

Emayatzy Corinealdi: The "Roots" Interview

By **Kam Williams**
For *The Skanner News*

Born at Fort Knox, Kentucky on Jan. 14, 1980, Emayatzy Corinealdi was an army brat whose family moved around a lot during her childhood as dictated by her dad's military career. After stints around the country and overseas, she put down roots in New Jersey, which enabled her to study at the Actor's Training Studio as well as William Esper Studio.

She parlayed a recurring role on the TV soap opera "The Young and the Restless" into a critically-acclaimed starring one in Ava DuVernay's "Middle of Nowhere" (2012). She's since appeared in the screen adaptation of Zane's erotic thriller "Addicted" (2014), and as Miles Davies' wife Frances in "Miles Ahead" (2016).

Here, Emayatzy talks about her latest out as Belle, Kunta Kinte's (Malachi Kirby) wife, in the remake of *Roots*.

ing the story of the history of this country to a new generation was an important conversation that I believe is necessary, given the current climate of race relations in the United States.

KW: How did you prepare to play Belle Reynolds? Did you watch the original miniseries?

EC: What was happening everyday in this country: police brutality, injustice, people feeling angry and ignored, all of these issues were things that helped to prepare me. That coupled with the knowledge that I have since gained about enslavement and its history.

KW: Did you have any emotional moments on the set during the shooting?

EC: Every day was an emotional moment on set. The final scene, having her daughter Kizzy taken away, might've been one of the toughest by far.

KW: What message

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Kam Williams: Hi Emayatzy, thanks for the time.

Emayatzy Corinealdi: Thanks, Kam.

KW: What interested you in *Roots*?

EC: The idea of bring-

ing you hope people will take away from the miniseries?

EC: Know your history. It can teach you who you are, where you have come from, and how to be a better person as a result. Also, I hope that



'In Search of the American Dream' is the story of six sibling's attempt to elude the authorities in a race across Texas after their undocumented parents are arrested and taken away.

young people especially will begin to have a better understanding of slavery and its effects, which are still evident to-

day. To understand those parallels and, from there, begin to be a part of the wave of hope to change things for the better

KW: You recently portrayed Frances Taylor,

Miles Davis' first wife, in the biopic *Miles Ahead*. Did you feel any extra pressure to get the role right, given that you were playing a real person?

EC: Definitely! I indeed wanted Ms. Frances to be pleased while at the same time honoring my director's vision, along with my own creativity. It is a balancing act which, I am glad to say, did pay off with her approval!

KW: Did you consult Frances in preparation for the role?

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his sizable subsequent achievements.

Written and directed by Jonathan Jakubowicz (Secuestro Express), "Hands of Stone" is a reverential biopic which humanizes Roberto while putting a positive spin on his indelible stain. This version of his story blames Duran's failing on his parasitic manager, Carlos Eleta (Ruben Blades), as well as on pressure from the big fight's promoter, Don King (Reg E. Cathey).

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Here, we're treated to the backstage specter of a burnt-out Roberto bemoaning his being exploited.

"I worked all my life. I didn't have any fun, when I was a kid." Truth be told, not only did he begin boxing young, but he married at an early age, too, 17. And his wife Felicidad (Ana de Armas) was only 14 when they tied the knot. FYI, the couple went on to have 8 children and are still together 47 years later.

If the movie has a flaw, it's in the fight scenes which leave a lot to be desired. Anyone ex-

pecting cinema verite on the order of "Rocky" or "Raging Bull," for which Robert De Niro won an Academy Award in 1981, is destined to be disappointed.

Speaking of De Niro, he plays the legendary Ray Arcel who came out of retirement over death threats from the Mafia to train a teen-aged Duran. Before you can say "Burgess Meredith," he whips the promising protegee into fighting shape, and it's just a matter

of time before his diamond in the rough's rags-to-riches dream becomes a reality. A touching, revisionist tale of redemption presenting the sensitive side of a pulverizing pugilist.

Very Good ★★★
Rated R for sexuality, nudity and pervasive profanity

In English and Spanish with subtitles

Running time: 105 min.

Distributor: The Weinstein Co.

To watch the trailer for *Hands of Stone*, visit TheSkanner.com.

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