

Beat: Vips

## **RAIN, LEGENDS & STORYTELLERS SPIKE LEE'S CANDID CONVERSATION AT CANNES 2025**

**WITH DARRIEN MICHELE GIPSON AT AMPAV**

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**USPA NEWS** - The rain was pouring like the opening beat to a Spike Lee punchline, relentless and rhythmic, when Rahma Rachdi, known in journalistic circles as "handyjournalist," was making her way to the American Pavilion at Cannes 2025. Battling slippery sidewalks with her electric wheelchair, she was first guided by Gabriel from outside, an angel on earth by name and deed, then another Gabriel, and finally her friend, actor MYC Agnew, helped navigate her to a perfect vantage point: second row, eye-level with none other than Spike Lee himself.

It was a journey that could only be described as a "trial by rain and miracles," fitting for a conversation that opened with Spike Lee's own words: "Whether you believe in God or the Universe, it was all lined up." Those were the first bars of an unforgettable hour spent with a legend, where spirituality, art, activism, and cinema collided in a candid dialogue that left none in the audience untouched.

Darrien Michele Gipson, Executive Director of SAG Indie, was the perfect foil. With her probing, sometimes gentle, sometimes pointed questions, she drew out confessions, stories, and insights that made the conversation jump off the stage.

This article is written by our accredited senior film correspondent and is based on press releases and official information from the French Ministry of Culture, the Cannes Film Festival and major industry bodies. This is not a report on site; it relies on her long standing expertise, data driven insights and intellectual intuition to analyse how these choices reshape the balance of power in the film world and the place of French cinema on the international stage.

### **MODERATED BY DARRIEN MICHELE GIPSON: A MASTERCLASS IN DISCOVERY AND DEPTH**

Darrien Michele Gipson, Executive Director of SAG Indie, was the perfect foil. With her probing, sometimes gentle, sometimes pointed questions, she drew out confessions, stories, and insights that made the conversation jump off the stage and into the hearts of all present who exchanged glances with Lee throughout, feeling the pulse of every candid word.

From discussions of family roots and spirituality, to the brotherhood of filmmaking with Denzel Washington and Barry Alexander Brown, Gipson's moderation coaxed the man behind Malcolm X to reveal the forces both seen and unseen, that drive him.

### **A SPIRITUAL MESSAGE WRAPPED IN RAIN AND RESILIENCE**

Lee's opening analogy of the rain wasn't just poetic. It was personal. "The rain reminded me of the obstacles we faced with Malcolm X. They said it couldn't be done. We weren't supposed to finish it. But we did. Because we trusted that invisible thread." His words set a tone of faith, perseverance, and brotherhood throughout the talk, weaving through tales of cinematic battles and creative triumphs, reminding young artists that "Success isn't just talent. It's brotherhood. It's having people who stand with you."

### **FRIENDSHIP, COLLABORATION, AND THE MAGIC OF THE MOVIES**

Lee's love for collaborations was clear. His recounting of the intense preparation Denzel Washington undertook for Malcolm X underscored the dedication behind cinematic legends becoming living legends: "If you were on set, you weren't looking at Denzel Washington. You were looking at Malcolm X." He highlighted his lifelong partnership with editor Barry Alexander Brown as a rare creative bond: "Barry does more than cut film; he shapes stories. That kind of trust is priceless."

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## RAHMA RACHDI & THE HUMAN STORY BEHIND THE REPORT

Rahma's proximity to Spike Lee that day her daunting journey marked by angelic "Gabriels," and momentary eye contact with the director, made her report more than words on a page. It was a shared human experience, a testament to the struggle and celebration behind the scenes of film and life.

## LEGACY, ADVICE, AND THE FUTURE

Ending on a note of mentorship, Lee urged emerging talents to "Find your voice, protect it, and don't let anyone silence it. That's how you leave a mark." His vow to keep pushing boundaries and telling authentic stories continues to inspire, making him not just a filmmaker but a cultural beacon.

## HIGHEST 2 LOWEST: FROM CANNES TO THE WORLD

Premiering at Cannes 2025, Highest 2 Lowest opened in theaters on August 15, 2025, including in New York and Los Angeles, and was available via streaming on Apple TV+ starting September 5. The film stars Denzel Washington and features music by A\$AP Rocky, blending crime thriller elements with social commentary. The film received critical praise and represents Lee's ongoing mastery of socially conscious cinema.

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## CURRENT RELEASE & RECENT AWARD

Spike Lee's latest film, Highest 2 Lowest, premiered out of competition at the Cannes Film Festival on May 19, 2025. The film was theatrically released in the United States by A24 on August 15, 2025, with screenings in major theaters including New York City, Los Angeles, and other key cities. It became available for streaming on Apple TV+ starting September 5, 2025. The crime thriller stars Denzel Washington, Jeffrey Wright, Ilfenesh Hadera, and A\$AP Rocky and is a modern reinterpretation of Akira Kurosawa's High and Low. The film received positive critical reception, with an 89% rating on Rotten Tomatoes, praised for its vibrant depiction of contemporary New York and compelling performances.

Following its Cannes debut and U.S. release, Spike Lee was honored with the Governors Award by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in September 2025, recognizing his lifetime achievements and lasting cultural impact in cinema.

## SPIKE LEE'S IMPACTS WITH HIS IMPRESSIVE FILMOGRAPHY

Spike Lee is an iconic American filmmaker whose career spans over four decades, marked by powerful storytelling and a commitment to social justice issues. His filmography includes landmark works such as the following:

1. Joe's Bed-Study Barbershop: We Cut Heads (1983)
2. She's Gotta Have It (1986)
3. School Daze (1988)
4. Do the Right Thing (1989)
5. Mo's Better Blues (1990)
6. Jungle Fever (1991)
7. Malcolm, X (1992)
8. Crooklyn (1994)
9. Clockers (1995)
10. Girl 6 (1996)
11. Get on the Bus (1996)
12. He Got Game (1998)
13. Summer of Sam (1999)
14. Bamboozled (2000)
15. 25th Hour (2002)

16. She Hate me (2004)
17. Inside Man (2006)
18. Miracle At St. Anne (2008)
19. Red Hook Summer (2012)
20. Old Boy (2013)
21. Da Sweet Blood of Jesus (2014)
22. Chi Raq (2015)
23. BlacKkKlansman (2018)
24. Da 5 Blood (2020)
25. Highest 2 Lowest (2025)

This article is an editorial interpretation of the public conversation featuring Spike Lee and Darrien Michele Gipson held at the American Pavilion during the 78th Cannes Film Festival (2025). It combines on-site reporting with contextual research from sources such as Les Inrockuptibles, Wikimedia, and the Cinematheque. This piece aims to capture the spirit, key ideas, and cultural significance of the exchange rather than reproduce it in full.../

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UPA United Press Agency LTD  
483 Green Lanes  
UK, London N13NV 4BS  
contact (at) unitedpressagency.com  
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