

I hope to film this screenplay within the next 18 months, and I am in the process of researching grants for funding.

From Machetes to School Books: Literacy education and the emancipation of Northern Uganda's child soldiers

PURPOSE

Today, the Ugandan government, hungry for international investors and business, has propagated false information suggesting that the war in Northern Uganda is over. However, having traveled widely through Uganda in the summer of 2007, I saw the ongoing effects of a war that is far from over. Thus, this film's primary purpose is two-fold: to inform the international public of the current conflict in Uganda, and to explore the effects of the war on Ugandan children.

Children's involvement in combat has, in many cases, obstructed their education, and such atrocities as being raped, watching their families being murdered, or being forced to serve as child soldiers has left lasting trauma. So, of secondary purpose of this film is to examine how education and literacy can help these children reintegrate into civilian life and build positive futures.

It is also the producer's hope that this film will foster understanding of and compassion for this war-affected population, and, as a result, inspire practical and positive actions on the part of viewers that will minimize the humanitarian crisis in Uganda.

APPROACH

To allow the viewer to better understand the conditions suffered by child soldiers, some of the filming will take place in the bush. We will also film children in their home environments (from huts in villages and refugee camps, to apartments in cities, to a pile of rags under a cardboard shelter) and in classroom settings.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience is both teenagers and adults. This film is intended to inform both teens and adults of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Uganda caused by a war that is still raging across the north. Adults involved in education will be particularly interested in the education aspect this film explores.

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Minutes

1. INTRODUCTION TO FILM

(1/4)

a) OVER BLACK. TITLE, *UGANDA'S CASUALTIES OF WAR*, IS SUPERIMPOSED.

Sound of feet running through the bush. Sounds of vegetation begin shoved aside. Sound of heavy panting. Jungle sounds.

b) CLOSE SHOT AT GROUND-LEVEL OF A SET OF LARGE, SCARRED, BAREFOOT, AFRICAN FEET. THE FEET ARE RUNNING THROUGH THE BUSH.

Sounds of heavy panting gets louder, blocking out the jungle sounds. Sound of feet thumping the ground.

c) RUNNER'S POV - THE BUSH. CAMERA SHOT CRASHES THROUGH BRANCHES AND LONG GRASS, THEN TURNS BACK TO LOOK BEHIND. PACE QUICKENS.

Sounds of a heart thudding. Sound of feet thumping. Sound of crashing through underbrush.

(1/2)

d) CAMERA PULLS BACK TO REVEAL RUNNER/BOSCO AT A DEAD SPRINT, EXPLODING FROM THE BUSH INTO A CLEARING. HE LEANS OVER, HEAD HANGING, PANTING AND SWEATING, TO REST HIS ARMS ON HIS KNEES.

e) TWO OR THREE SECONDS LATER, A SECOND RUNNER, LUCKY, CHARGES FROM THE BUSH. THE TWO YOUNG MEN ARE TALL AND LEAN. THEY ARE ABOUT 17 YEARS OLD. BOSCO IS WEARING A SWEATY TATTERED WHITE T-SHIRT AND RAGGED SOCCER SHORTS. LUCKY IS DRESSED IN AN EQUALLY RAGGED BLUE SOCCER JERSEY AND FRAYED NIKE SHORTS.

f) A MOB OF YOUNGER, RAGGEDY BOYS RUNS OVER TO THE TWO RUNNERS AND SURROUNDS THEM, CONGRATULATING BOSCO, WHO IS THE CLEAR WINNER OF A RACE.

g) BOSCO ROUGH-HOUSES WITH THE YOUNGER BOYS AND THEN BEGINS FOLLOWING THEM TOWARD A SERIES OF LARGE, ROUGH BRICK BUILDINGS WITH BLUE TIN ROOFS SITUATED IN THE MIDDLE OF A CLEARING. THIS IS THE ORPHANAGE COMPOUND

THAT HOUSES ABOUT 250 MALE AND 50 FEMALE TEENAGERS.

(1/2) The two runners talking animatedly to each other in Acholi. They begin shouting and laughing good-naturedly. Sound of little boys cheering, laughing, and yelling.

h) FADE TO BLACK. TEXT IS SUPERIMPOSED:
ACCORDING TO UGANDA'S MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, 15.3 MILLION CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18 LIVE IN UGANDA.
FADE TO BLACK.

i) ON BLACK. TEXT IS SUPERIMPOSED:
TWO MILLION ARE ORPHANS.
FADE TO BLACK.

Ambient sounds of children playing fades to silence.

(2) 2. INTERVIEW WITH A UGANDAN MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL

a) DR. PAUL, A PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT IN A RURAL VILLAGE, WALKS ALONG A RED DIRT ROAD. IN THE DISTANCE, WOMAN WORK IN SWEET POTATO AND CASSAVA FIELDS, YOUNG BOYS HERD SKINNY COWS, AND DAILY VILLAGE LIFE OCCURS IN THE BACKGROUND.

Dr. Paul gives a general overview of the state of Uganda—the effects of Idi Amin and the rebellion that overthrew his reign, the causes of the current war, and how it has affected Uganda's children. He specifically addresses the psychological and physical health concerns of child soldiers and street kids, and how those problems specifically relate to education.

