



10 DAYS IN AFRICA

a film by

REGI ALLEN

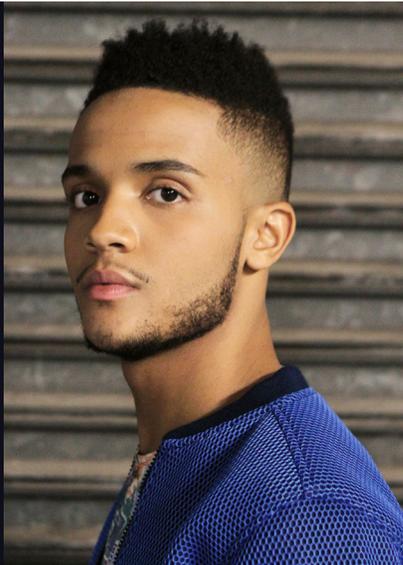
(Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal)

41 minutes

**AfroPoP X**
the ultimate cultural exchange

DISCUSSION GUIDE
SEASON 10

HOST: NICHOLAS L. ASHE stars as Micah West in the critically acclaimed OWN series *Queen Sugar*, directed by Ava DuVernay and executive-produced by Oprah Winfrey. Earlier he played Viola Davis's son in the courtroom drama *Custody*. Ashe made his acting debut at age 10 in the role of Young Simba in the national tour of *The Lion King*. Ashe is also a talented vocalist, pianist and composer. In 2015, he created a scholarship for young artists in his hometown of Freeport, Long Island. Ashe collaborated with Cierra Glaude on a short film titled *Last Looks*, which had its world premiere at the 2017 Urbanworld Film Festival.



AfroPop: The Ultimate Cultural Exchange is a US-based public television show featuring independent documentaries and short films about life, art, and culture from the contemporary African Diaspora. The African Diaspora includes Africa, the Caribbean, Canada, South America, Europe, the US, and anywhere people of African descent have made a significant contribution to the culture.

The films are always carefully selected to portray a more balanced view of Africa than you'll get on the nightly news and to provide fuel for what must be a global conversation on the present day realities and contemporary lifestyles of Africans, both on the continent and in the Diaspora.

USING THIS GUIDE

BACKGROUND

The first section of the guide provides

- A synopsis of the film and information on the filmmaker, along with a list of central characters and topics
- Background on the film's key issues, focused on brief historical, cultural, and political context

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

The second part of this guide provides questions crafted to be springboards for dialogue, inviting audience members to engage with the issues raised in the film and with one another.

The prompts are designed to meet the needs of a wide range of audiences and circumstances, so you'll want to choose those that best meet your particular needs. You may want to dive directly into an issue-based prompt, or you can gauge the interests of the audience by starting with a general question. There's no reason to cover them all or to use them in order (except for the "wrap-up" questions, which are intended to help people synthesize information at the end of a discussion). Typically you'll only need one or two questions to get things going; let the audience take it from there, using their interests to guide the path of the discussion.

Recommended for: high school, college, and adult audiences

RESOURCES

The final section the guide lists related resources. You can use them to prepare for leading a discussion or recommend them to audience members seeking additional information.



AFROPOP: THE ULTIMATE CULTURAL EXCHANGE

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BACKGROUND



Film Synopsis

10 Days in Africa (2002) was first broadcast as part of Afropop TV's inaugural season. African-American filmmaker Regi Allen makes a sojourn to three West African countries to discover for himself the truth behind the myths that separate Black identity in Africa from Black identity in the Diaspora.

