

A close-up photograph of a person's hand reaching upwards, with fingers slightly spread. The hand is positioned in the lower center of the frame. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a natural setting like a forest or a field. The lighting is natural, highlighting the texture of the skin.

Digging for Life

a short-film by João Queiroga

Press Kit

DIGGING FOR LIFE

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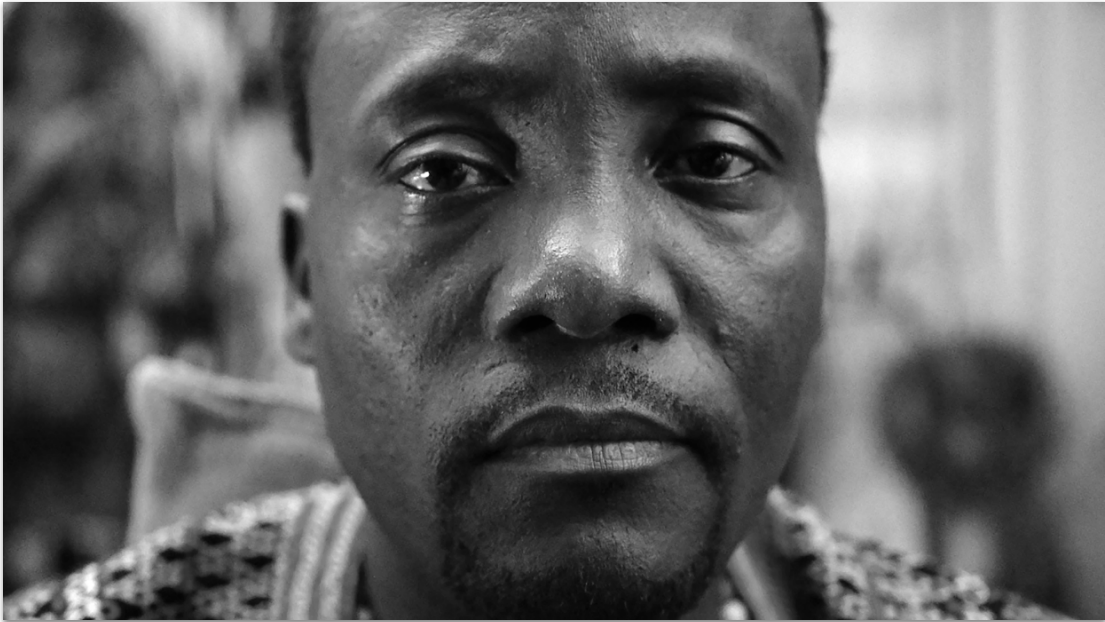
“You thought slavery didn't exist? What if I told you I was a slave?”

- Adiang Assuoe Thomas Germain

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Logline

Digging for Life tells the story of a Cameroonian man who finds himself trapped as a slave in the diamond fields of Angola.



Adiang Assuoe Thomas Germain, Producer/Protagonist

Film Genre: Documentary

Language: English

Duration: 14 minutes

Countries: Cameroon, US, Qatar, Portugal

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Treatment

Adiang Assuoe Thomas Germain is born in the city of rivers, Limbe, Cameroon. Soon after celebrating his 25th birthday, he embarks on a journey to fulfill his lifelong dream of a better life to live in South Africa, “the African El Dourado.”

Thomas starts his journey on the back of a truck and travels through the Congolese jungle to reach Gabon. For the first time, he encounters gorillas and pygmies, which to him appear as almost magical. Once he crosses the border into Congo he soon realizes there is a civil war taking place, which prevents him from hitch-hiking further.

As he searches for a way forward, he meets a “good Samaritan” who offers to assist him. Thomas first trusts this stranger, but he soon realizes he made “the worst decision of [his] life.” This stranger had made a deal to sell Thomas into a diamond operation in Angola.

Captured as a slave Thomas witnesses and faces unimaginable horrors. He is locked in a cage, beaten and called “macaco.” As he says, “our capturers are black like us, but they call us macaco [monkey].” While Thomas desires to escape he is paralyzed with fear.

Thomas’s rosy dreams of participation in a post-racial panacea in South Africa are quickly shattered by a new harsh reality. His dream of reaching “the African El Dourado” becomes a distant memory. After 4 years, he eventually succeeds in escaping the diamond fields, but the scars of his experience continue to haunt him to this day.

