



JAZZ IN WAKANDA

A FILM BY DJAKA SQUARE

STARRING DJAKA SQUARE | JAZZ HARDRICT | SYDNEY MORTON | ZAINAB JAH
 CINEMATOGRAPHY BY KALIYA WARREN
 PRODUCED BY DJAKA SQUARE & AHMED BARBARY
 MUSIC BY BADIE



AWARDS/RECOGNITION

2019 Urban World Film Festival
2019 NiteHawk Short Film Festival
2019 New York African Film Festival
2019 Da Bounce Urban Film Festival (Amsterdam)
2019 Harlem International Film Festival
2019 Ridgefield Independent Film Festival
2019 Black Muslim Girl Film Festival - Award for Best Narrative Short Film

LOGLINE

An otherwise uneventful day for Julie takes a more serious turn when her daughter, Jazz, starts to ask profound questions about slavery, and what she's learned at school.

SYNOPSIS (short)

Julie, French & African immigrant, and her daughter Jazz, 7, are on their way to see the Greek tragedy "Antigone." As they stop by to get a milkshake, the cashier points out Julie's slight accent. The comment not only causes discomfort to both mother and daughter but triggers a much deeper conversation around Jazz's recent uncovering: slavery.

SYNOPSIS (long)

Julie, French & African immigrant, and her daughter Jazz, 7, are on their way to see the Greek tragedy "Antigone." As they stop by to get a milkshake, the cashier points out Julie's slight accent. The comment not only causes discomfort to both mother and daughter but triggers a much deeper conversation around Jazz's recent uncovering: slavery.

Throughout the film, like a bedtime story, Julie narrates the tale of a young African boy. Later in the film, we find out that the boy is actually Julie's dad, who ran away from his country, a West African dictatorship, at a very early age. When she chooses to open up to her daughter about ancestry - educating and nurturing - Julie removes the conflict and brings a bit of peace to her heart.

DIRECTOR'S BIO (short)

From African & French descent, born in Paris, Djaka Souare is an actress who started her career in theater at a young age before transitioning to Film & TV. Djaka just directed her first short film "Jazz in Wakanda", selected at many festivals like Urban World, Harlem FF & NY African FF. She recently starred in 2019 TriBeCa FF Founders Award winner Phillip Youmans' short film "Nairobi", produced by Solange Knowles for her platform Saint-Heron. Overseeing projects from financing to casting, Djaka worked at Goldcrest & Saboteur in both documentary & narrative films for three years. She was a producer on the Sebastian Junger & Nick Quested National Geographic documentary "Hell on Earth" that premiered at TriBeCa in 2017 & received a DuPont Award; and on "I want my MTV", that opened at TriBeCa in 2019. Fierce human's rights advocate, fighting for representation of minorities & the African diaspora across all media, Djaka has several projects in development - docs, narratives & TV series - all celebrating diverse voices and multi-dimensional characters.

DIRECTOR'S BIO (long)

Djaka Souare was born and raised in Paris, France, to a French Mother and a West African Father. She starts performing, acting, singing and dancing at the age of eight. At 17, under the direction of [Claudia](#)

[Stavinsky](#), she gets cast as the witty Anita in West Side Story at the famous [Chatelet Theater](#). Shortly after, she spends a year immersed at the Performing Arts Academy of Skyline High near San Francisco, where she perfects her English. Back in Paris, she pursues her training, studies Stanislavski, and joins the Paris Musical Theater Academy. She works in TV, commercials, models, and performs in French festivals.

At the age of 23, Djaka writes her first play: "What do girls talk about?", a comedy about two roommates stuck in their house on Valentine's night - that she tours in France, Belgium and Hong Kong. Represented by CineArt then Artmedia, she gets cast in French independent films, but returns to Hong Kong where she performs non-stop for about two years. Graduate of the ISVP Program at [Broadway Dance Center](#), Djaka is selected to choreograph Beyonce's "Who run the world" for the [2015 NYC Dance Parade](#). She performs in a [Pascal Rambert](#) play at La Mama, plays Helena in [New Saloon "Three Translations of uncle Vanya"](#) at The Invisible Dog, and is part of [Classical Theater of Harlem](#) "Romeo 'N Juliet" in 2014 and "The Tempest" in 2015.

