



OLI OTYA?

LIFE AND LOSS IN RURAL UGANDA

PRESS KIT

A DOCUMENTARY BY LUCY BRUELL

Original Music by **Samite**, Directors of Photography **Jarred Alterman** and **Ali Musoke**,
Editors **Jay Miracle** and **Pola Rapaport**, Producers **Jack Briggs** and **Lucy Bruell**,
Executive Producers **Christian J.** and **Eva Trefz**

RUNTIME 75 min | **COUNTRY** USA, Uganda | **LANGUAGE** English, Luganda

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A Journey into the Heart of Medicine

Oli Otya? Life and Loss in Rural Uganda tells the story of a team of nurses from a small hospital who travel to the villages to care for people facing life-threatening illness. Naggalama, Uganda is less than 25 miles from Kampala, the capital, but in many ways, it is a million miles away. Families depend on the harvest; children fill cans of water at the pump; and food simmers on open fires. Villagers frequently turn to traditional healers, herbalists, and bone setters, hoping to ease their suffering. Nurse Prossy Nafula and her team bring medical supplies and liquid morphine to patients in the community. They are accompanied by American physician volunteers: Randi Diamond, a palliative care specialist at Weill Cornell Medical Center in New York, her husband, Howard Eison, an internist in private practice, and Jemella Raymore, who trained with Randi. The intimacy of medical care is a window into the lives of the people we meet, the challenges of integrating Western medicine into local practices, and pain relief as a basic human right.

The team crowds into a hospital van to visit patients. Julius, a paralyzed man, is weaker since the team last saw him, but he believes that he will heal and leave his bed to feel the sun on his face. Robina, a woman with cervical cancer, has 11 children and worries what will happen when she is no longer there to care for them. A young man with Huntington's Disease, David, is cared for by his mother who believes his jerking motions and screams are caused by demons. And we meet Postiano, a man who decides not to sell his bicycle to pay for cancer treatment because his children would no longer have a way to get to school.

Moments of sadness are juxtaposed with hopeful ones. Asiya, a young girl who was bedridden, takes her first steps with a walker. Fatuma thanks the team with a gift of a chicken, and children play circle games outside the staff quarters. Despite the fragility of the patients' lives, there are moments to savor.

Evening reflection sessions with the U.S. team capture some of the difficulties in trying to adapt their ways to the culture of rural Uganda. "You are thinking too linearly," a Ugandan clinical officer tells them. "You have to think in stories, understand stories." Through the lens of their experience, **Oli Otya?** explores how faith, culture, and belief frame how people understand illness and how they care for each other when options are few. It is the story of a cross-cultural partnership in care, an example of global health on the ground level.

Logline

Oli Otya? Life and Loss in Rural Uganda tells the story of a team of palliative care nurses from a small hospital and volunteer doctors from the U.S. who care for villagers with little access to medical treatment, where pain and suffering are often endured rather than relieved, and where people with life-threatening illnesses turn to traditional healers-herbalists, bone setters and witch doctors- hoping for a cure. The intimacy of medical care is a window into the lives of the villagers and the challenges of integrating Western medical practices with traditional beliefs.

Director's Statement

Oli Otya? is a journey into the heart of medicine, where compassion and comfort fill the gap left by the absence of accessible healthcare. The film illuminates a culture that is virtually invisible, a culture that relies on human kindness, spirituality, tradition, and where suspicion of Western medicine is pervasive. Our focus is on the people of this community, about the ebb and flow of life touched by life threatening illnesses.

My approach to this project evolved over the two summers I spent in Naggalama. I arrived in July 2016 with Jarred Alterman, the DP, prepared to focus on the work of Drs. Randi Diamond and Howard Eison, a husband and wife team of palliative care physicians from New York. As I walked around the hospital grounds that first day, I saw that the world of the hospital- patients cared for by their families, women pumping water to wash bed linens, the nurses and staff-were characters as well, and it was this world that I wanted to convey in my film. In rural Uganda, I became a participant observer; the film reflects this immersive approach-**Oli Otya?** is told through the voices of the people we meet.

I was honored to work with Samite who composed the original soundtrack for the documentary. I first heard his music in Uganda. Samite is a Ugandan refugee now living with his wife on a farm in upstate New York. Samite is recognized internationally for his indigenous compositions and as the founder of Musicians for World Harmony which promotes music as a means of healing.

On the second trip, I traveled with my Ugandan crew to explore the world of traditional healers. We visited an herbalist and a bone setter and spoke with some of the villagers who sought care from them. The crew became my cultural guides, and as Luganda speakers, the families and health care workers we filmed welcomed them.

