

## Spike Lee

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"He has made a tremendous contribution for African-American cinema," Karlyn said. "He is taking on issues that challenge people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds."

Karlyn, who specializes in film studies, said that while blacks have been historically excluded from taking an active role in Hollywood, Lee has helped to open up doors for black people in the film industry.

"He started as an independent filmmaker but very soon was able to get the backing to make bigger-budget films aimed at a wider audience," she said.

More than simply a filmmaker, Lee is a role model and a leader because he hasn't taken the easy route to success, Karlyn said.

"He is not safe. He goes after subjects that are not easy to talk about," she said. "He takes on serious issues in a serious way."

Karlyn said other black filmmakers who explore controversial issues include Oscar Micheaux from the 1930s, Julie Dash and John Singleton, who created the 1991 hit "Boyz n the Hood."

Karlyn said she presents and teaches Lee's films, including his 1989 film "Do the Right Thing," because he addresses wide-ranging issues and challenges the viewer to learn about racial identity, history

and responsibility.

"It is meaty content, but he knows how to make an exciting film," she said. "He knows the aesthetics of filmmaking."

Kim Hutchinson, co-director of the Black Student Union, said that she is looking forward to attending Lee's performance because Lee does not always present positive images. Works such as his HBO documentary, "4 Little Girls," are based on historical events, some of which may not have happy endings.

"He presents realistic things," she said. "Life isn't always peaches and cream."

Lee, a regular at Madison Square Garden for New York Knicks basketball games, is not only known for his

films. He began commercial work in 1988 with a Nike Air Jordan campaign, and he has also directed and produced music videos for artists such as Miles Davis, Tracy Chapman, Public Enemy and Michael Jackson.

In more recent work, Lee's 2000 film "Bamboozled" did not get the same kind of glowing reviews as prior hits such as "Clockers" in 1995. But Multicultural Center Director Erica Fuller said Lee is still a powerful filmmaker.

When Lee's first films came out, Fuller said he made an impact because he presented African-Americans as "whole, complete" people in situations viewers did not regularly see.

"In his initial films, he was very brave in bringing issues to the

screen that had not previously been illustrated," Fuller said.

Fuller hopes that by attending "An Evening with Spike Lee," students will start to gain an understanding of the issues he addresses in his films. Fuller said those issues include internal racism and internalized oppression, as well as interracial relationships and complexities.

While Lee has been treated as a "token artist of the industry," Fuller said, he is still a remarkable director and producer.

"He opened up the doors for black independent filmmakers to be taken seriously as fine artists in the industry," Fuller said. "He should be regarded at this point as a phenomenal filmmaker, not a black filmmaker."

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