

LOST TONGUE

Rare South African, human rights - cultural film hits the international
scene...

PRESS KIT / STATEMENT

SPRING 2016 RELEASE

Mvura Ya Afrika (MYA) Productions

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After three years, South Africa-based Mvura Ya Afrika (MYA) Productions presents the debut of feature length documentary, *Lost Tongue*. The story is one of hope and revival of the ancient and endangered N!uu language of a marginalized indigenous #Khomani San people in the Kalahari.

The film captures the journey of Helena Steenkamp, a #Khomani San woman embarking on a mission to restore her people's language - identity. A cultural and spiritual journey reveals the battle through time in the language going extinct. Today, the fight continues with new conflicts against time with the number of surviving people who can speak the language diminish. Now, arriving at a pivotal juncture, the community must band together and step up their support before the younger Khomani San generations lose the crux of their identity forever.

Funded by MYA Productions and non-profit outfit Entrepreneurship Africa (EA), *Lost Tongue* is the collaborative vision of coming of age director, Davison Mudzingwa and shot by Themba Vilakazi, one of South Africa's foremost talents in cinematography. Working to bring the picture to the world's screen are producers, Francis Yannicq of South Africa and U.S. based MeSun Barnett.

Mudzingwa says *Lost Tongue* is the inspiration of a previous directorial short film, *Bush Trail* from 2012, premiered at the Tri-continental International Film Festival in Johannesburg. Mudzingwa: "When we filmed *Bush Trail* in Kalahari in the #Khomani San community, we were surprised that the local people did not speak their language or followed their traditional culture. Out of interest, we began to investigate and a new, exciting and surprising journey for *Lost Tongue* began."



According to the producers, Lost Tongue is an “urgently important human rights and cultural project through which global audiences will experience remnants of a discriminatory history still alive today.” Barnett notes, “Never before has the world been this close to universal equality. However, there remains a great deal of progress to be met. It is exactly this that propels our earnest endeavor to share this authentic story to both an unknowing, and a more conscious public.” Hweshe cites, “the objective was not only to make a beautiful film; but, it was to use it as a vehicle of change within a marginalized #Khomani San community with power to make a real impact.”

Hweshe introduces a project engendered from the film: “We are excited about the Lost Tongue Legacy Project, a social impact programme in which we aim to form partners for the construction of a multimedia centre at the heart of the #Khomani San community. “The centre will become a symbol of hope for the hopeless youth. Through film, photography and multimedia classes youth will tell their own unique stories as professionals in the mediums mentioned come together from all over the world to work with local staff to teach students the skills to succeed, whilst providing the proper support needed. “Among other facilities, we would want the centre to have a facility for the recording of the language as well as a library and recreational spots.” Calling on local and international partners to assist in their endeavor, he says the centre will also cater for other surrounding and equally disadvantaged communities. The film is projected to hit the international festival circuit in 2016. The Legacy Project aims for a 2017 construction commencement.



U.S. PRODUCER: MESUN BARNETT

Born in the Philippines, and raised in both: South Korea, and The United States; MeSun advocates exploration in culture, worlds created in story, and the magical impact art cultivates. She views art as a means to captivate, challenge, teach... and free.

For over a decade, the desire to share story drove MeSun to earn a BA in Film from Columbia College Chicago and expand her skills on projects as Dark Knight Rises, Wanted, and Transformers 3. Later, she went on to acquire a new perspective in the entertainment industry whilst working at Electus International. There, she learned from a team of leaders as, Head of Post Production, VP of International Sales, and various Development Managers. Soon after, MeSun bridged her production experience with her administrative influences progressing into an Assistant Director for the commercial world, and 2ndAssistant Director for Def Jam's Fall Out Boy.

Today, MeSun believes that humility to question what she knows and understands what she does not both support her passion and ability to produce - create. She utilizes this mindset as it evolves whilst reminding herself that, "problem solving is an art of it's own. That is what producing is... so, today I paint!"

S.A. PRODUCER: FRANCIS YANNICQ HWESHE

Zimbabwe native, Francis studied communication and journalism at Christian College of Southern Africa and filmmaking at SAE Institute, both studies carried out in Zimbabwe and South Africa, respectively.

Lost Tongue is his debut feature film as a producer. He has recently finished another feature length documentary film What's The Frack? and has a slate of projects in the pipeline.

Francis co-owns Mvura Ya Afrika (MYA) Productions, the producer of Lost Tongue and What's The Frack? as well as being a director at Entrepreneurship Africa, a non-profit organization dedicated to driving entrepreneurship in Africa.



DIRECTOR:

DAVISON MUDZINGWA

Davison Mudzingwa is a multi-gifted storyteller, whose work spans across international radio, newspapers and digital media outlets. Lost Tongue is his debut feature documentary as a director. His second feature documentary What's The Frack? is set for release in early 2016.

The coming-of-age director's other upcoming and striking feature documentaries include Bitter Sugar, War Troupes, Prof, Swaziland Through My Lenses set for release in 2016. In 2012, his debut short film as a director The Roaring Jets screened at the Lesotho Film Festival. His other short film Bush Trail was screened at the Tri Continental Film Festival and Mpumalanga Film Festival. Davison has been a journalist for 12 years. He has worked in radio, video, print and online media platforms.

Radio is what incited his visual approach of storytelling. He has worked with international media such as IPSTV, REAL NEWS NETWORK TV, Radio Netherlands, Deutsche Welle, Inter Press Services (IPS) and FSRN. He is also the founder of Entrepreneurship Africa, an organization dedicated to advancing entrepreneurship in Africa and beyond.

Currently, a film editor for a non-profit organization with satellite offices around the world, Davison works with a dedicated team to expose human rights abuse. Through IPSTV and REAL NEWS NETWORK TV, Davison has covered several issues across Southern Africa.

Film, he believes, is what combines all the other forms of communication. His aim is to tell those stories that are often taken for granted and those far from the public eye.

In 2014 Davison was selected by Germany institute Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) as one of the 12 policy analysts from the Southern Hemisphere to attend United Nations sessions in New York.

Though a resident of South Africa, Davison's story telling ability has been honoured in his birth country of Zimbabwe where his poems have been included in an anthology for studying in higher education at Advanced Level.



DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

THEMBA VILAKAZI

He is a film producer, writer, journalist and entrepreneur. Themba Vilakazi initially trained as a photographer in Johannesburg. After his training and apprenticeship with the Alf Kumalo Museum and Photographic School, he worked with mainstream newspapers such as City Press and Dutch Press Agency. His photographic work has exhibited and published in prestigious books, the latest being 'I Praise The Dance'. In between his journalistic work, he went on to study film making at Big Fish School of Digital Filmmaking in Cape Town. After graduation, he co-founded Mvura Ya Afrika (MYA) Productions Pty Ltd where he is the principal cinematographer and photographer.

While fully dedicated to MYA Productions, Themba is also worked as a cameraman for China Central Television (CCTV) covering the South Africa beat. Some of the works to his credit while at Big Fish School of Digital Filmmaking include The 'Rolling Jets', which screened at the Lesotho Film Festival and 'Bush Trail', which showcased at the Tri Continental Film Festival and the Mpumalanga Film Festival. In 2013, he was selected as one of the judges at the Durban International Film Festival. Themba has also tutored film workshops at Big Fish film School in Cape Town and Inkanyiso Organization based in Johannesburg.

COMING SOON

LOST TONGUE, FEATURE DOCUMENTARY

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