Black, male and dare to step out of invisibility. The film intimately tells the stories of six young African American men from Akron, Ohio – mentored for years in a unique program of storytelling, drumming and journaling. These young men, well trained in critical and metaphorical thinking, and articulate about their inner lives, become the heroes in their own stories as they head for college to follow their dreams. What will their paths, trials and successes look like? How do they navigate persistent racial provocations?

The film's protagonists grow before our eyes, each of them hell-bent on disproving society's stereotypes and low expectations – they become the heroes of the film.

Finding the Gold Within is very timely, and aims to be a platform for dialogue, giving validation and inspiration. With protests raging around the country, and the movement ***Black Lives Matter*** gaining momentum, discussions about racism and the plight of young Black men are now a big part of the national dialogue in America.

"Having grown up in postwar Germany, I have always been very curious about the cultural and historical roots of scapegoating and the need to condemn others as outsiders. It's such a dangerous thing", says Karina Epperlein, the film's writer, director, and producer. "With this film, I set out to explore America's historically embedded fear of

'blackness' by allowing the protagonists to come alive with their own voices and intimate experiences. The need to criminalize African American men – making them into the 'other'– has a long history, going back to slavery. I knew – the African American community and many others – knew that change was needed before it exploded in Ferguson, Cleveland, Baltimore, New York, all over the nation! It's a good thing."

"Dr. Kwame Scruggs, the founder of *Alchemy*, provided me with intimate access to his core group of 28 black teenagers who were exploring mythological stories in his program," continued Epperlein. "Witnessing the 'soul work' that was happening in the circle, I felt at home. It was so inspiring, I knew I had to tell their story."

The young men had acquired impressive self-awareness, confidence, and the capacity to relate with honesty, authenticity, and depth. Much was expected of them. 26 out of 28 went on to college. Epperlein decided to focus on six protagonists, tracking their growth, sensibilities, trials and triumphs, as well as on the reunion workshops. Three years later we see them learning to mentor sixth graders. The circle is completed.

Karina Epperlein's films have consistently looked into society's dark corners, finding the light, and addressing themes of justice, transformation and healing. Her award-winning documentary work of twenty-two years spans themes from women in prison (*Voices from Inside*, 1996), the Armenian genocide, to dance and disability. Her short film *Phoenix Dance* (2006) screened in more than 120 festivals and theatres all over the world. It was "short-listed" for the 2006 Oscar Nomination for Short Documentary, and won numerous awards, including a Golden Gate Award from the San Francisco Int'l Film Festival. *Finding the Gold Within*, about young Black men from Akron, Ohio, entering college, is her tenth film.

Alchemy provides in-school mentoring programs to elementary, middle and high school-aged urban youth. School-based group sessions are designed to create a safe environment and a sense of community to assist adolescents in their development through the telling, discussion and interpretation of mythological stories and fairy tales. alchemyinc.net

Join our **GOLD Outreach Campaign** to campuses and conferences nationwide for Spring and Fall 2016 – with protagonists' appearances: goldthefilm.com/get-film

Screenings of *Finding the Gold Within*: goldthefilm.com/screenings

- April 26, Louisiana State University, LA, Office of Diversity & Academic Affairs
- April 13, Broward County Public Schools, Theatre Screening by Equity & Academic Attainment, Fort Lauderdale, FL
- April 4 & 11, Alta Bates Herrick Hospital, Psychiatry Grand Rounds, Berkeley, CA, w/ filmmaker
- March 4, [Oneota Film Festival](#), Luther College, Decorah, Iowa
- Feb 23, [AFAM Black Film Festival](#), University of Oklahoma, Skype with filmmaker
- Feb 16, Fordham University, NY, with Darius Simpson and Stacey Starr
- Feb 8, Harris-Stowe University, St. Louis, MO, Black History Month Series
- Feb 5, University of Akron, OH, [Rethinking Race Film Festival](#), with Stacey Starr
- Feb 3, Eastern Michigan University, MI, with Darius Simpson
- Feb 3, University of Iowa, Black History Month Series
- Jan 19, University of Michigan, [Museum of Art](#), with panel, also Darius Simpson

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