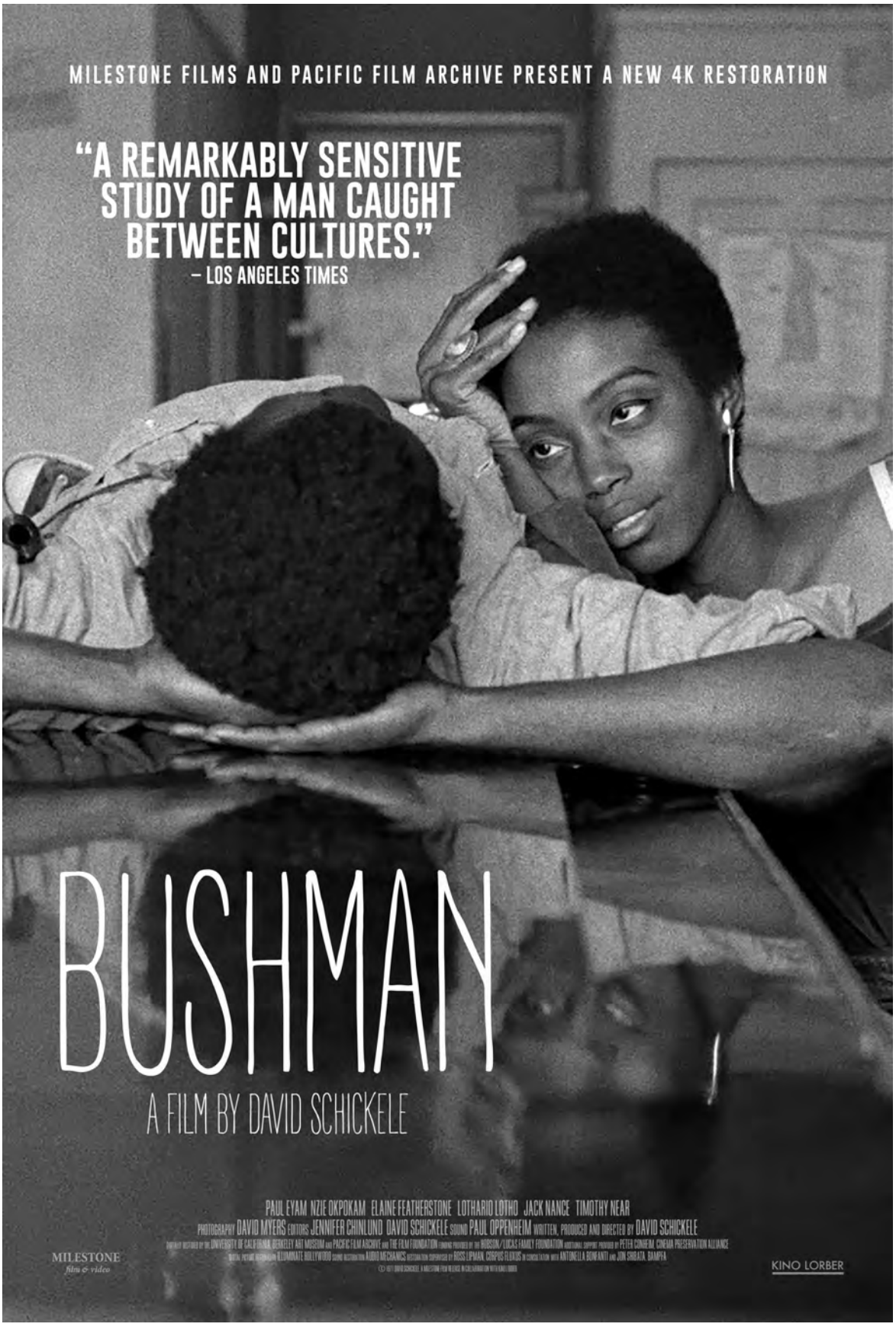

MILESTONE FILMS AND PACIFIC FILM ARCHIVE PRESENT A NEW 4K RESTORATION
"A REMARKABLY SENSITIVE STUDY OF A MAN CAUGHT BETWEEN CULTURES."
– LOS ANGELES TIMES
BUSHMAN
A FILM BY DAVID SCHICKELE
PAUL EYAM NZIE OKPOKAM ELAINE FEATHERSTONE LOTHARIO LOTHO JACK NANCE TIMOTHY NEAR
PHOTOGRAPHY DAVID MYERS EDITORS JENNIFER CHINLUND DAVID SCHICKELE SOUND PAUL OPPENHEIM WRITTEN, PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY DAVID SCHICKELE
MILESTONE
film & video
KINO LORBER

Bushman: The Adventures of an African in America (1971) has been restored by the University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive and The Film Foundation. Funding provided by the Hobson/Lucas Family Foundation. Additional support provided by Peter Conheim, Cinema Preservation Alliance. A Milestone Film & Video/Kino Lorber release.

Digital Picture Restoration: Illuminate Hollywood
Color Grading: Andrew Drapkin
Sound Restoration and Transfers: John Polito, Audio Mechanics
Optical Track Negative: Simon Daniel Sound
Film Laboratory: Fotokem
Restoration and remastering supervised by Ross Lipman, Corpus Fluxus in consultation with Antonella Bonfanti and Jon Shibata, BAMPFA.

Special thanks:
Gail Schickele and Nighttrain Schickele
Steve Wiener and Bill Tayman, Illuminate Hollywood
Amy Heller and Dennis Doros, Milestone Films
Cathy Carapella, Global Image Works

Bushman (directed by David Schickele, US, 1971) has been restored and digitally remastered from the original 35mm black-and-white picture and soundtrack negatives. In addition to the fully restored digital edition, new 35mm prints have been struck from the original picture negative and newly restored optical soundtrack. The work was completed in Fall 2022.

1968: Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy, and Bobby Hutton are among the recent dead. In Nigeria, the Civil War is entering its second year with no end in sight. In San Francisco, the adventures of Gabriel, a young Nigerian reflects tribal, personal, and racial frictions during the tumultuous sixties. Truth is stranger than fiction in Bushman, a rare sort of film portrait, part document, part imagined - poetic in its approach to real events.

Cast:
Bushman ..... Paul Eyam Nzie Okpokam
Motorcyclist ..... Mike Slye
Alma ..... Elaine Featherstone
Alma's brother ..... Lothario Lotho
Friend ..... James Earl Garrison
White Girl ..... Ann Scofield
Black Waitress ..... Shezwae Powell
Felix ..... Jack Nance
Mark ..... David Schickele
Diane ..... Donna Michelson
Susie ..... Timothy Near
Marty ..... Patrick Gleeson

Black Friend..... David Major
Curtis Branch..... Curtis Branch
Steno Mask..... Florence Schwartz
John Dotson ..... John Dotson

Crew
Photographed by..... David Myers
Sound recorded by..... Paul Oppenheim
Additional Photography by ..... Stephen Lighthill and Kirk Smallman
Production Manager ..... Gene Doherty
San Francisco State College Strike footage by Ralph Arlyck
Script Supervisor ..... Cindy Harwood
Stills of Deportation ..... Margo Davis
Production Associates: Arnie Cohen, Mary Colwell, Dan Loewenthal, Michael Murray, Rick Paup, Pat Riley, James Spears, Ken Valentine
Sound Mixed at American Zoetrope . Peter More
Nigerian Music Recorded by ..... David Ames
Edited by ..... Jennifer Chinlund and David Schickele
Special Effects by..... Steve Wax
Sine Qua Non ..... Ginna Frank
Directed by..... David Schickele
Dedicated to..... Etan and Ogbe
Produced by the Bushman Company with the help of a seed grant from The American Film Institute

Special Thanks to

Peter Buchanan
Garden Club Bar
Diane Porter
John Hanson
Rob Nilsson
Naomi Coe
Howard Swann
Bill Broder
Clair Salop
Harris Wofford
Bob Primes
Loki
Adam Miller
Don Brennan
Rod Freebairn-Smith
Roger Landrum
Dale Dearden
John Eskow
Larry Hankin
Doug Korty
Sara Morris
King
Wilma Moses
Steven Vincent
Francis Coppola
Barbara Edmonds
Jerry Greenbaum
David Strain
Gregson Davis
Chris Pearce
Orville Schell
Willie Robinson
Burns Ellison
Zak Thompson
T-Bone
Carleton Carey
Clarence Carey
Bobby Shaw
Sally Collier
David Goheen
John Korty
Sandra Schickele
George Changaris

Music Credits

“Down in the Valley”
Written by Bert Berns, Solomon Burke, Babe Chivian, Joseph C Martin
Courtesy of Unichappell Music In. (BMI), Wren Music Co., A Division of MPL Music Publishing, Inc. (BMI), Sony Music Publishing
Performed by Otis Redding
By arrangement with Warner Music Group

“Blue Velvet”
Written by Lee Morris (ASCAP) and Bernie Wayne (BMI)
Courtesy of Steve Peter Music (ASCAP), Bernie Wayne Music Co c/o Songs of Mojo One (BMI), Universal Songs of PolyGram lnternational, Inc. (BMI), Universal Music Publishing Group.
Performed by Bobby Vinton
By arrangement with Sony Music Entertainment

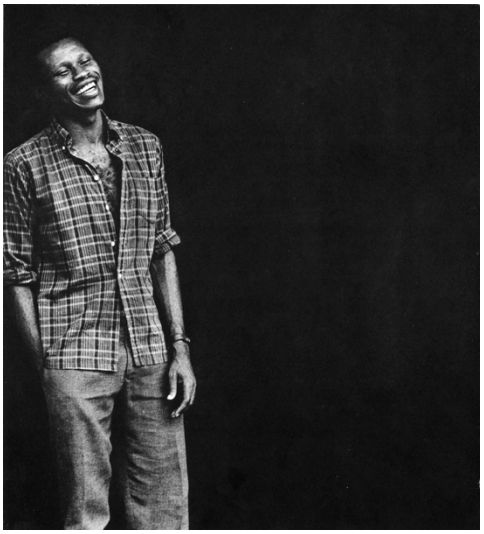
"Respect"
Writers: Otis Redding
Courtesy of O R M Inc (BMI), Royalty Network
Performed by Aretha Franklin
By arrangement with Warner Music Group and Otis Redding Foundation

“My Girl”
William “Smokey” Robinson and Ronald A. White
Courtesy of Bourne Co. and Sony Music Publishing
Performed by The Temptations
By arrangement with Motown Records under license from Universal Music Enterprises

Additional support for music rights provided by Peter Conheim, Cinema Preservation Alliance.

Premiere: San Francisco Film Festival, October 10, 1971.

Brief Synopsis (written by David Schickele)



The year is 1968, a year marked in the United States by social upheavals, political assassinations, and violence of all kinds. In Nigeria, the civil war with Biafra is entering its second year with no end of the suffering in sight. On the outskirts of San Francisco, a young Nigerian named Gabriel is walking at dawn with his shoes on his head, hitching a ride.

A crazy three-wheel motorcycle picks him up and takes him to the Fillmore, the Black section of San Francisco. Gabriel is half in love with a Black girl named Alma, but this is to be their last day together: Alma is going back to work In Watts, the ghetto where she grew up. Gabriel cannot follow. He has not been in the United States long enough to really understand what is happening to, and in the minds of, American Blacks.

Heartsick and culturally stranded, Gabriel enrolls In San Francisco State College after the termination of his initial job - teaching African languages to Peace Corps trainees.
He studies, fights financial problems, fences with sexual predators of various kinds, a white girl who confuses sex with charity and charity with hatred, and a homosexual yearning to be ravished by the Dark Continent.

Interwoven with Gabriel's adventures in America are glances back to his African origins: his childhood in a small village; the confusions of a Christian missionary education; the intellectual awakening of the African universities; the euphoria of independence from Britain giving way to the realities of politics and survival.

In America Gabriel becomes increasingly alarmed and concerned at the political and racial mood around him, worrying at the same time about the fate of his family and friends back home in the fortunes of a terrible and elusive civil war. He escapes from the city for a few days on a camping trip to the mountains with some friends. There he meets a girl named Susie whom he eventually woos away from her previous lover. But before this new love has a chance to develop…

The screen goes black. We hear the voices of a camera crew. A new face appears on the screen, telling us that the film, only half shot, cannot be finished. The main actor has been deported.

This was indeed planned in the script, but the reality happened faster. The actor Paul Okpokam was really arrested on false charges connected with the San Francisco State College Strike. The remainder of the film chronicles Paul’s arrest and his subsequent Involuntary intimacies with the legal and penal systems of California. After a year In Jail, the final months in the dangerous corridors of San Quentin, the U.S. Immigration Service deported Paul Okpokam to Nigeria.

AN INTRODUCTION TO A NEW AMERICAN INDEPENDENT FEATURE FILM

David Schickele

[This was David Schickele's fundraising letter to make the film.]

Since making "Give Me A Riddle", a document of an American's relation to his African friends and their Africa, I have wanted to make a sequel, as a 35mm dramatic feature, about an African in America. This is a new idea in American film. There are many novels based on the confrontation of native and foreigner but most of these involve a "civilized" man among "primitive" men. By reversing the situation, I will be able to play with old concepts in new ways. This film will be a "Passage to India", a "Heart of Darkness" turned upside down.

Paul Okpokam will play the leading character. His imagination, expressiveness, and individuality have impressed me since we first met in a Nigerian classroom six years ago. I saw him perform on the university stage and in the villages, which he would sometimes entertain with his own impromptu folktales. In "Give Me A Riddle" Paul proved to have a strong and beguiling screen presence. That presence in this feature will be one of its defining characteristics.

In writing the screenplay I have been aided by conversations with Paul about his perceptions and experiences in America. The events and characters are fictitious, however. This will not be a documentary, though I hope to capture a kind of documentary reality by encouraging controlled improvisations within the basic design. Paul will play the part of Gabriel Kajuguma, a wild and gentle young man of Africa whose Western education has not destroyed his basic identification with the "bush". He is at once a representative of traditional Africa and an individual in pursuit of personal growth and freedom.

Contemporary Reviews

As with most "discoveries," previous audiences and critics had found the movie when it was first screened at film festivals in 1971 and 1972, but the lack of distribution — and the disinterest in a wider audience to deal with the facts of how our country deals with immigration — caused its disappearance from mainstream cinema history. It was the Gold Hugo for Best First Feature at the Chicago Film Festival, a cash prize finalist at the USA Utah Film Festival (1978), and played in the San Francisco, Filmex Los Angeles, Dallas, Atlanta, Washington AFI, London, Venice, Florence Festival dei Popoli, Pesaro and Adelaide Film Festivals. Here are quotes from some of the better reviews of the film from those festivals.

