



AFRICA UNITED (Cert 12A)

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Overview: Three young people set off from Rwanda in an attempt to make it to the 2010 World Cup three thousand miles away in Johannesburg. They have many adventures en route, directly experiencing some of Africa's serious problems but also its joys.

Director: Debs Gardner-Paterson

Producers: Footprint Films and Link Media in association with Out of Africa Entertainment for Pathé.

Length: 88 minutes.

Cautions: contains some violence and disturbing issues.

THE FILM

Rwandan schoolboy Fabrice (Roger Nsengiyumva) is an accomplished footballer. A coach encourages him to go for a trial at the National Stadium which could lead to participation in FIFA's 2010 World Cup opening ceremony in South Africa. His friend Dudu (Eriya Ndayambaje) acting as his 'manager' and Dudu's sister Beatrice (Sanyu Joanita Kintu persuade Fabrice to travel to the trials. But by catching the wrong bus, they erroneously end up at the National Stadium in the Congo Democratic Republic. There they are in danger of being recruited as child soldiers but for the intervention of another boy, Foreman George (Yves Dusenge) who joins them. Rather than return to Rwanda, they resolve to make the full journey to South Africa. Along the way, the group narrowly avoid theft and guerrilla threats but are also befriended and cared for in times of need. Fabrice takes part in the opening ceremony watched by Dudu despite illness.

FIRST REACTIONS

- At first, the film may remind us of other films dealing with incredible journeys. Can any of the group think of some titles?
- The kind of real-life issues *Africa United* raises make it much more than just a road movie. What large-scale problems does Africa have in the film that by and large we don't?
- What do you think motivates each of these children to set out on such a long journey? How street-wise are they? Is it best that they can't foresee all the potential dangers they may encounter?
- Dudu's story-telling helps to keep them all going. How? Which tales give you hope and inspiration to carry on?

INTERACTIONS

- Rhidian Brook, who wrote the screenplay, has previously been responsible for several books and television programmes which examine what faith consists of. What kind of faith do we see at work in *Africa United*?
- Are there any bad people in this film or are they all just victims of very difficult circumstances who are trying to survive one way or another? Where, if at all, do you see evil at work?
- **Read Joshua chapters 2 and 6.** Rahab was a prostitute who protected a group of Israelite spies. She may have been acting mainly to save her own skin, but Rahab was also clearly attracted to the faith of these men. In the film, Celeste is a young sex worker who helps the children escape when

they are in danger. In the New Testament we learn that Rahab was one of Jesus' ancestors (Matthew 1) and the Letter to the Hebrews (11.31) declares that she was saved by her faith. Do you feel the same about Celeste? What is it about her that makes it possible to call her a good person, a child of God?

- The children's journey covers more than the 3,000 miles of physical distance between Rwanda and South Africa. It is also a journey of discovery through seven countries which have grappled with civil war, desperate poverty, HIV, and the squandering of childhood. How do our characters react to what they see? Are they mature enough to recognise why these things are happening?
- For us Rwanda might seem entirely a place of previous chaos and genocide. Yet Fabrice, for example, comes from a comfortably well off family with many of the accessories (like a mobile phone) we associate with western society. How has your image of Africa in general been affected by watching this film?
- **Read Hebrews 11.** This passage describes faith as the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen, the assurance about things we cannot see as yet but which truly exist. The New Testament's idea of faith is to trust in God. The children in *Africa United* have a belief that Johannesburg exists although they have never seen it before. They also have faith in the way to get there and what it will be like once they reach their destination. What are the differences between their hope and the faith of Christians? And what are the similarities?

SCENE TO DISCUSS

A disheartened Fabrice exclaims 'All this fuss about kicking a ball in the air' to which Dudu replies that 'It is not about you, it's not about me, it's about us. We're a team: Africa United.'

- How significant is it that Dudu makes this statement from his hospital bed surrounded by his companions? Does it have a greater impact by it being a sick child who gives reassurance to others? What parallels does it have with Jesus on the cross, apparently weak and powerless and yet offering hope?
- How does this scene change the film's overarching them? Is it really about winning a place in a football squad or more to do with Africa uniting to win victory over a fist of other enemies (war, poverty, epidemics)?

OTHER ANGLES TO TALK ABOUT

Is *Africa United* anything more than a feel-good movie? If so, how does it differ? Is there an element of fable about the story, one which may never have happened in real life but nevertheless is inspirational?

Stephen Brown is an Anglican priest, group trainer and internationally known authority on feature films. He regularly broadcasts, teaches and writes for the Church Times and others about films.

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