



The **WITNESS** Project presents

REBECCA'S STORY

a short film by
the youths of **WITNESS** Project

Georgetown, Guyana / 2013 / Color / 12 min 42 sec

CONTACT

WITNESS Project

The Margaret Clemons Foundation

155 W 70th Street, Suite #10E

New York, NY 10023

212.787.5454

witnessprojectinternational.org

facebook.com/witnessproject

margaretclemonsfoundation.org

Margaret Clemons | **Executive Producer**

mcgroup@verizon.net

Morgan Riles | **Producer**

morganlriles@gmail.com



The EASTER KITE

Written by Teriq Mohammed
Illustrated by Kwesi Archer



SYNOPSIS

On a beautiful day in the South American city of Georgetown, Guyana, a young couple drop off their daughter Rebecca and her little brother Aaron with their Grandmother before traveling on business. With parting hugs and words of love, Rebecca retrieves her favorite book, not realizing that it would be the last time she would see her parents alive.

Weeks later, their days are marred by their distressed Grandmother's harsh words and rough hands. Rebecca yearns for an escape, and finds hope in the intervention of Lindsey, a young witness to Rebecca's plight who offers respite through an after school program.

Plagued by her own demons, her Grandmother dismisses his help. Undaunted, Rebecca soon discovers that her Granny's violent harshness and sharp tongue hides a troubling disability and desolate past. In a small but powerful gesture, Rebecca reaches out with an offer of her own, opening the door to better days for her new family.



PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

It's easy to think about abuse in the broadest sense as a malady, but reading about a young girl who is shoved down a flight of stairs over unfinished chores really brings it home. Verney Henry, a Witness Project member, wrote an article about a horrific act of child abuse she witnessed, expressing feelings of anger, hatred, resentment and most tellingly, helplessness. I thought, if any scenario could summarize the feelings these youths experience, it's this one

A sweeping Guyanese jungle illustrates youthful imagination and the fight for survival. Scenes of fear and shame from physical abuse are palpably intense, and the notes of hope and determination in our film were wonderfully evidenced in watching these youths work together as a team on set with no prior experience in filmmaking except for our guidance. Rebecca's Story is really the culmination of a particular kind of resiliency that's found in these teens, who have lived with abusive guardians and are in some cases still dealing with situations at home. *This nuanced film is as much of a work of art as it is a genuine encouragement to these Guyanese youths, and that makes this story exponentially meaningful to me.*

- Morgan Riles







DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Directing this film was a great and sometimes rough experience. We were all new to filmmaking and knowing that helped to ease the stress of the process. But what really kept us going were all the 'Rebeccas' in Guyana and the world. They are the brave but torn souls that live in our world but often go unnoticed. The issue of violence needs to be brought into the light so we can scratch the match of change. If you take nothing else from this film, please take this, *"What we see changes who we are"*

- Kwesi Archer

It was a privilege to direct this film. The experience and the memories will stay with me forever. And though the shoot became tedious at times, we worked through it. The fact that we, a team of teenagers, with the guidance of a few experts, planned and executed a film production is amazing. I hope that our hard work helps keep hidden stories and situations like Rebecca's in the spotlight.


- Haresh Bhagwan

Shooting this film was memorable as it was the first time for all of us. We all went in thinking it would be simple, just point and shoot. But boy were we wrong. From the rain flooding our set to having to spend 6hrs reshooting a scene that had already taken 5hrs, there were a lot of setbacks. But all in all, it was a successful production. The hard work and long hours made for a heartfelt and impactful 12 mins that I believe will touch the hearts and minds of all who see it.

- Teriq Mohammad



CAST

A film set scene. In the background, a man with a beard and a white t-shirt is operating a professional video camera mounted on a black tripod. He is holding the camera with both hands, looking through the viewfinder. In the foreground, two young women are looking towards the camera. The woman on the left has long dark hair and is wearing a white t-shirt. The woman on the right is wearing a white t-shirt and a black headband. A poster of a religious figure is visible on the wall behind the man. The scene is lit with warm, indoor lighting.

Rebecca.....	Daisha Henry
Granny.....	Margaret Kertzious
Lindsey.....	Haresh Bhagwan
Aaron.....	Brian Ringa
Mother.....	Judith Cameron
Father.....	Teriq Mohammed
Young Granny.....	Kaesia Munroe
Guardian.....	Gordon Roberts



