

TELLURIDE

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Nascent

Directed by: Lindsay Branham & Jon Kasbe
2015 Central African Republic | Duration: 7 minutes

Film Summary

Nascent is proof of how short films can impart big messages. It's a simple premise: two children, a Christian boy and a Muslim girl, give their perspectives on growing up in the divided and desperately poor Central African Republic. Despite differences in their upbringings and religious backgrounds, the pair shares a hopeful vision of peace that would allow them to be friends. This could have been an awkward film or, worse, a treacly one. But in the hands of director Lindsay Branham, the result is a thoughtful and powerful documentary that asks the simple question: Why can't we all just get along?

Teachers: *This film can support work in global studies, social studies, or peace studies classes covering central Africa or civil wars. It would be especially effective as part of anti-bias education to address Islamophobia.*

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Filmmaker Interview: Lindsay Branham



"I hope people will think deeply about who in their lives they maybe misunderstand or have considered an enemy. Maybe, you both have the same fears and hopes."

- **Lindsay Branham** | Director

Tell us a little about yourself, Lindsay.

Where did you grow up? I moved almost every year growing up. Denver, Laguna Beach, San Francisco, Lake Tahoe, Palm Springs, Santa Barbara, Stinson Beach, Los Angeles, and of course, beloved Telluride, Colorado.

What is your favorite color? Sage green—the softest, dusty green—like sagebrush in the desert.

What is your favorite food? Mexican—anytime, anywhere.

What is your favorite movie? *Beasts of the Southern Wild*.

If you could have any super power, what would it be? To give people the kind of vision that lets them see how beautiful they are, and from that place of wholeness, see the world with love and not division of any kind.

What is one thing you are afraid of? Not having enough coffee. No seriously, I'm scared of how human beings can hurt each other.

Q: Why did you become a filmmaker and how did you get started?

A: I studied broadcast journalism in college and was quickly enraptured by the potency of the visual medium. A vessel. And what you choose to focus this lens on could become a window to the world. I moved to Africa when I was 21 and have spent about half of the last 10 years there, telling stories, working on projects, and learning infinitely more than I have ever given.

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Q: How did you meet Bintou and Gaus and why did this story appeal to you?

A: I went to Central African Republic (CAR) with the intention to unravel the complexity of the war through poetry—and for the prose to be written by children. I interviewed 40 children before I found Bintou and Gaus. Their personalities, candidness, the way they expressed themselves and desire to participate in the project captivated me. They each brought something very different and unique to the film and their mysterious conversation that unfolds through the project culminates in a very special surprise.

Q: When editing the film, was there anything you wished you could have included in the final cut?

A: I wish I could have included the entire conversation between Bintou and Gaus, unedited. To watch them discuss the state of their country, religious conflict, the experience of being a child in the CAR at that time was breathtaking.

Q: When you made this film, did you have a specific audience in mind?

A: Yes—people like you! I made this film with the intention that people that live far away from CAR would find an entry point to experience Bintou and Gaus' interior and exterior worlds—whether through the visuals or the story, I wanted the film to unfold the war for people without alienating them.

Q: Is there an action you hope people are inspired to take after seeing this film?

A: I hope people will think deeply about who in their lives they maybe misunderstand or have considered an enemy. Maybe, you both have the same fears and hopes. Maybe, you have more in common than you know. If Bintou and Gaus could relate, even though they are on opposite sides of a civil war, I have hope for all of us.

Q: What are some of the challenges you encountered in the making of this film?

A: Making a film in two weeks in a very unpredictable place was extremely challenging. We were limited in how many hours a day we could film due to the security situation, and we had to be extremely careful with Bintou and Gaus' time and participation. CAR is a long way from NYC. We had one shot, and it had to be great.

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Q: What are the major similarities and differences you have noticed between kids in the Central African Republic and kids in the United States?

A: All kids want to become the best they can be. All kids want to have friends, play, explore, and reach their potential. Kids in CAR often do not get those opportunities.

Q: Are you still in touch with Bintou and Gaus? If so, can you give us an update on their lives?

A: Yes! They are both doing really well. In school, safe and sound. I will see them again in July and plan to show them the final cut of Nascent since they haven't seen it yet!

Q: Why did you decide to include this film in Mountainfilm for Students?

A: I think you are the future, and if this story can help inspire you to be someone who brings peace into the world, then we are building a better tomorrow for everyone.

Q: What's the next big adventure or film project on the horizon for you?

A: I am actually going back to Central African Republic in August 2016 to do a new film. This one is based on the life of a Catholic priest who risked his life to protect and rescue 1,500 Muslims from imminent death during the height of the civil war. This film is being created to screen all over CAR—and inspire people to be peacemakers right at home in their own communities.

Q: What is one piece of advice you can give students that you wish someone had shared with you?

A: If you choose to live your life with passion, conviction and intention, it will not be easy. You will feel lost at some point, you will feel discouraged, and you will feel confused. But stay the course. Don't give up. The world needs your energy, ideas and heart. You are bright and beautiful.

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Tags

Anti-bias Education

Central African Republic

Christian-Muslim Conflict

Conflict Resolution

Identity Development

Peace Studies

Religious Conflict

Social Identity

War

Pre-screening Activity

Before screening the film give each student a large sheet of paper. Without putting names on their papers, ask them to generate a list of every group they can think of that, if they were speaking about the group they could use the pronouns “us” or “we” in their sentences. Groups might include things like racial, religious, ethnic, national or geographic identities, age, gender, clubs or teams, interested or hobbies (e.g., video gamers, Harry Potty fans, skaters, etc.) family status (e.g., brother, daughter of a single mom, etc.) and of course, school affiliation or class membership.