A rare sort of film portrait, part document, part imaginary and poetic in its approach to real events, ***Bushman*** *is the first feature film by David Schickele. It describes the experiences and misadventures of a young Nigerian, Paul Okpokam (nicknamed Gabriel) who comes to America for the first time, settles in the Bay Area and attends San Francisco State College. One is immediately struck by the exciting juxtaposition of African outlooks and California urban life, especially in the sudden flashbacks to Gabriel's Nigerian village, with its simplicities contrasted to the complex life-hustle of a Fillmore existence. The vivid omniscience of director Schickele's position is imagined from the beginning of the film, as we see this displaced African, hitchhiking on the freeway, with his shoes balanced on his head. For the first time in American cinema, an educated African elucidates in a no-nonsense manner, the bewildering ineptness of American society to live humanistically, with every opportunity to do this either ignored or thwarted. Because one begins to see Black American life through an expatriate African's eyes, certain revelations occur—in a deserted barroom, Gabriel and his Black girlfriend converse. She tries to teach him the street inflections of Negro dialect, with humorous lack of success, then launches into a rueful monologue describing a childhood in Watts. It is an improvised, touching description that tells us more about Black women and their ability to interpret the entrapment of their men into the rackets or pimpdom, better than any sociological text. With the humor of real life,* ***Bushman*** *underscores its tragedies, exemplified by Gabriel's American sojourn. The African's plight is simply shown, and in a strange way, one feels wiser for having seen* ***Bushman****, for the director has shared his own and his hero's life with the world—a gift so timeless that one must learn from it and cherish its possession.* —Albert Johnson

"David Schickele's ***Bushman*** *is an entry in this year's Chicago International Film Festival that you should really go out of your way to see. It begins as a fictional documentary about a Nigerian student…He is an extraordinarily intelligent and likable person, sometimes hurt but often bemused by his adventures in our crazy society. The feature film that could have been made from this material…would have been a great one, I think. There is a use of dialog and music and camera movement that really does get Paul's spirit down on the film, and we feel we know him. There's delicate comic touch. in scenes like one where Paul answers the wrong ad in an underground paper… But before this feature film can be realized…the narrative is abruptly interrupted…The way this ending is handled – gently, sadly, never polemically — by Paul's friends succeeds, against the odds, in giving the movie a total form all the same.* ***Bushman*** *is a remarkable testament."* – Roger Ebert, *Chicago Sun-Times*

"A far more cogent contemporary comment is made by ***Bushman****… Schickele's portrait of the foreign environment surrounding the Nigerian is perceptive and compassionate. The camera spots tell-tale details everywhere – a huge highway sign warns, GO BACK – you are going*

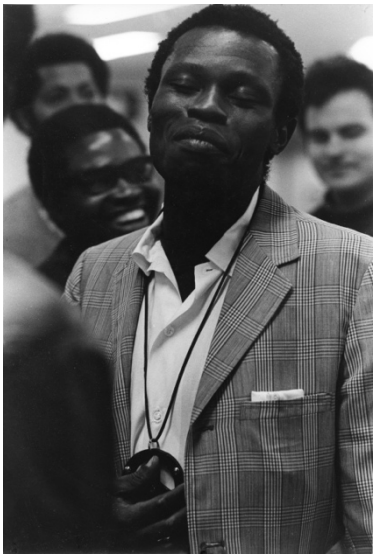
WRONG WAY. In a bar, the Nigeran ponders his identity as a Black man while wall posters of homogenized Blacks – including a slicked-down Brook Benton – stare down at him. …On a jukebox Aretha Franklin is spelling out R-E-S-P-E-C-T in seductive spurts, but the word is just harsh irony for the Nigerian…The story of the deportation had to be told in stills, and these are accompanied by a sweeping orchestral sigh that intensifies the heartsinking tragedy of the story. This is quite a movie" — Tom Shales, *Washington Post*

"Generally speaking, documentaries were the best of the things we saw in Dallas. Like everything else, they were often overlong, but the strongest of them were interesting enough to override the sprawl. One of these, Bushman, an account of a Nigerian who had been living and studying in San Francisco and was later deported, is both a remarkably sensitive study of a man caught between cultures and a tough examination of the subculture in which he lived here…There were angry films on view, pieces arising in political commitment and the best of these, including Bushman…" — Charles Champlin, *Los Angeles Times* reporting on the USA Film Festival, 1972

"The one indisputable talent among the new directors was David Schickele, until now known mainly as one of the pie-throwers at the 1969 first night. Times change: one of the targets is now the Chief of Police, Schickele is sufficiently respectable to rate financial support from the American Film Institute, and ***Bushman*** *is a very good film. It gains added resonance from what we know about its protagonist, but doesn't depend on it… But everything that was included is fresh, unhackneyed, and often funny. Okpokam's accent and a rather muddy soundtrack sometimes combine to make the dialogue unintelligible, but otherwise* ***Bushman*** *is very well made, particularly David Myers' razor-sharp camera work."* – Joseph Kostolefsky, *Film Society Review* reporting on the 15th San Francisco Film Festival.

"David Schickele's fine ***Bushman****…The movie ends with the deportation, but despite all provocation, its mood is relaxed, tolerantly ironic, sophisticated with a delight in subtle complexities that seems, in its lack of stridency, post-revolutionary."* – Roger Greenspun, New York Times

Dr. Paul Eyamnzie Okpokam

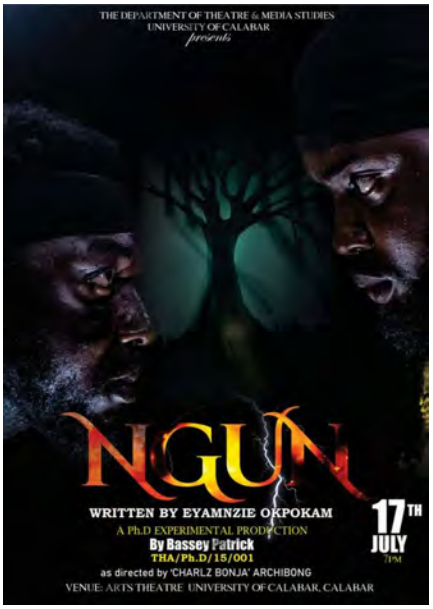


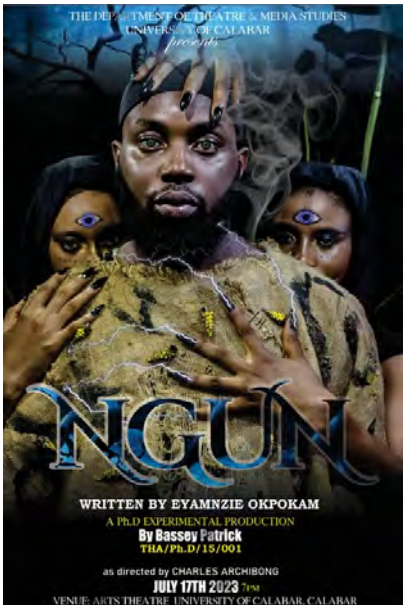
Born December 18, 1939, and died September 19, 2018, age 78. David Schickele spent 1961-1963 in Nigeria, teaching English at the University of Nigeria at Nsukka. Paul became his best student and a good friend. When Schickele went back to Nigeria to shoot GIVE ME A RIDDLE, their friendship continued to grow. Schickele had decided to do a documentary about a Black man in America and when Okpokam decided in 1967 to get a Master's degree in drama from San Francisco State University, they started to talk about ideas for the film. They started shooting it in 1968. Okpokam had tried to keep clear of the strike at SFSU because he knew his Visa would be endangered, but he found himself under arrest, and imprisoned for one year. After more than a year of working to get Paul out of Jail (David said, "I spent all of 1969 on it"), finally with the help of then California legislator Willie Brown, he was released for deportation. David quickly called friends to meet Paul at the airport where they had little time. No photos were allowed but there were some "undercover" photos taken including the 'ultimate' shot of Paul after someone put a peace symbol around his neck. It appears at film's end; the photo was taken by Margo Davis.

It's interesting that in an interview with Kingsley Akam just before he died, Okpokam mentions being in another film during his stay in San Francisco. Thanks to his description, we now know he appears (uncredited) in James Broughton's 1968 film, THE BED.

After his deportation to Nigeria, Okpokam went back to teaching, acting and directing in rural theater groups, and then wrote plays. He was never allowed back into the US. Schickele went back to Nigeria in 1972 to screen the film for Okpokam and his other friends he had made during his days in the Peace Corps. At least three of Okpokam's plays were published in Nigeria:

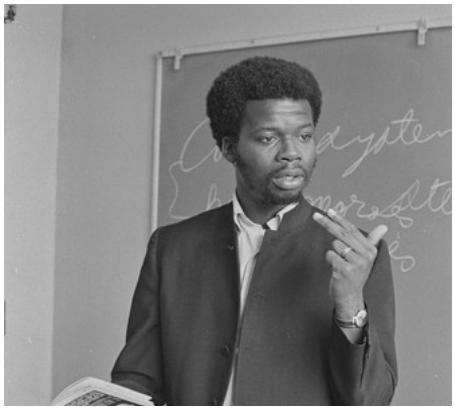
"Ngun: An African play in three acts," (recent posters below), "The Inheritor," and "The Ancestral Spear."





Dr. Paul Eyamnzie Okpokam – Mistaken Identity

It should be noted that in the David Schickele papers, that at the time of the San Francisco State College strike, police had stopped Paul Eyamnzie Okpokam a number of times because to them, he looked like one of the leaders of the strike, George Murray (left, below), who also taught English at the college. Schickele stated in his correspondence that Paul, concerned about his visa, was especially careful of staying away from the strike for this reason.



Elaine Featherstone (Alma)

Almost nothing is known of Elaine Featherstone outside of this movie. In 1970, she is writing a letter back to David Schickele from Bolinas, California (Marin County) asking what happened to Paul after he was sent back. At Christmas, she sent him a card. If she did go back to Los Angeles as she plans in the film, there is someone by that name that is the Office Coordinator of the Jackie Adoption Program in 1979 LA. Four years later, there is another reference to an Elaine Featherstone, who is a Certified Instructor for "FEM to BAM" (Baby and Mother) in San Diego.

Lothario Lotho (Alma's brother)

Born in Missouri, Lothario Lotho came to San Francisco at the age of 16 and moved the next year to Oakland. His mother, the youngest of 12 children, was a cosmetologist who had a beauty salon built on their home. Lotho joined the Civil Rights struggle while a high school student in San Francisco and later at UC Berkeley where he majored in dramatic arts and fought to establish the Black Studies program. (He also co-founded the original Berkley Jazz Festival to help fund the department.) He joined the Black Panther Party and established himself as a serious social activist. He competed against Bobby Seale and Lionel Wilson for Mayor of Oakland in 1973, later joking he was part of the "no chance party." Wilson later won in 1977, becoming the first Black mayor of the city. In 1987, he and Eldridge Cleaver were arrested after a traffic stop when police found pieces of rock cocaine in Cleaver's car, a charge they both denied. Lotho was the Master of Ceremonies at numerous events throughout the Bay Area, including twenty-three years as the MC of Berkeley's Juneteenth Festival. His comedic act was titled, "Lo the Show." Lotho died in 2011.

Jack Nance (Felix) 1943-1996

Marvin John Nance was an American actor. A longtime collaborator of filmmaker David Lynch, Nance portrayed the lead in Lynch's directorial film debut *Eraserhead*. Originally planned for six weeks, it took five years for them to complete the film. He continued to work with Lynch throughout his career, including as a series regular on the ABC mystery drama Twin Peaks. Nance died of subdural hematoma two days after getting into a fight at Winchell's Doughnut House.

Timothy Near (Susie)

Timothy Near is an award-winning freelance director, three-time artistic director and Obie Award-winning actress. She has directed over 80 plays and musicals at theatres across the U.S. including La Jolla Playhouse, New York Public Theatre, The Guthrie, Berkeley Rep, Center REP, and the Mark Taper Forum. She was the first woman to direct at the Alliance Theatre and at the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis. In her 21-year tenure as artistic director of San Jose Rep, she produced over 120 plays and 20 world premieres. Twice as artistic director, she contributed to the campaign, design and completion of two mid-sized theatres. In addition to an Obie Award for her performance in *Still Life* at the American Place Theatre in New York, she was a regular guest on "Sesame Street." She continues to direct and act.

Timothy Near: Memories of Bushman

HOW I CAME TO BE IN BUSHMAN
I only saw the film of Bushman once a long time ago. So my memories are hazy. I was 25 years old, just back from a year of advanced acting training in London, and working in a theatre company in San Francisco called The Circus. We were performing west coast premiers of Avant-Garde plays by playwrights such as Tom O'Horgan, Rochelle Owens, Berthold Brecht. I was often scantily dressed in these shows, and we were known to march accusingly towards the audience fists raised singing with revolutionary fervor. Director David Schickele came to see a show and subsequently asked me if I'd like to be in his film. He told me the story and it sounded exciting, so I said yes. His lead, Paul Okpokam and I immediately hit it off. He was charming, funny, and direct. There wasn't much of a script for our scenes. I remember both of us feeling quite frustrated about this. I think we ended up just having fun or being quiet and thoughtful together and David filmed that. As I think back, I imagine that the very act of Paul and I being together was the simple statement that David wanted to make. I think David was very interested in presenting on film a visual of an interracial relationship and making that a part of Paul's American experience. David was a gentle radical. He was ahead of his time in this sort of thinking.

PAUL OKPOKAM'S TRIAL: I attended the trial. Paul's defense seemed oddly minimal. Cloaked in mystery. When I asked Paul why this was happening, he said, "I didn't do it, but I can't tell you who did." He told me that there was a lot he knew, but couldn't tell me. I inferred that there was some sort of conspiracy and that I would never know.

SAN QUENTIN: When Paul was in San Quentin, I went a few times to visit him. It was scary for a fairly naïve rancher's daughter who grew up in the tiny town of Potter Valley to go through security and pass towers with guns aimed and ready. But it was a heck of a lot scarier for Paul. When he walked in the visiting room, he looked tired but always greeted me with a big smile. It was an open room where we met. Not a phone booth situation. We sat opposite each other at a table, not allowed to hold hands or touch. Guards walking by. I remember Paul said they wouldn't let him read books. This shocks me to this day. They thought he should have nothing that would stimulate his mind because he was a terrorist. He was far from that. He was a gentle man. I felt deeply uncomfortable and helpless when time was up, and I had to say goodbye. I still feel sick about it.

(Timothy Near in *Ballad of the Sad Café* with Jack Nance)

In Memory of David Schickele by Rob Nilsson

An Introduction to a Screening

David Schickele was the man I wanted to be back in 1969. Before I even met him, I had seen a film called GIVE ME A RIDDLE. It shocked me. Someone else had experienced Nigeria as I had, as a Peace Corps teacher in the '60s, and had managed to put this experience on film. No dumb propagandizing about the PC Peace Corps. A document about dreams and higher aspirations, everyday peregrinations of real people having fun, learning things and as unsure of themselves as you or I. This was a pioneering Cinema Verité documentary employing the Auricon conversion camera that D.A. Pennebaker had used in making CHIEFS. And, knowing all this, I was soon to meet the director.

A self-confident and brilliant young man at the time, David Schickele was a guy I wanted to know. Through his help I was able to complete THE COUNTRY MOUSE, my first dramatic film, and way led on to way. In 1972 I found myself returning to Nigeria with David to show the fruits of their labor to Paul Okpokam, the actor featured in BUSHMAN, David's "reverse angle" feature, shot when he turned the tables and brought Paul to America to see his hometown. We showed BUSHMAN in the town of Calibar in what was then called the Eastern Region. A projector, run by a generator, was set up in an open-air school classroom. Paul was there along with friends and family from his village, Okanga m'ponsi. I remember David doing a vigorous dance to a beat laid down by local drummers as I stood by taking pictures.

