

## MLK AT THE DGA



Actor Cuba Gooding Jr. was all choked up Monday night at Directors Guild HQ following a screening of short documentary *The Witness: From the Balcony of Room 306*.

The doc presents the story of Rev. Samuel "Billy" Kyles, eyewitness to Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination in 1968 in Memphis, where the civil rights leader protested for sanitation workers' rights and gave the famous "Mountaintop" speech.

Gooding Jr. was moved to stand by the presentation and share his emotional reaction to the film, noting criminal behavior in his family and describing how a scene of sanitation workers wearing "I am a man" signs resonated with him and should with any discouraged youths today.



Grammy winner Ben Harper opened the screening event with a short set of three songs, and 74-year-old Kyles later regaled the audience with MLK stories in the Q&A portion of the evening (moderated by actor and activist Tim Robbins) along with NAACP board member Maxine Smith, who also appeared in the film.

Actress Janeane Garofalo, artist Henry Rollins, and Harper's wife, actress Laura Dern, also attended the event presented by the film's backers, the

Hyde Family Foundation and the National Civil Rights Museum ([civilrightsmuseum.org](http://civilrightsmuseum.org)).



Photos by Deborah Day

Top: Harper

Middle: Robbins

Bottom: Smith, Kyles, Executive Producer Margaret Hyde and Director Adam Pertofsky

—Deborah day