

'Amazing Grace,' a Fitting Tribute

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

work that is so singularly and unapologetically focused on African American experience, particularly at a time when that subject matter was considered absolutely unworthy of literary notice. In addition to archival footage of Morrison herself, the film also carefully curates visual art from other African Americans in a way that lifts up Morrison's thematic significance. Morrison inspires as someone who managed, by the sheer force of her intellect and personality, to bring an astounding amount of light into the American literary landscape. Watch for the film's theatrical release sometime this year.

The career of journalist Mike Wallace, best known for his hard-hitting interviews on "60 Minutes," is the subject of "Mike Wallace is Here." For decades, Wallace was everywhere, the quintessential dogged interviewer; indeed, the film opens with an exchange between him and Bill O'Reilly in which the latter claims to have been inspired by Wallace and, indeed, to have beaten him at his own game. (Wallace, in his 90s by that time, appears entirely unimpressed.) Although director Avi Belkin grew up in Israel and is too young to have consumed "60 Minutes" at its height in the 70s and 80s, he nevertheless correctly discerned that Wallace's career is a fascinating vantage point for reflecting on the ways that television journalism has changed in the decades since its advent. Working from more than 1700 hours of footage, Belkin assembles a compelling case that this hard-driving, prickly personality may well have been driven by insecurities and an out-

sized ego and may not have been a favorite of his colleagues, but also worked with a kind of integrity that is increasingly hard to find, inspired by an actual desire to know the answers to the hard questions he posed. The interviews sampled here are riveting--with notoriously difficult world leaders like Ayatollah Khomeini and Vladimir Putin and outsized personalities like Leona Helmsley, Oprah Winfrey, Shirley MacLaine, and a young Donald Trump--and occurred in a context in which media companies appear to have been more prepared to defend independent efforts to get past pat answers to more difficult truth (in contrast to now, when so much of the media is corporately connected to its subjects). Although definitely not a contemplative figure, Wallace emerges as someone who used his questions of others to interrogate his own views. The film will be released theatrically in July.

Ninety-year-old Dr. Ruth Westheimer was present for the screening of "Ask Dr. Ruth," the immensely entertaining film about her life--and that is hardly surprising once you get a sense of how absolutely irrepressible she is. People less than half her age can scarcely keep up with her, and this investigation into her life story both reveals her buoyant persona and grounds it in a history that is quite full of loss and suffering. The only daughter of very loving Orthodox Jewish parents, Westheimer was sent away to a Swiss orphanage at the age of 10 to save her from the threat of deportation by the Nazis and, after two years of correspondence with them, never saw her parents again and later learned they had been murdered, likely at Auschwitz. The film employs quite ef-

fective animated sequences to depict her early seminal experiences at the Swiss orphanage, where the Jewish children were treated as a servant class and Jewish girls were not allowed to attend high school. We meet her first boyfriend and learn about her own emerging consciousness, while also exploring her surprising leap to fame in the relatively prudish 1980s as a sex therapist who was both controversial and quite beloved for her easy frankness. Still quite active as a



PHOTO COURTESY PERFECT DAY FILMS
The new documentary 'Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am,' focuses on the Nobel Prize-winning author, the black experience and the publishing world.

writer, speaker, and public personality, Westheimer appears to have no time for fear or regret, only enthusiasm. The film will be released theatrically on May 3 and will appear on Hulu in June.

"Jim Allison: Breakthrough" celebrates an iconoclastic immunologist who pioneered an approach to cancer treatment which now offers real hope to patients who have not been able to find it. His story, well told in this engaging and suspenseful tribute, provides

an instructive example of the barriers that hinder real innovation inside any system which, like the worlds of medical and pharmaceutical research, is too big to fail. All or most of the incentives reinforce and reward the usual ways of thinking, and block and even punish visionary approaches. The film tracks Allison's relentless and personally costly efforts to persuade a pharmaceutical company to invest the staggering resources needed to test his ambitious thesis for how to activate an effective immune response to certain cancers, and notes that both Allison and one of his best allies experienced significant early losses to cancer in their own families; the film makes the case that those losses (in addition to Allison's innate iconoclastic streak) motivated the two to push for ideas that seemed to others too risky to invest in. In this story, Allison's lifelong passion for playing the harmonica also feels somehow critical to teaching him to trust his own creativity. It's an inspiring and hopeful story, and will have its theatrical release this summer.

