



Our Nairobi: A Westgate Memorial Exhibition

Aim & outline

Since the attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi on September 21st, 2013 Nairobi citizens have lived in a state of mourning, fear and shock. We believe that a healthy society, in a nation whose unofficial motto is Peace, Love and Unity, we need to remember these words now more than ever. We, the Kenyan citizenry, should not let a four day siege in our nation's capital city, pass without a meaningful national conversation.

The “Our Nairobi: A Westgate Memorial” project aims to address this. It is a powerful memorial that draws its inspiration from a similar effort undertaken by Time Magazine, the Ground Zero Museum and the citizens of New York after the September 11 attack on the Twin Towers.

Our project consists of 3 main components:

- 1) A 2 month exhibition at the National Museum of Nairobi, displaying victims stories and stories of those closely involved. The stories celebrate the community, honor the aftermath of rescue and recovery and share a personal memorial tribute from Westgate friends and families.
- 2) After the exhibition closes, 40 powerful interviews with those personally affected by the attack will be uploaded to a Westgate Memorial website, www.westgatememorial.org.
- 3) The exhibition will open with four choreographed evenings, by invitation, with orchestra and choir on the one- year anniversary days (September 21st, 22nd, 23rd and 24th), in the courtyard at the National Museum.



On those evenings victims and their families, dignitaries, media and the general public will be invited to mark the one-year anniversary of the attack with an evening of reflection, music, and a candle lighting ceremony by a printed list of those that passed.

Invitations will have guests seated by 7:30pm when the concert will begin

The 22nd, 23rd and 24th are by invitation events mainly for families or volunteers closely involved, but the media are welcome throughout. The concert on the 21st will be a part of the Story-Moja Festival and so anyone can attend.

The exhibition will be free and open to the public. It will be open and running through the Story-Moja Festival, with an official opening on the one-year anniversary, 21st September 2014.

More Information on the Project

Part of the memorial consists of interviews with those personally affected by the attack. They were all asked one question: “What were you doing the morning of the attack?”

The link below provides an example of the interviews taken and the type of portraits that will be displayed.

<http://vimeopro.com/productionafrica/westgate-multimedia-project>

Password: waronterror

The physical exhibition aims to showcase more than twenty stories, at least 5 of which will be played during the memorial concerts and remembrance evenings on large screens. The stories will be displayed in the Aga Khan Hall of the Museum on individual flat screens with headphones along with portraits of the interviewees and a little plaque with a key quote to guide the visitor to an interview that might appeal to him or her.

People recounting their stories are shoppers, waiters, shop owners, journalists, police, first respondents, doctors, mortuary officials, the head of

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the Oshwal community, ambassadors; political commentators; victims and their friends and families.

The exhibition will incorporate a sacred space for visitors to write and share their reflections after watching the films. This allows the Kenyan citizenry to have a platform to voice their opinions, think carefully about the events that passed only one year ago and heal from the tragedy that the nation experienced in their own personal way.

Through the interviews conducted, new and thought-provoking information on the Westgate attack is continuing to emerge. However, the Exhibition is positioned more as a Memorial Project than an investigative journalism project. But, many of the key figures have never been interviewed before, either by the media or by the investigators, so there is lots of fresh material in the interviews and transcripts.

Unlike a documentary, where the story and characters are edited down so much, this project gives space and time for individual expression. The format was chosen because the film maker felt that editing this story down to just half an hour or an hour would not be as healing or interesting as allowing visitors the space to really explore the intimate thoughts and feelings of fellow country men and human beings on the deep subjects.

Through the story of Westgate people reflect on the meaning of life and death, the path to better national security and emergency response. They talk about terror, the meaning of Jihad, what it means to be Kenyan. Most interviews end with a question relating to what they want for future generations in Kenya and a vision of that future. Many things emerge, but one thing in particular: everyone across the board wants peace, love and unity. Everyone across the board still loves Kenya and wants it to overcome terrorism and prosper in peace and security.

People can choose to listen to who they want to listen to. They can find the stories that they can relate to, be it a high commissioner, cartoonist, policeman, volunteer or waiter. Part of the experience that the exhibition gives is an opportunity to really get to know a person who you would never ordinarily get to talk to or listen to. In this respect it is a community building exercise drawing on the powerful “We are One” campaign that emerged around the Westgate attack when everyone came together.

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In essence, this is a portrait of Kenya: capturing the intimate voices of people frozen in one space in one moment. Standing within the hall should be a powerful experience.