No need to tell you about the film. You're about to see it. But if you can, see GIVE ME A RIDDLE because it is BUSHMAN's companion piece and contrasts the charmed lives David and I lived in Nigeria in the '60s with the people who truly understood the art of hospitality, to the rather different welcome Paul received here in America, which you will see in the film. David Schickele is a great man of American cinema. His influence extends beyond his own films unfortunately, all too seldom appreciated by the opinion-makers, and permeates the lives and work of all the people fortunate enough to be his friends or to have his influence touch their lives and work. He has the title Okunrin Meta, which in Yoruba means, the strength of three men, in all my films, and has influenced and strengthened the work of many filmmakers. He is the undisputed Master of the art of friendship. His quiet humanity has touched all of our lives. He is the one person, in the lives of friends who know him well, without whom we could not be ourselves. I give you, David Schickele.

David Schickele died in 1999. He was, is, and will be a legendary figure in American cinema.

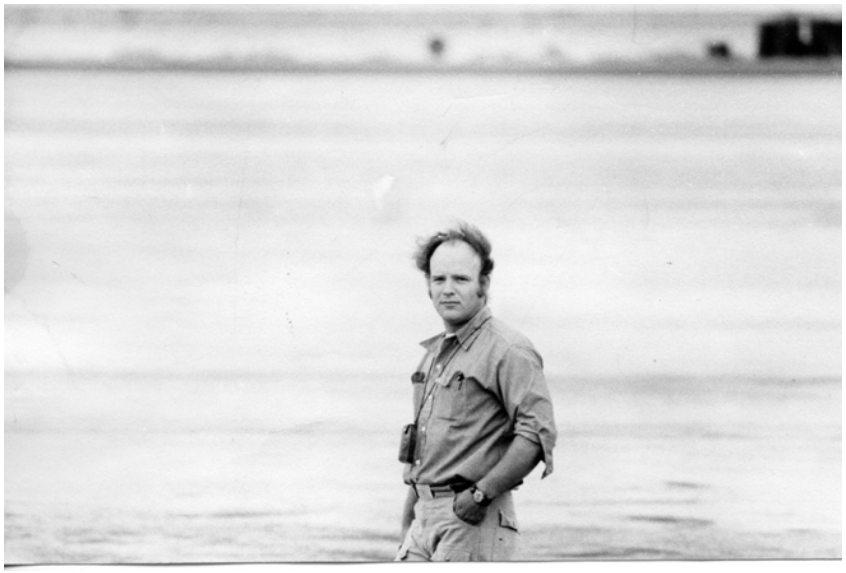
DAVID SCHICKELE

Bay Area filmmaker David Schickele (1937-1999) is best known for "Bushman" (1971), a feature-length film about an African in America struggling to integrate tribal, personal, and racial frictions. The film won numerous festival awards, including Best First Feature at the Chicago International Film Festival, and was collected by the Pacific Film Archive, UC Berkeley, and The Museum of Modern Art in NY for their archives.

David's grandfather René Schickele (1883-1940) was revered as a pacifist German writer whose works are collected by the national archive in Marbach. His home in Badenweiller is remembered, and there is a street, fountain and school named after him there. Also a pacifist, David applied for CO status during the Vietnam War and was denied; the Peace Corps his option for freedom.

Schickele's documentary "Give Me A Riddle" (1965), filmed verité style in Nigeria for the Peace Corps, is the first major film about the Peace Corps experience. Schickele served as instructor in the English Department at the University of Nigeria for the Peace Corps' flagship years 1961-63.
As a film editor, his work includes "Crazy Quilt" and "Funnyman," directed by John Korty; "Over, Under Sideways Down" for Gene Corr and Steve Wax; and "Chalk" for Rob Nilsson, with whom he co-wrote a screenplay for MGM, "The Peeled Man." Schickele's script "St. Elmo's Fire" (never produced) was written on a Guggenheim Fellowship and was one of the first projects selected for development at Robert Redford's Sundance Institute. His film, "Tuscarora," (1992) is an hour-long independent documentary about a ceramic artist whose tiny Nevada desert town is threatened by an open-pit gold mine. He wrote, directed and edited more than 30 films for corporate clients ranging from documentaries to tightly scripted, sound-stage productions.

A violist who conducted the Fargo-Moorhead Symphony at age 15 and who studied at the Academia Chigiana in Siena, Italy. Schickele began his film career in New York City where he also played in the orchestra at Radio City Music Hall. He recorded and toured nationwide for three years with the Robert Shaw Chorale. He was a lifelong chamber music enthusiast, performing extensively professionally and privately. As a composer, he produced five albums of original songs and music for Korty's documentary "The Energies of Love," and Nilsson's feature "Heat and Sunlight."



Jennifer Chinlund, Editor

I began my nearly 60 years of documentary editing work as the assistant editor for David Schickele on two of John Korty's early films. I went on to edit many documentaries. A number of them had a television screen life on Independent Lens and POV and most of them traveled to a lot of film festivals.

My experience working with David on Bushman taught me so much of what I needed to know about working as an editor. In the credits on Bushman he has me sharing the editing credit although he was definitely the editor. He sometimes gave me the job of doing a first assembly of a sequence and then we sat together making changes and discussing the most important aspect: the story. How would the viewer be drawn along through Paul's experiences as a process of discovery and illumination? What needed to be next, what would be best if revealed later in the story? What should be dropped from the assembly because it didn't really belong in the bigger story? How would we weave together the relevant minor pieces so the viewer would never lose track of the main thread?

That experience as David's assistant brought home two things about editing that stayed with me through all my future work.

First was the importance of story as an emotional experience for the viewer. Documentaries aren't just a stringing together of factual information. Few people remember for long that aspect of a film. What they remember is the emotional experience of the story. That's the key to a good film, and it gets discovered as the film is being edited.

Second was collaboration. I think it took me a long time, as I edited other films, to realize how important that aspect was for me, and it was there strongly with David. It brought a lot of pleasure and friendship into the process, and it gave us the chance to expand our ideas to include one another's suggestions about new directions to experiment with. In the later years I've had so many wonderful collaborations with directors, and I feel so much gratitude to David for that.

On the Okpokam Family

The Sun (Nigeria), June 2, 2023

The Okpokam family is an influential family from Southern Nigeria with major contributions to the formation of the Nigerian state. The Okpokams were major investors in trade, agriculture and medicine becoming very prominent in the early 1800s.

The family will come into the national spotlight during its venture into politics with the emergence of His Excellency, the Chief the Hon KJN Okpokam winning a seat into the Eastern House of Nigeria in the first elections in the country in 1952 winning all elections till 1964. Okpokam would also be part of the constitutional delegation that saw that the independence of Nigeria be achieved.

Okpokam would serve as the government whip of the house and in 1964 would serve as the Provincial commissioner of the Ogoja province. Putting up a good fight with the federal government to create the COR state which was done in 1967, Okpokam would become Nigeria's first Consulate-General and Ambassador to the Cameroons in 1968 playing a major role in Nigeria's victory in the Civil War and subsequently the High Commissioner to the Gambia in 1971. His political career would come to an end indicating his withdrawal from politics 1985 after serving on the Executive Council of the COR state since 1979 (where he strongly backed Shagari despite personal visits from Azikiwe).

The Okpokams were heavily commended by the state government of Cross River State during her celebration of State's 50th anniversary due to their contributions to development of the state, the region and the country as a whole, recognized for owning one of the first private Hospitals in the 1960s established by Dr. Simon Okpokam after his return from Europe, major stakeholders in the then Mercantile Bank, one of the biggest banks in the region, in Arts the prominent writer and former DG of the cultural centre, writer of the Hollywood film the Bushman in 1968, Dr. Paul Okpokam. the family also established one of the first Special Needs Educational facilities in the country in the early 1980s, the political contributions of former house member and prominent politician the distinguished Rt. Hon Ferdinand Okpokam who was a founding member of the popular 1999 boys (a group of young millionaires in their late 20s and early 30s who fought for the establishment of the PDP in their states, sweeping the state house, House of Representatives, senate, governorship against all odds) even the younger generation spared no rest with the works of the notable Dr. Atuora Okpokam, Nigerian environmentalist and scientist, Ekok Okpokam other notable works in Education, Engineering, Finance and Law were duly noted. Having provided numerous jobs in the region, indigenes popularly know the family as the "quiet giant".

BUSHMAN. From "LETTERS TO NIGHTTRAIN" by David Schickele

[When David Schickele discovered he was dying from cancer, he spent the year writing a personal memoir for his newborn son Nighttrain. This is from those memoirs.]

The American Film Institute was founded in 1968 by George Stevens Jr. All the filmmakers were curious about the new Institute, but nobody knew much about it. I had never met George Stevens Jr., but one day I called him and asked if he would meet with me sometime, just to talk about the Institute and the needs of American independent filmmakers. I was astonished when he accepted the invitation. I had nothing to offer him, and he had nothing to offer me. No grants competition had been announced. But we had a very nice, low-key chat, discussing the plans for the Institute, and the state of the American independent film. I told him I was gearing up to make a feature about an African caught up in these hazardous times in America. When the lunch was over, he offered me a $15,000 grant. This offer was a complete surprise to me. I think it was to him, too. He said he would have to clear it with his people, because in this start-up phase, they had never given a feature grant before. $15,000 was, of course, a fraction of what a feature would cost, but it allowed me to start organizing and fundraising for a low budget 35mm picture to be called "Bushman." The lead would be played by Paul Okpokam, the Nigerian who had been so appealing in my documentary "Give Me a Riddle." Paul was a spirited soul who always prided himself on being a bushman. Being bush in Nigeria was like being country in America, rural and unsophisticated, maybe, but full of heart. Paul was a man from the village, from the bush, and proud of it. Not like all the city dandies, with their wanna-be airs and their London pretensions.

My friend and former Peace Corps colleague, Roger Landrum, hired Paul to teach at a Peace Corps training program he was running in Boston. That job got Paul across the Atlantic. Then somehow, we got him across the country to San Francisco, where he enrolled as a drama student at San Francisco State College.

Paul helped me devise the rudiments of the Bushman script, much of it stemming from his own experiences in America. I hired David Myers to shoot, and Paul Oppenheim to take sound. With a foolish bravado, I started shooting in 1968, without a finished script, without enough money, counting on footwork and luck to pull me through.

1968 was not a lucky year.

1968 was a year of tumult, of riots and assassinations. Universities were shut down by student rebellions - at Harvard, Columbia, Michigan, San Francisco State, and other places. The Black Panther Party was making an impact across the nation, and demonstrations against the Vietnam War were becoming a way of life.

One day I drove my motorcycle to Richmond to interview a young Black man who had been recommended for a position on my crew. Meandering through town, looking for the address, I found myself in the middle of a Richmond mini-riot. I was stoned by a gang of young Black men hanging out on a street corner as I drove by. Luckily James Spears was on time, waiting for me

at his mother's place. His mother's couch was covered with plastic, which crackled as we sat down to talk. James had just gotten out of jail, and needed a job. I hired him on the spot, and from then on, he was a production assistant, serving also as the crew's security when we were shooting in the old Black Fillmore district of San Francisco. I was pleased to discover that James was a gifted handler of situations. For instance, there was an apartment I wanted to use as a location on Fillmore Street. I negotiated a location fee with the woman who lived in the apartment. When I came down to the street again, I was surrounded by three Black men who said I would have to pay them if I wanted to shoot anywhere in the neighborhood. James heard the shakedown, and huddled with the men on the street for a few minutes. I don't know exactly what James said, but our access to the area was unhindered from then on.

We continued shooting all over San Francisco, with one run out to the Sierras. Paul tasted snow for the first time.

Our schedule was loose so Paul could continue his studies at San Francisco State. But the college was soon effectively shut down by a long and violent strike led by the Black Student's Union, with the support of various faculty and student groups. The conflict had been boiling for months. Police riots broke out. The cops waded into crowds of students, cracking heads as they went.

One day we were waiting at the location for Paul to show up. He was usually very punctual. Half an hour passed, then an hour. Finally word came down through a friend: Paul had been arrested at school.

I rushed to the Hall of Justice, where I found Paul in jail. They gave us a few short minutes to talk. Visitors were separated from prisoners by thick glass windows. We had to talk on those awful little jailhouse phones. Paul's eyes were glazed with shock. Paul had been walking on the campus when two plainclothes policemen confronted him and asked him to follow them. They led him into the men's room of the education building. There they searched him, and showed him something they claimed they had found in his jacket pocket. They asked Paul what it was. Paul said he didn't know - he had never seen it before; they said it was a homemade bomb, and took him downtown.

Paul's friends and I leapt into action, in a flurry of activity typical of the time - finding bail and representation. The "Bushman" production was put on hold.
When we made bail (a friend in Berkeley put up his house), Paul was able to tell us more: the two cops who accosted him took him to the police staging area behind the campus. They shoved him into a squad car, and locked it. They told Paul he'd better say his prayers because they were going to blow him up with his own bomb. Paul was surrounded by laughing policemen who lit the "bomb" and put it on the squad car roof above his head. Paul had no idea how strong the "bomb" might be, or if it really was a bomb. He sweated out a countdown, and heard a small explosion above his head. He was relieved to find himself unhurt. They booked him. The charge was carrying an explosive device with intent to inflict bodily harm.

By this time, the San Francisco State strike had escalated to an almost constant rumble between the police and the student and faculty groups on campus. Bomb rumors were rife. I think the cops wanted to nail a terrorist. A Black man walking alone on campus was an opportunity.

We hired a lawyer, Frank Brann, who came well recommended, but who turned out to be ineffectual and despondent. A few months after the trial Brann rerouted his exhaust into the interior of his car, closed the windows, and committed suicide.

While Paul was out on bail we worked on his defense. We considered just taking him to the airport and putting him on a plane to Nigeria. But we didn't do it. We all underestimated the danger Paul was in.

Immigration got into the act and told Paul that if he hadn't left the country voluntarily by March 1, he would be detained and deported. Judge Noubarth was enraged by Immigration's interference with his bench and said that if Paul were deported by Immigration, it would be the same, in his eyes, as Paul jumping bail, which he would not countenance. So he revoked Paul's bail and threw him back in the slammer, just to keep Immigration from getting their hands on him. At this point, Paul would have been very happy to be deported. I remember him looking back over his shoulder as the bailiffs led him away.

The trial was simple. It was Paul's word against the cops. They produced a Hercules powder can full of 9mm shells, nails, gunpowder, and chunks of C4 plastic explosive. A jury of eleven white people and one Black man fell for it hook, line and sinker.

Judge Noubarth's final speech made it clear what Paul was up against. He accused Paul of being ungrateful for the helping hand that America had extended to him. The Judge went on to attack Paul's morality, on the basis that Paul had two sons back home but no "Christian" wife. Paul's insistence on his innocence was dismissed as mere foolery. The Judge gave a fire-and-brimstone speech about law and order, and sentenced Paul to five years in prison.
Suddenly Paul was a convicted felon. He was carted off to Vacaville, California, where they decide which prison to put you in for your stretch. Paul ended up in San Quentin, one of the most dangerous prisons in the system.

Five years.

I didn't feel responsible for Paul's being in jail, but I did feel that I was the only person who stood a chance of getting him out. I spent all of 1969 on it. It was nearly a full-time job - letters, phone calls, meetings. I tried to bring some diplomatic pressure to bear by asking the Nigerian Ambassador to intercede on behalf of a Nigerian citizen wrongfully jailed in America. But Nigeria was fighting the Biafran War at the time, and anything not directly related to the war effort had no importance. Why should Nigeria help a criminal who might side with the rebels when he got out?

