



BRAIDS ON A BALD HEAD

A Short Film by Ishaya Bako
Press Booklet

BRAIDS ON A BALD HEAD

A day in the life of a Hausa hairdresser in Northern Nigeria and how she's able to ask for better in her marriage after an experience with a mysterious new neighbour questions her sexuality.

SYNOPSIS

Hauwa Bello (**Mannura Umar**) is a quiet and petite hairdresser who lives with her jobless and abrasive husband Musa (**Johnson Yakubu Sani**), in a compound of six flats with shared facilities in a semi-rural community in Northern Nigeria. Theirs is a marriage which has grown loveless over the years.

Whilst washing clothes early one morning, a new neighbour comes out of her flat and greets Hauwa; this surprises Hauwa as no one else wakes up as early as she does. She serves breakfast to her husband during which she asks about a job interview and if he knew anything about the new neighbour. Her questions irritate him and she leaves him in the flat to go for for a bath. In the bathroom, she mistakenly walks in on the neighbour she met earlier. The woman smiles at her and asks her to close the door as Hauwa just stands, shocked and embarrassed. As Hauwa begins to bathe in the next cubicle the woman introduces herself as Samira (**Lucy Ameh**); and then starts singing.

Delicate Hair Salon is small stall within a row of shops in the market. There are three women having a heated conversation about the acceptable age of a girl to have a boyfriend. Helen (**Jennifer Igbinovia**), a hairdresser and owner of Delicate Salon; Mama Nkechi (**Tina David**), a heavy-set, sharp-tongued woman who is having her hair braided by Helen and Jumoke (**Mopelola Akanbi**), a dark woman waiting to have her hair made. Hauwa walks up to the shop and after short pleasantries, Hauwa begins to braid Jumoke's hair and the conversation resumes but takes a different turn when Hauwa asks the women about Samira. This becomes interesting gossip as the women believe the newcomer; Samira appears too classy to live in their neighbourhood. They also contemplate on the rumour that Samira is a lesbian.

There are a couple of kids playing in front of the compound as Hauwa returns home later that evening, as she walks in, she glances at Samira's flat and sees her loosening her hair, Samira smiles and asks her to help her. Samira welcomes her warmly and Hauwa comes into the flat admiring the use of space and the décor; it is tasteful without being overbearing. Samira sits on the floor in front of Hauwa and they both work on the hair. Hauwa asks Samira some questions and is both frustrated and endeared by her carefree responses. They sit for a minute in silence before Samira begins to sing, it's a song Hauwa knows well and grew up singing. She is too shy to sing with her. Samira asks her to join her and tells her that she has heard her sing in the mornings. The two women sing as Hauwa combs Samira's hair. She asks her why she isn't married. Samira says she doesn't think she

needs to be married to be happy and asks Hauwa if she's happy. The question makes her uncomfortable and she stands to leave. Samira pulls her back and kisses her; it's unexpected but welcome. Samira pulls back and Hauwa is hit with the realization of what this means; she apologizes and runs out of the flat.

Back at her flat, Musa is royally upset that his dinner has gone cold and she wasn't around to warm the food up. He shouts at her on what a useless wife she is; Hauwa shouts back at him. She's as surprised as he is at her outburst. He crosses the room in two giant strides and lands a heavy slap on her face, as he raises his hand for another slap, Hauwa looks at him directly with venom in her eyes- his hand remains suspended in the air... it's a look he's never gotten from his wife before. His hand drops by his side. Hauwa tells him she'll warm his food.

The heated dish is placed on the table and Hauwa sits beside her husband as he eats. He asks her to eat with him, she tells him she's coming. In their small room, Hauwa rolls out her mat and says her evening prayers.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

With Braids on a Bald Head, I aimed at creating a slow burning, observant piece about society and its effects on the relationships we can and cannot make, with the ironies and hypocrisies that come along.

Our central character is a woman that is strong, devout and dextrous but she's in a relationship that is fractured and weathered. Her fascination and attraction to the new woman she meets ignites desires in her that she felt were long gone or she didn't deserve. With this desire also comes confusion on the nature of these feelings and the person they're directed to. As she cannot pursue a relationship with this new woman due to the threats placed by her religion and society, she does the best she can which is to look to the relationship she's in already and stand up for better.

My interest in writing and developing this story and ultimately the rewards I got from the journey in making it stemmed from the beauty and delicateness that exist when women, especially black women make their hair. Indeed, the story itself was created watching and listening to women in the hair salon- the gossip, the care, the fights and of course the love that was shared. I wanted to create a film that represented this world in a small way but was also able to liberate a character in an incredibly subtle way.

The filmmakers I looked up to were Satyajit Ray, for his delicate and responsible portrayal of people living in poverty and Pedro Almodovar for his insight and how he handles female central characters.



Principal Credits

Written and Directed by
Ishaya Bako

Produced by
Oliver Aleogena

Production Manager: Anee Icha
Cinematography: Clarence A. Peters

Editor: Chuka Ejorh

Sound Recordist: Suleiman Yusuf

Set Design: Sunny White

Costumes: Lami Gana

Make Up Artists: Nelly Kogi

Grace Sabo

Music: Bello Buhari

Production Information

Title: Braids on a Bald Head

Genres: Short, Drama, World

Date of Completion: July 2010

Countries of Production: UK, Nigeria

Running Time: 25 minutes

Shooting Format: HD

Aspect Ratio: 16:9

Languages: Hausa and Pidgin English
(with English Subtitles)

Screening Formats: BluRay, Digibeta
and DVD

Production Companies: London Film
School and The Allied Film Company



Contacts

Rights & Sales

Chrissy Bright
Festivals Coordinator/ Film Sales Officer
London Film School
24 Shelton Street, London
WC2H 9UB, United Kingdom

