

Season 16

afropop

THE ULTIMATE CULTURAL EXCHANGE



Discussion Guide

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Leslie Fields-Cruz
BPM Executive Director
Executive Producer of AfroPoP

My colleagues and I are excited to present Season 16 of *AfroPoP: The Ultimate Cultural Exchange*. Over the years, this series has showcased stories from various parts of the African continent, South America, Europe, Australia, the Caribbean, and right here in the good old USA. *AfroPoP* titles have covered arts and culture, politics, human rights, and even sports. This season we're happy to present two documentaries and two narrative films by storytellers from North Carolina, Kenya and Louisiana. We're extremely proud of the series and hope this guide enhances your appreciation for these wonderful films. Special thanks to our funding partners, The Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National Endowment for the Arts; and to our production and distribution partners at WORLD, PBS Plus and PBS affiliated stations across the country. Now, go watch, discuss and share.

— Leslie Fields-Cruz



Chris Hastings
Editor-in-Chief and Executive Producer
WORLD
Executive Producer of AfroPoP

WORLD is once again proud to co-produce this extraordinary series. One of the cool things about *AfroPoP: The Ultimate Cultural Exchange* is the amazing partnerships that enable us to bring it to the viewing public. BPM and WORLD work hard to ensure that *AfroPoP* contains stories that not only entertain but invite viewers to think and learn about the communities, the world and the environment we all share. I invite users of this discussion guide to introduce their friends and family to *AfroPoP*. The conversations these films evoke are discussions Americans need to have as we navigate through our increasingly connected and complex world.

— Chris Hastings

A CELEBRATION OF BLACK STORYTELLING

For the 16th season of *Afropop: The Ultimate Cultural Exchange* we're doing something new. *AfroPoP* has traditionally been a documentary series. With 15 seasons behind us, Sweet Season 16 felt like the right time for a change. Which is why we are devoting half of this season's slate to narrative stories. Shout out to the filmmakers who've taken the time to bring us these powerful stories and to the characters, imagined and real, whose appearances provide much for us to consider. We look forward to the audience response and hope this discussion guide leads you to powerful conversations.

— Denise Greene

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide provides:

- A synopsis of each *AfroPoP* Season 16 film.
- Filmmaker biographies.
- Discussion prompts to stimulate thoughtful conversations.

We invite viewers to:

- Review the synopses and filmmaker biographies.
- Discuss the questions posed for each film.
- Consider how films like these can enhance our knowledge about the issues.

We hope educators, students, artists, cinephiles, social groups, and others will find the guide useful.

WHERE TO WATCH

Online

- blackpublicmedia.org
- worldchannel.org
- PBS virtual platforms

On Public TV

- PBS stations across the U.S. Consult local listings for air times.

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Denise Greene
BPM Director of Programs
AfroPoP 16 Series Producer

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EXCHANGE **pop**

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COMMUTED

Photos from "Commuted"

About the Film

When Danielle Metz's triple life sentence was commuted, she got a rare chance to regain the life and family that she'd been dreaming about in prison. But back home in New Orleans, she steps into a different reality.

Commuted traces Danielle's journey to find purpose and love, and to confront the wounds of incarceration that linger after release from prison.

Meet the Filmmaker

Nailah Jefferson is a native New Orleans filmmaker whose work reflects the community that raised her. Her first film, *Vanishing Pearls*, tells the story of a little-known African American oyster fishing community's fight for justice after a BP oil spill. In 2017, Nailah was nominated for a National Magazine Ellie award for Essence Magazine's Black Girl Magic Episode 4. Her first narrative film, *Plaquemines*, was awarded the inaugural Create Louisiana \$50k Short Film grant.

In 2019, Jefferson's *Commuted* was one of two projects to win \$100,000 at BPM's PitchBLACK Forum & Awards competition.

Discussion Prompts

- A 2024 study on mass incarceration finds that women are now locked up at twice the pace of men in the United States.* What factors do you think contribute to this trend?
-

- More than half (58%) of incarcerated women in the U.S. are mothers of minor children. Black women are overrepresented in the prison population. How do these statistics play out in our communities?
-

- Incarcerated mothers have an especially difficult time maintaining relationships with their children and often lose their parental rights. What community and policy interventions might improve this situation?
-

- Formerly incarcerated Black women often experience severe levels of unemployment. How might communities and employers work together to improve these women's employment prospects?
-

- How has *Commuted* impacted your understanding of what returning citizens like Danielle Metz go through once liberated?