I had meetings with a lot of California politicians, from then-Senator Alan Cranston on down. But I soon figured out that trying to convince people of Paul's innocence was pointless. People were not buying Black innocence in 1968, not during the San Francisco State strike, not during the rise of the Panthers. So I changed my tack. I said, "You don't have to believe, as I do, that there has been a miscarriage of justice here. Just help me get Paul out of the country. The only thing he wants is to go back to his home in Nigeria, where he is a teacher. He is no threat to you

there. Let's save ourselves some money. Why should we waste taxpayer dollars on Paul's room and board at San Quentin for five years, when we could just ship him home and be rid of him?"
I visited Paul in San Quentin two or three times a week. He said the prison was a cesspool. He was sick of the smell of shit, the taste of soup….

Visiting Paul in San Quentin was a nightmare. We couldn't really talk because of the window-and-phone separation, and the fear that we might be bugged. And we couldn't touch. That was the real misery of these visits, not being able to put my hand through that damned glass window and touch Paul's shoulder.

Paul lived in fear. His face was ashen. The Aryan Brotherhood threatened to kill him because he was foreign and Black, and the Black gangs threatened to kill him because he had a white visitor. Paul said his shoulder blades were bruised from walking down the prison corridor with his back pressed against the wall, so he wouldn't be taken by surprise from behind.

Finally in the Fall of 1969 (just before the Biafran war ended), I drove to Sacramento for a meeting I had set up with Willie Brown, then a member of the State House of Representatives, who was emerging as one of the most powerful men in California state government. He invited me into his office and I told him Paul's story. He got up and treated himself to a little tantrum, pacing the room, and saying, in effect, "Damn these young political kids, like the ones in the strike. Like your friend, probably. Their hearts are in the right place, but they're just too stupid to stay out of trouble. I bend over backwards to help them, but they always do something stupid, every time." Once again, I suggested the "Just ship him home and be rid of him" solution. Willie Brown said, "Well, I'll make a few calls, and see if there's anything we can do."
I went home not quite knowing what had happened at the meeting with Brown - he was hard to read - but a few weeks later I got a notice from the Adult Authority saying that they would spring Paul in December, handing him over directly to the FBI who would, in turn, ship him home to Nigeria. I still don't know how the decision to release Paul came about. I think Willie Brown finally found the right person in the Adult Authority to yell at.

I contacted the authorities to confirm the news, get a schedule, and ask if I could have some time alone with Paul before he got on the plane. Absolutely not. The FBI's plan was to pick Paul up at San Quentin in the early morning, and hold him in a secret hotel room until his evening flight. Friends would be permitted to see him at the gate, ten minutes before boarding.
The FBI, of course, refused to let me shoot the departure. (The fact that I had an unfinished feature on my hands never left my mind.) I thought of trying to shoot on the sly, but didn't want to do anything that might jeopardize Paul's release. I ended up hiring a still photographer to mingle with the crowd and sneak a few shots.

Paul said that on the morning of his release, he literally collapsed with relief as the gates of San Quentin closed behind him. The FBI guys had to lift him into the waiting van.
At the end of the day, ten minutes before boarding, flanked by two FBI agents, Paul said goodbye to the dozen of us who had come to wish him well. He was wearing a very clean and well-pressed jailhouse suit that San Quentin had given him as a parting gift. Agrinya (Paul's African nickname for Curtis Branch, a Golden Gate Park gardener) gave Paul a big leather-

crafted peace sign which Paul hung around his neck. A snapshot of this moment has been hanging in our house for many years, and I'm sure it will still be there when you read this letter.

I felt a great relief when I saw the plane take off. Paul was out. I could breathe again. Exhausted from a year and a half of this battle, I took a little vacation, wandering the winter mountains of Nevada in a rented Volkswagen.

What about the film? Could the uncompleted "Bushman" be salvaged? Maybe, but not right away. I was shell shocked by Paul's final year in America and emotionally unable to throw myself back into the film. It took some time for me to find my sea legs again.

Gradually, I started playing with the "Bushman" footage on the flat bed. Could I rescue this disaster? I whined a lot about being stuck and out of funds, until Ginna Fleming, an old Peace Corps friend and faithful angel, sent me a curt little note that said simply, "Finish the damn thing." A modest check was enclosed. That note did wonders for my concentration. Here I was with a film with no ending, no actor, no chance to reshoot. What could I do? The little voice that always gives me the same advice whispered again: solve your problem by telling the simple truth.

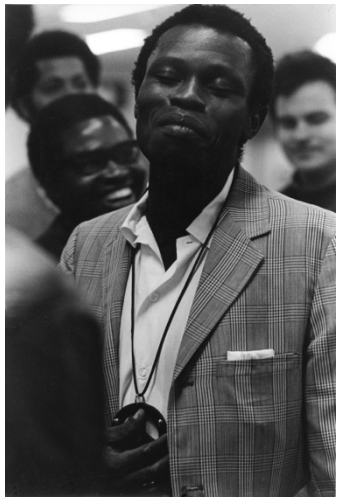
So halfway through the film the screen goes black, and I come on to explain, "They locked Paul up and sent him away before we had a chance to finish the film. It was going to be all about how (Paul's character) Gabriel got into trouble, got locked up and sent away. So in this case, truth was no stranger than fiction, just a little faster." And then the film proceeds to tell that story in a very lean, documentary style. I wove Paul's voice into the ending of the film, along with the sounds of the children of his village playing on the riverbank in Okanga Mkpansi, sounds which I stole from the "Give Me a Riddle" shoot. I grabbed shots of people on the streets of San Francisco, and images of San Quentin Prison looming out of the Bay. Somehow, I managed to cobble together a series of sounds and pictures that told the story and provided an ending to the film. I took the finished picture on the road, getting a nice reception at festivals across the country. "Bushman" won a Gold Hugo for Best First Feature at the 1972 Chicago International Film Festival.

Jumpcut Magazine, July/August 1974, Volume 2, Issue 4

BUSHMAN: Welcome to America

—Judith W. Hess

Too many good films never get circulated; the preceding statement may be a truism, but remains a fact, one which should constantly be recognized by JUMP CUT, and by other film journals which purport to deal with the progressive aspects of American film. One of these good films is David Schickele's BUSHMAN (1971). BUSHMAN traces the brief and frustrated career of a Nigerian Black who comes to San Francisco to get a Master's in drama at San Francisco State.



Schickele intended to distribute the 35mm film as a commercial feature; however, all the major distributors to whom he showed the film turned him down for the following reasons. First, the film is in black and white; distributors won't touch a black and white film unless they are absolutely sure that it will be a financial success (remember how Bogdanovich had to machinate to make THE LAST PICTURE SHOW in black and white--his producer insisted on color). The 72-minute film was considered slightly too short for commercial distribution. None of the distributors were convinced that the film would make enough money quickly enough to repay the high cost of initial distribution. Finally, the distributors found the film unclassifiable and thus couldn't figure out how to advertise it — commercial films, it seems, should fit into certain predetermined slots for which an advertising layout has been created. Schickele's experience exemplifies the tendency of the commercial film industry to stagnate; to accept within the commercial fold only those films which mimic preceding successes. And Schickele's film deserves better treatment.

Recently BUSHMAN was shown at the Pacific Film Archives (Berkeley, California) to a large and appreciative audience. The film depicts an individual experience which effectively illustrates the unavoidable interpenetration between large scale historical inevitabilities and the individual in society. Paul Okpokam, who enacts his own previous experiences on film, was arrested and imprisoned during the demonstrations at San Francisco State two-thirds of the way through the filming (1968-69). This occurrence brought Schickele into a confrontation with the meshing of film art and political oppression all too frequently experienced by the American film maker. Ironically, Schickele had planned to end the film with Paul's deportation; because Paul was in fact deported after time spent in Vacaville and San Quentin, Schickele was forced to break his established, though partially deconstructed, narrative line, and integrate Paul's contemporary situation into the film. What begins as relatively artificial selection and interpretation ends as cinema verité. Schickele's flexibility and talent are demonstrated by his ability to create a juxtaposition between the artful cutting of the enacted narrative and the series of stills and expositions which end the film. The film's importance and dramatic impact rest on this integration; we are confronted with the relation between political cinema (in this case, a satirical

but penetrating analysis of American society) and real time as experienced by an African Black before and during the San Francisco State demonstrations.

Schickele is careful to put his film in a sociopolitical context. Superimposed on opening shots of Paul hitchhiking on a throughway are the words: "1968--Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy, and Bobby Hutton are among recent dead; the Nigerian civil war enters its second year with no end in sight." A young man driving a motorcycle with an unstable trailer picks him up and asks what are obviously part of a long series of naive questions Paul has fielded as an “exotic foreigner.” “Say something in your language.” “What are you doing here?” “Don't the bare boobs in Nigeria drive you wild?”

That Paul remains an alien while in America is illustrated through his relations with different women. Paul meets his Black woman friend (Elaine Featherstone), who is planning to leave for southern California. They go to a friend's unoccupied bar which is plastered with advertisements featuring Madison Avenue's conception of the Black American, There Paul begins a series of reminiscences about his youth which are intercut throughout the first two thirds of the film. When he speaks about Nigeria, Paul is always isolated by the camera; we realize that his cultural heritage, which he is unwilling to discard, alienates him from his present surroundings. His woman is in the process of integrating her own past and present. She responds to contemporary rock (Paul doesn't) and. soon leaves for parts unknown to come to terms with her ghetto childhood. Paul, left alone, wanders through the city and meets a caricatured white liberal who sees in him an outlet for her fantasies which remain on the level of “hands across the sea.” Subsequent encounters are no more rewarding to him until he is able to create a very sensual, seemingly mutually satisfying relationship with a white woman (Timothy Near) who at once maintains her won independence and appreciates Paul as man and Nigerian.

At this point Schickele, who was and is Paul's friend, begins to integrate himself into the film. He is present during the mountain weekends which bring Paul and Timothy Near together. Suddenly we are confronted with Schickele the film maker who informs us that the film as he initially conceived of it is over. He explains that Paul has been deported after infinite legal hassle and some time spent in prison. We learn that Paul had a bomb planted on him during the student strike and that he was indicted for armed robbery (that absurd charge was finally dropped). A series of stills and verbal narratives trace his imprisonment and deportation. Since we have seen Paul as politically uninvolved (he never criticizes the present American political scene, nor does he participate in political demonstrations or other group activities; in fact we are given the impression that Paul is more poetic than practical) his end is shocking. Most compelling, however, is Schickele's handling of the situation. The sudden juxtaposition of fictional recreation of experience and the reportage of Paul's imprisonment and deportation parallels the intrusion of political reality into Paul's rather circumscribed life.

Media's Coverage of Paul Okpokam's arrest

All of the coverage of Okpokam's arrest is racially tinged if not outright racist. Of the hundreds of articles across the country, none suggest that the arrest was illegal or unjustified. The first article on Paul Okpokam's arrest can be found in the San Francisco Examiner on November 7, 1968.

S.F. State Open Amid Confusion

A strike called by militant Black students and joined by other activists caused confusion and noise at San Francisco State today. But the college on this second day of student uprising remained open, despite a series of incidents.
Some groups of white and Black militants interrupted classes, usually with polite requests to present their case for a strike.
Some were not so polite.

A crudely fashioned bomb exploded under a basement stairwell in the Education Building. There was no damage and no one was hurt.
STUDENT HELD
Police arrested Paul Okpokam, 27, a student from Nigeria, and charge him with possessing an explosive device and burglary. Okpokam was picked up near the Humanities Building shortly after the explosion.

Next day, several UPI stories were covered nationally and in those days of being clean cut or a hippie, Okpokam's appearance was noted as was the nature of the students on strike. Additionally, the nature of the "bombs" including Paul's were varied in the reports.

Acts of violence flare for the second day at San Francisco State College Thursday as radical groups sought reluctant support for a strike called by militant Black students. A small bomb made of .22 caliber bullets was exploded in the education building, and fires were set in restroom waste baskets, a telephone booth and a coach's desk…

Police arrested a suspect in the bombing. He was Paul Okpokam, 28, a bearded drama student from Nigeria, who was apprehended while carrying a package tightly wrapped in masking tape with a fuse attached.

By the next week, the November 13, 1968 Sacramento Bee reported that 60 faculty members joined the student strike, a number of classes were canceled, and that fires were set on campus. It also reports that President Robert Smith of SFSC, had suspended the student, Paul Okpokam.

The coded racism of the journalists covering the Okpokam arrest abruptly changed course with this rather puzzling editorial from Southern California. On his death in 1971, the paper noted Spackman's many satirical essays for the paper. We can only speculate on the meaning of this bizarre piece.

San Bernardino County Sun, November 21, 1968

LEARNING FROM THE NIGERIANS, editorial by Ellis Spackman

San Francisco — Paul Okpokam, 28, a drama major from Nigeria, was suspended from San Francisco State College after being arrested for violence on the campus.

This is outrageous. Mr. Okpokam has taken time out from butchering Biafrans in his native land, or possibly being butchered by a Biafran.

He has come to our country to straighten us out on race relations and how our colleges should be run.

Do we show gratitude for this? Indeed we don't.

After Mr. Okpokam was arrested for violence on the campus, he was suspended from San Francisco State.

The nature of the violence was not stated. In the bad old days when the wicked British colonialists kept order in Nigeria, they had trouble preventing Nigerians from eating each other on occasion.
But since independence, such dietetic irregularities have been frowned upon although when I was in Nigeria three years ago, a ritual murder was being widely discussed.

Could it be that Mr. Okpokam was seized with an atavistic urge and took a bite out of an administrator?

Mr. Okpokam is a drama major and this would certainly have been dramatic.

Let us hope that Mr. Okpokam is released promptly and that Gov. Reagan apologizes to him personally.

Otherwise Nigerians may give up on trying to civilize us and may quit coming over here.

Perhaps the whole matter might be resolved by having the board of trustees of the state college system appoint Mr. Okpokam president of San Francisco State.

On March 10, 1969, it was reported by the Examiner that the local Immigration and Naturalization Service said that Okpokam's student visa expired February 15 and his request for extension was denied. In this article, it seemed that David Schickele and friends were able to get their different perspective known to the papers. The Examiner tempered the events for the first time by saying Okpokam was "accused" of carrying a bomb. The journalist also gave a more sympathetic portrayal by stating "Okpokam originally came to this country as an instructor for the Peace Corps training program. At the college he was enrolled in two drama classes, and he taught English in the Educational Opportunity Program."

Exactly a month later, the Oakland Tribune reported that U.S. Immigration offers ordered Paul's deportation, for having remained longer in the US than his authorized period. (Of course, they had refused an extension, and he was unable to travel or even be deported since he was denied bail and imprisoned.)

On May 18, the Fresno Bee reported that Okpokam was found guilty after a three-hour deliberation and faces a ten-year jail term. On June 5, he was sentenced from one to five years in state prison. Superior Judge Harry J. Neubarth denied a motion for a new trial and refused to allow Nigeria's request to "repatriate" the defendant back to his home country. In the Philadelphia Inquirer, Nigerian Consul General P.A. Afolabi complained that the defendant was allowed to "languish" in jail and that Okpokam's situation "has been of great disquiet and embarrassment to us in light of the copies protection expected by American citizens in similar circumstances in Nigeria."

The Oakland Tribune quoted the judge, "He is a man who could maim, injure innocent people. What am I supposed to do, let him walk out of the courtroom?" Jet Magazine had a slightly more sympathetic viewpoint (suggesting that Okpokam was only six academic credits short of his master's degree) but did add the Judge's next sentence, "This kind of violence has got to stop, and it's time someone does something about it."

