

George Stanley Nsamba: the short film hero

AGNES NANTABA November 21, 2018 In The Magazine, Interview, Profile Leave a comment



Kampala, Uganda | AGNES E NANTABA | George Stanley Nsamba also known as NES is a Ugandan Film Maker and Cinematographer. He uses films made on a small budget for social change. Nsamba rose through the ranks with his first short film 'Crafts; the value of life' in 2015 and later 'Silent depression' in 2016. Silent depression is a 12 minutes story told with musical rhymes and footage of everyday life of Kampala's street dwellers. The film also tells a story of how young people have gotten so attached to social media and the internet which cuts them off from physical interactions. Nsamba portrays several facets of failed dreams including a rapper who struggles writing her verse but has no hit, the lawyer who just lost two court cases wondering if it is the right career, and the model dreaming about runways at Paris Fashion week but is turned down at several auditions.

'Silent depression' has since become a cult reference for the effect of smart phones on humanity. The film was regarded the most prolific film that screened at the 5th annual Slum Film Festival in Nairobi by the press and digital media.

"It was used as a case study in the national museum of Scotland on October 10, 2017," Nsamba says.

"It has gotten 28 nominations and was picked by Reuters as film of the year so it remains my biggest project because of its impact and being an eye opener for the youths"

His other films include 'The Dummy team' a story about HIV testing and parents letting kids live their dreams, while 'Time irreversible' is about HIV protection cautioning people to be extra vigilant since HIV cannot be seen on one's face. Nsamba is also the founder of Ghetto Film Project a charity organisation that uses film to rehabilitate, empower, mentor and tell stories from the slums of Kampala. He is a motivational speaker, children rights activist, and spoken-word artiste.

"I do poetry for people who don't want to stick to the norms of word play," says Nsamba.

"It's more of free expression for ideas and beliefs through art and it relates to how I was raised".

Nsamba's draws his inspiration for film from a documentary that was shot about his mother in 2008. The documentary titled 'Greater' portrays a woman who fights through all odds with HIV/AIDS and manages to get back on her feet. Shot by Italian film makers, the documentary won at the Bubble Gum Film Festival in France. So Nsamba's main inspiration was to do more than that the documentary.

He says, "That explains why my films are bent more towards documentaries".

The inspiration pushed him to quit school at Makerere University in his first year pursuing a bachelor's degree in industrial and Fine Arts to start the Ghetto Film Project. Previously a drug addict who survived depression on two counts, Nsamba chose to use film to help young people discover their purpose in life.

His films have garnered 68 nominations and film selections from film projects all over the world in a period of four years. These have come with four international awards.

Recently, Nsamba took on to using film and documentaries to inspire youths to get back into agriculture. Nsamba was born Mulago Hospital where both his parents worked and resided. About six years after birth, his parents separated leaving him and two other siblings in the hands of a single mother, Vicky Aryenyo.

He is the middle child of the three. With his mother, they moved to Naguru not only to stay in a huge slum area but an unfinished building that flooded during heavy rain. Life became harder when their mother was diagnosed with HIV, and live on the verge of death. This left the toddlers at the mercy of neighbors and onlookers. As the situation worsened, Nsamba resorted to carrying trash in exchange for old newspapers that he sold to put together money for the family food. He also took to robbery and use of drugs as a

young teenager. He battled drug addiction for years until the journey to end it was sparked off by the death of his close friend in the July 2010 attacks. His long stay in the ghetto explains why his works are closely associated with slum life.

Nsamba is currently working on his first feature which he says is an FGM story.

He went to Naguru Infant School, Naguru Katale Primary School, and several secondary schools.

-- **The Independent Uganda**, <https://www.independent.co.ug/george-stanley-nsamba-the-short-film-hero/>