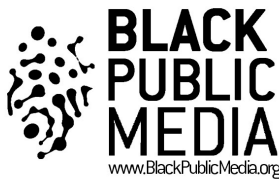




Discussion Guide

Season 5.0, 2013

"A Lot Like You" (Tanzania), 60 minutes



A LOT LIKE YOU

DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Film

Filmmaker Eliaichi Kimaro is a mixed-race, first-generation American with a Tanzanian father and Korean mother. When her father moves back to Tanzania, she decides to document his path back to his family and Chagga culture. This takes her on a journey that evocatively examines the intricate fabric of multiracial identity and the complex ties that children have to the cultures of their parents.

The multifaceted stories of Kimaro's family history reveal the complicated legacy of colonialism on current constructions of race, class, and gender. As she talks to extended family members, Kimaro uncovers a cycle of violence that resonates with her work and life in the United States. When she speaks with her parents about the oppression that her aunts face, she faces a jarring disconnect between immigrant generations on questions of patriarchy and domestic violence.

Ultimately, the film raises questions about the cultures we inherit and the cultures we choose to pass down, both unintentionally and by choice. It reveals how simply bearing witness to another's truth telling can break silences that have lasted lifetimes.

Keywords: Africa, African American, Asian American, Chagga, family violence, female genital mutilation (FGM or female circumcision), human rights, identity formation, multiracial & multicultural identity, Tanzania, women's rights

Background

Kimaro Family Members Featured in the Film

Eliaichi Kimaro - the filmmaker
Sadikiel - Eliaichi's Tanzanian father
Young - Eliaichi's Korean mother
Awonyisa & Ndereriosa - Eliaichi's paternal aunts
Ndesario, Nderingo, & Mkunde - Eliaichi's paternal uncles

Context

- According to the 2010 U.S. Census, nearly 3% of Americans - more than 9 million people - identify as belonging to two or more racial groups.
- The eastern African nation of Tanzania (which emerged from British colonial rule in the 1960s), has a population of nearly 47 million people, divided between Christians (approx. 30%) adherents of indigenous African traditions (35%), and Muslims (35%), who are concentrated largely in Zanzibar.
- There are more than 800,000 Tanzanians who identify as Chagga, the country's third largest ethnic group. The original tribal lands were located in the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro in the northern part of the country.
- According to the World Health Organization, about 140 million women (92 million in Africa) have undergone some form of female circumcision (also commonly referred to as FGM, female genital mutilation). There is no medical reason for

the procedure and it often causes long-term damage to women's health. International organizations, including the United Nations, consider the practice a human rights violation.

Discussion Prompts

General

Describe one new insight you received from watching this film. What actions might you take as a result of that insight?

What questions and issues does the filmmaker want you to think about and how do you know? Were there any other questions you wanted to ask?

Share a moment from the film that you found to be particularly inspiring or disturbing. What was it about that scene that was especially compelling for you?

What emotions did the film evoke for you? How did this aspect of your viewing experience compare or contrast to others in the room? What do you think accounts for the similarities or differences?

Reviewing Core Content

What did you learn from the film about:

- Female circumcision and its impact on women and families?
- The key factors that shape personal identity?
- Facets of identity development that are unique to multiracial children and/or children raised in homes with multiple cultural identities?
- The power of sharing personal stories or, alternatively, of keeping them hidden or unspoken?
- Chagga culture or Tanzania?

Finding Identity

In the opening scene the filmmaker says, "My partner and I are also an interracial couple, thinking of having kids of our own someday. And if our kids were to ever ask me, 'What am I, Mama?' what would I say?" How would you answer that question if you were in Kimaro's shoes? If you are a parent, how would you answer that question from your own child?

Kimaro says, "I never felt like I truly belonged with either the Korean community or my African-American friends." In your experience, what gives people a sense of belonging or a sense of alienation? In your community, where are the lines drawn between "us" and "them" and who established those particular lines?

When Young tells her Korean parents (Kimaro's grandparents) of her plans to marry Sadikiel, they ask about potential offspring: "How will they think of themselves? How will they be accepted in society? What about their identity? Who will they think they are?" What concerns were being expressed through these questions? How do these concerns compare to the responses you have seen or heard from your own family or community to interracial or intercultural marriages?

In your view, what is the meaning of the film's title, *A Lot Like You*?