*Women's Mass Incarceration : The Whole Pie 2024. Prison Policy Initiative.



Nailah Jefferson
Producer & Director



Danielle Metz
Co-Producer

Supa Modo



Photos from "Supa Modo"

About the Film

Jo, a witty 9-year-old, terminally ill girl is taken back to her rural village to live out the rest of her short life. Her only comfort during those dull times is her dreams of being a superhero, which prove to be something her rebellious teenage sister Mwix, overprotective mother Kathryn and the entire village of Maweni think they can fulfill.

Meet the Filmmaker

Likarion Wainaina is a Russian-born, Kenyan filmmaker who now lives and works in Nairobi, Kenya. His cinematography credits include a number of documentaries and commercials. He also has directed TV dramas, sitcoms and commercials that are currently airing on Kenyan TV.

Wainaina's short films include *Between the Lines* (2013), which was the first Kenyan film to be projected on an IMAX screen in Kenya, and *BAIT* (2016), which was among the top short films screened that year at the Cannes Film Festival.

Discussion Prompts

- What do you think of Jo's family's decision to remove her from the hospital? And who do you think benefitted from that decision?

- Are there ways that arts organizations in your community support families that are dealing with childhood illnesses? If not, what do you think they could do to support these families?

- Superheroes have long been popular in the United States. Only recently, however, have Black superheroes gained wide appeal. Who are your favorite Black superheroes and why are they among your favorites?

- If you could be a superhero, what powers would you have and how would you make the world a better place?

- What do you think about how this film ends? If you were the director, how would you have ended the film?

- How has this film impacted your thoughts about how to deal with terminal illness?



Likarion Wainaina
Director



Kati Kati

Photos from 'Kati Kati'

About the Film

When Kaleche wakes up in the middle of the wilderness, she has no idea why or how she got there. She makes her way to Kati Kati, a nearby lodge, where she meets a motley crew of residents under the leadership of Thoma. As Kaleche strikes up a quick and intense friendship with him, she discovers that the functional alcoholic is a very special guy at a mysterious place: Kati Kati is inhabited by the souls of dead people waiting for redemption.

Meet the Filmmaker

Director, writer and video artist Mbithi Masya, born in Nairobi, Kenya, began his career as art director in advertising. After joining the art collective JUST A BAND, he left advertising to focus on music, video art and his civic, activist projects. He spent two years working on two separate video art exhibits, one of which, KUDISHNYAO!, was hosted at the Rush Gallery in Manhattan, New York in 2012. He continues to work on commercials and music promos for JUST ABAND and other Kenyan artists, and has continued to create and submit new work for exhibition. *Kati Kati* is his first feature film.

Discussion Prompts

- How does this film’s portrayal of the afterlife square with what you imagine when you contemplate our existence once life as we know it ends?

- What did you think about the setting and costuming decisions made for this film?

- Kaleche remains cool throughout the film. Do you think that was the right choice of demeanor for a character who finds herself in the situation she “awakens” into?

- How is Kati Kati different from the world we all inhabit while we’re alive? How is it the same?

- What genre would you assign to this film (e.g., horror, drama, suspense, thriller, etc.) and why? Also, how would you describe it to persuade a friend to watch it?

- This story relies on the idea that until a person comes to terms with what they did while living, they can never escape Kati Kati. What do you think about that?

- What message(s), if any, do you take away from this story?



Mbithi Maysa
Director/Co-writer



Freedom Hill

Photos from "Freedom Hill"

About the Film

Princeville, N.C., sits atop wet, swampy land along the Tar River in North Carolina.

Resting along the floodplain of the river, Princeville and its residents are not strangers to adversity. The historical town has been inundated with flooding over the centuries. With each flood, a little more of the small town erodes.



Meet the Filmmaker

Resita Cox's films are a poetic portrayal of her community's irrepressible spirit and resilience in the face of racism. Born and raised in the South, her films center Southern, Black communities and use them as a lens to examine topics ranging from environmental justice to racial justice. With a degree in journalism from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Cox started her career as a storyteller in TV news. She has worked with Kartemquin Films as the impact producer on their Emmy-nominated docuseries *We Are Witnesses*. As the director of *Freedom Hill*, she was named a 2021 Hulu/Kartemquin Accelerator Fellow.