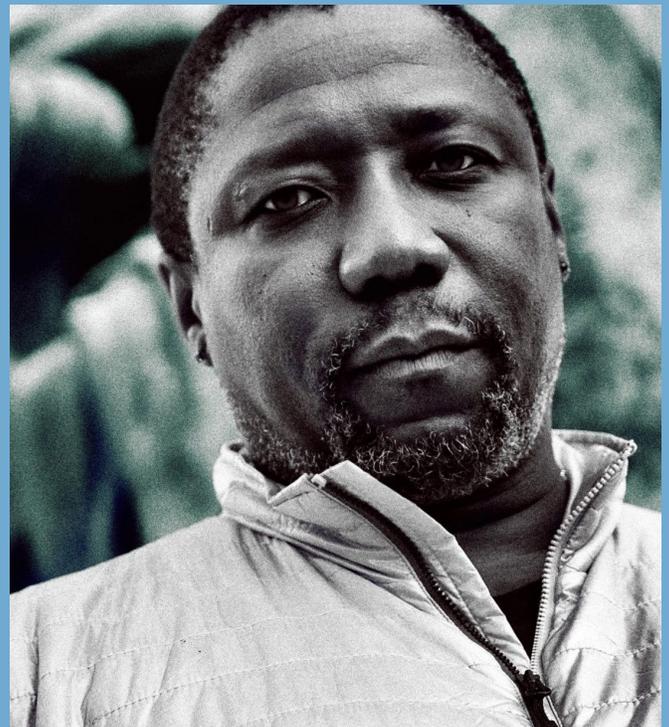
With a critical lens often pointed at himself, Allen creates a compelling record of his journey that raises as many questions as it answers. With deep reflection disguised as a travel diary, and juxtaposing stereotypical media images with footage of the real thing, *10 Days In Africa* is a loving tribute intended to heal many wounds while exposing the complex and challenging nature of Black identity.

Topics: African Americans, African roots, Black identity, Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), culture, Ghana, heritage, legacy of slavery, media literacy, Senegal

The Filmmaker

Regi Allen is an award-winning editor, producer and media design artist, who is currently a senior editor at Discovery Communications and the founder and creative director of niceandcreative studios. He has edited and produced various works and specials for PBS, MTV, Discovery Channel, ABC, HBO, ID, SyFy, Showtime, TV Land, American Movie Classics (AMC) and Black Entertainment Television (BET). He received EMMY Awards for editing work on *Sesame Street* and while at ABC World News Tonight with *Peter Jennings/The Century* with Peter Jennings.

Allen's prior works include a *Planet Brooklyn* (1996) video art series that won various film festival awards including The Community Choice Award for Best Experimental film from the National Black Programming Consortium. He also won Best Show Award from Washington D.C.'s Rosebud Foundation for his work on the video art-poetry documentary *Voices Against Violence* (1994). His collaboration on Sandy Wilson's "So Many Things To Consider" and Jane Wagner's "Girls Like Us", were both selections of the Sundance Film Festival Short Film Series. In 1997, Regi was awarded a twelve-month appointment as a Research Fellow of the Studio for Creative Inquiry at Carnegie Mellon University. There he developed a multi-media campaign for media literacy that examined the power of images and imagery in pop culture. While in Pittsburgh he also produced and exhibited various works at the Andy Warhol Museum.





CONTEXT

Pan-Africanism

Between 1956-1976 more than 40 African nations declared independence. As Regi Allen recalls, it seemed like Africa “was on the precipice of becoming a world power.” He continues, this vision “was called Pan-Africanism.”

Pan-Africanism has been both a political and intellectual movement. It dates back to the late 19th century, growing out of opposition to slavery and the need to disprove popular “scientific” claims of African inferiority. At its core, Pan-Africanism taught that African peoples, both on the African continent and in the Diaspora, are connected by a common history, culture, and destiny. Therefore peoples of African descent should be united politically, economically, and ideologically. In practice, unity has been elusive. For example, some leaders called for Blacks in the Diaspora to stay and fight for equal rights wherever they lived while others (like Marcus Garvey) encouraged all Black people to return to African homelands.

Pan-Africanism has also been an important cultural force. As an anti-colonial movement, it sparked much of the nationalism that led to African countries achieving independence from colonial rulers. In recent years, it has also been central to the creation of Kwanzaa observances, as well as the addition of Afrocentric approaches to the teaching of history and literature as a corrective to exclusively Eurocentric lessons.

Sources: <http://exhibitions.nypl.org/africanaage/essay-pan-africanism.html>; www.thoughtco.com/chronological-list-of-african-independence-4070467; www.thoughtco.com/what-is-pan-africanism-44450

Ashanti Empire

The Ashanti (Asante) Empire emerged from a group of independent clans in the 1600s in what is present-day Ghana. It was a response to European traders looking for locals who could grant them rights to the area’s abundant gold. In the early 1700s, the chiefdoms were unified by Osei Tutu, making them more powerful than most of their neighbors.

