

Ingrid Sinclair, Bridget Pickering, and Wanjiru Kinyanjui. *Africa is a Woman's Name*. 2009. Spain, Africa. Shona with English subtitles. 52 minutes. Transparent Productions. Women Make Movies. \$250.00.

Africa is a Woman's Name is an engaging documentary about three heroic African women facing economic, social, and cultural challenges in this millennium. Each of the three vignettes focuses on one woman from the countries of Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Kenya, respectively. This collaborative short film brings together the talents of three well-known African women filmmakers: the Zimbabwean Ingrid Sinclair, best known for her excellent film *Flame* (1996), the first film to be made about Zimbabwe's struggle for independence and the women who fought and died for it; the South African Bridget Pickering, who has produced many critically acclaimed films, most notably *Hotel Rwanda* (2004), and directed the short film *Uno's World* (2001); and the Kenyan Wanjiru Kinyanjui, who has written for television and directed films in Germany (*Der Kampf um den heiligen Baum*, 1994; *Karfunkel*, 1991).

The documentary begins with Ingrid Sinclair's vignette of Amai Rosie, an unschooled day laborer who, because of Zimbabwe's acute economic crisis in recent years, has had to spend time in South Africa working as a domestic. She must leave her young son, Tino, with her married daughter in order to make enough money to send him to school. Amai is pragmatic and realistic. She recognizes that "knowledge is power" and regrets that she did not understand this when she was younger, but as a mature woman she is ready to make the sacrifice so that her children can have a better life in Zimbabwe (despite an inflation rate of 230 million percent). Her goal is to earn enough money to finish the house that she is building for the entire family: "When you own something, you feel good. . . . Women must be strong and independent."

The second story, directed by Bridget Pickering, focuses on Phuti Ragophala, an educated school principal working in the village of Limpopo, one of the poorest rural areas in South Africa. Ragophala has dedicated her life to the well-being of the school and the community, as well as to the businesses that support it. Since her nomination as director, the elementary school/ high school has won prizes as the best public service center in the entire country. Ragophala insists that in order for change to take place in her community, and indeed in Africa, "we must go the extra mile . . . for the kids so that they will grow up responsible people." In order to sustain the school, she created a network of enterprises that benefit the students and also the community, including raising chickens, making herbal soaps, and growing food. All strata of society—parents, students, and the larger community—are involved. Creating sustainable networks that benefit the entire community, Ragophala notes, "will break the chains of poverty. . . . One child can change everything."

The last story, directed by Wanjiru Kinyanjui, focuses on Njoki Ndung'u, a Kenyan lawyer and civil rights activist. Ndung'u has devoted her life to

empowering women in Kenya to fight for equality and against sexual violence. According to Ndung'u, before the enactment of Kenya's Sexual Offense Law, a woman was raped every thirty minutes. Sex offenders went unpunished and women were left to live with the shame of rape, often silenced by their families. Today, as one of eighteen women in the Kenyan Parliament, Ndung'u has fought for legal aid for women victims of sex crimes. She also founded "The Big Sister Project," which educates young girls, primarily in grade schools, to learn how to take care of themselves both physically and mentally. Her "3-4 Program" instructs girls in martial arts and self-defense and gives them practical vocabulary to say "no" to men. "I love my body, I own it, . . . I won't allow anyone to violate me. . . . I say 'no' to violence. . . . No, respect me! No, don't touch me!" are some of the slogans the girls are taught to chant in her education sessions, often led by rape survivors who have been, themselves, empowered through Ndung'u's programs. For Ndung'u there is enormous inequality in Kenya, with divisions along race, class, and ethnic lines. However, she states, the most severe inequality is gender: "It's all about power. . . . Women must use power to build."

This excellent documentary is an inspiration, demonstrating that African women across the continent are becoming empowered to take charge of their own lives and well-being. Despite great odds, women can overcome barriers of poverty, illiteracy, and lack of infrastructure to achieve amazing things that benefit not only themselves, but also their families and communities. As Ragophala notes, "men take on projects for their own self-promotion, women work for the good of the community." This film would be extremely useful in courses in women's studies, African development, African film, and cultural studies.

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