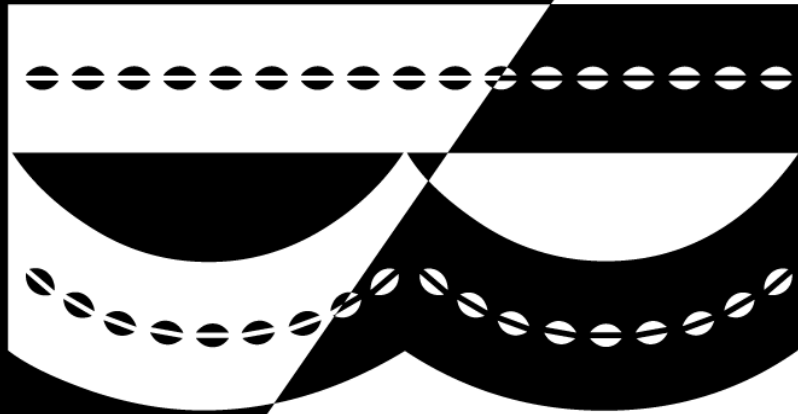


THE LICALI ORGANISATION PRESENTS

A FILM BY OLUWATOYIN AGBETU

BEAUTY IS...



WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY TOYIN AGBETU | SCREEN WRITER WIGWAM | CO-PRODUCED BY ALEAKWE OLIVE
SPECIAL APPEARANCE BY DEANNE OPIA | AKPORE IZOH | RUSSELL NII ODARTI | CAROLINE KING-GADEKAH
DAMI OSHINOWO | DAMI SOLEBO | ALEX APLERKU | STEPHANIE YAMSON

WWW.LICALI.ORG/BEAUTYIS

BEAUTY IS...

SYNOPSIS

Beauty Is... the film by community educator and guerrilla film maker Toyin Agbetu asks 'what is beauty?' and examines the answer from a philosophical position through discussions on hair, skin shade, body image and character.

It's a serious, yet often humorous cross between Chris Rock's "Good Hair" and Bill Duke/D. Channsin Berry's "Dark Girls" documentaries with some sensitive Oprah styled interviews mixed in.

The film explores the risks posed by chemical straighteners and skin bleaching, it shares insights on conditions like Vitiligo and Alopecia whilst discussing the impact of biased media on children and personal relationships.

Backed by a global campaign to challenge governments and the pharmaceutical industry, this is edutainment that may just change your life.

ABOUT BEAUTY IS

Beauty Is... a feature length film exploring the topic of beauty from a Pan African perspective through a candid collection of personal and group interviews. It uses an assortment of short films and animations through which to explore the impact of education and schooling, confidence in dating and personal relationships, under discussed conditions like Vitiligo and Alopecia and controversial topics like 'light skin - dark skin' preference leading to skin bleaching habits.

Beauty Is... also examines the nature of our external features such as hair, skin and body shape, and then dives deep into investigating societal pressures from both our peers and a sexist global media that feeds insecurities about body image whilst perpetuating shadism and western beauty ideals. The documentary asks questions about the cosmetic and pharmaceutical industry and reveals through experts how the harmful chemicals in some skin bleaching creams and hair straightening products work.

This film offers a unique look beyond the traditional 'natural v processed' looks argument to engage with a philosophical debate about the role of ethnicity, gender, culture and tradition in defining what beauty really means in a wonderfully diverse world of billions.

Release date: 19 April 2014

Certificate: tbc

Running time: 123 mins



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BEAUTY IS...

BEAUTY IS CAMPAIGN NOTES

1. *The Beauty Is Campaign calls for governments across the world to pass a law prohibiting the use of all skin bleaching products on children under the age of sixteen.*

Many children around the world are damaged by the use of skin bleaching products on them by their parents/carers. Some of these products contain carcinogenic levels of the chemical Hydroquinone, others like 'home grown' brews use toxic materials like Mercury or Kojic acid. We believe that these children are being abused and the people applying these dangerous chemicals are committing a morally criminal act.

2. *The Beauty Is Campaign calls for all medicine and health regulators to invest funds into researching the long term side effects of chemical 'beauty' products sold by the pharmaceutical industry.*

Independent investigations has revealed that exposure to agents such as Sodium Hydroxide (Lye) or Formaldehyde in Karatin (Brazilian Hair Treatment) hair products may cause fibroids and can cause eye damage, skin rashes, bloody noses, breathing difficulties ultimately leading to cancer.