On June 9, 1969, Congressman John Rarick (R, Louisiana) was given permission to "extend his remarks at this point in the Record and to include extraneous matter" from an article entitled "Sabotage-The Guerilla Warfare Has Begun" by David Emerson Gumear. Gumear is described for the record as having "spent two years as an undercover operative for the Intelligence Division of a major metropolitan police department. His engagement was to infiltrate and report on Communist and New Left activities." Later, it was discovered he was an informant for the Chicago Police Department and the FBI, while being a member of the rightwing John Birch Society. This was two years before America discovered the secret government operation known as Cointelpro, and their operatives' actions to discredit, as well as wrongfully implicate and arrest people considered "subversive." Cointelpro was particularly active in the San Francisco Bay Area. In this article it states,

"During the second day of a student strike at San Francisco State College last November seventh, Communist-directed militants running the strike exploded a bomb and set several fires in restrooms and faculty offices. Shortly afterwards, campus police arrested Paul Okpokam, a bearded drama student from Nigeria, who was carrying a package of explosives."

There seems to be no further reporting on Okpokam's imprisonment or later deportation. However, in Variety's review, the prejudices still come to play: "If Okpokam personally was really the admirable Gabriel of the film's start, and if he was really innocent as the docu claims, then there's a lot for viewer to get angry about in the sad turn pic takes. But Gabriel may be one person, and the actor another worse type. Bushman, unfortunately, provides no real answer to outsider, but the puzzle itself is provocative."

History of the San Francisco State College Student Strike

Tag: Interview by Jason Ferreira

1968: The strike at San Francisco State

December 28, 2018

Fifty years ago, students at San Francisco State embarked on a campus strike that lasted five months – the longest student strike in U.S. history. Led by the Black Student Union and Third World Liberation Front, the strike was a high point of student struggle in the revolutionary year of 1968. It was met by ferocious repression, but the strikers persevered and won the first College of Ethnic Studies in the U.S. As part of Socialist Worker's series on the history of 1968, current San Francisco State University Professor Jason Ferreira – the chair of the Race and Resistance Studies department in the College of Ethnic Studies and author of a forthcoming book on the student strike and the movements that produced it – talked to Julien Ball and Melanie West about the story of the struggle and the importance of its legacy for today.

WHAT WAS unique about San Francisco State that made it an epicenter of struggle?

ONE OF the things that made San Francisco State unique as opposed to Berkeley or some other places is that it was a commuter school. The students were older, and it was a working-class school. Among the type of students who went to San Francisco State, not only did many have work experience, but they also had political experience that they brought with them to the campus.

The Black Panthers were a tremendous influence on what happened at San Francisco State, with many of the members of the Black Student Union (BSU) being early members of the party. So there's an intimate relationship between the BSU and the Black Panther Party.


Students on strike at San Francisco State in 1968

The SF State campus itself was a really exciting place. It was an epicenter for a lot of activism, a lot of organizing, a lot of culture, a lot of hippies, a lot of dope, a lot of poetry. It had everything, so it was a very exciting place to be.

WHAT STUDENT groups were active on campus?

THERE WERE four core groups of students. There was the BSU, the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF), Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Programs.

The TWLF was a coalition of student organizations of color. In many ways, it was formed by the BSU, but it also includea a Latin@ student organization (LASO), a Mexican American student organization (MASC), the Filipino organization called PACE and the Intercollegiate Chinese for Social Action (ICSA).

The TWLF was formed based on the political principle of Third World solidarity, which is animating Cuba, Algeria, Tanzania and Vietnam. So it's no coincidence that they called themselves the TWLF — like the National Liberation Front in Vietnam. They were all internationalists — not necessarily Marxist, but internationalist.

The BSU created the TWLF partially out of principle and partially because they knew that in the struggle that was going to unfold, they would need alliances.

Plus, they could also see that the other students of color on campus weren't as politically developed — that their consciousness had not come along as far as the Black Power movement had. Other groups of color were just forming the Asian-American or Latino movements in the late 1960s, whereas the Black community had gone through this a few years before, due to Malcolm X and the Black Consciousness movement.

So the BSU created the TWLF as a way to support that political development.

There were also the white student groups: SDS and the Programs. There was a lot of tension between these two groups.

The Programs were trying to build student power and community involvement programs, where they were connecting student-organizing efforts like a Tenants Union in public housing in San Francisco, while trying to give students credit to be organizing.

Then there was SDS, which was more confrontational — like "F*** the pigs, kick ROTC off campus, kick the Dow Chemical recruiter off campus." SDS at SF State had principally been taken over by Progressive Labor. So SDS viewed students in the Programs as reformist, and those in the Programs looked at SDS as ultra-left and sectarian.

WHAT WAS the source of discontent on campus and the conditions that led to the strike?

THERE'S SO much focus on the strike itself because it's so spectacular. The institution was shut down for four-and-a-half months, the Tactical Squad was out there every day cracking skulls.

But it's important to understand that the strike was just a culminating moment, when the crisis came to a head. There were many contributing factors.

The BSU students had been organizing for years, developing alternative educational experiences, within the Experimental College at first, and later the tutorial programs that connected them to the community. The BSU students ran this program and were tutoring hundreds of kids in the Mission and Fillmore, teaching them the basics, but also teaching them Black Power.

Out of these diverse experiences, a unique and revolutionary Black Studies curriculum began to cohere. However, the administration was threatening to pull funding for these working programs.

There was also an English instructor, George Murray, one of the Central Committee members of the Black Student Union, who was a longtime student at State and a graduate student by the late 1960s, but he was also Minister of Education for the Black Panther Party.

In the summer of '68, George traveled to Cuba and gave a speech there where he basically said — I'm paraphrasing here — that every U.S. soldier that dies in Vietnam is one less soldier we have to deal with in the streets of Detroit." He was linking the Black liberation struggle with the struggle of the Vietnamese people.

Needless to say, when the Board of Trustees and then-California Gov. Ronald Reagan found this out, they were irate and tried to fire Murray. That was one catalyst for the strike.

In the spring of '68, there was also a sit-in organized by SDS and TWLF where the goals were twofold: kicking the ROTC off campus was the big SDS demand, and the TWLF had a set of demands around recruitment and retention of Third World students — not only Black students but also students from the Mission and from Chinatown. That sit-in didn't get the ROTC off campus, but it did get special admissions for students of color.

The SFSU campus president, liberal John Summerskill, made the promise, but as soon as he made it, he resigned. As a result, over the course of the summer and into the fall, those special admits never materialized. This also added to the rising level of frustration.

So the BSU wasn't getting their Black Studies program as promised, and funding for the programs they were involved in with the community was being threatened by Sacramento and by the Board of Trustees. One of their prominent members, George Murray, was threatened with being fired.

Plus, members of the Third World Liberation Front weren't getting the special admits they had been promised, and on top of that, they were beginning to make a demand for Third World studies, La Raza studies and Asian American Studies.

So when the catalyst happened — with George Murray being fired from teaching — the BSU went out on strike. The BSU issued 10 demands, and the TWLF added five demands, going out on strike along with the BSU.

I think what made the strike so unique is the way that white students on this campus followed the leadership of Third World students. On other campuses, it wasn't that way — white students were in the leadership, and Third World students were maybe involved.

But this was a case where leadership and the demands were squarely in the hands of Third World folks. And white students supported and didn't challenge that leadership. They didn't say try to make this about student power or the war — they stayed focus on the BSU and TWLF demands' — because, I think, those demands ultimately opened out to these broader issues of imperialism and the war.

WHAT WERE the demands of the strike?

REHIRING GEORGE Murray was one of the original demands of both the BSU and the TWLF. One of their five demands was to rehire George Murray, too.

If you look at the demands, they're very specific: We want this woman fired, we want Nathan Hare given a permanent position, we want this number of faculty positions. It wasn't "we want global revolution" or anything like that. This was intentional because the students wanted to be able to struggle over something concrete and be able to win a base for later.

During the course of the strike, they continually restated the demands and said they were nonnegotiable because this is what the community needs. They argued that the demands reflected the fight against racism: It's about self-determination and power. They weren't looking for crumbs — they wanted the power to determine who the faculty was and the type of curriculum being taught.

HOW DID the strike unfold? Can you talk about the strikers' tactics?

UP UNTIL the fall of '68, some of the dominant tactics of the student movement were occupations and sit-ins. The BSU said we're not going to do that — we're going to embrace the tactics of guerrilla warfare, like Che and the Vietnamese.

What did they mean by that? They didn't mean being armed per se, but they pointed out that sit-ins were largely symbolic. At most, you hold a space for a day or two days or three days. At a certain point, the institution wears you down. Maybe you get immediate attention when they arrest you, but in the end, you display your powerlessness.

The BSU was looking at what happened at Columbia University in New York City in the spring of '68. Stokely Carmichael had come out and given a talk at State, where he said that the Columbia students made a dent, but they didn't change the power relations on campus.

The BSU decided that they were going to shut down the university down. They weren't just going to occupy space. But they didn't just go out on strike by picketing the campus. Instead, they decided to use guerrilla warfare tactics — we advance when the enemy retreats, and when the enemy advances, we retreat.

This meant having mobile forces. One of the first things they did in the first week was create disruptions all over campus: stink bombs clogging up toilets, going to classes and saying, "Don't you know we're on strike?" and doing some political education.

The logic was: If we can't have the education we want, you're not going to get the education that you've been getting. We're going to disrupt this classroom, but when the police come — boom, we're gone.

Those were the initial tactics during the first week. SDS and the movement people supported the strike. But it took about a week before things developed.

HOW DID the strike build support at this point, and what role did police repression play?

THE BSU had a press conference about one week into the strike, and the cops came onto campus and just started beating people — members of BSU in particular. BSU leader Nesbit Crutchfield got hit over the head for everyone to see.

Pandemonium ensued on campus. Some faculty supported the students, even if they didn't necessarily agree with the tactics — they supported the ideas behind the strike. So the faculty got in between the police and the students on that chaotic day.

From that point on, the biggest recruitment factor for the strike was probably the police because they overreacted. They decided that they were going to shut the militants down, and it got to the point that the Tactical Squad was pulling police not just from San Francisco, but Santa Cruz, Vallejo and all over the region.

And of course, the cops relished the opportunity to rough up Black folk, hippies, people who were challenging gender conventions with long hair, people who were peace activists. They saw San Francisco State as a place to vent their racist vitriol. You could feel it, like the heat of their hatred radiated off of them.

This began to politicize more and more students, who saw that law and order wasn't a good response to legitimate demands.

The BSU and the TWLF started doing more education, with a convocation to explain their demands. And they started bringing the community in, from the Mission and the Fillmore and Chinatown.

There was a tremendous transformation. These apolitical students — everyday people who you would have seen on campus — were saying "F*** the pigs" and throwing rocks at the cops.

Part of this had to do with the broader environment, including the war in Vietnam. Ronald Reagan famously said in a press conference that San Francisco State was a domestic Vietnam. There's certainly an exaggeration in that — obviously the things happening in Vietnam, like napalm and the massacre at My Lai, weren't happening at San Francisco State.

But Vietnam was undeniably a subtext for what was happening at State, both in terms of the fact that a group called the Third World Liberation Front was fighting for educational self-determination and the empowerment of oppressed people — and also with the state's response that we need to crush these militants and dissidents because they represent anarchy," just as they were doing with the Panthers.

So Vietnam was the subtext. For those everyday students who weren't militants or radicals themselves, it was difficult to remain neutral when your campus is being occupied militarily every single day. The Tac Squad was out there with huge batons and riot shields and helmets, and they're looking to pick off members of the BSU or TWLF, or crack the skull of some protesting student.

WHAT WAS the response of the administration to the student strike?

In the spring of '68, as I mentioned, the president of SF State, John Summerskill, resigned after that TWLF/SDS sit-in. John Summerskill was a liberal; he was a Kennedy boy. But liberalism was under attack by this point in the movement.

These days, we tend to think about those liberal politics of the 1960s, but the movements by this point had realized that liberals were part of the problem. Liberals just want stability, they don't want to change the power dynamics.

So the liberals were caught in the middle. You had, on the one hand, the right wing, with Reagan and the law-and-order people, and on the other hand, there was the left, with powerful movements pushing for radical demands. They didn't just want reforms. They wanted power — real, meaningful and deep democracy.

The liberals were caught in the middle, pushed and pulled both ways. They might want to help Black people, but they also had a responsibility to and a relationship with the forces on the right that didn't allow them to do that.

So when John Summerskill resigned in the spring of '68, and they brought in another liberal: Education professor Robert Smith. Through the summer and into the fall, he was the president.

But as the strike unfolds, he had the right wing telling him to not close the campus — to bring in the police to maintain order for the "good students" who want to study and kick out the dissident students. Meanwhile, the students are telling him to shut the campus down until we resolve these issues.

Smith tried to occupy a middle ground, with school still in session, but creating spaces where everyone could come and talk about the issues. He proposed a convocation where anybody who was interested could come and learn about the issues of the strike. That didn't satisfy the right, of course, and it didn't satisfy the striking students.

The BSU and TWLF took advantage of the crisis and used the convocation as a platform to educate the nonpolitical students about the origins of the strike. They ultimately walked out, and Robert Smith resigned.

Reagan brought in a new president — another San Francisco State faculty member named S.I Hayakawa. What a character this guy was! He was a megalomaniac who decided that he was going to be the man to shut this down and instill law and order. He was also, as a Japanese-American, a person of color, so the right absolutely loved him because he created all these new dynamics.

So now you have a man of color in the big seat, talking about who the responsible students were, and who the irresponsible students were. But you also have Asian-American students, Black students, Native students and Latino students continuing to push him — they weren't falling for a symbolic "nonwhite face in a high place."

From the point Hayakawa was hired to the end of the strike, the administration was all about "law and order": Use the police to shut down and crush the campus movement.

Importantly, the strength of a lot of the student organizations was in their community programs: the tutorial and community involvement programs. Hayakawa started shutting down their sources of funds, so that dried up.

This is a classic counterinsurgency tactic — kind of like what the right did in the late 1970s and 1980s when it started unraveling social programs.

The New Deal and Great Society programs had all brought in students who had previously been excluded from campus. When that happened, they got politicized. As liberal and reformist as they might have been, these programs politicized people, got them involved in the community and kind of subsidized activism.

So the right wing decided that they were going to cut the programs off at their base, which was their connections to the community.

In the end, Hayakawa became the darling of the right. He eventually became a U.S. senator for California, and of course, his big claim to fame when he was a senator was pushing for English-only in California.

He had a Tam o' Shanter hat, and that Tam o' Shanter hat became a symbol for law and order. He became a celebrity of the right. He was flown out to meet with Richard Nixon because he was seen as the guy who wasn't going to take shit from these militants — *and* he was a person of color.

HOW DID the students maintain momentum for the strike with so much repression?

THERE WERE days that it was very scary for people, and the big fear was that somebody was going to get killed. It was well-known that the police looked forward to taking out some of the strike leadership of the strike.

And this can't be separated from the police's simultaneous desire to neutralize the Panthers. There were raids on the Panthers office in the Fillmore happening during the Strike.

So it was very, very difficult. But when you've got 3,000 students, and sometimes up to 5,000, out there, that's an inspiring way of boosting spirits.

Then there are dark days like January 23, 1969, when there was a huge bust and well over 400 people were arrested.

The leadership had to be very selective about what days they were going to go on campus, because they knew there were warrants out for Roger Alvarado, the TWLF spokesman, and Benny Stewart, the BSU chairman, and many others.

