

accessible. Significantly, he has incorporated an activist component to his role as filmmaker by encouraging viewers to pass resolutions in support of the miners within trade unions, raise funds to support the families of the slain miners, and organize screening parties to raise awareness about the massacre.

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Roy T. Anderson, director. *Akwantu: The Journey*. 2012. 87 minutes. English with English subtitles. United States. Art 4 Reel Filmworks, LLC. \$23.99.

Akwantu: The Journey is a documentary that marks Roy T. Anderson's feature-length directorial debut, and tells the story of the Maroons of Accompong, in Jamaica. Anderson, a veteran stuntman in several box office Hollywood films, addresses the origins, history, and culture of Maroons with virtuosity and imagination, especially since this documentary marks the filmmaker's personal effort to discover his own roots (<http://akwantuthemovie.com/>). The film was made by Anderson's own production company, Art 4 Reel Filmworks, LLC, and was an official selection in the Africa in the Picture Film Festival (2012) and the Pan African film festival (FESPACO, 2013), and received the Special Jury Award in the Belize International Film Festival (2012).

From New Jersey in the United States, to Canada, Jamaica, and Ghana, and back to Jamaica, the filmmaker undertakes a personal journey in search of his ancestral origins, and takes the viewer along, as if giving glimpses of his family photo albums, personal travelogues, and testimonials. The filmmaker's voice-over narration gives emphasis to the feeling of openness and sharing as we encounter his home videos, birth certificates, conversations, reunions, and celebrations with family members. This personal dimension does not trivialize the historical and cultural significance and depth of the documentary, but actually adds a sense of connectivity with the camera, the man behind it, and the viewer, especially as these personal stories get to be told by Maroons themselves.

The Maroons of Accompong Town in modern-day Jamaica constitute a closed independent community with lineages traced back to escaped slaves from Ghana. Today the Maroons constitute a nation within a nation, and have their own governing laws. They are genealogically linked to Asante people and to Akwamu, the dominant Ghanaian coast state in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that also had a key role in the trade agreement that governed the flow of slaves between Africa and the Americas. Tracing the footsteps of the slaves, from the dungeon and the door of no return to slave ships and the New World, Anderson takes the

viewer step by step through the process of enslavement and resistance, as well as the spirit of defiance exemplified by the story of Captain Cudjoe and Queen Nanny of the Maroons, the national heroes of Jamaica and founders of Accompong Town.

The film opens with a dictionary definition of “Ma.roon (ma’roon)” as “escaped slave, or descendant of escaped slave,” and provides four more relevant definitions by the end: “Xaymaca (zye-my-ca): Land of wood and water (the name given to Jamaica by its original settlers, the Taino Indians);” “Okomfo Anokye (Ah-come-fu Oh-nochee): an Asante priest, statesman and lawgiver, co-founder of the Asante kingdom in West Africa”; “Obeah (o-be-ya): a form of spirit worship practiced in Jamaica with roots in West Africa, particularly among the Akan speaking peoples of Ghana”; and “Yankipong: From the Twi (Asante) word Onyankopong meaning ‘God the Creator.’” Dictionary definitions signal the objective approach of the documentary, with each one serving as a marker for its respective part in the journey covering a time period of about three hundred years and moving from continent to continent. Each part adds complex layers to the basic definition of the key word, tightening the connections of modern-day Maroons in Jamaica with the Asante kingdom in Ghana, West Africa, the Transatlantic slave trade, and resistance to the British in colonial Jamaica.

If layers of meaning invite subjective interpretations, a balance is conveyed with the deployment of interviews from scholars, maps, archival documents, stills, illustrations, and a creative 2D animated representation of the Maroons’ fierce resistance against the British. Anderson often moves in front of the camera to “walk in the footsteps of the ancestors” so as to enable them to own part of their history: to challenge “History,” in the postcolonial sense of giving voice to the voiceless.

Akwantu: The Journey critically addresses modern-day Jamaicans who do not know much about the Maroons, other than the stereotypical definition stemming from colonial times: they are different, darker in color than some other Jamaicans, and possess supernatural powers. The realm of spirit and the sacred is well integrated into the environment, as in the Old Town in Accompong, and the camera remains respectful of this harmony. The educational value of the documentary resides both in the historical analysis of Maroon origins and the presentation of the community’s cultural significance, as revealed in layers of meaning still present in modern Maroon society. Even the discussions of the “Kindah tree of one family” and of the “abeng” avoid the trap of reductionism, or of presenting difference as an exoticized attraction for touristic purposes in Jamaica. *Akwantu* succeeds in Anderson’s goal of undertaking a respectful journey in memory of the ancestors.

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