



**Press info no. 5 | 19 September 2015**

## **Diaspora filmmakers visiting the WDR**

On Friday (18/9), **Jutta Krug**, Commissioning Editor for Documentary Film for WDR television, invited the special guest directors of the **AFRICAN DIASPORA CINEMA** to an exchange of ideas in Cologne's Vierscheibenhaus. The directors who participated were **Dyana Gaye** (France/Senegal), **Bazi Gete** (Israel/Ethiopia), and **Hannah Awo** and **Joseph Akwasi Akiwumi** (Ghana), as well as black German filmmakers **Nancy Mac Granaky-Quaye** and **Esther Donkor** and actress **Joana Fatondji**. **Götz Schmedes** of the WDR television department for fiction films also took part, as well as two directors working for the WDR, **Lukas Roegler** and **Marcel Kolvenbach**.

This sort of meetings between WDR television executives and guests of FilmInitiativ's African film festivals and series have been a tradition for several years. However, this year the meeting was held for the first time in the auditorium of the WDR's film building, which enabled the participants to present film clips from their work. To kick off, **Götz Schmedes** and **Jutta Krug** showed a trailer highlighting the structure and programming, and their respective timeslots of the public service WDR television. As examples of the 90-minute artistic documentaries produced by **Jutta Krug**, **Marcel Kolvenbach** showed an excerpt from his documentary **Atomic Africa**, followed by **Lucas Roegler**, who presented for discussion the beginning of his film **Sisters of No Mercy**, which focuses on trafficking of women from Nigeria to Europe.

In return, the guests presented films that they are showing within the **AFRICAN DIASPORA CINEMA** series in Cologne and reported on film projects they are currently working on. These included short films and documentaries by film students **Hannah Awo** and **Joseph Akwasi Akiwumi** of Ghana, who are currently studying at the Art Academy of Media Arts (KHM), the latter of whom also produced the Diaspora series trailer for FilmInitiativ. **Dyana Gaye**, patron of the Diaspora series, arrived from Paris to show the trailer of her feature film **Des Etoiles**, which has been picked up for German distribution by EZEF in Stuttgart. And Ethiopian-born Israeli director **Bazi Gete** presented his debut film, **Red Leaves**, for which he was able to cast one of the best-known African actors – **Debete Eshetu** – for the lead role of an Ethiopian patriarch who cannot find his way into Western-oriented Israeli society. **Nancy Mac Granaky-Quaye**, who advised FilmInitiativ on the curation of the festival focus on black German filmmakers in the Diaspora series, showed excerpts from her university film **BEENTO** that tells the GDR-era how-we-met story of her Ghanaian father and her German mother. She also presented the short film **Yahtzee**, which she co-directed with **Esther Donkor**.

**Marcel Kolvenbach** received much support for levelling criticism against German television, which he believes with few exceptions is barely open to airing authentic stories from other continents, and shows far too few films about Africa and the Diaspora that are actually made by African directors. Yet Cologne's African film festivals and this Diaspora series demonstrate just how many outstanding, enlightening, and exciting films there are by African directors. **Kolvenbach** pointed out the positive effects of the WDR meetings, which allowed him to meet Libyan director **Nizam Najjar** last year during the FilmInitiativ festival, which led to their working together on a film project in Syria.