With Kumasi as its capital, the Ashanti Empire made the gold mines into royal possessions, further enhancing the Kingdom’s power. By the early 1800s, the Ashanti had also become one of the African kingdoms that provided slaves to European traders. In return, they received luxury items and firearms.

According to scholar Maria Quitana, “The consequence of this trade for the Ashanti and their neighbors was horrendous. From 1790 until 1896, the Ashanti Empire was in a perpetual state of war involving expansion or defense of its domain.” The resulting weakness led to their defeat by British forces, who would ultimately annex the territory as a colony.

After Ghana declared independence, the Ashanti were partially restored to power. They exist today as a constitutionally protected “state” within Ghana.

Sources: www.blackpast.org/gah/ashanti-empire-asante-kingdom-18th-late-19th-century; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashanti_Empire

Slave Castles

“Slave castle” is the designation given to commercial forts used in the slave trade. Built along Africa’s west coast, they were places where captives were held and loaded onto the waiting slave ships that would take them across the ocean. There are several dozen slave castles still standing. In the film, the group visits Cape Coast in Ghana and the Gorée Island House of Slaves off coast of Dakar, Senegal.



DISCUSSION PROMPTS

General

What was it like for you to watch this film?

Summarize the main message(s) of this film in a single sentence or tweet. How does your summary compare to what others in the room wrote? What do you think accounts for the similarities or differences?

Describe a moment in the film that you found particularly moving. What was it about that scene that was especially compelling?

Was there anything in the film that “spoke truth” to you? Was there anything that surprised you?

Discovering Self

Regi says he wants to go to Africa because “that’s where Black people come from.” Why do people think it is important to discover their roots? Do you know where your people come from? What difference does it make for you, either knowing or not knowing?

Often travel gives us as much insight into ourselves and as about the people and places we visit. What do you think Regi learned about himself?

Regi says, “It’s a funny feeling being between two places, these two continents, these two worlds.” Why do you suppose the default is to feel split, rather than to feel like one is multidimensional and has more capacity for understanding and expression than those who are grounded in a single place?

What did you learn from the film about Pan-Africanism and its role in the lives of Blacks in the Diaspora?



Forging Connections

Regi observes, “Africans and African Americans are victims of cultural distortion. At what point will we be able to begin to have a real conversation? A conversation not based on commercial or cultural acceptance, but on commonality and connectedness?” What, exactly are the distortions and how have they disrupted the ability to find the connectedness that Regi seeks?

At their first hotel, the tour group is greeted by a group of traditional drummers. What’s the difference between experiencing indigenous cultures and seeing a show put on by indigenous peoples?

From the bus, the filmmaker doesn’t feel like he’s experiencing the real Africa. What’s the difference between tourist interactions and genuine sharing? What finally makes Regi feel welcomed as a person, not a tourist?

In Dakar, Regi identifies a pattern of mistrust. He asks, “What is it that separates us? Maybe you don’t trust me. Well, I don’t trust Americans either.” And in several scenes, the travelers don’t trust the locals, fearing that those seen as vulnerable will become crime victims. Regi says of the resulting dynamic, “I don’t know if this is the Africa of my dreams. No one’s running up to me with open arms welcoming me home.” What is the Africa of your dreams? How would you make authentic connections?

At one point several people in the tour group begin to don dashikis and other identifiably African clothing. Regi asks, “Is it me or did everyone just go African on me? Culture it seems has a funny way of sneaking up on you.” What’s the power of dressing in the traditional garb of African cultures? As you look at the street scenes, how many Africans are actually wearing such clothing and on what occasions?

Outcomes

Describing her fear of theft, one of the women on the trip says, “I honestly felt a little disgusted with myself that I had so worried about holding on to this bag and holding this because they’re going to try to take my bag or they’re going to try to pull away from me, whatever that I didn’t enjoy my day. I didn’t enjoy seeing that last slave castle” [emphasis added]. In your view, does turning slave castles into tourist stops trivialize the events that occurred there?

