

About the Filmmaker

Morenike Olabunmi is a Jamaican-born independent filmmaker, writer, and researcher. Her documentary, *Etu & Nago: The Yoruba Connection* which illumines the story of Yoruba/Nago descendants in Jamaica, West Indies, received Best Documentary Short awards at Reel Sisters of the Diaspora Film and Jamerican Film and Music Festivals. It also won the Jurors' Choice award from the Brooklyn Chapter of Links Film Festival.

In 1995, Olabunmi created Emerging African Cinema, a film course where college students explore Africa's culture, politics, and history through the films of prolific African filmmakers. She has taught this course at Empire State and Medgar Evers Colleges in New York City. A lecturer, Olabunmi has also presented papers in the United States, Jamaica, Cuba, and Nigeria on the influence of African traditional expression in Jamaican culture. Olabunmi earned a BFA and an MA in Cinema Studies from the School of Visual Arts and College of Staten Island, New York City.

Olabunmi directed and produced *Wattle an' Daub*, a cable program on Brooklyn Community Access Television which showcased multifaceted services for children in New York City. She served as production consultant for Osuntoki Mojisola's, *Osun: Her Worship, Her Powers*. Olabunmi's photographs are featured in numerous Yoruba Calendars, and books such as *The Story of Hanover: A Jamaican Parish*, and *The Story of Westmoreland: A Jamaican Parish* by Marguerite R. Curtin, and on the cover of *The Healing Power of Sacrifice* by Baba Araba Ifayemi Elebuibon.

Olabunmi's philosophy has been to use all available mediums to illuminate Africa's contribution to world society. "As a student of African folklore I'm interested in its use in culture, its manifestations of expressive forms in both traditional and modern societies in which the themes, symbols, and protocol that permeate traditional life occupy new positions, or occur in different occasions in everyday life both on the African continent and in the African diaspora."

Filmmaker's Statement

Directing and producing the documentary *Etu & Nago: The Yoruba Connection* was an act of faith. It became a burning desire after discovering that Nigeria, West Africa and Jamaica, West Indies had locales that shared the same name-- Abeokuta. As a Jamaican who had climbed to the top of Olumo Rock in Abeokuta, Nigeria, I felt obligated to learn more about the inhabitants of Abeokuta and other towns in Jamaica where the citizens had visible ties to Nigeria.

Etu & Nago: The Yoruba Connection bears witness to the endurance of ancestral memory against time, distance and bondage. Spending countless hours with the film's subjects and observing their undying faith in and love for the traditional ways of their forefathers, I developed a deep respect for these individuals who

have managed to preserve such a vital part of their heritage. Independently researching, directing and producing this project was a race against time because the majority of the film's participants are in their seventies and eighties. I am of the opinion that elders who have nurtured traditional forms of cultural expressions must have their knowledge recorded before they die and the wisdom of the irreplaceable past is lost in antiquity.

—*Morenike Olabunmi*