Discussion Prompts

- The history of Black communities across the United States being erected on land that others consider undesirable is older than the nation itself. Are there places in your area that are the result of racialized topography?
-

- Climate change and the lack of economic opportunity in places like Princeville contribute to population loss. What opportunities might there be for communities like this in the global green economy?
-

- Reparations is a recurring topic in our national discourse. What might reparations look like for a community like Princeville/Freedom Hill?
-

- There is a perception among many Americans that struggling Black towns like Princeville are the way they are because the residents don't aspire to or work toward anything better. How does this film disrupt those perceptions?
-

- Despite the challenges residents of Princeville face, the film reveals the community to be one where people are deeply committed to faith, family and culture. How does that compare with the community where you live?



Resita Cox
Director/Producer

**Fast fashion is all the rage.
But are its environmental
consequences really worth it?**

It's time to reconsider our shopping habits.



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September 2024**

BE HEARD: #ShopLikeNana is made possible by support from Paramount +

Appreciation

Black Public Media salutes all the media storytellers whose creative contributions have appeared on AfroPoP over the past 16 seasons.

(Listed below in alphabetical order by first name)

Abdul Fofanah	Jamie Meltzer	Nailah Jefferson
Alain Gomis	Janet Goldwater	Nora Chipaumire
Alex LeMay	Jarreth Merz	Nora Philippe
Alla Kovgan	Jeffrey Wolf	Nosarieme Garrick
Amir George	Jeremy Robbins	Odette Geldenhuys
Andy Adkins	Jérôme Guiot	Olivia Peace
Barbara Attie	Jessica Beshir	Opiyo Okeyo
Barron Claiborne	Joel Zito Araújo	Pablo García Pérez de Lara
Bentley Brown	John Rowe	Pascale Obolo
Blitz the Ambassador	Juan Mejia Botero	Piotr Cieplak
Bobbito García	Keith Aumont	Rachel Perkins Adkins
Caleb Heymann	Keren Shayo	Rachèle Magloire
Cambria Matlow	Kevin Couliou	Raja Amari
Carrie Hawks	Kevin Merz	Raoul Peck
Chantal Regnault	Kivilcim Akay	Rebecca Richman Cohen
Chris Metzler	Lev Anderson	Regi Allen
Christine List	Likarion Wainaina	Resita Cox
Christine Turner	Lisa Russell	Roberto Manhães Reis
Christopher Nizza	Luchina Fisher	Rosalynde LeBlanc
Claire Duguet	Luciano Blotta	Rudzani Dzuguda
Daan Veldhuizen	Madeleine Hunt-Ehrlich	Sam Pollard
Dan Fallshaw	Magali Damas	Sara de Gouviea
Dara Kell	Maggie Betts	Shahari Moore
David Hinton	Marc Serena	Shamira Raphaëla
Dieudo Hamadi	Marco Williams	Sia Nyorkor
Ditte Haarløv Johnsen	Mariette Monpierre	Simon Sheridan
Duana Butler	Mario Furloni	Stacey Holman
Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi	Mbithi Masya	Tamara Dawit
Eliaichi Kimaro	Micah Fink	Terence Nance
Emily Harrold	Michael Fequiere	Thierry Teston
Eric Kabera	Michèle Stephenson	Thomas Allen Harris
Eva Weber	Mika Kaurismäki	Tre Whitlow
George Amponsah	Miquel Galofré	Tyler Johnston
George Potter	Morgan Robinson	Viola Scheuerer
Hélène Harder	N'Jeri Eaton	Violeta Ayala
Hoku Uchiyama	Nadia Hallgren	Weaam Williams
Jacob Templin		Yaba Blay

Hungry for more?

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WATCH earlier seasons on the
BPM Website,
WORLDchannel.org and PBS Passport



Share your thoughts with us on social media

We love hearing from viewers!

Visit our Facebook Groups page to continue discussions about the Season 16 films.



Follow us on Instagram for the latest news on upcoming mixers, filmmaker chats and other engagement opportunities.



Check out our Digital Shorts series:



Showcasing a new short film every month

Now streaming on the BPM YouTube channel

Visit us online at blackpublicmedia.org

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THE ULTIMATE CULTURAL EXCHANGE

is presented by



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BLACK PUBLIC MEDIA (BPM)

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Discussion guide by

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Photo collage from "Commuted"