3. *The Beauty Is Campaign calls for ethnosmetics - a study of the social impact of the cosmetic industry on the formation of ethnicity based beauty ideals to be made compulsory.*

Ethnosmetics is a new word coined by Toyin Agbetu to describe the linked study of cosmetics and ethnicity. As an educator Toyin believes this unique perspective has been neglected for far too long in learning institutions. He argues that the language and images used to describe beauty in both schools and the media has a huge impact on how we see ourselves in society.



BEAUTY IS...

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I made this film as part of a global campaign designed to challenge the misconception many people hold about what beauty is. This film has been three years in the making and taken every penny I've got. It's been an emotional journey and during that time I've interviewed many people and seen many tears as a result of our questioning.

I wanted to explore why so many of us have a distorted idea of what it means to be beautiful. How do we perceive body image, skin tone, character and confidence and why do so many of us believe long hair is the only route to attractiveness?

If the media we watch is influencing how we define beauty, I planned to encourage viewers to challenge the negatives and help redefine misconceptions. I wanted my film to transmit a deep philosophical message that could be used as an international educational resource able to reach into the cities, the villages the homes and schools of every child and person that asks the question... am I beautiful?

The campaign element of the film seeks to encourage governments across the world to ban usage of skin bleaching creams on children.

I also want to encourage research into the dangerous effects of chemical hair straighteners. There have been reports published revealing there may be a link to fibroids, we also know that the chemical burns that people receive when using these products often have long term detrimental effects when they enter the blood stream.

Finally, whenever the topic of beauty is addressed in many schools during PSHE lessons - the issue of ethnicity is ignored. I believe this is wrong and issues such as body image, skin tone, hair texture are all factors that are unique to each and every one of us.

However what motivated me most to make this film was being a parent. Ultimately this campaign is not just about us, it's also about our young ones. I intend to release this film in multiple languages in order to reach as many children no matter where they are on this planet. I want them to have the confidence to say I am beautiful and believe it.

- Toyin Agbetu



BEAUTY IS...

PRODUCTION

- Between 2010 and 2013 over thirty people were interviewed in various locations across London.
- During the process of making this film Toyin felt he had to challenge Amazon, a global online company that was selling products through the post that are illegal if sold over the counter. They were using legal loopholes to avoid prosecution. It took a lot of patience and letter writing but he finally got this huge multinational online retailer to pull all these products from sale in the UK.
- More than 60 hours of footage was shot for the film, which runs for 123 minutes.
- The short films were conceived and written by Toyin Agbetu and WigWam. Most of them had to be truncated in the final film to reduce overall screen time. All characters were played by professional actors.
- Beauty Is was filmed guerrilla style on a range of Panasonic Lumix DSLR cameras.
- The film was edited by director Toyin Agbetu on Sony's Vegas Pro software.
- The narrative behind the dolls animation was inspired by real stories from the directors' daughter and nieces.
- The original sound track was composed on Steinbergs' Cubase Artist by Toyin Agbetu who has decades of experience in the music industry.
- This film was independently financed through donations from family, friends and community.

HIGHLIGHTING

- Skin Bleaching
- Alopecia
- Vitiligo
- Chemical Toxicity
- Educational Bias
- Media Racism
- Hair Extensions
- Shadism
- Relationships
- Religious intolerance
- Parental and Self Empowerment



BEAUTY IS...

BIOGRAPHIES

Toyin Agbetu

Writer / Director / Producer



Photo Credit: Ligali

Toyin Agbetu is a husband, father, community educator, film maker, artist-activist, and founder of *Ligali*, a pan African human rights based organisation that challenges the misrepresentation of African people, culture and history in the British media. As an activist he is frequently invited to participate in public debates such as those hosted at the *Oxford Union*, on *BBC Radio 4*, *BBC Bristol Question Time*, various community events and in numerous publications.

Before he became engaged in activism he was a prolific, successful record producer and owner of several independent record labels. Best known for creating the genre "streetsoul" Toyin had numerous club hits in the late 1980's to early 90's under various pseudonyms (including Master "The Beatcreator" Tee, *Deluxe* and *Nemesis*). He wrote music for video games and appeared on TV programmes such as the *Gamesmaster* which drew on his knowledge as a programmer and senior software developer.



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BEAUTY IS...

In 2000 he launched the Ligali organisation.

His international profile increased when on 23 March 2007 he successfully challenged the British monarch, church and government at Westminster Abbey, London at their public ritual of disrespect to the millions of African people lost during Maafa.

