

MATABELELAND

A FILM BY NYASHA KADANDARA

ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT

Main Film Contact: Producer - Sam Soko - ssoko@lbxafrica.com

Additional Film Contact: Director – Nyasha Kadandara- nyasha.kadandara@gmail.com Press

Contact LBx Africa - Lucky Mwachi - lucky@lbxafrica.com

Sales and Distribution Contact: Chloe Genga – chloe@lbxafrica.com

South America - Distribution Contact: Hi Kigali – festival@hikigali.com



LOGLINE

Chris, a 60 year old immigrant struggling to support his sprawling family, believes his father's unburied spirit has cursed him. His father was killed in a genocide whose echoes still haunt him. As he finds love with Dumi, who demands greater commitment, he's forced to confront his past, his faith, and the weight of the legacy he's built.

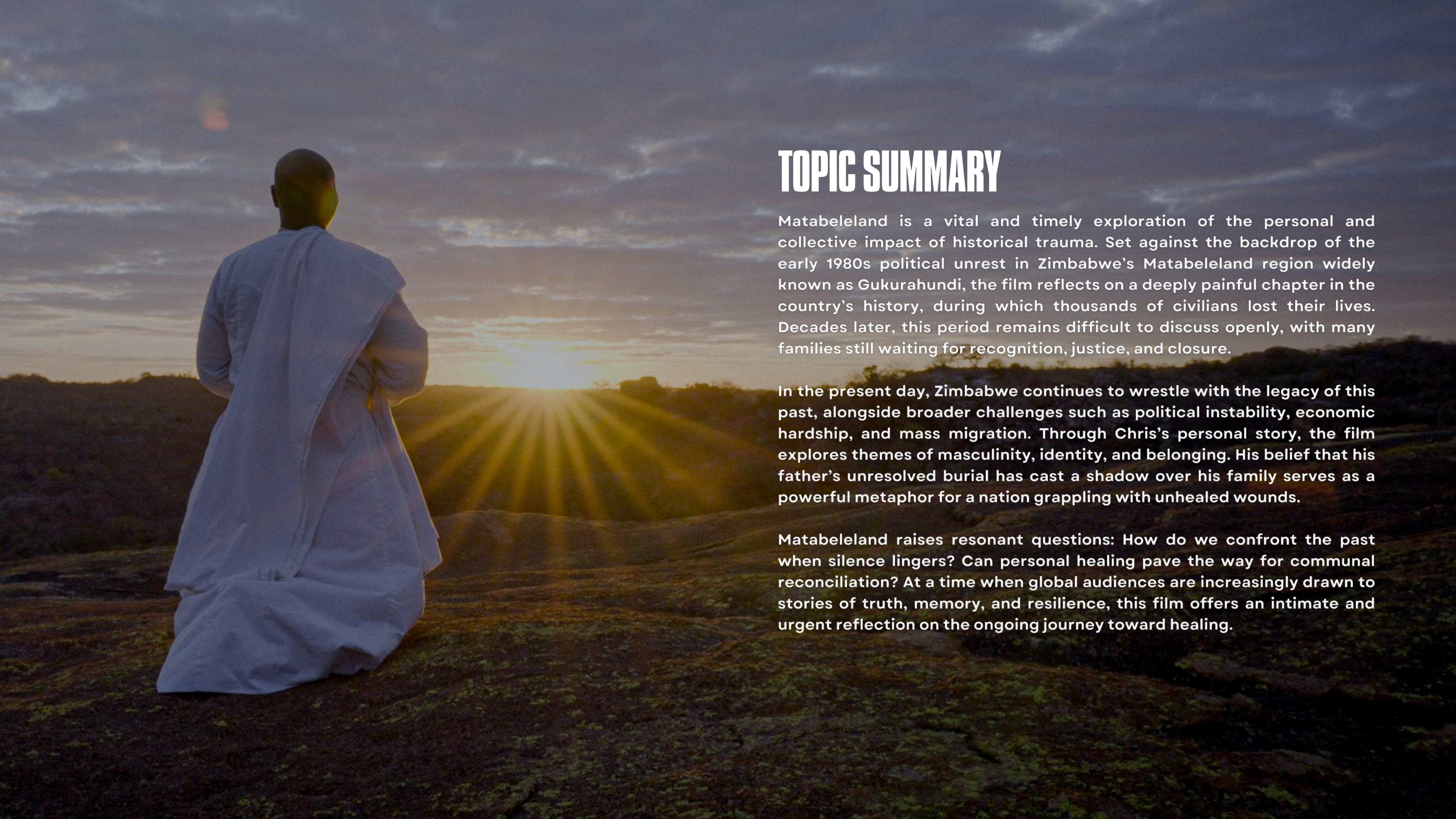
SHORT SYNOPSIS

Chris has long believed his family's misfortunes and his financial struggles are the result of a curse. Twenty years after leaving Zimbabwe, life in Botswana has not brought the relief he hoped for. Instead, things keep getting worse. He finds comfort in charismatic spirituality and in his girlfriend, Dumi, who sees a future with him despite his sprawling family. Dumi, a single mother and ever warm, is happy to have found love but wary of what the future holds. She makes one thing clear: without commitment, they have no future.

