



Sweet Dreams Discussion Guide

Directors: Lisa Fruchtmann, Rob Fruchtmann

Year: 2012

Time: 89 min

You might know these directors from:

Rob Fruchtmann:

Sister Helen (2002)

In addition to this feature length documentary, winner of the Sundance Directing Award in 2002, he has directed a number of other documentaries and worked in various roles in film and television.

This is the first full-length feature film directed by Lisa Fruchtmann. She is an academy award winning film and television editor, and has over 20 editing credits. She is known for her work on *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *The Right Stuff* (1983), *The Godfather: Part III* (1990) and *My Best Friend's Wedding* (1997) and many more.

FILM SUMMARY

"I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream," a song first published in the 1920s, continues to encapsulate the public's adoration of this sweet treat. But as a tool for reconciliation, a means of empowerment for women in post-genocidal Rwanda? *SWEET DREAMS* shows us a way out of the ashes.

With an approximate 1 million Rwandans killed in the 1994 genocide – the majority of them men – the widowed, orphaned women remaining in their country had to find a way back to life. In the words of Kiki Katese, the founding member of Ingoma Nshya, the first Rwandan all-women drumming troupe, "In Rwanda people are broken. We have many bodies moving, but inside they're dead. They need to learn things that could make them smile." Katese began this process of healing by putting drums into the hands of women, an instrument that had only ever played by men in the past. And thus the rulebook was being rewritten, with the sweet taste of ice cream and entrepreneurship just a chapter away.

Over the course of two years, sibling co-directors Lisa and Rob Fruchtmann returned to Rwanda several times for a year and a half, listening to the horrific stories of drummers' pasts, watching them flourish through their music, and witnessing them as they came together to begin a collective enterprise – opening Inzizi Nziza, ('Sweet Dreams' in Kinyarwanda) the country's first ice cream shop. By granting the local community a space to relax and experience pleasure in their lives, these newly empowered women chose ice cream as their symbol of hope.

Through thoughtful storytelling, *SWEET DREAMS* interweaves the history of genocide, still so ripe and raw in the minds and hearts of many, with the hope of a new beginning for Rwandans' reconciliation with the world, with their country, and with themselves.

FILM THEMES

Like a phoenix rising out of the ashes of their genocide-torn homeland, the Ingoma Nshya troupe put rhythm on the streets and sweetness back into the hearts of their countryfolk.

POST-GENOCIDE RWANDA

The events that ripped across Rwanda over 100 days in 1994 continue to live on in the everyday hearts and minds of the nation. Such bloodshed and violence is not easily forgotten. Many Rwandans numbly pace through their daily lives, closed off to any joy, any possibility. Having lost everything, life is a meaningless state. As the cries of heartbreak and pain fill the memorial gathering, and as the church choir sings, “My heart is full of pain. God, why did you create me,” we are all reminded that the traumatic aftermath extends much further than the trauma itself. Rwanda continues its healing process.

BREAKING WITH THE PAST

In order to create a place for rehabilitation, healing, and hope, a division between the past and the present has to be created. Women were forbidden from drumming in the “old” Rwanda, a rule Kiki Katese did away with when she created Ingoma Nshya. “We were proposing a space where people would feel safe again and where women, who were not given a lot of space and chances, could have these opportunities.” Mothers, daughters, and sisters of both victims and perpetrators came together in peace and cooperation. By rewriting the rulebook and placing women in empowering positions, a sense of hope arrived.

THE COURAGE TO COME TOGETHER AND DREAM

With so much taken from the lives and hearts of Rwandans, the ability to dream is no longer easily accessible. Imagining that something is possible involved having the courage to live again, to tap into one’s emotional core. Through the channel of music, of coming together with others and drumming through the madness of all the pain and guilt and hurt, the road to reconciliation is paved. Ingoma Nshya teaches women of differing tribes that by putting the past behind them and uniting in the common goal to heal, they are able to move forwards. “When you accept to forgive, to be connected with other people, to live with them, to share the same country with them, then you move forward,” states Kiki.