E: c.bright@lfs.org.uk

T: +44 207 2400 161

F: +44 207 2400 167

Production

Ishaya Bako

E: amateur.heads@gmail.com

T (UK): +44 75349 27141

T (NGA): +234 80642 70739

FULL CAST

Hauwa :: **Mannura Umar**
Musa :: **Johnson Yakubu Sani**
Samira :: **Lucy Ameh**
Mama Nkechi :: **Tina David**
Helen :: **Jennifer Igbinovia**
Jumoke :: **Mopelola Akanbi**

FULL CREW

Writer/ Director :: **Ishaya Bako**
Producer :: **Oliver Aleogena**
Cinematography :: **Clarence A. Peters**
Editor :: **Chuka Ejorh**
Set Design :: **Sunny White**
Production Manager :: **Anee Icha**
Production Coordinator :: **Emmanuel Oghaku**
Sound Recordist :: **Suleiman Yusuf**
Music :: **Bello Buhari**
Assistant Director :: **Jerry Abubakar**
1st Assistant Camera :: **Lukman Alabi**
2nd Assistant Camera :: **Dominic Aleogena**
Gaffer :: **Zafi Agbaje**
Spark :: **Ikenna Anyawu**
Grip :: **Standcity Victor**
Make Up Artists :: **Nelly Kogi & Grace Sabo**
Costumes :: **Lami Gana**
Sound Editor :: **Jemima Tytler**
Production Assistants :: **Toba Rotibi & Abubakar Buhari**
Making of Video :: **Shalom Enabulele & Folarin Abimbola**
Translators :: **Mannura Umar & Timothy Whyegon**
Continuity :: **Emma Edosio**
Re-recording Mixer :: **Brendan Nicholson**
Colorist :: **Leo Costa (D-I Room)**



About the Director

A near fatal car crash months after his graduation from university led Ishaya to make a decision away from a career in IT to one behind the camera. His resolve was strengthened when he was accepted into the MA Filmmaking program of the London Film School from which he graduated in 2010 with a distinction and emphasis in directing and producing. He is currently working on the 'Take One Project'; an initiative devised with Nigerian Film producer and director Oliver Aleogena. The Take One Project is a collection of short films from young African filmmakers that portray life in 21st century West Africa.



Selected Filmography

Braids on a Bald Head (July 2010)

Writer/ Director

25mins, HD, Colour, London Film School & The Allied Film Company

School of Curry (December, 2009)

Producer

15mins, 35mm, Colour, London Film School

Blue Baby Elephants (July, 2009)

Writer/ Director

10mins, 35mm, Black & White, London Film School

The Filipino Guide on How to be Invisible in London (April, 2009)

Producer/ Editor

10mins, 16mm, Colour, London Film School

FILMMAKERS



Oliver is a versatile and trained director with a degree in Literature from the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria and over a decade of experience in the film-making industry. He started up as a young director on the set of Nigerian TV series “I Need to Know” where he directed 25 episodes. He followed up with directing breath-taking commercials for various clients including telecoms giants MTN and Globacom, international bank, FCMB, and Nigeria’s biggest political party, PDP. He also directed

the FIFA U-17 World Cup draws (Nigeria 2009) held in the International Conference Center, Abuja. He recently started a reformation in the industry with like minded media professionals, advancing the frontiers in production of audio-visual content, birthing the Allied Film Company in 2006.

Clarence is a graduate of Cinematography & Production Techniques from the City Varsity Film School, Cape town, South Africa. He returned to Nigeria in 2006 joining the revolution train and producing cinematographic works that have remained unparalleled. He is arguably the biggest Music Video director in Nigeria working with some of the biggest names in West African music including ‘P. Square’, ‘2 face’, ‘9ice’ and ‘M.I’.



Clarence A. Peters
Director of Photography

ACTORS

Mannura Umar [Hauwa]

Born and bred in Kano State, Northern Nigeria; Mannura grew up to a not so traditional muslim family of eight. She studied Hausa at the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, where she fell in love with acting while writing and performing in local, indigenous stage dramas. She made her transition to acting in a few TV dramas and began a career in the burgeoning 'Nollywood' industry but quickly got disillusioned by the lack of discipline and creativity. She now writes and provides voice work for Hausa and English radio dramas for international aid organizations including the BBC World Service Trust and USAID.



Lucy Ameh [Samira]

An ordinary girl from an ordinary home Lucy's curiosity for the screen early on eventually became her singular passion. Though oblivious of the ropes, she had always known her destiny was to perform for the camera.

By 2004 at just 16, Lucy Francesca Ameh, had made a resolve to launch her career. Throwing all caution to the wind, with nothing to lose she ventured into her fantasy.

She made a good impression on her first appearance featuring in a TV drama 'Nemesis' and since then made subsequent screen appearances in Nollywood films 'Our Lives', 'Sitanda', 'Angel of Life', 'Total & Final War', 'Beauty & the Beast'.

In 2007 she contested in the reality show 'The Next Movie Star' (Ghana/ Nigeria). In which she came 3rd. Happy with her achievement she resumed other notable film productions such as 'Braids on a Bald Head', 'Distance within', and 'Back story'.

Lucy's craving for the industry seems to be insatiable as she has recently enrolled into the NTA TV College In Jos, Plateau State, aiming to try her hands on Directing movies besides acting.

Johnson Yakubu Sani [Musa]

Johnson grew up in Kaduna and after a degree in Economics, brief stints with working in a Newspaper house and a printing firm took the plunge into acting. He began his career on stage with the play "Woe unto Death". From then he has acted in a couple of Nollywood productions in varying roles.

As well as acting, Johnson is a gifted musician and is currently the Music Director of the 'Ark of God Church' in Abuja. He is also working on a gospel album.