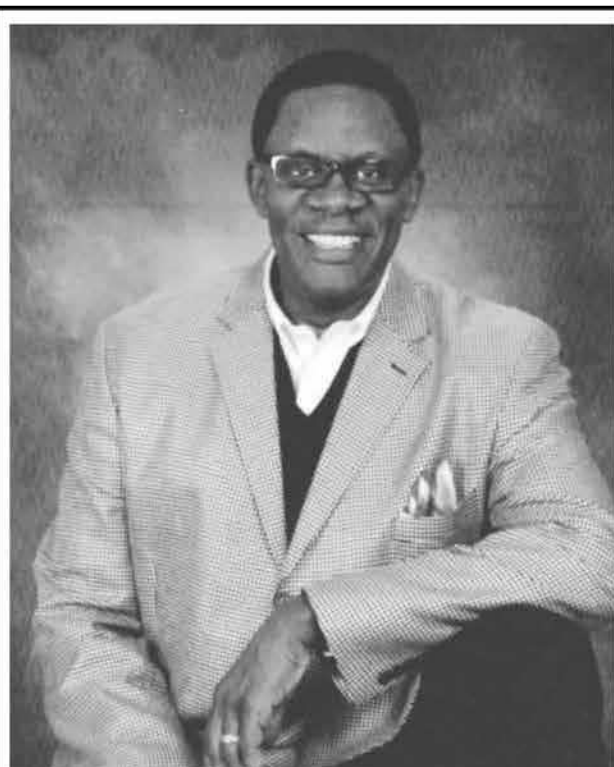
"Scared of Revolution" isn't quite as easy to pin down and, for me, wasn't as successful as the other biographies. It profiles Umar Bin Hassan of the Last Poets, an African-American group of performance poets and musicians that was a major influence on the emergence of hip-hop. I suspect that, for those already familiar with the Last Poets, this film might be much more intrinsically fascinating; it focuses less on presenting the Last Poets in their heyday in the 1960s and more on Hassan looking back with some sadness on his life. Still, his life and struggle for meaning and voice in a context of generational poverty, violence, and addiction is worthy of attention even without all the context I would have wanted for understanding his legacy. You can follow the film at <http://www.thelastpoetsfilm.com/>

I saw a number of films that ex-

plored manifestations of systemic racism. One of the best was "Decade of Fire" is an investigation into the destruction of the South Bronx in the 1970s. The story is personal to co-director Vivian Vasquez (working with Gretchen Hildebran); Vasquez, the daughter of Puerto Rican immigrants, grew up in the South Bronx in the 60s, a time when it was a thriving and very diverse community in which African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Irish, and Jewish folks lived in relative harmony. But by the 70s, most whites had moved out of the community, blacks and Latinos forced out of other parts of the city due to redevelopment moved in by larger numbers, and the predominantly older housing in the South Bronx disintegrated. For the decade of the 70s, an extraordinarily high number of buildings were destroyed by fire--just at a time when it appeared the government policy was to just "let them burn."

The public narrative was that the black and brown people living in the South Bronx were essentially uncivilized and didn't have any respect for property. Vasquez and others reflect on how that narrative got into their heads--and how some residents eventually came to resist it. James Baldwin, Stokely Carmichael, and others began to challenge that the destruction was really a matter of government policy--and the film sets out to address how redlining, policies that made it impossible for people of color to obtain home loans, the construction of highways that primarily served white suburbs, speculator absentee landlords with no intention of maintaining buildings to minimum habitability standards, and other aspects of segregation and racism were the real cause of the South Bronx's "decade of fire," and describes how residents eventually found ways to take matters into their own hands. The direc-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



Dr. Billy R. Flowers

THE SPINA COLUMN™

An ongoing series of questions and answers about America's natural healing profession.

Part 24. Osteoarthritis: you needn't be frightened about a frightening problem anymore

Q: I have been having a lot of pain in my neck. The doctor said that it was osteoarthritis and that I would have learn to live with it. What is your opinion?

A: As you might know, there is a tremendous amount of health research going on today Much relates to the spine and nervous system. You might ask your doctor if he has read the latest study on osteoarthritis. The study showed that there was no correlation between the amount

of osteo-arthritis and the amount of pain a person suffers. In fact it has been found that pain and osteo-arthritis are both caused by the same problem. Mechanical stress on the bone and joints is the biggest cause of pain and also the cause of that deformity of the joint your doctor calls osteoarthritis .

In Chiropractic we evaluate where

the joint and bones are stresses. Our chief purpose then is to remove the stress or irritation from the joint (and nerves) -- not only to reduce pain but to allow the bones to be as healthy as possible as well. If you have joint pain, isn't it time you stepped up to , effective Chiropractic?

Flowers' Chiropractic Office

2124 NE Hancock, Portland Oregon 97212 • Phone: (503) 287-5504