But it should be said that by this point in the struggle in the spring of 1969, the leadership of the BSU and TWLF were deeply engaged in the community. They had offices in the Fillmore and in the Mission, and they were engaging in many meetings with community leaders to intervene on behalf of the students. They were also organizing on a statewide level with Third World students on other campuses.

HOW SUCCESSFUL was the strike in shutting down the campus?

IT WAS never a hundred percent. But think about it: Even if students and faculty were still holding classes, imagine trying to go to your class, and you have to march through the Tac Squad and through 2,000 students out on the central square just to get there. It would be a little nerve-wracking.

LATER ON in the strike, the faculty walked out, too. Can you talk about how that developed and what effect it had on getting the administration to settle?

THE FACULTY had a long set of issues going back many years, which were connected to efforts to organize a union for faculty. The organization that was representing faculty at the time was a professional association — it wasn't a real union.

There was a group of radical faculty at SF State that wanted a real union. Some had ties to the labor movement themselves. Some — many of them on the younger side — had ties to the wider movement.

That's another thing to recognize about San Francisco State: Some of the faculty wanted to be there because they were young and hip and cool. They smoked weed and went to the jazz clubs. It wasn't like Berkeley or Stanford or other places, where the faculty was stodgy and separate from the life of the community.

These people were young, some of them in the 20s, and they were politically involved. San Francisco State was a specific destination for them. This was another way in which the political and cultural life of the campus was interwoven with the political and cultural life of the city.

So the question of power was part of all of this. On the one hand, students at SF State were making specific demands challenging the power of the Board of Trustees and, quite frankly, the larger political economy of higher education in California. They were challenging the so-called Master Plan for Higher Education, in which students were tracked. Some students, mainly white and middle class ones, were tracked for the UCs, some people tracked to the CSUs, and then some people, mostly working people and people of color, tracked directly to the community colleges.

The demands of the TWLF and the BSU were challenging that system, and saying: "We want power; we want autonomy." And the faculty wanted that power, too.

For years, the Board of Trustees had tried to control and centralize the educational process — to seize power away from individual campuses and away from faculty and students.

The faculty was fighting for the bread-and-butter issues of a trade union, too. They wanted better salaries, better working conditions, a grievance procedure — classic union stuff.

When the students went out on strike, there were already some faculty who had issues with the Trustees, and they supported the students. There was faculty, for instance, who tried to get between the police and the students at various times.

By December, they were telling the administration that they better deal with the students, or we're going to go out on strike, too. But by that point, they didn't want to deal with the students. Hayakawa was looking to crush the strike, not settle it.

So the faculty walked out in January. The San Francisco Labor Council sanctioned the strike, which meant that deliveries weren't coming through and garbage was piling up across campus. Nobody was going to cross the picket line.

The authorities were becoming quite concerned that this could turn into some type of regional insurrection if the strike were to spread to the Fillmore, the Western Addition, the Mission, Bayview-Hunters Point. They feared that if the struggle deepened, they weren't going to be able to keep it confined it to just the campus anymore.

So the community was involved, labor was involved, and other campuses were threatening strikes. One could argue that this is why we got a College of Ethnic Studies. The power in the street was just too strong.

WHAT WAS the outcome of the strike? What did the strikers win, and what did they lose?

THE STUDENTS got their demands for the most part — except that George Murray never came back to SF State.

In the middle of the strike, he was arrested. He was under constant surveillance, and he got pulled over driving in the South Bay. He had a gun in his car, which wasn't surprising: he was the Minister of Education of the Black Panther Party, an organization undergoing intense political repression.

They used that as a pretext to throw him into jail. From jail, Murray became part of the negotiations to end the strike. But by that point, he left the party and became a minister.

The BSU and TWLF settled the strike, and they ultimately established the College of Ethnic Studies during the fall 1969 semester — which was composed of a Black Studies Department, La Raza Studies Department, Asian American Studies Department and, eventually, an American Indian Studies Department.

Then came the business of offering classes and hiring people. It was different at that time, because there really weren't a whole lot of people with PhDs in La Raza Studies. So they often ended up hiring folks from the community to teach — or members of the Black Student Union who were graduate students.

But this campus/community relationship was actually fundamental to the mission of these early departments.

IN THE first year of Ethnic Studies, many of the original faculty were pushed out. Can you talk about how the administration was able to do that?

A LOT of the original faculty in Ethnic Studies either got fired, didn't get rehired or got pushed out.

But have some perspective: This was after five months of that type of grueling strike, where there was so much sacrifice, where people's personal relationships were damaged, where there was a level of paranoia and police infiltration. There was a real fatigue factor — people asked if they wanted to jump right back into that in the fall of 1969.

At the same time, some of the members of BSU, like Nesbit Crutchfield, were sent to prison on trumped-up charges. By the spring of 1969, 400-plus people had been arrested. That took the wind out of the sails of the movement. All of a sudden, you had to figure out how to represent 400 people in the courts, facing felony charges.

Some people, like members of PL, said that it was important to organize against the courts and represent themselves, to show how the courts are part of a class system. But there are a lot of other people who were arrested who just weren't political in that way. They had been rounded up and thrown into jail, and the leadership of the BSU and TWLF felt a responsibility to defend these people.

There was a legal defense campaign that lasted a full year, which was draining, just representing these people, getting the evidence and lawyers together, trying to get the charges dropped. So in the fall of '69 and into the spring of '70, people were stretched thin.

And on top of that, some people started to look away from organizing on campus. They participated in all these struggles, like against the police in the Mission or defending the elderly at the I Hotel. So some people in the movement invested their energies into other spheres of struggle.

As a result, there wasn't a strong defense of the people who were trying to build Ethnic Studies. In some ways, that created a vacuum, and the people who filled that vacuum — in my view and the view of

many of the original strikers — were a combination of traditional bourgeois academics or cultural nationalists.

So people sort of burrowed down into their spaces and did their academic work, but it wasn't connected to working-class struggles anymore in an organic way. Plus, the cultural nationalists were always critical of the Panthers — and, by extension, the BSU — anyway, because the Panthers worked with white folks or were Marxists or identified as Third World revolutionaries.

CAN YOU talk about the legacy of the strike 50 years later — both for our radical history and for how it shaped San Francisco's struggles and grassroots institutions?

I TEND to talk about San Francisco as one of the global epicenters of an international revolutionary movement. Havana, Algiers, Dar es Salaam: those would be other ones. San Francisco is one of those places where the local and the international converge.

What happened at San Francisco State remade the city. I think of it as similar to the famous 1934 strike of longshore workers, and the impact that had on the political terrain of San Francisco.

What happened at San Francisco State in 1968 reverberated throughout the city. Many of the institutions bettering the city right now have connections to the strike — if not directly, then indirectly. People went from their experience at State and got involved in the community.

There were community health clinics started out of the strike, as well as KPOO, a people's radio station. People from the Black Student Union were centrally involved in the politics of the Western Addition, and some of them joined together to start this radio station. It's still standing today — still community-based radio.

Then, of course, there's Los Siete de la Raza — many of the people who were involved in Los Siete de La Raza were connected to the student strike at SF State and the College of San Mateo.

Los Siete developed free breakfast for children and community health centers. They developed legal aid centers and put out a community newspaper called *Basta Ya* that ran for a couple years. After that, the organization dedicated more time to organizing workers at the point of production.

All of these things gave birth to and catalyzed community-oriented institutions. *El Tecolote*, a free bilingual newspaper, while not a Los Siete creation itself, represents the next iteration after *Basta Ya*. It was started by students at San Francisco State in the La Raza journalism class.

It served a need because Latinos continued to suffer from horribly racist coverage in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, which referred to Raza youth as dirty, Latin, hippy gangsters and so forth. So folks decided to create their own newspaper and report on their own community. *El Tecolote* still publishes out of the Mission District.

After the strike, some people got burnt out and decided that this academic thing wasn't worth it. They got more involved in the community — in the struggle at the I Hotel, for example. Plus, in the fall of 1969, Native students were part of the occupation of Alcatraz Island.

So the strike produced a wave of energy that permeated the city: The I Hotel, Alcatraz, Los Siete, the Panthers — they were all connected to what happened at SF State and propelled forward by the strike, even if the struggles had national and international reverberations.

The other legacy that I would mention is the participation of Chinese students in the strike.

The experience of the strike led to dramatic changes within the community as folks began challenging the established leadership in Chinatown of the Chinese Six Companies. This leadership was very conservative, connected to the politics of Taiwan and the political right. Then suddenly, you had young Chinese students asking about who this guy Mao is, and working with youth in the community.

The politicization at State led to their deeper involvement in Chinatown politics, developing the voice of Chinatown youth and connecting with those people in the community who had been silenced — like the Communists who had a history going back to the 1930s in Chinatown, but who had been silenced and purged because of McCarthyism and the right-wing leadership.

So a new generation came to be the foot soldiers in a challenge to the traditional leadership in the community. This also happened in the Mission.

So when I say there's a rich history and legacy of the SF State strike, it's not confined to a syllabus or even to the campus itself. It's in the neighborhoods of San Francisco, and it's tied to both a national and international struggle.

Alles Schweiget (Mozart)

Die Nachtigall (The Nightingale) (Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart)

This a famous German melody and song that appears in the film during the campfire scene. It is notable because it was a Schickele family often sung by David's father Rainer.

Alles schweiget, Nachtigallen
Flüssen mit süßen Melodien,
Tränen ins Auge, Schwermut ins Herz
Flüssen mit süßen Melodien,
Tränen ins Auge, Schwermut ins Herz

All is silent, Nightengales
Rivers with sweet melodies,
Tears in the eye, melancholy in the heart
Tears in the eye, melancholy in the heart

Life took over from David Schickele's intentions, but it's fascnating to see what he envisioned when he set out to make the film. It is not surprising (then or today) that the film's final drama hinges on the character Gabriel's visa problems. As Schickele wrote in the final version, "Truth was no stranger than fiction, only a little faster." The film was shot in the Fillmore District of San Francisco. When Okpokam was arrested, Schickele put aside the film for a year to devote himself to freeing his friend from prison. In 1971, he did a film for the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, in in January 1970, started work on BUSHMAN again. The startup financing of BUSHMAN came through the American Film Institute's grant of $15,000.

GIVE ME A RIDDLE

Photographed by..... Kirk Smallman and David Schickele
Sound by..... Richard Pearce
Produced and Directed ..... by David Schickele
With Roger E. Landrum, Paul Eyam Nzie Okpokam, Gabriel Ogar, Manzie Ejiogu
B&W. 1.33:1. 58 minutes.

Give Me A Riddle chapter from "Letters to Nighttrain"

I first went to Nigeria as a Peace Corps volunteer in 1961. I went back in 1966 to make a documentary about Nigeria. I went back again in 1972 to write an article about the Biafran war. Physically, emotionally, and intellectually, Nigeria was one of the great adventures of my life.
Nigeria became an independent country in 1960. In 1967 it was tom apart by civil war. Between these two events Nigeria enjoyed a kind of golden age, full of cultural ferment and cross-tribal fertilization. Every kid out of the village was writing the great Nigerian novel. A spirit of great hope prevailed through the land. I made a movie called "Give me a Riddle" about this golden age, seen through the eyes of ex-Peace Corps volunteer Roger Landrum, returning to his host country a couple of years after his Peace Corps service as a teacher at the University of Nigeria. The film follows Roger as he looks up his old student friends, travels with them to their homes, talks with them about their lives and the life of their country. Shot in 1966, the film is a time capsule of a Nigeria and a Peace Corps both in the rambunctious bloom of youth.

(Excerpts from a 1996 Peace Corps interview)

Why did you join the Peace Corps?
I was losing my case as a conscientious objector, so I knew I faced at least a couple of years in jail. I knew the Peace Corps didn't qualify as a military deferment, but I thought it might buy me some time.

I was attracted to the adventure of it. The chance to step out into the world and get into my own kind of trouble. I was one of the first volunteers to go abroad. At this point, the Peace Corps had few rules and no history. I felt free.

I was also caught up in the mood of the age - Kennedy and the rousing spirit of the times - the Sixties taking a deep breath and deciding to go for it. But basically, I didn't expect anything to happen. I took a test in a big building in Manhattan, and I thought that would be the end of it. I was very surprised to get a telegram one day telling me to show up for Peace Corps training at Michigan State University in a couple of weeks. Hm, these people don't fool around, I thought. They were going to send me to Nigeria. I could barely find Nigeria on the map, but I signed on.

What did you do in the Peace Corps?

My job description? I taught English at the University of Nigeria at Nsukka.

Tell us how your 1966 film "Give Me A Riddle" got made.

"Give Me A Riddle" owes its existence to Harris Wofford, then Associate Director of the Peace Corps. When I got back from my Peace Corps service, I pitched to Harris the idea that a returned Peace Corps volunteer should make a film about the experience. Sargent Shriver, then head of the Peace Corps, was reluctant, as I understand it, because Disney had offered to make a PC movie for free. I argued that no Disney movie would hold on to the important truths. I wrote a proposal. Harris pushed it, Shriver finally agreed, and we were off and running. They gave me a Land Rover and a driver named Saibu, and I hired a second cameraman and a soundman. My friend Roger Landrum, who had been in Nigeria with me in the first days of the Peace Corps, joined us as our on-screen interlocutor. We drove around Eastern and Southeastern Nigeria visiting friends and former students in their homes and villages and schools. It was a delirious and exhausting shoot.

By the time I had a rough cut of the film, Shriver was gone and I had to deal with Jack Vaughn, the new Peace Corps director. Vaughn was very gentlemanly, but he wanted changes in the film. Those scenes that showed bearded volunteers drinking with their Nigerian hosts - they would have to go. Vaughn reminded me that Lyndon Johnson was in the White House. "Lyndon calls me almost every day and says, 'Gawddammit Jack, here's another picture in the paper of a volunteer with a gawddamn beard. What have you got over there, a bunch of gawddamn hippies?'11 Vaughn told me how hard it was to defend the Peace Corps on the hill with this kind of image problem. I said, 'Tm sorry, Mr. Vaughn, but that's your job. My job is to tell the truth, and yours is to run interference for it." In the end he let me finish the film as I saw fit.

It became clear over time that the film was a valuable historical document, capturing the spirit of Nigeria in that halcyon time between independence and civil war. Since then, military rule and civil deterioration have taken a tremendous toll on the country.

My friend Manze Ejiogu, who is in the film, came to visit me a couple of years ago. This was his first opportunity to see the film, so I had some friends over and showed it to him. The country is in such bad shape, after a string of army generals at the helm who have killed or imprisoned the most promising young Nigerians and stifled political activity throughout the land, that Manze was close to tears at the end of the film. He loved the film, but said, "It is impossible to be a responsible Nigerian today without wanting to kill yourself."