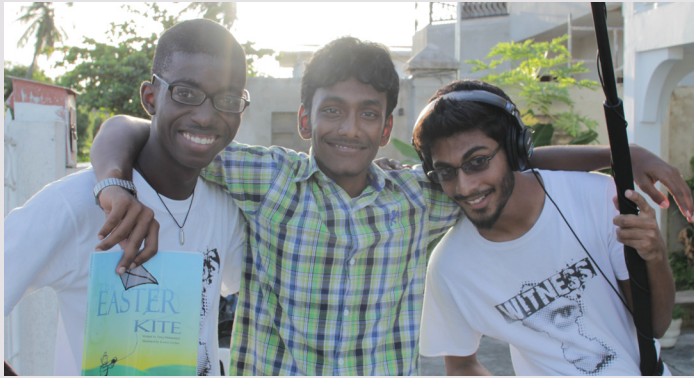


CREW

Directors.....	Kwesi Archer, Haresh Bhagwan, Teriq Mohammed
Producers.....	Morgan Riles, Ginger Theisen
Co-Producer.....	Rosheni Takechandra
Executive Producers.....	Margaret Clemons, Alysia Christiani, Nancy Stevenson
Director of Photography.....	Devi Sankar
Editor.....	Morgan Riles
Music Composer.....	Angela Sheik
First Ass't Director.....	Danita Jaundoo
Second Ass't Director.....	Shakera Hoosain
Script Supervisor.....	Rajendra Ramesh
A Camera Operator.....	Devi Sankar
B Camera Operator.....	Kelly Brassington
1st Ass't Camera.....	Nakasi Noel
2nd Ass't Camera.....	Radiante Frank
Clapper-Loader.....	Mark Davidson, Marcel Persaud
Art Director.....	Gordon Roberts
Set Decorator.....	Reanna Douglas
Sound Mixer/Boom Operator...	Verney Henry, Marcel Persaud
Gaffer.....	Judith Cameron
Electricians.....	Mica Gaard / Danita Jaundoo
Costumer.....	Reanna Douglas
Props.....	Kwesi Archer, Teriq Mohammed, Gordon Roberts, Nancy Stevenson, Rainy Day Worzella
Photographers.....	Gunaav Shivsankar, Rainy Day Worzella
Colorist / Sound Editor.....	Morgan Riles



**KWESI ARCHER, HARESH BHAGWAN,
TERIQ MOHAMMED - DIRECTORS**



Born in Georgetown, Guyana. 19 year old Teriq, a law student at the University of Guyana, 19 year old Kwesi, studying Graphics and Sculpture at the E.R. Burrowes School of Art, and 17 year old Hareesh, a student at Nations 6th Form College, met in the spring of 2011 at the WITNESS Project's first meeting and have been friends ever since.

With no background or experience in film, the three co-directors, under the guidance of veteran filmmakers Morgan Riles and Ginger Theisen, led the production like old pros. The film was informed by their POV as Guyanese youth and their experiences growing up in a culture where the issues explored in the film are an everyday part of many Guyanese peoples lives.

MORGAN RILES - PRODUCER / EDITOR



Morgan Riles is an editor and filmmaker based in Brooklyn, NY. She has edited for OWN Network, College Humor, and Art21 on PBS, and others. She graduated from Ohio University's Honors Tutorial College with a Film BFA in 2008. Her feature documentary, "BIOMODD [ATH1]: A Living Game Computer As Social Sculpture" follows the work of Belgian artist and TED

fellow Angelo Vermeulen, and screened at the 27th International Festival of Films on Art, and the Houston Cinema Arts Festival, in 2009. She is currently cutting "Artist to Artist", a new web series for Art21.

GINGER THEISEN - PRODUCER



Ginger Theisen is a filmmaker and producer. She has worked on several high profile films such as STAR WARS: THE PHANTOM MENACE, THE PERFECT STORM, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, HIDALGO and THE OTHER GUYS. Ginger is excited about having co-produced this film with the WITNESS team during the summer film workshop sponsored by the Margaret Clemons Foundation. She is currently in

development on CRAZY HORSE, THE CRAZY HORSE RIDE and TALISMAN. Ginger is president of Platte River Pictures, LLC and a PGA member.

ABOUT THIS PROJECT



WITNESS Project International started working with youth and communities through arts based programming with our successful photography portrait project, as part of the 2011 TED Prize winner JR's global Inside Out Project. We outfitted Guyanese youth ages 11 – 17 with cameras; they then photographed over 600 children and adults who supported their project. Their photographs sent this message to adults: *"Stop your violence against our mothers, sisters, aunts, and neighbors. We see you and you must do better."*

As a result of the success of that photography project we were given a full page each week for one year in the leading national newspaper, The Stabroek News, for a youth page called WE SEE - written by the WITNESS Project youth based on their own experiences of how the violence they see affects them.

Now, through film, these youths can share with the world a glimpse into some of the issues surrounding the plague of gender-based and child-directed violence that is found in Guyanese society. Under the direction of filmmakers Morgan Riles and Ginger Theisen our intensive summer film workshops resulted in over 20 youths learning how to write and edit scripts, produce, handle a camera, prepare sets, direct, learn about lighting, sound, and act.