(1 1/2) 3. INTERVIEW WITH A FORMER STREET KID

a) KISESI JOSEPH, A SLIGHT AND SERIOUS BOY OF 15, WALKS DOWN A CROWDED STREET IN MBALE.

Over ambient city sounds, Kisesi explains that he is a war orphan who spent several years living among Mbale's notorious "street kids" after both his parents were killed. He talks about the high cost of education in Uganda and adds that orphans have little chance of paying school fees. He expresses anxiety about his future, explaining that unless he can continue his education, he will have no hope of escaping poverty.

4. INTERVIEW WITH A FORMER CHILD PROSTITUTE

(1/4)

a) OVER BLACK. TEXT IS SUPERIMPOSED:
*MORE THAN 30,000 CHILDREN FROM NORTHERN UGANDA HAVE BEEN
ABDUCTED IN THE PAST 18 YEARS.*

FADE TO BLACK.

b) OVER BLACK. TEXT IS SUPERIMPOSED:
AND UGANDA IS STILL AT WAR.

FADE TO BLACK.

c) OVER BLACK. TEXT IS SUPERIMPOSED:
*THE BOYS ARE TRAINED AS SOLDIERS AND FORCED TO KILL,
MAIM, RAPE, AND PILLAGE.*

FADE TO BLACK.

d) OVER BLACK. TEXT IS SUPERIMPOSED:
*THE GIRLS ARE FORCED TO SERVE AS LABORERS AND "CHILD-
WIVES" OF SOLDIERS.*

FADE TO BLACK.

(1 1/2) e) ADIEBO JULIET, A GENTLE AND BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN OF
16, SITS ON A FOAM MATTRESS ON THE CONCRETE FLOOR OF A
SMALL DINGY ROOM LIT BY A BARE LIGHT BULB HANGING FROM
THE CEILING.

Juliet tells of her captivity in the Lords Resistance
Army (LRA) where she served as a laborer carrying baggage
ad cooking for soldiers. When she escaped, she returned
to Soroti and discovered that her parents were missing.
She was rejected by her extended family because of her
service in the LRA. Lacking food and shelter, she
traveled to Mbale and hunger forced her to work as a
prostitute for a time.

Now, she has sponsor and she lives in a small room and
has food to eat. She is also able to attend school and
hopes to become a nurse. She explains that education is
everything in Uganda, and because she is going to school,
she is certain that her future will be successful.

5. INTERVIEW WITH A FORMER CHILD SOLDIER

(1/4) a) OVER BLACK. TEXT IS SUPERIMPOSED:
*IN UGANDA, MORE THAN FOUR MILLION CHILDREN LIVE IN
CONFLICT AREAS.*

FADE TO BLACK.

b) OVER BLACK. TEXT IS SUPERIMPOSED:
FEAR OF ABDUCTION AND REBEL ATTACKS HAVE FORCED MORE THAN ONE MILLION CHILDREN TO FLEE THEIR VILLAGES TO LIVE IN REFUGEE CAMPS.

FADE TO BLACK.

- (1) c) BOSCO (THE RUNNER FROM THE INTRO) SITS ON A CROWDED BUS TRAVELING TO GULU DISTRICT.

Over ambient sounds of travelers, Bosco explains that he hasn't been back to his home village since his grandmother, his last blood relative, died in January of 2008. Bosco talks about his life before being abducted by the LRA. He explains that his father was an attorney and his mother was a teacher, so education was very important in the household.

- (2) d) BOSCO SITS OUTSIDE A RUINED HUT IN AN ABANDONED VILLAGE IN GULU DISTRICT.

Bosco states that the abandoned hut is the site of his childhood home. He was left an orphan after his mother was slaughtered by the LRA as a consequence of his escape, and his father died of illness.

Bosco believes that education will help transform him from an outcast child-soldier to a person of value in the community. He shares his dreams and hopes for the future: to become an attorney and influence Ugandan policy regarding children. He states that he hopes to serve as an advocate for the thousands of forgotten and abandoned children in Uganda.

He explains that as a child-soldier, his education was obstructed, and he is now behind in his studies, but he is confident he can succeed if given the chance. He says this will only occur if someone will pay his school fees.

FADE TO BLACK.

- (1 1/2) 5. INTERVIEW WITH A MINISTER OF PARLIAMENT

a) TIMOTHY MBUTU, A MINISTER OF PARLIAMENT, SITS DRINKING TEA AT A TABLE IN AN UPPER-CLASS HOME.

Minister Mbutu speaks of the current state of affairs in

Uganda, of the growing crisis among war-affected children, and the need for literacy education and practical job skills training. He explains that education has stopped in many places in the North due to rebel attacks on schools, teachers, and students. He also claims that education is an important factor in helping former child-soldiers and other war-affected children to reintegrate into society and build positive futures.

MBUTU: Uganda's future rests in the hands of her children. If the children are not educated, but instead are left to fend for themselves on the streets and in the bush, then our future is not secure. Uganda is not secure.

(1/2)

FADE TO BLACK

7. CONCLUSION

a) OVER BLACK. TEXT IS SUPERIMPOSED:
FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT UGANDA'S WAR-AFFECTED CHILDREN, PLEASE VISIT WWW.CASUALTIES-OF-WAR.ORG.

The song "Life Is Hard In The Jungle" by Akena John Bosco plays in the background.