When the Right Hand Washes the Left
by David Schickele (Nigeria 1961-63)

December 16, 2017

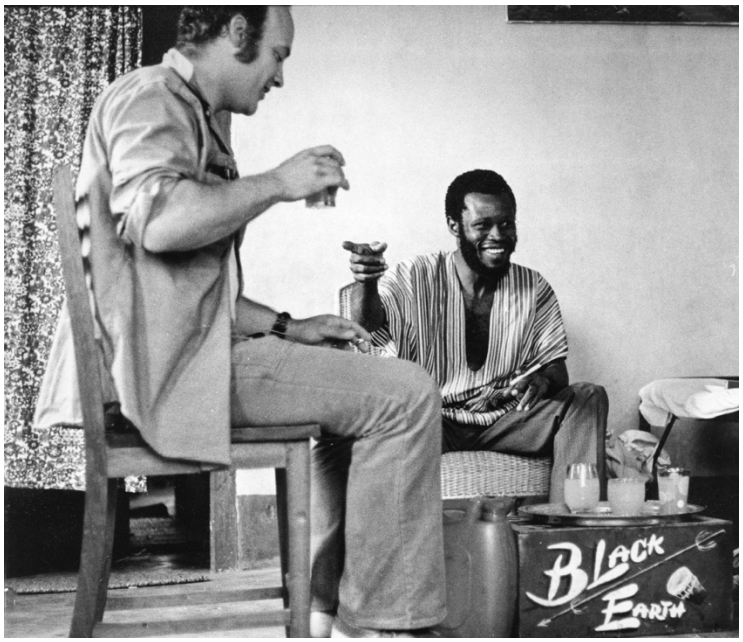
David G. Schickele first presented his retrospective view of Volunteer service in a speech given at Swarthmore College in 1963 that was printed in the Swarthmore College Bulletin. At the time, there was great interest on college campuses about the Peace Corps and early RPCVs were frequently asked to write or speak on their college campuses about their experiences. A 1958 graduate of Swarthmore, Schickele worked as a freelance professional violinist before joining the Peace Corps in 1961.

After his tour, he would, with Roger Landrum make a documentary film on the Peace Corps in Nigeria called "Give Me A Riddle" that was for Peace Corps recruitment but was never really used by the agency. The film was perhaps too honest a representation of Peace Corps Volunteers life overseas and the agency couldn't handle it. However, the Peace Corps did pick up Schickele's essay in the Swarthmore College Bulletin and reprinted it in its first "Point of View," a short-lived series of discussion papers that they published in the early days of the agency. This series of monographs were devoted, "to the Peace Corps experience and philosophy by members of the staff, current and former Peace Corps Volunteers and qualified observers."

What is impressive about Schickele's essay is that what he said in 1963 is still valid today.

When the Right Hand Washes the Left
by David Schickele (Nigeria 1961-63)

THE FAVORITE PARLOR SPORT during the Peace Corps training program was making up cocky answers to a question that was put to us 17 times a day by the professional and idle curious alike: Why did you join the Peace Corps? To the Peace Corps training official, who held the power of deciding our futures, we answered that we wanted to help; make the world a better place in which to live; but to others we were perhaps more truthful in talking about poker debts or a feeling that the Bronx Zoo wasn't enough. We resented the question because we sensed it could be answered well only in retrospect. We had no idea exactly what we were getting into, and it was less painful to be facetious than to repeat the idealistic clichés to which the question was always a veiled invitation.



I am now what is known as an ex-Volunteer (there seems to be some

diffidence about the word “veteran”), having spent 20 months teaching at the University of Nigeria at Nsukka in West Africa. And now I am ready to answer the question.

My life at Nsukka bore little resemblance to the publicized image of Peace Corps stoicism — the straw mat and kerosene lamp syndrome. The university, though 50 miles from anything that could be called a metropolis, was a large international community unto itself, full of Englishman, Indians, Pakistani, Germans, Americans and, of course, Nigerians. I lived in a single room in a student dormitory, a modern if treacherous building with running water at least four days a week and electricity when the weather was good. I ate primarily Western food in a cafeteria. I owned a little motorcycle and did my share of traveling and roughing it, but the bulk of my life was little different from university life in the States, with a few important exceptions.

In the first place, the university was only a year old when I arrived, and a spirit of improvisation was required at all times and in all areas, particularly the teaching of literature without books. The library was still pretty much a shell, and ordered books took a minimum of six weeks to arrive if one was lucky, and I never talked to anyone who was. The happier side of this frantic coin was that in the absence of organization many of us had practically unlimited freedom in what and how we were to teach, and we made up our courses as we went along according to what materials were available and our sense of what the students needed. This was tricky freedom which I still blame, in my weaker moments, for my worst mistakes; but it allowed an organic approach to the pursuit of an idea with all its nooks and crannies, an approach long overdue for students trained in the unquestioning acceptance of rigid syllabi.

The longer I was there the more I became involved with a nucleus of students, and the weaker became the impulse to disappear over the weekend on my motorcycle in search of external adventure. My social and professional lives slowly fused into one and the same thing. I shared an office with another Volunteer, and we were there almost every evening from supper until late at night, preparing classes and talking to students, who learned that we were always available for help on their work or just bulling around. We sponsored poetry and short story contests and founded a literary club which was the liveliest and most enjoyable organization I’ve ever belonged to, joyfully subject to the imperative of which all remote areas have the advantage: if you want to see a Chekhov play, you have to put it on yourself.

In some ways I was more alive intellectually at Nsukka than I was at Swarthmore, due in part to the fact that I worked much harder at Nsukka, I’m afraid, than I did at Swarthmore; and to the fact that one learns more from teaching than from studying. But principally it had to do with the kind of perspective necessary in the teaching of Western Literature to a people of a different tradition, and the empathy and curiosity necessary in teaching African literature to Africans. It is always an intellectual experience to cross cultural boundaries.

At the most elementary level, it is a challenge to separate thought from mechanics in the work of students who are not writing in their native language. Take, for example, the following paragraph, written, I would emphasize, not by a university student but by a cleaning man at the university in a special course:

“I enjoy certain tasks in my work, but others are not so enjoyable.”

It sings a melody in my poor mind, when a friend came to me and said that: I enjoy certain tasks in my work, but others are not so enjoyable. I laughed and called him by his name, then I asked him what is the task in your work. He answered me and then added, for a period of five years, I have being seriously considering what to do to assist his self as an orphan, in that field of provision. That he should never play with the task of his work. But others who are not so enjoyable could not understand the bitterness to his orphanship. He said to those who are not so enjoyable that they have no bounding which hangs their thought in a dark room."

I regard this passage with joy, not to say a little awe, but beneath its exotic and largely unconscious poetic appeal there is a man trying to say something important, blown about in the wilderness of an unfamiliar language by the influences of the King James Version and the vernacular proverb. Where writing like this is concerned, it is impossible to be a Guardian of Good Grammar; one must try to confront the roots of language — the relationship between thought and word, with all the problems of extraneous influences and in many cases translation from a native tongue.

They spoke what was in their heads

At another level, the intellectual excitement came from a kind of freshness of thoughts and expression in minds that have not become trapped by scholastic conventions, or the fear of them. I remember times at Swarthmore when I kept a question or thought to myself because I feared it might be in some way intellectually out of line. But most of my Nsukka students had no idea what was in or out of line, what was a cliché and what was not, what critical attitudes were forbidden or encouraged (though I did my share, I confess, of forbidding and encouraging). They were not at all calculating, in a social sense, in their thought. They spoke what was in their heads, with the result that discussion had a lively, unadulterated and personal quality which I found a relief from the more sophisticated but less spontaneously sincere manner of many young American intellectuals. It was also a little infuriating at times. I am, after all, a product of my own culture. But one has only to look at a 1908 Phoenix (the Swarthmore student newspaper) to realize how much sophistication is a thing of style and fashion, and how little any one fashion exhausts the possible ways in which the world can be confronted and apprehended.

In Nigeria literature became the line of commerce between me and my students as people, a common interest and prime mover in the coming together of White American and Black African. Ours was a dialogue between equals, articulate representatives of two articulate and in many ways opposing heritages. Because literature deals more directly with life than other art forms, through it I began to know Nigeria as a country and my students as friends. An idealized case history might read something like this: A student brings me a story he has written, perhaps autobiographical, about life in his village. I harrumph my way through a number of formal criticisms and start asking questions about customs in his village that have a bearing on the story. Soon we are exchanging childhood reminiscences or talking about girls over a bottle of beer. Eventually we travel together to his home, where I meet his family and live in his house. And then what began, perhaps, as a rather bookish interest in comparative culture becomes a real involvement in that culture, so that each new insight does not merely add to a store of knowledge, but carries the power of giving pain or pleasure. If there is any lesson in this, it is

simply that no real intellectual understanding can exist without a sense of identification at some deeper level. I think this is what the Peace Corps, when it is lucky, accomplishes.

This sense of identification is not a mysterious thing. Once in Nsukka, after struggling to explain the social and intellectual background of some classic Western literature, I began teaching a modern Nigerian novel, Achebe's No Longer at Ease. I was struck by the concreteness of the first comments from the class: "That place where the Lagos taxi driver runs over the dog because he thinks it's good luck . . . it's really like that." It seems that the joy of simple recognition in art is more than an accidental attribute — not the recognition of universals, but of dogs and taxicabs. Before going to Africa, I read another book by Achebe, Things Fall Apart. I enjoyed it and was glad to learn something about Ibo culture, but I thought it a mediocre work of art. I read the book again at the end of my stay in Nigeria and suddenly found it an exceptional work of art. It was no longer a cultural document, but a book about trees I had climbed and houses I had visited in. It is not that I now ignored artistic defects through sentimentality, but that my empathy revealed artistic virtues that had previously been hidden from me.

We in America know too much about the rest of the world. Subjected to a constant barrage of information from books, TV, photographers, we know how Eskimos catch bears and how people come of age in Samoa. We gather our images of the whole world around us and succumb to the illusion of being cosmopolitan. We study comparative literature and read books like Zen in the Art of Archery and think of ourselves as citizens of the world when actually vast reading is simply the hallmark of our parochialism. No matter how many Yoga kicks we go on, we still interpret everything through the pattern of our own American existence and intellectual traditions, gleaning only disembodied ideas from other cultures.

If, as the critics have it, ideas are inseparable from their style of expression, it is equally true in the cultural sense that ideas are inseparable from the manner and place in which they are lived. This to me is the meaning of the Peace Corps as a new frontier. It is the call to go, not where man has never been before, but where he has lived differently; the call to experience firsthand the intricacies of a different culture; to understand from the inside rather than the outside; and to test the limits of one's own way of life against another in the same manner as the original pioneer tested the limits of his endurance against the elements. This is perhaps an impossible ideal, surely impossible in the narrow scope of two years; but it was an adventure just the same. It was an adventure to realize, for instance, to what extent irony is an attribute, even a condition, of Western life and thought, and to live for nearly two years in a society in which irony as a force is practically nonexistent. But that is too complex a thing to get started on right now.

Hundreds of 23-year-old spies.

Life at Nsukka was not always the easiest thing in the world, and the friendships I talk of so cavalierly were not the work of a day. Our group arrived at Nsukka shortly after the Peace Corps' first big publicity break, the famous Post Card Incident, which was still very much on Nigerian minds. We were always treated with a sense of natural friendliness and hospitality, but there was also quite a bit of understandable mistrust. Nigeria became a nation only in 1960, and the present university generation is one bred on the struggle for independence and the appropriate slogans and attitudes. I tended to feel guilty rather than defensive, except when the

accusations were patently ridiculous, such as the idea that we were all master spires — hundreds of 23-year-old master spies — or when facts were purposefully ignored, as in the statement that the Peace Corps was run by the CIA. America is a large, rich, powerful, feared and envied nation; Nigeria is a new country naturally jealous of its independence and autonomy. All things considered, I am a little amazed at the openness and frankness of our receptions.

There were other problems. Many Nigerians have an overdeveloped sense of status and found it hard to believe that we were paid practically nothing. Many reasoned that because we lived in the dormitories with the students instead of in big houses as the rest of the faculty, we must be second-raters, or misfits that America was fobbing off on them. But insofar as we made names for ourselves as good teachers and made ourselves accessible as people (something that few of my friends had ever known a white man to do), our eventual acceptance into the community was assured. Shortly after our arrival a petition circulated among the students asking the administration to dismiss the Peace Corps. Months later student grievances erupted into a riot that forced the school to close down for more than two weeks, but in the long list of grievances, the Peace Corp was not now mentioned.

I do not wish to imply that we "won them over"; indeed, I think they won us over in the final analysis. It's just that the intransigence of our preconceptions of ourselves and others gradually dissolved into a kind of affectionate confusion. Ideas often try to live a life of their own, independent of and separate from the people and objects with which they supposedly deal. In the intellect alone they are self-proliferating, like fungus under glass, without regard for what the weather is doing outside. But the kind of personal contact we had with Nigerians helped break up the false buttressing of formal thought, and when that happens, personal friction creates a warmth conducive to further understanding and not a heat with which to light incendiary fires. A glass of beer can make the difference between families and worthy opponents.

I was at first surprised by how little I felt the presence of any racial feeling in Nigeria. What little I did notice had a kind of second-hand quality, as if it were merely a principled identification with the American Negro or a historical commitment. Though well-informed about civil rights events in the United States, most Nigerians I talked to showed little understanding of the state of mind of the American Negro as differentiated from themselves. Most Nigerians have had little contact with hardcore prejudice backed by social force. They have good reason to resent, sometimes to hate, the white man in Africa, but they have never been subjected as people to the kind of daily and life-long injustice that confronts the American Negro.

Racial feeling sometimes crops up in strange circumstances. A friend writes me, "Before Nsukka, the only whites I had ever known were reverend fathers in school who interpreted everything I did as a sure sign of fast-approaching eternal damnation…" In Africa as in America all whites are to a certain extent, guilty until proven innocent, but in a very short time we were joking about our respective colors with a freedom and levity which is not always possible in America. Color has its own pure power, too; and I soon felt ashamed of my chalky, pallid skin against the splendor of the African's.

Much has been written recently about the contradictory feelings of the Negro toward the white man — hating him and yet buying facial creams to be more like him — and I think the same sort

of contradictory relationship exists in Nigeria, but with a cultural rather than a racial basis. The African stands in a very delicate psychological position between Western industrial culture and his own. He is driven to a comparative evaluation and must build a society out of his decisions. America is not so much interested in changing as exporting its society; Nigeria is interested in change and is of necessity much less parochial than ourselves in the source of its inspiration.

The only thing that cuts a little ice

“Africa caught between two worlds” — it is a cliché, but it is no joke. To the race problem it is at least possible to postulate an ideal resolution: racial equality and the elimination of intolerance. But in its cultural aspect — the struggle between African traditions and the heritage of the West — there is no indisputable resolution, not even in the mind. If I have learned anything from living in Nigeria, it is the unenviably complex and difficult position in which the young Nigerian finds himself; and if I have learned anything from the poems and stories written by my students, it is the incredible grace, honesty and sometimes power with which many Nigerians are examining themselves, their past and their future.

I don’t know how friendship fits into all this, but somehow it does. My instincts revolt against the whole idea of having to prove in some mechanistic or quantitative way the value of the Peace Corps. If the aim is to help people, I understand that in the sense of the Ibo proverb which says that when the right hand washes the left hand, the right hand become clean also. E. M. Forster had said that “love is a great force in private life,” but “in public affairs [it] does not work.” The fact is we can only love what we know personally, and we cannot know much. The only thing that cuts a little ice is affection, or the possibility of affection. I only know that when I am infuriated by some article in a Nigerian newspaper, I can summon up countless images of dusty cycle rides with Paul Okpokam, reading poetry with Glory Nwanodi, dancing and drinking palm wine with Gabriel Ogar, and it suddenly matters very much that I go beyond my annoyance to some kind of understanding. That my Nigerian friends trust me is no reason for them to trust Washington or forgive Birmingham; but something is there which was not there before and which the world is the better for having.