He, concludes his story, singing a song he learned as a young Cameroonian:

Demain il fera beau sur les chemins

Demain tous les oiseaux

chanteront sur les routes

Demain...

Tomorrow it will be a beautiful day

Tomorrow all the birds

will sing on the road

Tomorrow...

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

*Film Stills*Stills

(click on the title or scan the QR code)



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Film Stills



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Director's Statement

When Adiang Assuoe Thomas Germain first shared his journey as a slave-survivor with me, I was perplexed. I couldn't fathom that the person who I had come to call my friend had experienced such a dark path. Soon after his revelation to me, we decided to make a film together.

We channelled his trauma into an art project that we hope will give a voice to the many who remain enslaved and invisible. Tommy's experience as a black African contrasts sharply with my own lived experience. The contrast is sharpened when considering my Portuguese heritage, a heritage that planted the seeds of racism and oppression in Angola.

As a filmmaker, it was particularly important to me to collaboratively work with Tommy. It was crucial to bring him on board as a Producer to take ownership of his story and inherent film depiction. Thus, we combined my technical ability with his genuine and authentic desire to share his story with the world.

Ultimately, we believe that this story can be the lever for change. Cinematic arts can create actions, advocate ideals and promote human rights. As Tommy notes,

"It's time to tell the story, it's time to tell the world."



DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

João Queiroga

Director | Editor



João Queiroga is a Portuguese director, performer and educator. He holds a Master of Fine Arts in documentary media from Northwestern University's School of Communication. He is a Calouste Gulbenkian scholar, a Hoffman grantee, a Davis UWC scholar, and a Fulbright recipient. Additional experience includes assignments with Cinema/Chicago WGN-TV Chicago and Cannes Int'l Film Festival. As a filmmaker his work has screen internationally at Hot Docs, IDFA, BFI:Flare, DocLisboa and many others. His hybrid documentary film "Our Skin" was nominated for an Iris Award and won a Lili Award. João has served as Chair of the Post-Production Department at New York Film Academy, and is currently an Assistant Professor at Northwestern University in Doha, Qatar.

Work Sample

(Please click on the title or scan the QR code)

Director's Reel



CREW BIOGRAPHIES

Creative Personnel*Adiang Assuoe Thomas Germain***Main Character | Producer**

Adiang Assuoe Thomas Germain was born in Limbe, Cameroon. Thomas is the main character of the short documentary film *Digging For Life*. He is also credited as Producer. Thomas is producing the film in conjunction with a local and international team of filmmakers. He holds a Diploma in Journalism from New York Film Academy.

*Stanley Glover***Performer**

Stanley Glover is the recipient of a 2019 Princess Grace Award in Dance. He attended Philadelphia's University of the Arts where he graduated and earned a BFA in May 2016. He was a Top-20 contestant on Season 11 of the hit television show *So You Think You Can Dance* and has performed repertoire and trained under some of the best in the industry, including Sonya Tayeh, Sidra Bell, Robert Battle and Dwight Rhoden. He also performed as a principal dancer in the Las Vegas production of Cirque du Soleil's *Mystère*.

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

Creative Personnel*Kevin Gorey***Producer**

Kevin Gorey is an award-winning NYC-based documentary film producer. His work has screened internationally at Hot Docs, IDFA, BFI:Flare, DocLisboa, NewFest and many others. Additionally, his experience includes assignments with Consulates of the United Kingdom and South Africa. Within these organizations, he fostered foreign direct investment and international trade development. Kevin holds an MBA in Finance, Marketing and Analytics from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management and a BA in Economics and International Relations from DePaul University in Chicago.

*Pochi Tamba Nsoh***Consulting Producer**

Pochi Tamba Nsoh is a journalist with Cameroon Radio and Television, where she serves as producer and presenter. Nsoh is also the founder of Network of African Youths for Development (NAYD) that provides over 80,000 young people with opportunities and resources. She holds a Diploma in Documentary Media from New York Film Academy.

