

I Am Not a Witch



Synopsis

Set in a makeshift Witch Refugee Camp in Zambia, *I Am Not a Witch* centers on a 9 year old child witch, Shula. Shula has to decide whether to give up her special powers to gain acceptance in her village, or to stay living as a witch but remain forever exiled in the camp. In exchange for safety, food and shelter all women and children who seek refuge at the camp pledge an oath to the local Chief. The oath states that, without going through a special witch cleansing ceremony, no one is allowed to leave the boundaries of the camp. If they leave the camp without going through the ceremony they succumb to a terrible curse. An upcoming witch cleansing ceremony will allow Shula to leave and carve out a normal existence with the very family who originally abandoned her. During the ceremony she must declare "I am not a witch, I am not a witch, I am not a witch". It's this declaration that will make her powers redundant, meaning she will not be able to practice magic again.

Shula realises that being a witch is what brings her the most joy. She learns to shape shift into a goat and starts to use her talent to change people's lives in a positive way. On the eve of the cleansing ceremony various events transpire within the camp that create a lasting impression on Shula. She finally makes her decision, resulting in unexpected consequences.

I Am Not a Witch is a bittersweet tale of what it means to be an outsider and of the ever-present struggle for acceptance despite the overwhelming odds against it

Director's note

I am uninterested in showing the motives that people have in using children for witchcraft. I am also avoiding a modern day cautionary tale of people who are subjugated and victimized by their family or friends. I want to deliberately sidestep the politics or the potential earnestness and take it away from the puffery.

Instead I am interested in telling a story from a child's perspective so that we are forced to ask questions rather than provide answers. My aim is to provoke a feeling of empathy rather than one of sympathy. I want to explore characters that are going against the status quo, but secretly and desperately trying to belong to it.

Production company profile

Founded by Rungano Nyoni, since its inception Icreatefilms (Zambia) has concentrated its production efforts on local content, with a distinctive Zambian voice but with aspirations for international reach.



Director

[Rungano Nyoni](#)

Biography

Born in Lusaka, Zambia, Rungano Nyoni's films have screened at more than 200 film festivals worldwide. In 2012, she was nominated for an African Academy Awards and a BAFTA for her short film *Mwansa The Great*. In 2013 her project was selected for the Cannes Cinéfondation Residency. She recently co-directed *Listen*, which will open this year's Directors Fortnight in Cannes.

Selected filmography

The List (2009)

Mwansa the Great (2011)

Listen (2014)

Production

Clandestine Films

10, bis rue bisson

75018 Paris

ig@clandestine-films.fr

Icreatefilms Ltd

Number 123 , close c, avondale

Lusaka

runganonyoni@gmail.com

Genre

Narrative

Based on

Original screenplay

Shooting format

HD

Shooting location

Zambia

Shooting start date

04/2015

Expected completion date

02/2016

Production status

Writing / Development

Budget

650,000 Euro

Financing in place

50,000 Euro