When a political shift in Zimbabwe reopens old wounds, Chris is forced to confront the thing he's tried to bury. His father was killed during a period of violence in Matabeleland in the mid-1980s, and Chris believes his spirit left without a proper burial haunts the family. When Chris meets Shari, a woman helping families exhume and rebury loved ones, he is offered the chance to finally set things right.

As he begins this journey, Chris must face a deeper question: can he finally embrace the peace and love he's been searching for, or will the past continue to shape the life he's built in its shadow?

'Matabeleland' is a rare exploration of vulnerability in African manhood, a personal story of how historical violence ripples through generations, shaping families, relationships, and identity.



TOPIC SUMMARY

Matabeleland is a vital and timely exploration of the personal and collective impact of historical trauma. Set against the backdrop of the early 1980s political unrest in Zimbabwe's Matabeleland region widely known as Gukurahundi, the film reflects on a deeply painful chapter in the country's history, during which thousands of civilians lost their lives. Decades later, this period remains difficult to discuss openly, with many families still waiting for recognition, justice, and closure.

In the present day, Zimbabwe continues to wrestle with the legacy of this past, alongside broader challenges such as political instability, economic hardship, and mass migration. Through Chris's personal story, the film explores themes of masculinity, identity, and belonging. His belief that his father's unresolved burial has cast a shadow over his family serves as a powerful metaphor for a nation grappling with unhealed wounds.

Matabeleland raises resonant questions: How do we confront the past when silence lingers? Can personal healing pave the way for communal reconciliation? At a time when global audiences are increasingly drawn to stories of truth, memory, and resilience, this film offers an intimate and urgent reflection on the ongoing journey toward healing.

MEET THE MAIN CAST

CHRIS NYATHI

Chris, a Zimbabwean in his 60s, migrated to Botswana in 2003 after losing his government job due to unpaid wages. Since then, he has worked as a truck driver while supporting both his extended family back home and his growing family in Botswana. Chris took on the burden of caring for his siblings after his father's mysterious death when Chris 22—a loss that continues to haunt him. For the past seven years, he has shared his life with Dumi, whose desire for deeper emotional commitment now clashes with his unresolved past.



DUMI NDABA

Dumi, a single mother and paralegal at a law firm in Botswana, is Chris' partner of seven years. Though she initially didn't take him seriously, their bond grew strong over time. Now, despite their years together, Dumi feels she's still uncovering parts of Chris and longs for a deeper, more formal commitment. She wants to get married—but her patience is wearing thin.





DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When I met Chris in 2018, I was moved by his courage to let a camera capture his father's reburial, fully aware of the potential repercussions. His willingness to be filmed in moments of vulnerability—around his children, co-workers, and girlfriend—is rare, especially for an African man in his sixties. This openness drew me in, compelling me to document his journey to uncover what it might reveal about our people and our country.

Matabeleland' is my first independent feature and my first documentary about Zimbabwe, my home. This film offers a nuanced, deeply personal perspective on a misunderstood region, presenting Zimbabwe beyond the usual focus on politics or the ever-struggling economy. Through Chris's story, I hope Zimbabweans can confront our history, seeing in his struggles a mirror of our collective trauma and resilience, particularly for those from Matabeleland who have long felt unseen.

As an immigrant for 17 years, I've seen how little people understand about Zimbabweans beyond the headlines. In Zimbabwe, the 1980s genocide in Matabeleland remains largely unspoken, its impact misunderstood or denied. This silence has fueled ongoing violence and fractured communities. Through Chris's journey, I hope to explore the roots of this violence and the weight of truth left untold.

Returning to Matabeleland each year since 2018, I witnessed the deepening wounds within the community I grew up in. Filming Chris is my way of seeking healing and understanding for this region. My hope is that 'Matabeleland' will offer audiences a more complex view of who we are, beyond the caricatures of a struggling African state.

ARTISTIC APPROACH AND TONE

This story is captured with an intimate verité style, predominantly filmed handheld by the self-shooting director. This technique allows a unique closeness between Chris, the director, and the audience, creating a fluid blend between observer and participant. The handheld approach not only brings viewers into Chris's world but also subtly examines the impact of the camera itself, enhancing the raw authenticity of Chris's interactions with his children, partner, and co-workers. Each encounter reveals different facets of his character, allowing us to witness the complexities of his manhood.