From 2015 to 2019, Djaka becomes part of [Goldcrest Post](#) Production family, working across both documentary and narrative films, overseeing projects from financing to casting with financiers, producers, writers and directors. Djaka was a producer on [Sebastian Junger & Nick Quested](#) National Geographic feature film: "[Hell On Earth: the fall of Syria and the rise of Isis](#)". The documentary premiered at TriBeCa Film Festival 2017 and received a DuPont Award. She was also a producer on the upcoming "I want my MTV" documentary premiering at the 2019 TriBeCa FF. Djaka still produces for [Saboteur](#), Goldcrest' sister company.

In 2018, Djaka starred in 2019 TriBeCa FF Founders Award winner [Philip Youmans](#) short "Nairobi", for Solange Knowles' platform [Saint Heron](#), in "Words", a love story by [Amhalise Morgan](#) featuring [Nicholas Pinnock](#) and in "[Z-born](#)" by [Shaan Couture](#) for the [2018 Women Weekend Film Challenge](#).

Fierce human's rights advocate, fighting for representation of minorities and the African diaspora across all media, advocate for equity and inclusion for women in the entertainment industry, Djaka just wrote & directed her first short film - composed of 70% women crew & cast: "Jazz in Wakanda", a "thought-provoking and powerful story about race and identity." So far, the film has been selected at 2019 Urban World, NiteHawk Short Film Festival, New York African Film Festival, Harlem International Film Festival, Ridgfield Independent Film Festival, Da Bounce Urban Film Festival (Amsterdam) and awarded Best Narrative Short Film at Black Muslim Girl Film Festival.

Djaka has several projects in development, including, amongst others, a narrative written by actress of color Yolonda Ross in her directorial debut, a documentary about people with albinism, and a TV series set in New Orleans featuring multi cultures and multi languages - all projects shedding a light on the experience of diverse and mixed identities, all celebrating underrepresented voices. Djaka is also writing her father's life story, Guinean immigrant who escaped his country in the 1970s, lived in Paris, and ended up working as an actor in Los Angeles.

DIRECTOR' S STATEMENT

I was born and raised in Paris to a French white Mother and a West African Father, who raised me with old studio movies. My father was an actor, I grew up admiring him, going on set, cherishing this world

of Cinema. Being from African descent, I always longed to tell the stories of the African diaspora - I never saw any. My main interests lie within humanity, within diverse and female voices, shedding the light on the experience of mixed identities. I have French & American citizenship. I speak French, English, Spanish, bits of Italian and Chinese. My African ancestors were slaves. But not in America. I am an Immigrant. I am a proud citizen of the world.

As it feels that a part of the world wants us to focus on our differences, my film is about embracing one another, about facing our ancestry, about being complete, even when coming from diverse cultures. It is a love letter to mothers, to fathers, to daughters and to never putting anyone in a box. I chose Harlem because I wanted to emphasize the positive aspect of this multi-cultural neighborhood and the beauty of its residents, part of what I call "the real New York".

Having always been a fierce women's rights advocate, I was very affected and related immediately to recent women's testimonies regarding sexual abuse and gender discrimination. Within the recent political climate in the US, and even with hopeful movements like #MeToo and Time's Up making advancement by strides, finally witnessing women coming together like sisters in arms, massively speaking up about the constant injustices made to their gender filled me with joy and hope. Most of all, it ignited a voice that I thought couldn't be as loud as it was longing to be: my own.

Naturally, instinctively, as my voice came out, rising, I used the art form I knew best: Cinema, took my pen and wrote Jazz in Wakanda. I quickly focused my boiling energy on what seemed unachievable at the time: directing the film. But not only. I produced it, starred in it, and - despite screams and shrieks from all my friends in the industry - included my 8-year-old niece in the story. In most countries, Television and film doesn't provide a balanced picture of women's diverse lives, experiences, identities and contributions to society in a changing world and that always left me sad and powerless. Not anymore.