Oli Otya? is a story of collaboration across cultures. The patients and families who gave us permission to film have much to offer about how they care for one another as they experience illness, the limits chronic disease places on their lives, and the end of life. The documentary raises timely issues about our responsibilities to one another, access to healthcare, and relief from pain and suffering as a basic human right. The struggles are personal, but they resonate universally.

Ultimately, the essence of medicine, whether traditional or Western, is grounded in the personal connections between health workers- doctors, nurses, and others on the team-and the people whose lives are in their care.



Palliative Care in Uganda

Palliative care is a specialized branch of medicine that provides symptom control, emotional, psychological, and spiritual support for people suffering from life-limiting conditions. Although Uganda was the first country in Africa to designate palliative care as an essential clinical service, palliative care services are mainly found in the urban areas. The picture is radically different in the rural areas, where over 80% of the population lives. There, palliative care is considerably more limited – in many areas, non-existent. Access to medical care is a serious problem in a country where the patient-doctor ration is estimated at 1:11,000 and 70% of the doctors practice in urban areas. Without treatment, patients with advanced illness often endure serious pain and suffering.

St. Francis Naggalama Hospital, located in a rural area 35 km north of Kampala, is a model for rural areas across Africa. It started a rudimentary palliative care program in 2013 with a nurse, an assistant nurse, and a spiritual aide, who travel to the villages to bring much needed supplies, psychosocial support, and pain medication, including liquid morphine that the government provides free of charge to patients on the palliative care service. **Oli Otya?** Introduces us to the other side of the opioid crisis-pain relief as a human rights issue. It is a portrait of compassionate care in a low resource part of the world, one that will resonate across borders.

Awards

Rootflix Viewers Choice Award

THE AFRICAN FILM FESTIVAL

OFFICIAL SELECTION

SEDONA INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

AWARD OF MERIT: DOCUMENTARY FEATURE

ACCOLADE GLOBAL FILM COMPETITION 2020

EXCEPTIONAL MERIT AWARD

DOCS WITHOUT BORDERS 2020

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE: ORIGINAL SCORE

DOCS WITHOUT BORDERS 2020

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE: HEALTH/MEDICINE/SCIENCE

IMPACT DOC AWARDS 2020

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE: ORIGINAL SCORE BY SAMITE

IMPACT DOC AWARDS 2020

Meet the Characters

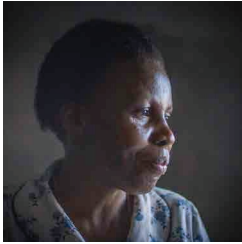


Nafula Prossy

Palliative Care Nurse, Naggalama, Uganda

Nafula Prossy has diplomas in nursing and palliative care. She joined the hospital in 2007 and has led the palliative care team since it started in 2013. She lives with her young children in the staff quarters of the hospital. Her husband is a construction worker in Kampala.

"I have passion for patients. In palliative care we look at the whole person. I hate seeing a patient in pain when I can do something to control that pain."

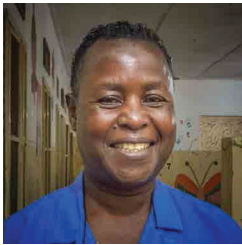


Nabayise Immaculate

Palliative Care Nurse, Naggalama, Uganda

Nabayise Immaculate (Immy) grew up in Naggalama and trained as a nurse. She is the pastoral counselor on the team.

"We give hope to our patients through the visits we make to their homes. There are many people who need to be comforted while they are ill. I will take care of them until God decides it's their time."



Nalwoga Teddy

Assisting Nurse, Naggalama, Uganda

Nalwoga Teddy is an assistant nurse on the team. She helps with vital signs, medication, and other supplies for the patients.

"We will come and be with you."

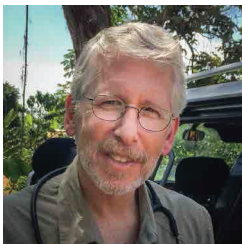


Randi Diamond

Palliative Care Specialist, New York

Dr. Randi Diamond is a palliative care physician at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York. She first visited Uganda in 2009 and returned in 2013 to help develop palliative care services in Naggalama. She returns several times a year to work with the team.

"When you're here, you don't have all the technology and all the tests. You're touching the essence of medicine. It's very much about talking to your patients and examining your patients."