Regi says, “I understand that foreign currencies help contribute to the upkeep of this important memorial yet I can’t help but find it ironic that I’m paying to get into a slave castle.” Should fees at slave castles be waived for descendants of slaves? Aside from entry fees, can you think of any other ways to fund upkeep for the sites?

Regi reacts to seeing the “door of no return” saying, “At that very moment everything made sense. The very same blood that was spilled on this walls is the blood that flows through my veins. This can’t be the door of no return because [the descendants have returned]. I am here. . . I finally feel connected to this place.” What does it mean for the relationship between African Americans and Africans that slavery is the primary thread connecting Americans to the continent?

Regi says, “Africa is many things to many people. I wish every African American could visit Africa and every African could visit America. It would be the ultimate cultural exchange program. To me having gone to Africa is like going down south to see family you knew you had, but never met.” What do you think would change if Regi’s wish became reality?



Through African Eyes

How did the film inform the way you think about immigration policy?

Harouna's mother sent him to Mauritania to find work and send money home: "She said that I was her only hope." In your view, should economic desperation be treated differently in immigration law than the dangers to people fleeing violent conflict? Should the law differentiate between political refugees and migrants seeking economic opportunity? Why or why not?

We see Austin talk about the goods he sent home to family. Do you think governments should regulate remittances, either as capital being sent out of the country or as income to recipients?



Media Choices/Pop Culture

Regi isn't sure what he'll find in Africa because "All I knew of Africa came from textbooks and Saturday afternoon television." What images come to mind when you think of Africa? What are the sources of your ideas? How did the film's images of Africa, Africans, and African Americans compare to images you typically see?

People that Regi meets say that American tourists often "have a misconception vis-à-vis Africans, because of what they see on TV, like Africa is a jungle, there is no civilization." Similarly, Africans get their ideas about Americans from TV: "America is just a rich country, everybody is rich. That's what we see." How do media depictions of Africa and Africans affect African Americans? How do they influence the relationship between Africans and African Americans?

Regi reports, "Today we travel north to Kumasi, home of the Ashanti Empire. Finally, the majesty, power and wealth of Africa up close and personal. Kingdoms of gold, diamonds and ivory just like the Budweiser posters in the '70s, the ones that hang in Baptist church basements all across America. . . Maybe it's not about gold and ivory. Maybe royalty is about something else. I must admit though, I somehow saw it differently in my mind's eye." What does Black royalty mean to you? What are the sources — and consequences — of romanticized notions of African royalty? How can those who feel connected to the Ashanti both celebrate their history and also acknowledge the reality of the Kingdom's role in the slave trade?

Filmmaking Choices

What major questions was the filmmaker trying to answer and how do you know? What were the filmmaker's answers? Would you have answered the same way?

What emotions did the film evoke? What filmmaking techniques contributed to that reaction?

Was there anything about the construction of the film that you found to be particularly notable or memorable?

If you could ask the filmmaker one question, what would you want to know?

Wrap-Up

Complete this sentence: I think Regi's story is important (or interesting or inspiring) because. . .

Is there one thing you learned from this film that you wish everybody knew? What do you think would change if everyone knew it?

Fill in the blanks: One thing I learned from this screening is

Now that I know, I will

RESOURCES

AfroPop: The Ultimate Cultural Exchange

www.facebook.com/AfroPoPTV

www.blackpublicmedia.org

@BlackPublicMedia

www.worldchannel.org/programs/afropop/

Heritage Tourism

<http://africana.fiu.edu/tourism-init/2015-rootsheritage-tourism-conference/2015ht-conference-program-12-31-2014.pdf>

The overview of this 2015 academic conference explains the history and ongoing issues of African American heritage tourism to Africa.

“Slave Tourism”

www.latitudenews.com/story/slave-tourism-african-americans-travel-ghana-africa-obama/

This article explores heritage tourism from the perspective of Ghanaians who are more interested in moving forward than helping Americans deal with a painful past.



SEASON 10

TEN DAYS IN AFRICA
BETWEEN TWO SHORES
BLACK PANTHER WOMAN
FATAL ASSISTANCE
AFROPOP SHORTS

**AfroPoP X**
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