

IM Global Flies Spike Lee In To Toronto To Present Amazon's First Film 'Chi-Raq'

by [Ali Jaafar](#)

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EXCLUSIVE: Stuart Ford's [IM Global](#) is flying [Spike Lee](#) in to Toronto for a few hours today to give international buyers a sneak peak at some footage of his eagerly anticipated *Chi-Raq*. The first feature to be fully financed by [Amazon](#) Studios, *Chi-Raq* once more finds Lee — one of the greatest chroniclers of America for over 30 years — front and center in the heart of the debate on gun laws and race relations in America. Nick Cannon, Wesley Snipes, Jennifer Hudson, D.B. Sweeney, Harry Lennix, Steve Harris, Angela Basset all star with John Cusack and Samuel L. Jackson. Teyonah Parris will play the lead role.



Written by Lee and Kevin Willmott, (*C.S.A: Confederate States Of America*), *Chi-Raq* looks at inner-city violence in Chicago. It is said to be inspired by the Greek comedy *Lysistrata*, in which the women of Greece band together and withhold sex until their men end the Peloponnesian War.

IM Global is selling international on the film among its company-record eight pic here — those include three Special Presentations like *Desierto*, the Jonas Cuaron drama starring Gael Garcia Bernal that is [expected to be a hot seller](#) at the fest. IM Global's commitment to diverse genres of cinema — it has also made significant investments in Bollywood and Asian cinema — is paying off: Interest is very high on *Chi-Raq* and Saturday's footage screening is believed to be three times over-subscribed.

I am a great supporter of Spike Lee. He is a a genius and a life Saver for...

On behalf of everyone in the Chicagoland area, I cannot wait for this story. I assume it...

Lee managed to find some time in his tight schedule to talk about the film, made all the most timely given recent events in America.

DEADLINE: *The buzz is strong on this film.*

LEE: I don't really disagree with that assessment. I don't really do anything I'm not excited about. I don't do any film that my juices aren't flowing. Film is the thing I love, film is my passion.

DEADLINE: *What makes Chi-Raq so urgent in today's landscape?*

LEE: Well, there's a situation in America where young black men are killing young black men at alarming rates and Chicago, or [Chirag](#), is really like the poster boy for this. Again I'd like to state that in no way shape or form we saying that this only happens in Chicago. It happens in Brooklyn where I'm from, in the Bronx, it's happening in Philadelphia. You know the nicknames, one of the nicknames for Philadelphia is Killadelphia, one of the nicknames for Baltimore is Murderland, so it's something that's nationwide.

DEADLINE: *What role can an artist like you play when it comes to making a film about a subject matter like this?*

LEE: Well I've always believed that great art can impact world. I would just be irresponsible as a filmmaker to not comment on this self-inflicted genocide, which is happening. We shot the film in Chicago but here's the thing. It's not all of Chicago, that's why it reminds me of Charles Dickens' *A Tale Of Two Cities*. The majority of the shootings and the killings are in the south side of Chicago. Chicago – I mean I'm not the only one to say this – arguably is one of the most segregated cities in the U.S. And the bulk of these shooting and killings are on the South Side. I would like to give you a fact. We started shooting this film this past June 1 and our last day of filming was July 9 so think about that. During that time of production while we were in Chicago, 331 people got wounded and shot and 65 got murdered. And one of the issues that we talk about in this film is that guns are out of control here in America. There has to be some gun reform and that is going to be a fight because you have to go up against the NRA, the National Rifle Association. And their lobby is very very powerful.

DEADLINE: *How do you see this connected to Do The Right Thing? Has America gone forward or backwards in the last 25 years?*

LEE: I would say that America is always advancing, many people might say not fast enough but progress has been made, but if you look at *Do The Right Thing*, the strangulation on Radio Raheem by the NYPD. I mean who would have thought that that would happen again in real life, right here in Staten Island with [Eric] Garner. But back in '89, we made that film, no one I knew, not even me had thought that there would be an African American president. There's always going to be struggles in this country and that's just part of the fabric. I think racism is part of the fabric of this country but the struggle continues and eventually good rules over evil I think.

DEADLINE: *You've always been at the forefront of independent filmmaking. This is Amazon's first fully financed movie. How did that relationship come about?*

LEE; This is going to be the first theatrical release, it's a new branch with Amazon. So it's not going to go straight onto Amazon Prime, it's going to be in the theatres. Jeff Bezos is an innovator, he's a visionary and like a lot of people I work with like Michael Jordan, Phil Knight, and Nike. I'm honored that they chose *Chi-Raq* to be their first theatrical release because you know when you step off the box and into the arena, a special arena where there are major studios, you're seen as an enemy. You want to make sure that you're coming out strong and so I think that they have confidence in this film or we wouldn't be their first theatrical release. And also I think it would be stupid to think that that many people want Amazon to fail. They don't want Amazon to be successful. Therefore they don't want this film to work either. But I've always been doing stuff against the odds starting from day one with my student thesis film.

DEADLINE: *You're invested your own money in the movie, which is rare.*

LEE: Well some people say it's idiotic. That's something one never does. You never put your own money in but I will always bet on myself.

<http://deadline.com/2015/09/spike-lee-chiraq-gun-reform-chicago-samuel-l-jackson-wesley-snipes-im-global-toronto-nick-cannon-1201522039/>