

## The Bittersweet Effects of the Homeless World Cup

By Brian Stimson  
Of *The Skanner News*

With a skeleton crew of two, filmmakers Demetrius Wren and Christina Ghubril set out to document the lives and ambitions of South Africa's 2008 and 2009 Homeless World Cup Teams. The result, the film "Streetball" will screen as part of the Cascade Festival of African Films at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 24 at PCC Cascade Campus' Moriarty A&H Building, room 104. Like all films for the festival, the screening is free. Visit [www.african-filmfest.org](http://www.african-filmfest.org).

The event gathers teams of the homeless and excluded to engage in tournaments of Street Soccer, a universal sport that takes no more than a ball and a hard surface to play. Made up of a group of orphans, gangsters, and recovering drug addicts, the tournament provides them with a sense of purpose and shared goals, but also offers a window into a life very different from their own.

The film's director, Demetrius Wren, who will attend the screening, spoke with *The Skanner News* from his home in New York City about the friendships he made, the difficulties the team faced and the lack of solutions for South Africa's street kids.

*The Skanner News:* Tell me what kind of role the game of Street Soccer plays in the lives of the kids featured in the film?

*Demetrius Wren:* Street soccer is one of those universal games played all over the world. All you need is a ball to kick around and you have a game. A lot of times, they'll make a ball out of balls of trash and tie it together with plastic bags and they play street soccer.

You don't need a turf, you can play it in the dirt or in the street. A majority of these guys in the film are either orphans or

they're living on the streets or coming out of a drug rehab program or are gangsters. It's South Africa's version of street basketball. That one thing where people can come together and play a sport and have a good time

between some of the struggles they're going through. And it's positive. A lot of the kids who are doing crystal meth, they call it tik, or sniffing glue to pass the time or keep warm. The rules are so simple for street soccer that its one of these things kids love to do without harming them except for the occasional skinned knee here and there.

*TSN:* I notice that your background is very different from the subjects in your film. Did this affect your filming or the way that you told or were told the stories in any way?

*DW:* I met them on another project and I realized we weren't that different. I'd go



A scene from 'Streetball'

home and I'd go back to the hotel the company was putting me in and they'd go back to their shelter or whatever situation they we're dealing with. That's why I wanted to tell their story, unravel the mystery. I'd seen a lot of docs on the subject before. There was always an us/them mentality ... when I was there, they were just friends of mine. We liked the same things, enjoyed the same things, cared about the same things I cared about. It was different for them because I was African American and in South Africa, it's something they idolized. I'd walk in and they'd start singing Jay-Z's *Empire State of Mind*, since I was from New York, so it allowed them to open up quicker to me than someone else.

There were a lot of people coming there

interested in soccer stories. It was 2008, 2009, everyone was buzzed about the World Cup coming in two years. They felt I was one of them.

I grew up with a single mother, growing up in rural Mississippi. I could relate a lot. I just happen to hit the lottery, my mom got married and that guy happened to get a really good job and so when I was 11 years old I leap-frogged social and economic standards. I felt like they were just like me except they didn't hit the jackpot when they were 10 or 11, they just stayed where they were. Things just got worse.

*TSN:* How did travelling to Australia for the Homeless World Cup change the atti-

See BALL on page 14

**MISS BLACK OREGON 2011**  
THE CROWNING EVENT

**TARGETING EDUCATION**  
FEBRUARY 27TH 6:00PM  
1512 SW MORRISON ST. PORTLAND OR. 97205

1ST PRIZE SCHOLARSHIP SPONSORED BY: MELVIN BROADOUS [WWW.MELVINBROADOUS.COM](http://WWW.MELVINBROADOUS.COM)

2ND PRIZE SCHOLARSHIP SPONSORED BY: MARINELLO SCHOOL OF BEAUTY [WWW.MARINELLO.COM](http://WWW.MARINELLO.COM)

Hosted By: *Urban Integ*

@ **Scottish Rite Center**  
FULL BAR \* GOOD FOOD & DRINKS IN THE "GRAND LOUNGE"

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT CHRISTOPHER'S GOURMET GRILL  
3962 NE MLK JR. BLVD. \* 503-939-4643

FOR MORE INFO. CALL: 503-839-6222

Pacific Crest Sinfonietta & Twysted Healing Systahs presents ...

**Two WEEKENDS ONLY!**

**Sherman**  
a jazz opera

"WHAT WE PLAY IS LIFE."  
- LOUIS ARMSTRONG

**ETHOS @ IFCC**  
5340 N. Interstate Ave.

7 p.m. - Fridays  
Saturdays, Sundays

February  
18-27, 2011

TICKETS: \$15  
\$10 - Students/Seniors

Available at:  
Reflections  
Geneva's  
[www.Ethos.org](http://www.Ethos.org)

Art by the late Phllemon Reid

Score: **Thara Memory**  
Libretto: **S. Renee Mitchell**  
Director: **Barbara Kite**

Featuring:  
**Reggie Houston, LaRhonda Steele & Thara Memory's SuperBand!**  
- ALL ORIGINAL MUSIC -

This production is sponsored by the  
Regional Arts & Culture Council

ALSO Celebrate **History, Hope & Harmony** with a **BLACK HISTORY MONTH RECEPTION** honoring local jazz elders **Sweet Baby James Benton & Bobby Bradford**  
Wed., Feb. 23, 2011 from 4:30 p.m. UNTIL

Portland City Hall  
1221 S.W. 4th Ave.

Come meet Portland's own Grammy nominated **Esperanza Spalding**  
2011 community ambassador for the Portland Jazz Festival ([PPJjazz.com](http://PPJjazz.com))