'Matabeleland' transcends an individual's struggle, reflecting on a legacy of historical and cultural upheaval while probing the nature of masculinity and belonging in a shifting world. It's an expression of life through the lenses of ethnicity, love, dictatorship, and migration. Though deeply rooted in Southern Africa, the film's themes are universal, posing questions that resonate worldwide: What is the role of a man? Should I stay, or should I return? How do we heal from past wounds? These universal themes are likely to draw broad international audiences, while also speaking powerfully to underrepresented viewers, especially those with roots in similar places.

CONNECTION TO THE STORY

The director and principal cinematographer was born and raised in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe. She has lived through many tumultuous moments in the region and met Chris, the principal protagonist, in 2018 when they both saw new opportunities following the coup that ousted the dictator Robert Mugabe. Chris saw a window to retrieve his father and reburial him. Nyasha saw an opportunity to make a film that reflects the intergenerational trauma rife in her home region. Together they set out to tell the story that is not 'Matabeleland'. Both Chris and Nyasha also have shared experiences around being longtime immigrants and the challenges that cause family relationships.

The producers and editors of this project view this film as not only an opportunity to address past trauma but also as a chance for African men to reconcile with the complexities of modern African masculinity. The kind of vulnerability witnessed between Chris and Dumi is rare, sometimes shocking and inspiring. It's the story of many men of a particular generation on the continent. This includes navigating the challenges of the past, meeting present expectations, and facing an uncertain future. Something that might as well resonate globally.

TEAM



SAM SOKO
PRODUCER

Sam Soko is a Nairobi-based documentary filmmaker known for his bold socio-political storytelling. His work has screened at Sundance, Berlin, and TIFF, earning Emmy, Peabody, PGA and other recognition. A strong advocate for freedom of expression, Sam engages in global discussions on impactful media. He co-founded LBx Africa, a Kenyan production company dedicated to collaborating and sharing African perspectives with the world.



NYASHA KADANDARA
DIRECTOR

Nyasha is an award-winning pan-African director and cinematographer who tells stories that traverse the continent and reflect alternative voices. She is always looking to experiment with new forms of storytelling including virtual reality, podcasting, fiction and non-fiction. Her work has been showcased at numerous festivals including Hotdocs, Sheffield DocFest, SxSW and DOC NYC. Nyasha is a 2022 Brown Girls Doc Mafia Fellow, a Sundance Documentary Fund Grantee and recently participated in the 2023 TIFF Filmmakers lab.



BOB MOORE
CO-PRODUCER

Bob Moore is a Montreal-based documentary film producer and partner at Eyesteelfilm, known for his award-winning work that has screened globally. He sits on the executive board of the Documentary Organization of Canada and consults international institutions on film production. Bob also distributes films through Eyesteelfilm's dedicated theatrical distribution company. Before film, he worked in law, philosophy, and the arts, fostering his passion for social and political storytelling.

PRODUCTION COMPANIES



Established in 2012, LBx Africa (Lightbox Limited) is a Nairobi-based production company that produces high-quality Fiction and Non-fiction content. We collaborate with filmmakers across the continent to bring uniquely African perspectives to global audiences. We currently have projects ongoing in different parts of the world.

Our work includes the multi-award-winning and Oscar-nominated film 'Watu Wote' (2017), critically acclaimed documentary 'Softie' (2020), which won the World Documentary Cinema Special Jury Award for Editing at the Sundance Film Festival, 'No Simple Way Home' (2022), 'Free Money' (2022), 'What Is Eating My Mind' (2023), 'Lea: Sicke Cell The Enemy Within' (2023), 'Beneath The Tides' (2024), and Matabeleland (2025).



EyeSteelFilm is a documentary film and interactive media company dedicated to using cinematic expression as a catalyst for social and political change. Their work has been celebrated at festivals such as Sundance, IDFA and the Toronto International Film Festival. They have collaborated with a wide range of partners, such as the National Film Board of Canada, CBC, CTV, Documentary Channel, Bravo!, BBC Storyville, ZDF/ARTE, PBS and National Geographic International.

LINK TO PRESS ASSETS AND VISUAL MATERIAL

Click here to access stills, BTS Photos and crew photos:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1UDCltr18vfuaRHth5p-asJTZqj465Z8H?usp=drive_link

PARTIAL CREDITS

Director: Nyasha Kadandara

Producer: Sam Soko

Co-Producer: Bob Moore

Cinematographer: Nyasha Kadandara

Editor: Jordan Inaan

Executive Producers: Bramwel Iro, Sam Soko, Bob Moore, Mila Aung-Thwin, Dan Cross, Ron DeFilippo

Line Producers: Joan Nyeri, Ruth Munyiri

Original Score: Eduardo Aram, Gabriel Milliet

Principal Cast: Chris Nyathi, Dumi Ndaba, Shari Eppel

FILM LINKS

Social Media and Film information links

<https://linktr.ee/matabelelandfilm>