Because of the steady and calm approach, lots more is revealed in these interviews than would be in a “run and gun” news style approach. Each interview took at least an hour to film and is edited down to ten minutes, on average.

In this way the project is an excellent example of oral history. The information collated allows one to learn about the perspectives of individuals who might not otherwise appear in the historical record. It goes beyond the basic facts and gives you an insight into the hopes, feelings, and personal experiences of those interviewed. The stories are told in their own words, giving each interview the chance to participate in the creation of the historical retelling of their lives. And for these reasons this project is extremely valuable.

The full transcripts of each interview will be donated to the National Archives for the public and scholars alike to enjoy.

As well as the films the public will be able to enjoy a gallery of prints by the Kenyan cartoonist, Gado. This collection is collated from his published cartoons following 9/11, the Embassy bombings, subsequent attacks, and Westgate.

About the Film Maker



Arjun Kohli's previous work creating a news piece with photo journalist Kate Holt for the BBC (<http://www.bbc.com/news/in-pictures-24329418>) inspired him to undertake a larger oral history project to capture the national sentiment surrounding the Westgate attack.

Arjun studied broadcast journalism at the Mohammed Amin Foundation in Nairobi, before conducting further studies in film



production and editing at the South African School of Motion Picture. He then worked with Voice of America, the BBC World Service and later Reuters Africa Journal before continuing with academia conducting a Masters course in African Studies at the University of Oxford.

He has worked making documentary films with various NGOs and international bodies including UNEP, USAID, DFID, UNESCO and filed for the BBC and Guardian multi-media.

For a full bio please visit www.productionafrica.com

Supporters and Funding

The project holds the opportunity for the public, business' and NGOs alike to show their support for the victims and unity against terrorism both in Kenya and across the world.

A wide cross-section of society has already shown support for this project, from Red Cross representatives, to police officers, and foreign ambassadors. The project is being crowd funded largely by the Nairobi community, people affected by the attack and media sales.

Media Sales and Media Participation

We'd really like you to talk about the Exhibition and encourage people to visit it. It's unusual for Nairobians to go to the Museum for specific exhibitions so it would be good if the press could review it and discuss it and encourage participation. We were all affected in some way or knew people that were.

Whilst we have not gathered all 40 films that will form the memorial website, we thought that we should display at least 20 to mark the one year anniversary and encourage the public to re-visit.

Many would say that Kenyans have a culture of forgetting and moving on, often without really absorbing lessons. In a way, this is an effort to break that culture, and the media has a role to play.

We hope that the stories and exhibition will provide a meaningful focus and entry point when discussing Westgate one year later.



With its portraits, transcripts, video and audio this project is very media friendly. The films were shot in colour in High Definition on an EX3 and the portraits were shot using a Canon 5D.

If you would like to make a television, radio or print magazine feature about the project; the making of the memorial, or simply cover the memorial events themselves, please get in touch.

We are happy to run interviews, provide access to the production or concert rehearsals (7th September) and do interviews before, during and after the event. There will be an interview booth set up at the Memorial on all four evenings to interview either the film-maker or the volunteers. But, please be sensitive to the fact it is a Memorial.

We are also happy to work with you if you want to create a video, radio or print piece using some of the project photographic, print or video material.

If, during the siege, your media house featured a character that you want to follow up with in this context, we are open to inviting him or her into studio as a participant.

We are open to ideas that you have.

We will send a media advisory if there is going to be an official opening ceremony, other than the concerts.

Available on enquiry:

Key Quotes and list of those interviewed

Timeline of terror in East Africa to date

Video and audio clips relating to the project

Some portraits for use in magazine, online or newspaper features

For media enquiries, please contact:

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The Westgate attack, basic facts

- The basic narrative that has emerged is that on Saturday, Sept. 21, unidentified gunmen attacked the Westgate mall. The siege, which the Islamic terrorist group al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for, lasted until September 24th 2013
- At least 67 people were killed and up to 200 injured, in what became an 80-hour siege
- The Kenyan military recently identified four terrorists who they allege took part in the attack. Their bodies are now in the United States undergoing forensic investigation.
- The government then said five militants had been killed – but no bodies were ever shown to the media. At least 11 other people were arrested after the attack, suspects who apparently were not at the mall during the incident.
- Al-Shabab means The Youth in Arabic, it emerged as the radical youth wing of Somalia's union of Islamic Courts. The group has claimed to be allied with al-Qaeda