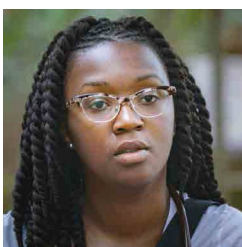


Howard Eison

Doctor of Internal Medicine, New York

Dr. Howard Eison is an internist in Connecticut. He's also Randi's husband. They met in medical school and married right after graduation.

"Global health is complicated. You have no guideposts. You don't have the CAT scan which gives me great security, or the blood test. And especially in palliative care with so much emotion going on, you need language, a way to understand what the patient is feeling."



Jemella Raymore

Palliative Care Physician, New York

Dr. Jemella Raymore is a palliative care physician in New York who trained under Randi. This is her first time traveling to Africa.

"It's been a struggle with this idea of how we do more here with such limited resources. But you have to be realistic about where you are and what you are able to do."

Production Team



Lucy Bruell
Producer/Director

Lucy Bruell directed "Speaking with Music," "Beyond the Practice Room," and "On A Personal Note," feature documentaries on young classical pianists that aired on public television. She was a producer/reporter for Newsweek Television and directed segments in Egypt and Greece for China Central Television's series, "One World." "A Visit with the Big Apple Circus Clown Care Unit," narrated by Paul Newman received a Grand Award at the New York International Film and Video Festivals.

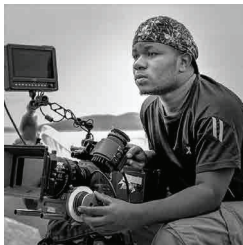
Lucy is a recipient of multiple grants including support from the National Institutes of Health, the 911 Children's Fund, and the Littauer Foundation. She received an M.S. in Journalism from Columbia University where she was the William Wood Research Fellow in Broadcast Journalism. She is an Instructor in the Division of Medical Humanities at the NYU Grossman School of Medicine.



Jarred Alterman
Director of Photography

Jarred Alterman is an award-winning documentary filmmaker and cinematographer. He was the DP on "Bisbee '17" which premiered at Sundance this year. His directorial debut, "Convento" was featured at the Margaret Mead Film Festival and won a special jury prize at the Independent Film Festival in Boston. Alterman recently won best cinematography at the Tribeca Film Festival for "Contemporary Color," a multi-camera concert doc featuring David Byrne, Dev Hynes, St Vincent and Ira Glass.

He is a cinematographer for the on-going public television series "Art:21," filming artists who work in a variety of mediums. He has worked with Charles Atlas and the Merce Cunningham Dance Company on several films, including "Ocean." He recently worked with Laura Poitras and Field of Vision, on "The Proposal," a five-part documentary series in Mexico and Switzerland.



Ali Musoke
Director of Photography

Ali Musoke is a feature and documentary DP based in Kampala, Uganda. He was the DP and a Producer on "N.G.O. Nothing Going On" which won best feature film at the Mashariki African Film Festival and earned a special jury mention at the Cartage Film Festival in Tunisia. His documentary portfolio includes projects for HBO, National Geographic, Vitamin Angels, and Save the Children. He was also a camera assistant on Mira Nair's feature "Queen of Katwe."



Pola Rapaport
Editor

Pola Rapaport is a writer, director, and editor of many award-winning films. Her work-in-progress is "Marika: Death and the Racer," about a Belgian Paralympic athlete planning euthanasia. Recent work includes "Nadia Comaneci: The Gymnast and the Dictator," "Hair: Let the Sun Shine In," "Family Secret," the story of the discovery of the filmmaker's secret Romanian brother, and "Blind Light," a hybrid documentary/drama of a photographer's peak experience in an Italian villa, starring Edie Falco.

She is the editor of several feature documentaries, including "Museum Town," which premiered in 2019 at SxSW and "Grace Paley; Collected Shorts." She also edited SxSW Winner, "A Woman Like Me," about facing a terminal disease, and Kathy Leichter's "Here One Day."



Samite Mulondo
Composer

Samite is a world-renowned musician, performer, and humanist. Now living on a farm in upstate New York, Samite is a Ugandan refugee who travels the world to spread the healing power of music. He is the subject of the documentary, "Song of the Refugee," distributed by PBS in 1998. Samite has released nine CDs internationally and in 2009, the film "Taking Root: The Vision of Wangari Maathai," which features his original score, debuted nationally on PBS. More recently Samite collaborated with the filmmakers of "Alive Inside," an award-winning documentary on the power of music to awaken the memories locked away in patients with Alzheimer's disease and dementia.