CAST

DJAKA SQUARE

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ZAINAB JAH

Zainab Jah was born in London and spent her childhood in Sierra Leone where she was a regular on children's television shows. She then went on studying dance at the London School of Contemporary Dance and Leeds University in Yorkshire, before embracing theater. For Koffi Kwahule's Bintou (The Movement Theatre Company) she received a 2010 AUDELCO Best Supporting Actress nomination. Zainab expanded her repertoire with a number of plays set in Africa, like Lynn Nottage's Huntington's production of "Ruined" and Ms. Gurira's "The Convert", for which she was awarded the 2012 Los Angeles Stage Alliance Ovation Award for Featured Actress in a Play at the with McCarter Theatre Center and Goodman Theatre at the Kirk Douglas Theatre. She also appeared in the title role of "Hamlet" at the Wilma Theater in Philadelphia. In 2016, Zainab played Maima, an AK-47-toting soldier who has given herself the name Disgruntled in the Broadway production of Ms. Gurira's "Eclipsed", alongside Lupita Nyong'o. In 2017, she starred in Suzan-Lori Parks' revival of "Venus" at the Signature Theatre and opened School Girls or the African Mean Girls play by Jocelyn Bioh. Last winter, she was Lena - one of two refugees wandering the South African wastelands - in the heartbreaking "Boesman & Lena" by Athol Fugard at the Signature in NYC. Zainab's film and television credits include: Dinner Rush with Danny Aiello; principal roles in "100 Centre Street" directed by

Sidney Lumet; "Law & Order: SVU", "Elementary", "Homeland", "Instinct", "Blindspot". Zainab stars in season two of FOX "Deep State" and just finished shooting "Seacole" with Gugu Mbatha-Raw and "False Positive" with Pierce Brosnan.

SYDNEY MORTON

Originally hailing from Cincinnati, Ohio, Sydney started training in ballet at four years old. She went on to receive a BFA in Musical Theatre from the University of Michigan as well as studying Shakespeare in London at The Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts. In New York, she first landed the role of Gabriella in "High school musical" at Paper mill playhouse and then joined the Chicago company of "Jersey Boys." Broadway soon followed, as she had the honor of performing in four original Broadway casts: "Memphis", "Evita", "American psycho", and "Motown", where she worked closely with Berry Gordy himself and played the controversial member of the Supremes Florence Ballard. Her theatre experience includes the "Hunchback of Notre Dame", "An Octoroon", and "Flashdance". You can see Sydney playing in Spike Lee's hit series, "She's Gotta Have It" on Netflix. Other TV and film appearances include starring opposite Adrian Grenier in the Syfy pilot, "Cipher", "Younger", "Jessica Jones" (Netflix), "The Intern", "The Sound of Music Live" (NBC.)

JAZZ HARDRICT

Jazz Hardrict is a ten-year-old 4th grade student at Ile Omode African Centered School in Oakland, California. Jazz loves the experience of being on stage and dreams of being a successful performing artist and a pediatrician who discovers the cure for Sickle Cell. At age six, she played the character of Young Cinderella. At age seven, she was cast as Lil Simba in 3Crosses's production of *The Lion King*. In addition, she played the monkey and a street urchin in *Aladdin*, Lil Magic in *Dreamgirls*, a NYC street kid in *Rent*, and a Parisian child in *Funny Face*. Last December, she was in the cast of African-American Shakespeare Company *Cinderella*. Jazz studies ballet, martial arts, gymnastics, and African Dance.

CREW

PRODUCER

DJAKA SQUARE

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CO-PRODUCER

AHMED BARBARY

Born in Cairo, Egypt, Barbary is Technical Director at Goldcrest Post NYC. He first studied computer sciences before pivoting to his passion: Film and Motion Picture. Barbary spent five years working as a Post Production supervisor between Dubai and the US before making New York his home. His credits include "Free Solo", "The Square", "The Man in the Woods", "Hell On Earth: the fall of Syria and the rise of Isis", "Word is Bond."