THE SWEET RECONNECTION TO LIFE

Ice cream is a symbol of pleasure, of enjoyment, a confection we turn to when we put aside our worldly cares and partake in a sweet indulgence. Pleasure has become something foreign to the average Rwandan, who is accustomed to the numb pulse of suffering, something done alone and in silence. Introducing ice cream into the community through a shop opened by local women sends a message loud and clear: “You should enjoy. You should feel good. Happiness is for us, too.” By inviting others to indulge in something, Inzizi Nziza offers a joy not recently experienced by Rwandans. A small ice cream shop in a small town in rural Rwanda symbolizes a gigantic step for the emotional state of the country, as it turns its face out of the darkness and into the light.

“Trying is very important. When you believe that something is possible, it’s done already.”

Kiki Katese

“If you bring development to the women, you bring development to the entire family.”

Male villager

“Reconciliation is not only about two people. People have to reconcile with themselves and with life.”

Kiki Katese

FILM FACTS:

- SWEET DREAMS had its premiere at the 2012 Silverdocs Film Festival, now known as AFI Docs. The film also screened at the United Nations.
- Kiki Katese, the founder of the Ingoma Nshya (A New Drum, A New Kingdom) all-female drumming troupe, is also a playwright. In 2009, she was invited to the Sundance Institute Theatre Lab, where she met actor Jennie Dundas, one of the founders of Brooklyn's Blue Marble Ice Cream. SWEET DREAMS co-director Lisa Fruchtman was working as an advisor at the theatre lab, where she heard about the idea of Katese and Dundas opening an ice cream shop in Rwanda. Within 6 months, the film directors had made their first trip to Rwanda.
- Siblings Rob and Lisa Fruchtman returned to Rwanda four times over 1.5 years to film.
- Ingoma Nshya involves poor uneducated women from the age of 16 to 60. "Ingoma" means "drum" but also means "leader," hence the reason why traditionally women could not drum - only men were allowed to rule, only men were allowed to drum. After the genocide, 74% of the remaining population was female. In the words of Katese, "That is the 'manpower' we were left with, so somehow they had to be engaged, and play roles they had never played before."
- Co-director Lisa Fruchtman is an Academy Award-winning editor, whose projects include "Apocalypse Now" and "The Godfather."
- Ingoma Nshya initially had 100 members but has since downsized to 20 core members, and six of the drummers also work at the ice cream shop. The group performs around , in Rwanda and around the world, always by invitation.
- The Republic of Rwanda is located in central Africa and has a presidential system of government. The 2015 population was 11.3 million, with the majority young and living in a rural setting. The official language is Kinyarwanda, although French and English are also spoken. Rwanda was ruled by the Germans from 1884 until WWI, when Belgium took over. Independence was achieved in 1962.
- The Rwandan Genocide took place over a 100- day period in 1994, when members of the minority Tutsi tribe were slaughtered by Hutus. An estimated one million people were killed - around 70% of all Tutsis and 20% of the total Rwandan population - although exact figures are impossible to locate as the government made no attempt to record deaths. Many women were raped during the course of the genocide and infected with HIV, and around 400,000 children were orphaned
- An ingoma is made out a hollowed-out tree trunk covered with strips of animal hide. There are three types of drums, each with a different pitch, and they are played with two wooden sticks.
- Earth is referred to as "the blue marble," hence the name of the Brooklyn ice cream shop.

WAYS TO INFLUENCE

1. **Support** [Blue Marble Ice Cream](#), Alexis Miesen and Jennie Dundas company that continue to support women in conflict or natural disaster torn areas by helping them open ice cream shops.
2. **Consider** supporting the filmmakers and their outreach campaign, either by donating to [Women Make Movies](#) or [directly to the filmmakers](#).
3. **Learn** about [Bpeace](#), the organization that Alexis and Jennie initially worked with, which helped them formulate their idea on how to open an ice cream shop in Rwanda.
4. **Support** [The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women](#) that is involved in "Skilling for Change in Rwanda," to enable women to be economically independent.

We believe a good documentary is just the beginning...

In a world of sound-bites, documentaries provide an opportunity to think, understand, share, and connect with the world.

They are controversial, divisive, fascinating, unexpected, and surprising. They can be thrillers, dramas, comedies, romance, tear-jerkers, and horror films.

Documentaries provide the perfect topic for meaningful conversations. If you want to talk about the things that matter with people that matter then pick a film, invite your friends, and watch & discuss together. It's as easy as that.

Influence Film Club – We are the conversation after the film.