

June 28, 2011

**AFRICAN Filmmaker Showcases Work about Economic Injustice:
Free Screening July 28, 2011 7pm Tegeler Hall, Saint Louis University**

BIG BANANA, a new documentary by Franck Bieleu, sheds light on the hidden political consequences of the transnational fruit trade. It will make its St. Louis debut July 28 at 7pm at Tegeler Hall of Saint Louis University. The event is sponsored by Partners for Just Trade, Plowsharing Crafts, and the Doerr Center of Saint Louis University.

Bieleu spent two years in Cameroon filming and speaking with local residents of Cameroon, as well as on location in St. Louis and London. BIG BANANA outlines Plantation du Haut Penja (PHP)'s land grabbing tactics and the devastating consequences for communities: poverty, pollution, and sickness from pesticides. Consumers are not always aware of the political costs behind their purchases but BIG BANANA explains why bananas are so cheap: PHP has appropriated land from small farmers, and failed to comply with local minimum wage in addition to other basic labor standards.

The Cameroon screening of BIG BANANA was scheduled for April 26, 2011 but was shut down by Cameroonian authorities. The event was scheduled to include a debate about land and labor issues for journalists, diplomats, stakeholders, and civil society. Cameroonian politicians have a vested interest in supporting the transnational banana trade is the country's largest export industry at \$245 million annually. With the presidential elections of Cameroon scheduled for October, BIG BANANA has the ability to educate people about the abuse of farmers, despite the Cameroonian government's attempts to keep it from the public.

Originally from Cameroon, Franck Bieleu studied at the London Metropolitan University and has previously used film to give voice to those suffering from poverty. His 2008 film "What Hope for African Youth?" explored the large migrations of youth from Africa due to lack of opportunity. The film showed at the African World Documentary Festival as well as aired twelve months on national French TV RFO and TV5.

Partners for Just Trade (PJT), a member of the Fair Trade Federation, imports "Fair Fruit" from Cameroonian farmers who lost their land to PHP and who are now paid a fair wage through the export of their dried fruit. The non-profit, faith-based organization builds partnerships between producers living in extreme poverty and consumers in North America. PJT addresses root causes of poverty through Fair Trade sales, education, solidarity, and a commitment to trade justice.

Plowsharing Crafts has two not-for-profit retail stores, in the Delmar Loop and Kirkwood, and has provided meaningful income to skilled artisans around the world by marketing their products in the St. Louis area since 1985.

The Emmet J. and Mary Martha Doerr Center for Social Justice Education and Research is an independently funded center within the Saint Louis University School of Social Work that promotes long range solutions to social problems through education and research.

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