Jay Miracle

Editor

Jay Miracle, Editor, won a Primetime Emmy and the American Cinema Editors' Award for "Hearts of Darkness, A Filmmaker's Apocalypse." He was an Editor/Writer on such projects as: "20 Feet from Stardom" and "Spirit Game," and he was an additional Editor on the ITVS program: "Meet the Patels." Jay co-directed and edited a feature on Norman Cousins: "The Healing Force," and has written and/or edited several TV Specials, including "Diamonds" (on New York diamond dealers, and "The Colonel Comes to Japan," on Kentucky Fried Chicken in Japan, which won an Emmy for Best Documentary). Jay produced, directed and wrote "The Imposters," the Discovery Channel documentary which was nominated for a Primetime Emmy. He co-produced and was the sound recordist on the feature documentary "The Gates of Heaven" with Errol Morris.



Zohar Kfir

Creative Producer

Zohar is a media artist, editor, and cinematographer. She is a graduate of New York University's Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP). Her latest work, "Testimony," is an interactive documentary for virtual reality that shares the stories of survivors of sexual assault and their journey to healing. It premiered at Tribeca Film Festival.



Gal Nissim

Art Director

Gal Nissim is an interdisciplinary artist who bridges art, science, and technology to create interactive work that explores the dynamic relationship between nature, culture, and human-made environments. Nissim received her master's degree from the Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP) at NYU Tisch School of the Arts.



Moses Bwayo

Sound Recordist

Moses attended Kampala Film School. He worked in the sound department of the Disney film "Queen of Katwe" directed by Mira Nair and was the sound mixer for "Kyenvu" (Kemiyondo Coutinou, 2017). In 2015 he produced the feature film "N.G.O. Nothing Going On" (Arnold Aganze, 2015). Moses was also a production coordinator for Peripheral Vision International.

Advisors

ALICE HERB Esq

Alice Herb is an attorney, journalist, and medical ethicist. She has been Assistant Clinical Professor of Family Practice and Associate at Law, Division of Humanities in Medicine at State University of New York, Downstate Medical Center and a visiting professor at Sarah Lawrence College. Prior to her current role as attorney-ethicist, Herb was a producer, director, and writer for ABC News as well as independent news and cultural affairs cable programs from 1966 through 1988. After receiving her JD from NYU School of Law in 1955, she practiced law for eleven years.

SABINE KRAYENBÜHL Editorial Consultant

Editorial Consultant Sabine Krayenbühl is an award-winning filmmaker and editor. Among her editorial credits are "My Architect," "Mad Hot Ballroom," "The Bridge," and most recently, "The Price of Everything." Krayenbühl earned a BFA from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and is a long-term member of New York Women in Film and Television.

STEVEN FIELD, MD

Steven Field is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine in the NYU Grossman School of Medicine where he serves as Clinical Ethics Consultant at NYU Langone Health and is the Physician Leader for the Schwartz Rounds program. Dr. Field is also a facilitator for the School's Humanistic Aspects of Medical Education program. He received his B.A. in History from Yale University in 1973 and his M.D. from New York University School of Medicine four years later. Following Gastroenterology training at Mount Sinai Hospital, he returned to clinical practice and teaching at NYU, where he has remained, though retired from practice.

SUSAN SALZ, RN

Susan Salz is a registered nurse with certifications in hospice and palliative care nursing. Ms. Salz volunteered at Kisoro District Hospital in Uganda through Doctors for Global Health.

Photo Gallery

*High resolution images available for review purposes



A daughter cares for her mother at the bone setter's clinic



A patient's young daughter in front of their cornfield



Randi, Howard and Prossy discuss a patient



The team pays a home visit to a new patient



Boys roast corn on a cooking fire as Ali films them



Julius waiting for the team to pay a home visit

"The photography is brilliantly colorful, and the original musical score by Samite is both delicate and mesmerizing."

Professor Robert Abrams, BMJ Medical Humanities Blog

Licensing Information

Oli Otya? immerses viewers in a unique global health experience as it follows a cross-cultural team of physicians and nurses providing palliative care to villagers in a rural area of Uganda.

The documentary is available for educational distribution and is ideally suited for students and faculty at universities, colleges, and medical schools with public health, global health, and palliative care programs. It is also available for screenings at organizations, conferences, and libraries. If you would like more information about screenings, please contact lucy@labruell.com. We also invite you to schedule a virtual discussion session about the team's work in Uganda after the screening.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Contact Us

We welcome your comments and your questions about **Oli Otya?** and the ongoing challenges of alleviating pain and suffering in under resourced areas of the world. Please contact us and sign up for our mailing list on our website: www.oliotyafilm.com.

For inquiries please contact

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