From 2007 he wrote a weekly column for the national newspaper, the New Nation and hosted the Pan African Drum, an interactive topical community programme that broadcast weekly on Nyansapo radio.

He has directed, independently financed and released several guerrilla films. These include *The Walk* and *Maafa: Truth 2007*, a series looking at African enslavement, resistance, educational empowerment and Pan African ideology through his lens as a philosopher and philologist.

He is the author of *Revoetry - Poems from an African British Perspective* and *Ukweli – A Political and Spiritual Basis for Pan Africanism*. Both titles promote a collaborative African philosophy dedicated to community development. In 2013 he co-curated Hackney Museums' award winning *Sankofa* exhibition on the history of African History Month.



Photo Credit: Phil Rocker

Olive Aleakwe Cooper

Co-Producer

Olive-Aleakwe is a freelancer who has worked across different sectors including broadcast (television, radio and commercials), charities, digital marketing (viral promos), financial, investment banking, recruitment, social care, training and voluntary sector.

She has delivered briefs as a Producer, Development and Production Researcher, Talent Booker, Project Co-ordinator, Production Co-ordinator and administrator, on various projects for the Arts Council, BBC, Big Lottery Fund, Channel 4, Current TV, Diverse TV (formerly part of Zodiak Entertainment), FilmFour, Fresh One TV (part of the Jamie Oliver group), LOCOG (The London Organising Committee of the



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BEAUTY IS...

Olympic and Paralympic Games / Cultural Olympiad) and Tonic Productions, amongst others.

Development & Production Credits include:

- Hip Hop Changed the World (presented by Idris Elba)
- Streetdance
- Rap Beatbox Choir (featuring Akala, MsDynamite, Wretch 22)
- Men's Hour
- Meera Syal's Asian Comedy Story
- Meera Syal's Comedy Night
- Lauren's Spacepod 2012 (with Lauren Laverne)
- Pune, India
- Tel Aviv Comes Out
- Drunk Again – Ann Widdecombe Investigates
- Stoned Again (with Jacqui Smith, former MP)
- How To Make Friends
- This Filthy Earth
- Maisie's Catch



BEAUTY IS...

FILM CREDITS

Contributors

Abi Lee-Carter
 Aisha Aoki
 Ama Biney
 Anastasia Chikezie
 DebRose SearchWell
 Emerzy Corbin
 Funke Balfour
 Ken McCalla
 Kingslee 'Akala' Daley
 Mandy Ricketts
 Lorraine Leadbetter
 Olayinka Fasanya
 Robert Gardner
 Maame Ama Gueye
 Judith Jacob
 Saynab Mahamud
 Sujata Jolly
 Tamara Miller
 Warren Leigh-William
 Martina William

BeUnique Family

Lukuman Raji
 Belinda Raji
 Lydia Taylor

Discussion on Beauty

Adana Adams
 Oleander Agbetu
 Natalie Barrett
 Glenda Baptiste
 Marjorie Fiedler
 Shatara Ford
 Sophia Hunte
 Valerie Matthew
 Sherelle Parke
 Jaide Ryan
 Tanya Thompson
 Adana Adams

Reasoning on Beauty

Chima Amechi
 Danny Gray
 Seyi Ma'AtrixXx
 Nathan
 Ababa Bes Hatep Ptah
 Richie
 Justin Solomon
 Videll Wilks



BEAUTY IS...

Cast - The Cost of Beauty

Reanne Opia

Akpore Uzoh

Cast - The Boyz

Russell Nii Odartei

Akpore Uzoh

Dami Solebo

Alex Aplerku

Cast - Bleaching Love

Caroline King-Gadekah

Russell Nii Odartei

Cast - The Dollz

Caroline King-Gadekah

Bami Oshinowo

WigWam

Akpore Uzoh

Stephanie Yamson

Voice Over

Amiri Agbetu

Colin Pryce

Infinity Agbetu

All Music Composed By

Toyin Agbetu

Special Thanks

Oyin Solebo

BeUnique Hair Care

Bickles of Brixton

Charlie Bligh

Clinogen

Black History Studies

David Somerset

Dionne Lewis

Illa State Records / Akala Music

Jon Daniel

Johanna Cargill

Karen Cargill

Kwadwo Osei-Nyame

Kwaku and Awula Serwah

Lewisham Trading Standards

Long Belly Productions

Makaya Womack

Naithan Agbetu

Nadia Denton

Nana Asante

Noire Essence

Oleander Agbetu

Operation Sankofa

Purely Natural Hair Salon

Tony Warner

UJIMA Unisex Salon

YAHW Arts