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

Creative Personnel*Jesseca Ynez Simmons***Producer | Cinematographer**

Jesseca Ynez Simmons is an award-winning cinematographer and documentary filmmaker. She has been recognized by the American Society of Cinematographers and was a Southern Exposure Film Fellow in Birmingham, AL. Her work has been seen on National Geographic, IDFA, HotDocs, Chicago Int'l Film Festival, DocLisboa, Sidewalk Film Festival and many others. Jesseca received her BA in Politics from the University of California, Santa Cruz and an MFA in Documentary Media from Northwestern University. Jesseca is currently a Professor at the University of Dayton.

*Laurent Youmndingouetmoun***Aerial Cinematographer**

Laurent Youmndingouetmoun is a Cameroonian cinematographer based in Christchurch, New Zealand. With a Computer Programmer background, Youmndingouetmoun has a unique skillset. He combines his ease with technology with his love for visual storytelling. Beyond collaborating with a vast list of clients, his directorial work has screened internationally and recently won the “Best Landscape” category award at the US Drove Festival, Oklahoma City, USA.

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

Creative Personnel*Collin Susich***Sound**

Collin Susich is an award-winning audio engineer and musician specialising in post production sound. Collin's interest in film has lead him to work on genres ranging from fiction, experimental video art to feature length documentaries. Collin has been a musician for 16 years and this experience has greatly informed his approach to capturing quality sound. Collin is a graduate of the Audio Engineering and Recording program at the Digital Institute of Recording Arts.

*Nur Munawarah***Assistant Editor**

Nur Munawarah is a Singaporean filmmaker and photographer. She obtained a Diploma in Screen Media from Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts in Singapore and is currently pursuing her Bachelor of Fine Arts at Northwestern University. She has been the recipient of several awards, including the Singapore Photographers 2019 Award, Singapore in the World Photographic Cup 2020 and won the International Photography Competition 2019 held in New York.

CREW BIOGRAPHIES

Creative Personnel*Nevo Shinaar***Consulting Producer**

Nevo Shinaar is an Israeli-born creative producer and multimedia artist based in Chicago. As a producer, his award winning films played at film festivals including Sundance, SXSW, AFI Docs and Palm Springs, showcased on POV PBS and the NY Times, and supported by Tribeca Film Institute and Kartemquin Films. He is a founding member of the award-winning SITE collective, and of Wolf + Me Films. Nevo holds an MFA from Northwestern University in Documentary Media and is a part of Free Spirit Media.

*Penjo Baba***Consulting Producer**

Penjo Baba is a Cameroonian filmmaker based in Bamenda, Cameroon. He is the founder and artistic director of Penjo Entertainment. His mission is to improve the lives of those in need in the local communities through the power of art and filmmaking. He has had several assignments within BBC World News, CNN: CNN Inside Africa fixer 2015, World View Participant Cameroon, CRTV: Monday Show, Hello, CRTV Morning Safari, Miss West Africa Cameroon 2011, CRTV National Radio News, Satellite FM Radio, Yaounde, Canal2 International - Ma Maison Ciné.

CREDITS

Featuring

Adiang Assuoe Thomas Germain
Stanley Glover

Director & Producer

João Queiroga

Producer

Adiang Assuoe Thomas Germain
Jesseca Ynez Simmons
Kevin Patrick Gorey

Consulting Producer

Pochi Tamba Nsoh
Nevo Shinaar
Penjo Baba

Director of Photography

Jesseca Ynez Simmons

Additional Photography

João Queiroga
Collin Susich

Aerial Cinematography

Laurent Youmndingouetmoun

Sound

Kevin Patrick Gorey
Collin Susich

Post-Production Sound

Alex Inglizian

Music

Lawn Games

CREDITS

Editor

João Queiroga

Assistant Editor

Nur Munawarah

Archival Footage

Library of Congress

Special Thanks*(alphabetical order)*

Alberto Gomes

Aljawahra Al-Adba

Anas Khalaf

Ashely Brandon

Calum Walter

Clare McDonough

Dana Atrach

Ines Summer

Greg Lowe

JP Sniadecki

Kyle Henry

Mike Attie

Rafie Drencheva

Rana Kazkaz

Reem Al-Ahmad

Seoul

Shuhan Fan

Nouf Al-Sulaiti

Yassine Ouahrani

Wondja Blanche

FILM MATERIALS

Digging for Life

Website

(click on the title or scan the QR code)



Teaser

(click on the title or scan the QR code)





Digging for Life