After giving them several minutes to make the list, let everyone post their list on the walls of your classroom. Then do a walkabout during which the students look at everyone’s lists and place check marks on every item they share.

When everyone has had a chance to look at every list, invite the class to reflect on what they have in common. Everyone will have at least one thing in common with others in the class, and some will have a lot in common. Note that they likely have things in common even with people who aren’t friends. Also note that around the world there are conflicts based on people dividing into “us” and “them.” Invite students to think about which differences tend to draw the most attention and why we emphasize those differences when it’s clear that we all have things in common.

Introducing the Film

1. Ask students what they already know about the Central African Republic. Fill in any significant gaps about the location of the nation and its modern history, including its role in regional conflicts centered in bordering countries like Sudan and Chad.

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2. If students aren't already familiar with documentary films, review the characteristics that differentiate documentary from other genres.
3. Give students an assignment for viewing. Be sure they know why you are sharing with them this particular film and how it connects to other work they are doing or topics they are studying.



Discussion Question Categories

General/Open Prompts

1. What are the main messages of this film? Do you agree, disagree or have more questions before you decide?
2. Name one thing you saw in the film that inspired you, one thing that made you mad or sad, and one thing you want to know more about.
3. Imagine going home and telling a friend or family member about this film. What would you say?
4. What did you learn from this film about (fill in curriculum connection) ?
5. If you could ask Gaus or Bintou one question, what would you ask? Why is that question interesting or important to you?
6. What's one lesson from this film that you wish everyone in your family or community knew? What do you think would change if everyone knew it?

Exploring Self

1. Did you see anything in the film that made an especially strong impression on you? What was it about that moment that moved you?
2. In what ways are Bintou and Gaus like you or someone you know? In what ways are they different?
3. What life lessons can be learned from this story? How can you apply those lessons of the film to your own life?
4. Both Gaus and Bintou witnessed attacks on their home and family. What do you think you would feel if you experienced what they did? What could you do with those feelings besides taking revenge or going to war?

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Exploring the World

1. What did you learn from the film about what Gaus and Bintou have in common with each other?
2. What do you think Americans can learn from Bintou and Gaus about relations between Christians and Muslims?
3. Gaus says that, "Before this war, we lived with Muslims in peace." Bintou adds, "We used to live together with the Christians without a problem." Yet, they are being encouraged to see people from another religion as so "other" that they are engaging in war over the differences. Which groups does your community construct as "other"? How does this construction influence the way you see people who seem not to be like you? How does the construction of "otherness" relate to the willingness to go to war?

Exploring Filmmaking

1. What questions do you think the filmmakers were trying to answer? How do you know?
2. In one word, how did the film make you feel? What techniques did the filmmakers use to make you feel that way?
3. How did the filmmakers use editing to make the point that the children have a lot in common?
4. Are there any important perspectives that are missing in the film? If so, what/who would you have added and why?

Exploring Social Issues

1. The film ends with a question: "Will this war stop?" What do you think it will take to end wars like the one in the Central African Republic?
2. Bintou asks, "Do I make you feel scared?" Gaus says he isn't afraid. They refuse to see each other as enemies. Does that make them heroes? Would someone in your community who befriended and "outsider" be considered a hero?
3. Gaus says, "I want the country to find peace so we can all move forward." He seems to understand that peace doesn't just happen; we have to "find" it. In your view, who is—or should be—engaged in the search?

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4. Are peace-seeking actions generally valued or not valued? How about engaging in conflict? What's your evidence?
5. Bintou and Gaus want to feel safe. In your view, is it possible to achieve that goal by continuing the conflict?

Sense of Wonder

1. What is it about seeing the world through a child's eyes that can be especially powerful?
2. Imagine a world at peace. What does it feel like? What possibilities open up when there are not threats of attack?

Extensions



Watch

The Music of a War Child | Emmanuel Jal, TED

https://www.ted.com/talks/emmanuel_jal_the_music_of_a_war_child?language=en

What's It Like to go to School in a Refugee Camp? | BBC

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/31895371>

Gua Africa: Education is the Root | Gua Africa, YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_iL_ZkCMaM



Read

The Central African Republic's Forgotten Crisis | Nathalie Baptiste, The Nation

<https://www.thenation.com/article/central-african-republics-forgotten-crisis/>

Central African Republic Profile Timeline | BBC News

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13150044>

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Do

Lesson: What Does It Mean to be a Refugee? | Benedetta Berti & Evelien Borgman, TEDEd

<http://ed.ted.com/lessons/what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-refugee-benedetta-berti-and-evelien-borgman - watch>

Explore the Global Conflict Tracker | Council on Foreign Relations

<http://www.cfr.org/global/global-conflict-tracker/p32137 - !/>

Listen to the podcast "Update: New Baboon" (mild language) | Radiolab

<http://www.radiolab.org/story/update-new-baboon/>



Book Recommendations (NF: Nonfiction, F: Fiction)

NF | Grades 9–12

A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier, by Ishmael Beah

<https://www.amazon.com/Long-Way-Gone-Memoirs-Soldier/dp/0374531269>

F | Grades 9–12

Girl at War, by Sara Novic

<https://www.amazon.com/Girl-at-War-Sara-Novic/dp/0812996348>