

# The Freeport News

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Social/Community News

## 'Womanish Ways' snags award at U.S. film festival

ERICA WELLS

Guardian Managing Editor

[erica@nasguard.com](mailto:erica@nasguard.com)

Marion Bethel's documentary, "Womanish Ways, Freedom, Human Rights and Democracy," which tells the intriguing story of the struggle for women's right to vote in The Bahamas has captured the 2012 Award in Documentary at the Urban Suburban Film Festival in Philadelphia.

The documentary was selected from hundreds of films submitted, said the festival's organizers.

Bethel, who directed the documentary and worked closely alongside Bahamian filmmakers Maria Govan and Kareem Mortimer for the making of "Womanish Ways," said winning the award represents an enormous boost for the film and the story of the women's suffrage movement in The Bahamas, which is so little known.

"Our history is not well known," said Bethel. "The film, therefore, reveals to a wider international audience a deeper understanding of life in The Bahamas in this period and the legacy of this period.

"Winning the award affirms the quality and significance of the film in itself, and its appeal to an international audience. The award raises the profile of the film. It opens the door for unforeseen magic to happen."

"Womanish Ways" focuses on five of the central figures of the Suffrage Movement in The Bahamas — Mary Ingraham, Mable Walker, Eugenia Lockhart, Georgiana Symonette and Dame Dr. Doris Johnson.

Through photographs and film footage, interviews with women who stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the key figures, the film gives a stirring account of this important period in Bahamian history.

The documentary, a labor of love for Bethel, was years in the making and represents what she describes as "turning up the volume on women's history and contribution to the advancement of human rights and democracy in The Bahamas."

"The film is a testament to the power of women's voices and the importance of their stories."

"This film has huge resonance for me going back to my childhood. I grew up with these women of the suffrage movement all around me," said Bethel. "They were a part of my extended family in the neighborhood. My mother, grandmothers and aunts were part of this movement. I did not know then of their struggle and determination to demand the right to vote. This film is a tribute to these women, their vision and their achievement of human rights and democracy in The Bahamas."

Bethel said that in working on "Womanish Ways" and reading the historical documents of the period, and especially the documents drafted by the suffrage movement, her pre-judgments of the movement were blown out of the water.

The women, she said, were politically sophisticated and savvy.

"They grounded the movement in the social thought of the day using the ideas of Locke, Rousseau, Sir Winston Churchill and Roosevelt and the political instruments of the day of the United Nations, namely, the UN Convention on Human Rights of 1948 and the UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women of 1952," noted Bethel.

"They also established political connections with international women's organizations. This successful process of navigating and negotiating the difficult political terrain of both The Bahamas and the metropole countries in the 40s, 50s and 60s has left an indelible mark on my consciousness."

\* "Womanish Ways, Freedom, Human Rights and Democracy" is now available on DVD from Logos Bookstore, the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas, Buy the Book and Chapter One Bookstore.

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