

ENTERTAINMENT

'Down in the Delta' tale of growth, family's bond

By Tammy D. McMahan
Can an alcoholic, irresponsible single mother living in gang-infested urban Chicago turn her life around? Not only can she, as the film "Down in the Delta" demonstrates, but she can be the catalyst for her family's rebirth.



ESTHER ROLLE

"Down in the Delta," which marks Maya Angelou's directorial debut, is the story of Loretta Sinclair, her family and a summer full of change.

Tracy (Kulani Hassen) who is autistic.

Sinclair, played by Alfre Woodard, is a reckless drunk, who wallows in self-pity and is headed for destruction. Her long-suffering mother, Rosa Lynn Sinclair (Mary Alice) and son Thomas (Mpho Koaho) are forced to care for her and keep the family together, including caring for Loretta's youngest child,

After Loretta fails to land a job as a cashier at a local grocery and she retreats to the bottle, Rosa Lynn takes drastic measures. She pawns a cherished family heirloom, a silver candelabra named Nathan, for money to buy bus tickets to send her daughter and grandchildren to spend the summer with her brother-in-law, a proud, but

sensitive Earl Sinclair (Al Freeman, Jr.) Mississippian. Rosa Lynn's actions disturb Loretta, who eventually returns and takes the family to Mississippi.

Earl lives with his wife Annie (Esther Rolle) who has been stricken with Alzheimer's Disease. Earl's household also includes Zenia (Loretta Devine), a warm and practical housekeeper and daytime caretaker of Annie. Loretta's introduction into the Southern Sinclair household is bumpy at first. She is reckless, Earl is principled.

However, Loretta slowly realizes that she can turn her life around for the better. She starts working at Earl's restaurant. She becomes more loving toward her children. She's inspired by Zenia, a single mother who owns her

own home. She even pitches a plan to Earl's corporate lawyer son, Will (Wesley Snipes), to revitalize the economy of the small factory-based community. Her rebirth brings the family together, much like the candelabra; the story behind which is revealed in the film.

Down in the Delta has a number of strengths including its authentic portrayal of Loretta Sinclair. Woodard enlivens the character with caustic humor, tragic pathos and careless sexuality, effectively portraying someone who is teetering on the edge of self-destruction. She is most impressive in a scene in which she softly pleads for any job at a local grocery. In actuality, she was pleading for her life.

In another scene, her character subtly speaks

volumes about how misogyny has scarred her. She is amazed at Earl's love for and patience with his wife Annie. Toward the end of the film, Woodard capably embodies a changed Loretta, one who is not perfect, but who now has self-respect and confidence.

The supporting cast add impressive performances. Earl is a heroic type who is at times loving, sensitive and disciplined and at times overly traditional and stubborn.

In her last role, the late Esther Rolle aptly depicts some of the effects of Alzheimer's—the confusion and fleeting moments of clarity.

Young Mpho Koaho ably combines a wise-beyond-his-years mentality with childlike exuberance. And Devine is



ALFRE WOODARD

quietly effective as the soft-spoken caretaker. Down in the Delta is an intentionally uplifting story that is not the typical Hollywood fare. The film has a happy ending, but the work is somewhat honest about the featured trials and triumphs of life.

Angelou makes directorial debut with 'Down in the Delta'

NEW YORK (AP) — For author-turned-filmmaker Maya Angelou, making a movie gave her a chance to use silence to say something.



MAYA ANGELOU

Angelou makes her directorial debut in "Down in the Delta," which opened last weekend and tells the story of a black family.

Two characters are trapped in silence — one by Alzheimer's and one by autism.

The movie opened over the weekend. Angelou tapped into her own experience of being sexually assaulted, an episode that left her speechless for six years.

"For years I thought of my whole body as an ear," Angelou said. "When I write, I can't use silence. A person reading a book doesn't want to encounter three or four pages of nothing. With film, though, I could use silence to tell volumes."

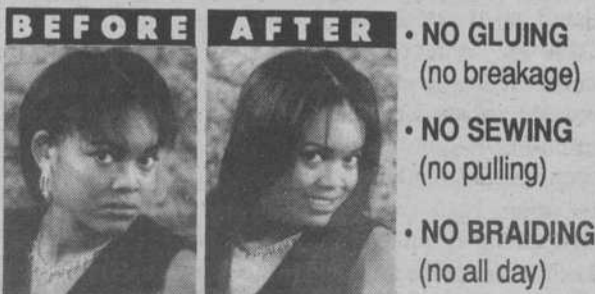
Angelou, a professor at Wake Forest University, N.C., has written several books of poetry and the best seller "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings."

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Committee 1999 Calendar of Events

Sunday, Jan. 10, 1999	Musical Sunday	Zion Methodist — 4 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 11, 1999	Community Forum	West L.V. Library — 6 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 12, 1999	Poetically Speaking	West L.V. Library — 6 p.m.
Wednesday, Jan. 13, 1999	Youth Night Talent Show	Cheyenne H.S. — 6-9 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 14, 1999	Evening honoring future dreamers	Charles West Theater — 6 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 14, 1999	Tribute to Grand Marshals	Second Baptist — 7 p.m.
Saturday, Jan. 16, 1999	Parade (entry fee \$50)	Downtown — 10 a.m.
Saturday, Jan. 16, 1999	King Banquet (tickets \$100)	Caesars Palace — 6 p.m.
Sunday, Jan. 17, 1999	Comedy Night	Artemus Ham Hall — 8 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 18, 1999	Directions Breakfast	Second Baptist — 8 a.m.

For more information call (702) 631-1913 or (702) 799-0670

Black Women: STOP PULLING YOUR HAIR OUT!!! ADD-ON HAIR "The Safe & Easy Way"



BEFORE AFTER • NO GLUING (no breakage)
• NO SEWING (no pulling)
• NO BRAIDING (no all day)
Let me demonstrate "The New Method" to Add Length, Volume or Cover Thinning!
Call me today
(702) 312-3657, Yolanda
1-888-572-6733 pager/voice mail

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated
Theta Theta Omega Chapter
presents
Second Annual
Mardi Gras Ball
Saturday, January 30th
at the
Rio Hotel & Casino
3700 W. Flamingo Rd.
8:00 p.m to 1:00 a.m.
New Orleans Style Dinner
Entertainment provided by Gene Howard,
featuring Platinum Soul
Tickets Now Available
AKA Hotline 594-5053

ABC Insurance Agency
High Risk? Accidents?
DWI? Cancelled?
Low Down Payment • Low Monthly Payments
IMMEDIATE SR-22's
Aubrey Branch Quincly Branch
Broker/Agent Consultant
1700 Civic Center Drive
N. Las Vegas 649-1029
BUSINESS • HOMEOWNER • LIFE 310-6055