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

KALIYA WARREN

Originally from Minneapolis, Minnesota, Kaliya Warren is a Brooklyn-based filmmaker who directs branded content for clients such as Delta Air Lines, PepsiCo, Bloomberg Philanthropies, and Paramount

Pictures. A graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, Warren's short THE GROWN-UPS garnered several top awards at NYU, was nominated for a National Board of Review award, and screened at festivals throughout the US. Recently, Warren was selected as a Shadow Director on ABC's renowned industry showcase, ABC DISCOVERS. Warren has also worked for acclaimed director Spike Lee, and assisted Emmy-award winning filmmaker Lisa Russell on a biographical project about exiled former Kansas City Black Panther leader, Pete O'Neal. She's a member of Brooklyn-based production company Ilium Pictures and currently in development for her first feature film, EXPATRIATES, one of five finalists for TriBeCa AT&T's Untold stories grant.

EDITOR

MARIAH REHMET

Originally from Texas, Mariah is a Brooklyn based editor, producer and director whose credits include "Stretch and Bobbito: radio that changes lives", "Remembering the artist: Robert De Niro Sr", two episodes of Netflix TV Mini Series documentary "Rapture", "The Man in the Woods", "Hell On Earth: the fall of Syria and the rise of Isis", "Word is Bond."

MISSION

Her name is Jazz, and she is my inspiration for this project. Over Thanksgiving 2016, I asked her what she wanted to be in life: "I want to be a doctor and liberate my people." I asked her why. "Because a long time ago, some white men took my ancestors, put them in shackles and used them as slaves." At 6, she had just learnt about slavery. As much as we all know what slavery is, I realized that I had never thought about what it could mean for a child, let alone a young girl, to carry that idea around. I was raised in France without any powerful black figure in sight, and so I wondered... What if Jazz was MY child? What if I had a child with an African American man? How would I react to my daughter's statement? That was my starting point.

Whenever you have an art form, it is so important that that medium represent all people. Films and television programming are very powerful in shaping social beliefs and individual behavior and attitudes. In addition, violent, degrading sexualized media products also negatively affect women and their participation in society. Jazz in Wakanda is inspired by a layered, fun, yet complex mother and daughter relationship, by their undeniable bond while inevitable complexities of life get thrown their way.

We need more women telling their stories; it is past time for everybody to get a seat at the table so we can all celebrate ourselves in narratives that transcends history, race and color - we are all from one race: Human. That undeniably entails that women work in front and behind the camera so that gender stereotypes can become part of the past. Female centered, Jazz in Wakanda's crew was composed of 70% women with Female Producer & Director, Female DP, Female Assistant to director, two Female Set photographers and Female Hair and Make-up. Our cast was composed of four Female characters, far from any type of cliché characters that we usually see: strong, alive, unapologetic, non-conventional and embracing it.

There's no art without activism.

MUSIC

Badie was born and raised in the suburbs of Paris, France, to a French Mother and a West African Father. Interested in music very early on, in its mystical power, unifying, energizing and soothing, he listens to reggae, soul, biguine and afro-beat discs in a loop and deepens his musical culture through radios and sound systems. With his brother and several comrades, a dance troupe, Badie forms "The Street Kids". Together they perform in several cities in Europe.

In 2003, Badie releases his first solo album *Élément Terre* at a Warner music france label, S.O.W (Soul of Warner). While adding its French culture to personal references, the spirit of Bob Marley hangs over this album, faithful to Badie's image: a child of the concrete jungle who aspires to see another horizon. With the rhythms of reggae, folk, Afro-soul Badie swings his aversion to the "shit système" which breaks men and women. Badie is currently working on a new album, while often opening for famous artists like Keziah Jones or Ayo. He continues his collaborations with the collective CapiLocks and the legendary Jamaican Earl Chinna Smith.

SPECIFICATIONS

The film was shot in its entirety in Harlem, New York over two days, in August of 2018.

Film running time: 10 minutes and 7 seconds

Film language: English

Shooting Format: Digital

Aspect Ratio: 16:9

First time Filmmaker.

PRESS RELEASES/COVERAGE

<https://www.africanfilmny.org/nyaff26/jazz-in-wakanda/>

<https://www.shaeri.eu/magazine/Djaka/86.html>

PHOTOS/IMAGES

<https://www.dropbox.com/home/Jazz%20in%20Wakanda>

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https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8913312/?ref_=ttmi_tt

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