

Local film to debut at Asheville Film Festival

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WNC filmmaker, David Weintraub, who chronicled South Beach's Yiddishland in his award-winning 2007 film, "Where Neon Goes to Die," premieres his newest offering at the Asheville Film Festival on Friday, Nov. 13.

"The Golden Side of the Tracks" focuses on Overtown, Florida, once hailed as the "Harlem of the South" because it grew to become a center of black commerce and nightclubs.

"The story of South Florida's founding always involves wealthy business people like Henry Flagler and Julia Tuttle, but never the people who built the major cities, cleared the swamp and constructed the railroad," said Weintraub, who is director of the Environmental and Conservation Organization in Hendersonville.

"Even today the blacks who helped to found many cities in the South are invisible. I created this film in the hopes it would inspire a discussion about the major contributions blacks had in building many southern cities including those in North Carolina."

Using vintage footage and images meshed together with interviews with longtime Overtown residents, historians and activists, the film reveals an important chapter in South Florida history that few have ever read about.

Weintraub said at its height Overtown was a thriving community of families, schools, churches and nightclubs. It had its millionaires, professionals, builders and artisans. "Overtown's history was irrevocably changed in the 1960's when I-95 was extended to come through Overtown resulting in the eviction of 40,000 people. This drove a stake in the heart of the community," he said.

"The parallels to many neighborhoods in WNC including Asheville are amazing. Discussions about highway construction again center on the removal of sections of neighborhoods in the black community in Asheville."

The Golden Side of the Tracks will have its world premiere at the Asheville Film Festival at the Asheville Community Theatre's 35Below on Nov. 13 at 1:30 p.m. followed by a discussion on how gentrification and highway construction has affected WNC's black community by the WNC Alliance.

For more information about the film, contact the Center for Cultural Preservation at (828) 692-8062 or at www.saveculture.org. For more information about the Asheville Film Festival, contact them at 828-259-5800 or kcoffey@ashevillenc.gov or online at www.ashevillefilmfestival.com.

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