Gender, Power, and Violence

How would you characterize the connections between Kimaro's personal experience with abuse and the family violence she discovers in Tanzania?

Ndereriosa, Kimaro's aunt, says, "You're circumcised because a girl is not expected to have the sexual lust of a man. That's what they said. But it's not true." Given that it isn't true, why do you think that this particular explanation of the tradition persists?

Awonyisa describes the Chagga practice of kidnapping women for marriage saying "Once you are circumcised, a man could do as he pleased." Ndereriosa adds her story of abuse saying, "You really had to be subservient, obedient, tolerant." Responding to these accounts, Sadikiel says, "I think it is fundamentally an ethnic thing, a cultural thing that should be understood in the cultural context." How would you balance respect for traditional cultural practices and also challenge those that are harmful? If you were a human rights commissioner, how would you address Chagga traditions around female circumcision and marriage?

How would you characterize Sadikiel's response to his sisters' experiences ("This is how the practice of marriage took place there. It wasn't criminal activity. It wasn't violence. But it's a way of getting married...")? How about Young's response ("The culture seems to stack against girls so much. For me it's very hard to just stand by.") What was *your* reaction to the aunts' descriptions of their marriages?

Aunt Awonyisa expresses resentment that she was never able to get the education she wanted, mostly because she was a girl. What are the ripple effects of denying or providing education to girls and women?

Young acknowledges that Awonyisa could have been bitter, but "toward the end of her life she threw a big party, and the purpose of that party was to give thanks to all the good things that happened in her life." What factors contribute to that kind of resilience? Where do you see resilient women in your community?

Describing her work with women who have been raped or abused, Kimaro recalls seeing "how simply bearing witness to someone's suffering can transform their life." Why do you think that is? What's the power of sharing stories or making the hidden visible?

Migration and Identity

Sadikiel was the only child in his family to move away from Tanzania. What did he gain by leaving? What did he lose?

In Tanzania, the filmmaker discovers that, "To them, I am just an American with nothing but my name connecting me to this world." What ties us to people and places we have never been but that have been important in the lives of our parents or grandparents? What role does distance play in our relationship to the culture of our elders?

After a ski outing, Sadikiel observes that the amount of money they spent that day, "is more money than my brothers are going to make all year." Kimaro acknowledges that her family was "able to live a lifestyle that was so different from anything Dad could have possibly imagined as a kid tending goats on the mountain. But now I wonder if there's any cost to us from my parents' hard-won success." How would you answer her? How do you think her aunts and uncles might respond?

Kimaro's father built a traditional Chagga hut in the backyard of his modern Dar El Salaam home. In your view, what accounts for the very different ways that people react to the hut?

At the end of the film, Sadikiel acknowledges differences between generations, noting that one's children and grandchildren "have a different expectation. They have a different value system." He believes he has to adapt. What do you think? Do elders need to adapt to the value systems of younger generations? What role does immigration play in generational values and relationships between members of different generations?

Challenges of Documentary Storytelling

Her aunts ask Kimaro, "Now that we've shared our stories with you, what are you going to do about it?" What is the responsibility of a filmmaker to the subjects of her or his films? Does being related to a subject alter that responsibility in any way?

Kimaro struggles to tell her parents' and her aunts' stories, saying, "We tried for months to capture what we thought of as Chagga culture." Why didn't that work? What is the value of giving people voice to speak for themselves? How does a filmmaker preserve the authenticity of others' stories while also acknowledging that we can only tell stories through the lens of our own perceptions? Why did Kimaro ultimately decide that it was her own story she needed to tell?

Resources

Official Film Website: <http://ALotLikeYouMovie.com>

AfroPoP series information page: <http://AfroPoP.tv/ally>

2011 Tanzania Human Rights Report from the Legal and Human Rights Centre
www.humanrights.or.tz/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/TANZANIA-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT-2011.pdf

Amnesty International's 2001 Tanzania Report
www.amnestyusa.org/research/reports/annual-report-tanzania-2011

World Health Organization on Female Circumcision
www.who.int/topics/female_genital_mutilation/en/

Mavin & AMEA Clearinghouse (information about multiracial, multiethnic, and transracial identity)
www.mixedheritagecenter.org/

Overview of Chagga History and Culture
www.everyculture.com/wc/Tajikistan-to-Zimbabwe/Chagga.html

Thank you for taking the time to review this guide. Written by Faith Rogow, Ph.D.

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