After a long career as a songwriter, musician, filmmaker and teacher, David Schickele died of a brain tumor in 2000.

To Preserve and to Learn

Making David Schickele's Peace Corps Film

by Roger Landrum (Nigeria 1961–63)

A COUPLE OF YEARS AFTER WE SERVED together as PCVs in Nigeria, David Schickele asked me if I would be part of a film project he was proposing to the Peace Corps. The basic concept was to capture the adventure of crossing into another culture and the rewards gained from escaping the cocoon in which Americans living abroad typically enclose themselves. It is an experience common among many PCVs to one degree or another, and for the Peace Corps, this film could be used to recruit the next wave of Volunteers, focusing on its two mandated cross-cultural goals rather than the more commonly publicized development assistance goal. Our personal experiences in Africa had been a revelation to us in numerous ways, and David wanted to make a documentary providing Americans with a new perspective from inside the Volunteer's Peace Corps and a different view of Africans.

The Peace Corps was jittery about the proposed project. In 1965, David was unknown, at the beginning of a career as an independent filmmaker and musician. These were still the early years of the Peace Corps, and facing a lot of Congressional skepticism, the agency was sensitive about its image both in Washington and with the American public. This project did not fit the preferred style of hiring a powerful PR firm to shape the Peace Corps message and conducting recruitment campaigns under tight agency control. But as things often happened in those days, Harris Wofford got behind the project and convinced Sargent Shriver to take a chance, despite strong objections from others within the Peace Corps.

At the time, I was a Peace Corps employee, a program officer in the Division of Training, and I soon got a taste of the obstacles David and Harris had overcome. In preparation for our filmmaking party's departure, my passport had to be sent, with Travel Orders, through the General Counsel's office for final approval. There they were confiscated and declared "lost." It took a confrontational hubbub to pry them out only a short time before the party's scheduled flight to Nigeria. That was just the beginning of our troubles.

Starting with only an idea

I have to admit there was not much of a plan for the film, except in David's mind. There was no written script. And I had never been in a film before and was fairly nervous myself about what role I was expected to play. The general plan was to meet up with four Nigerian friends — former students of ours at the University of Nigeria at Nsukka between 1961

through 1963 — and David would capture the ensuing reunions and take things from there. Our friends had not even been notified we were coming. The idea was to take them by surprise.

The Peace Corps country director, David Elliott, could not have been more helpful. He had a Peace Corps vehicle lined up for us along with the Nigerian driver requested by David — a trusted colleague from our Volunteer days. But the Nigerian government had to approve letting an American film crew loose in their country at a time when they were even more sensitive about their image than the Peace Corps was. After fruitless visits to many government offices in Lagos to obtain the proper documents, we finally got another break when we ended up before the Minister of Culture. The Minister turned out to be Cyprian Ekwensi, a famous Nigerian novelist whose most popular work, Jagua Nana, was the story of a celebrated Nigerian prostitute. Minister Ekwensi was not stuck on propaganda. He and David hit it off and we soon had the necessary documents to deal with policemen or other government agents who might spot our film crew at work.

The filming crew
The crew was David, with a handheld 16 mm camera, a second cameraman, a soundman, the Nigerian driver, and myself. As I remember, we had five weeks to locate our Nigerian friends and get enough footage for David to create his recruiting film. This is something of a blur to me, and not only because this all happened many years ago. Being surrounded by a film crew is more than a small distraction from returning to your Peace Corps site.

The script
The centerpiece of David's "script" turned out to be trips back to the home areas of the four Nigerians, in far-flung parts of eastern Nigeria — in one case by dugout canoe up the Cross River to a tiny village. David wanted to include as a part of the film the journey this new generation of university-educated Nigerians were making from their ancestral ethnic roots. In many ways it was a greater epic than anything PCVs faced.

The cast — the RPCV
For years afterwards, I kidded David that he had cast me as himself in the film. This was more of a paradox than you might think. David and I were the best of friends and remained that way until he died a year and a half ago, but we were also quite different. For lack of a better phrase, David had a beat generation interest in culture and the arts. He found the preferred Peace Corps brand of idealism cliché-ridden and the political drama of Nigeria's early independence discomforting. When we first arrived in Nigeria as PCVs in 1961, I think he was a bit afraid of Nigerian students, who were not only profoundly African in manner (this was well before today's slick globalizing influences) but zealously outspoken about neocolonialism, which kept all of us somewhat on guard. The students demonstrated against the Peace Corps upon our arrival on campus where we had been thrown — sink or swim style — into their dorms to live with them, adding to the normal tensions of adjustment to another culture. We also had our classes to plan and conduct in these somewhat volatile circumstances. It was months before David left the university campus to get out and mix it up with Nigeria and Nigerians. Some in our group never really did this. I, on the other hand, was excited about the Peace Corps mission and was determined to spend

most of my time with Nigerians, and so I began making excursions into the countryside as soon as we arrived in Nsukka. Curiosity soon got the best of David, and, before long he joined in. We spent a good deal of time together exploring Nigeria, but in the end, David made his own personal journey into Nigeria, as I did. I have always thought that my outgoing approach with Nigeria and Nigerians got David out of his shell, and, to that extent, inspired David's film project. In watching him make the film, it became clear that he was far more reflective than I was about things I often took for granted. At any rate, my role in the film, as cast by David, became that of an interlocutor with the Nigerians.

The cast — the former students

One by one, we found our four Nigerian friends — each astounded to see us appear at his doorsteps. They had graduated and now were at their jobs in various parts of eastern Nigeria. Two were teachers, one was with an oil company, and the other was a government district officer. We proceeded to become reacquainted — Nigerian-style, with lots of parties and long conversations.

Pol Ndu, a teacher and published poet, appears briefly in the film to host one of those wonderful Nigerian small-town parties with local friends, gossiping and dancing. Not many years after making the film, Pol, a sweet and refined young man with a wife and two kids, was killed in an automobile accident.

Paul Okpokam — a teacher who turned out to be a natural actor — is seen in the film with his class at a girl's school, where he pushes me into making a guest appearance for a lesson about Chinua Achebe's novel, Things Fall Apart. He later leads an excursion to his ancestral village on the Cross River where I meet his family. Masks and drums are brought from the Sacred Forest for masquerade dances to celebrate his return home.

Paul came to the US in the late 60s to star in Bushman, a feature film David made about the adventures of an African in San Francisco. That film won awards at independent film festivals and is in the archives of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City as an early example of cinema verité. Paul also got arrested during a race riot at San Francisco State University, allegedly for carrying a homemade bomb on campus in his jacket pocket. That event became the conclusion of Bushman. Paul was briefly imprisoned and then deported to Nigeria where he resumed his career in acting and theatre management.

Manze Ejiogu appears in the film conversing with me at length about Nigeria and translating at an Owerri village celebration. He has had a long career in the oil business and was installed as a traditional chief in Owerri. Manze visited David and me in the States a few years ago and has corresponded with us over many years, often about Nigeria's descent into political darkness.

Gabriel Ogar is the man many women seeing the film most wanted to meet. Gabe married his fiancée, Josephine, who appears briefly in the film as well. As far as I know, they lived happily ever afterwards. His career has been in local government. We heard about him through Paul but not from him directly.

The film focuses mostly on these people but some of the most beautiful parts are quiet scenes of a rural village waking up in the morning, yam fields, and Nigerian music.

Give Me A Riddle
As for the film itself, Give Me A Riddle — named after a scene about Ibo proverbs and riddles — lives on, especially with Nigeria RPCVs.

It was utilized a bit in Peace Corps recruiting, although the agency was never comfortable with the "behind the scenes" look at the Peace Corps. By the time the rough-cut was prepared from over 25 hours of footage, Shriver was gone. The new Peace Corps director, Jack Hood Vaughn, told David that scenes showing bearded PCVs drinking with their Nigerian hosts would have to go because this "image" made it too hard to defend the Peace Corps on Capitol Hill. It turned out that President Johnson had called Vaughn to complain about PCVs. For years, David quoted with relish Vaughn's account of the phone call: "Gawddammit Jack, here's another picture of a Volunteer with a gawddamn beard. What you got over there, a bunch of gawddamn hippies?"

The Peace Corps banned showings of the film in southern states out of concern that it would inflame race relations — which probably meant offend southern politicians. The Peace Corps leadership feared the American south in the 60s — probably for good reasons. There was a Shriver policy that PCVs could not be trained where they might face racial discrimination, which eliminated southern colleges and universities. As a program officer for training, I arranged the first training program at a Black college — Morehouse in Atlanta. The Morehouse president and I had to promise Shriver that there would be no trouble. Then a carload of trainees, training staff, Nigerians and I were mistaken for civil rights workers, and arrested and jailed on phony charges in the small town of Roberta, Georgia. It was Morehouse and the Nigerian Embassy that got us released, not the Peace Corps. David would have loved to film that.

Today, when I see Give Me A Riddle, I am always a little surprised by how bold we were in those early years of Peace Corps. It is an emotional experience to see again how generous our Nigerian friends really were and to revisit David's take on the Peace Corps. At one level, Riddle is about friendships, talks, trips and a sense of place. It is true to those dimensions of the Peace Corps. David prized the film as a historical document capturing the spirit of Nigeria in that halcyon time between independence and civil war. With David's death, from a brain tumor, Riddle has become infused — at least for me — with his sense of spiritual journey and of finding delight in unexpected places.

The film is long forgotten by the Peace Corps but is sometimes shown at RPCV conferences. I hear about it fairly often. Harris Wofford called a few months back after showing it on video to the founder of City Year, who wanted to talk about it. A few weeks ago some Peace Corps friends of mine insisted on seeing it. Parts of the film were shown at the Memorial Service for David in San Francisco in November 1999. The RPCV group Friends of Nigeria has asked to show it during their gathering at the 40th anniversary conference. David took the film back to Nigeria for a showing in 1972.

Unfortunately, the Peace Corps doesn't make films like this anymore, but RPCVs still tell their stories in books and in other ways. When I meet young people who I think have the right stuff to join the Peace Corps, I always shown them the film. They usually sign up and, I am happy to report, usually have very similar experiences in places as distant from Nigeria as Hungary and Ecuador.

After the Peace Corps, Roger Landrum founded and directed three nonprofit organizations. The Teachers Inc. recruited, trained and supported a corps of teachers for inner-city public schools in New York City, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and Atlanta. Youth Service America, by leading a nation-wide expansion of youth volunteer programs in schools and higher education and youth corps in states and cities, laid the program and policy foundation for the federal National and Community Service Acts of 1990 and 1993. Youth Service International, is developing service programs for young people in Central and Eastern Europe. Landrum served as volunteer president of the group RPCV/Washington and the National Peace Corps Association, and organized and chaired the RPCV Coalition that created the 25th Peace Corps Anniversary Celebration in Washington, D.C. in 1986. Landrum lives in Washington, DC.

Milestone Film & Video

In 34 years in film distribution and restoration, Milestone has built a reputation for releasing classic cinema masterpieces, groundbreaking documentaries, and American independent features. Thanks to the company's work in rediscovering and releasing important films such as Charles Burnett's *Killer of Sheep*, Kent Mackenzie's, *The Exiles*, Mikhail Kalatozov's *I Am Cuba*, Marcel Ophuls' *The Sorrow and the Pity*, the Mariposa Film Group's *Word is Out,* Ayoka Chenzira's *Alma's Rainbow,* and Alfred Hitchcock's *Bon Voyage* and *Aventure Malgache*, Milestone has long occupied a position as one of the country's most influential independent distributors. Important contemporary artists who have co-presented Milestone restorations include Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, Barbara Kopple, Steven Soderbergh, Thelma Schoonmaker, Jonathan Demme, Dustin Hoffman, and Charles Burnett.

In 1995, Milestone received the first Special Archival Award from the National Society of Film Critics for its restoration and release of *I Am Cuba*. Manohla Dargis at *LA Weekly* chose Milestone as the 1999 "Indie Distributor of the Year." In 2004, the National Society of Film Critics awarded Milestone with a Film Heritage award. That same year the International Film Seminars presented the company its prestigious Leo Award and the New York Film Critics Circle voted the company a Special Award "in honor of 15 years of restoring classic films." In November 2007, Milestone was awarded the Fort Lee Film Commission's first Lewis Selznick Award for contributions to film history. In January 2008, the Los Angeles Film Critics Association chose to give its first Legacy of Cinema Award "to Dennis Doros and Amy Heller of Milestone Film & Video for their tireless efforts on behalf of film restoration and preservation." And in March 2008, Milestone was honored by Anthology Film Archive for its work in preservation.

The company won Best Rediscovery in the Il Cinema Ritrovato DVD Awards for its release of *Winter Soldier* in 2006 and again in 2010 for *The Exiles*. In 2015, Il Cinema Ritrovato honored Milestone for Best Blu-ray, for the *Project Shirley* series. In 2011, Milestone was the first distributor ever chosen for two Film Heritage Awards in the same year by the National Society of Film Critics for the releases of *On the Bowery* and *Word is Out*. The American Library Association selected *Word is Out* for its Notable Videos for Adults, the first classic film ever so chosen.

In December 2012, Milestone became the first two-time winner of the prestigious New York Film Critics' Circle's "Special Award" and also received another National Society of Film

Critics Film Heritage Award, this time for the company's work restoring, preserving and distributing the films of iconoclast director Shirley Clarke. In 2019, Doros and Heller were honored with the Art House Convergence's Spotlight Lifetime Achievement Award and the Denver Silent Film Festival's David Shepard Career Achievement Award. In 2023, Milestone received the Ambler Cinematic Arts Award.

In 2009, Dennis Doros was elected as one of the Directors of the Board of the Association of the Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) and established the organization's press office in 2010. He served three terms on the board. In 2016, he was honored with AMIA's William O'Farrell Award in recognition for services to the field. From 2017–2021, Doros served as President of AMIA, and on the board of Co-ordinating Council of Audio-Visual Archives Associations. From 2018–2021, Doros was a member of the National Film Preservation Board, which helps select the Library of Congress's yearly additions to the National Film Registry.

Heller and Doros have lectured internationally on the importance of saving and screening films outside the mainstream. In recent years, Milestone premiered pristine restorations of Nancy Savoca's *Household Saints*, David Schickele's *Bushman*, Bridgett Davis' *Naked Acts*, Mikhail Kalatozov's *I Am Cuba*; Lois Weber's *Shoes* and *The Dumb Girl of Portici*; Kathleen Collins's *Losing Ground*; George T. Nierenberg's *Say Amen, Somebody* and *No Maps on My Taps*; the films of Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, including the Oscar®-winning *Common Threads*, Ayoka Chenzira's *Alma's Rainbow,* and Eleanor Antin's *The Man without a World*. They produced Ross Lipman's acclaimed essay film *Notfilm*.

In 2021, Milestone entered into a distribution agreement with Kino Lorber, which has allowed co-founders Doros and Heller more time to focus on the rediscovery and restoration of films that will delight viewers and challenge the cinematic canon. The pair — along with filmmakers Nancy Savoca, Rich Guay, Ira Deutchman, Mary Harron, Geoffrey Fletcher, and attorney Susan Bodine — have also been actively involved in the founding of a new non-profit organization, Missing Movies, dedicated to addressing the current cinephile's dilemma — thousands of films that are no longer available to the public.

"They care and they love movies." — Martin Scorsese

"Among the distributors dedicated to the preservation and circulation of classic cinema, none deserves more commendation and affection than Milestone Film & Video."
- David Sterritt, Quarterly Review of Film and Video

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