

## ...Supporting film professionals with passion

By Akin Omotoso



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[Akin Omotoso - Wikipedia](#)

IN January 2011, the *iREPRESENT International Documentary Film Festival* announced itself boldly onto the Festival landscape and it was a breath of fresh air. Guided by the vision of three illustrious heavyweights of the arts scene Jahman Oladejo, Femi Odugbemi and Makin Soyinka (joined in later years by Theo Lawson), that first edition screened a little over 20 films at Terra-Kulture. Today 10 years later, over 300 films have been screened!

I was fortunate to be there in January 2011. I was on double duty. First as a filmmaker presenting my documentary *‘Wole Soyinka: Child of The Forest’* and what I remember, as I think back now, is that I knew then that iREP was going to be special. It had to do with the passion of the directors of the festival, the passion of the people at the festival, the quality of directors in attendance and the support and hunger of the audience to engage and consume the documentaries on display.

At the time I was presenting a television programme called, *‘The Admiral And Akin Go To The Movies’* and the timing of the festival coincided with our series. That first year featured acclaimed documentary filmmakers such as Jihan El Tahri and Manthia Diawara, amongst others. Diawara, professor of comparative literature and film and director of the Institute of African American Affairs at the New York University had his recently published book, *‘African Film: New Forms Of Aesthetics And Politics,’* which also featured an accompanying DVD that had interviews with the best of the best. The roll call featured names like Jihan El Tahri, Nadia Cherabi Labidi, Mahamat-Saleh Haroun, Jean-Piere Bekolo, John Akomfrah and Newton Aduaka. At that first festival, Manthia graciously granted our TV show the rights to showcase those interviews. I remain forever grateful to that moment in time.

Years later, I was fortunate to be invited back. My documentary *'The Colour Of Wine'* had its World Premiere at iREP. It was the opening night film. The venue was Freedom Park. Standing there introducing the film, in the open air under the Lagos skies, I was reminded of the first time and how much the festival had grown, the elements I recognized from 2011 were all there burning stronger than ever. The passion, the support, the films, the people, all there, intact. I am happy to have been a witness to history in the making. To have been there, representing.

- *Omotoso is director of Rise, and Man on the Move, among other works*

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