

EPISODE SEVEN

BEYOND THE WALL

AS I
AM



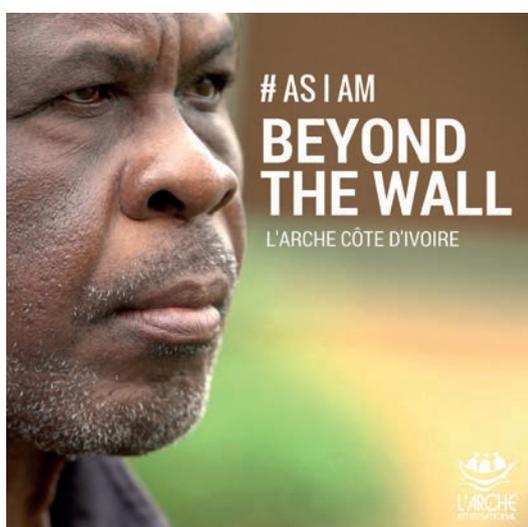
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FILM SUMMARY

When wars break out, many heroes go unnoticed. In 2002, a conflict erupted in Côte d'Ivoire between the government and rebels based in Bouaké. This episode shares a story of that time and introduces you to Yobouet N'Da Pierre. When the violence of the conflict intensified, no one was allowed in the streets. N'Da risked his life to go beyond the wall, out onto the streets, and greet his friends. His decision to climb the walls that divide us sent a powerful message to his friend Adrien and echoed throughout the relationships of his community.



"THE COLONEL IS SOMEONE WHO NEVER FORGETS HIS FRIENDS."

-Konan N'Guessan Adrien N'Da's friend

FILM THEMES

- **Walls**

The wall that N'Da climbed was a physical barrier but it symbolizes multiple things in the context of the film. It served to keep the people inside safe and offer them peace of mind but being deprived of contact with his friends was a hardship for N'Da. Walls protect by dividing one thing from another. What happens when the kind of protection we desire is in community with others? The wall is both harmful and helpful, it provides protection and it confines.

- **Life in a time of war**

The dire circumstances of living in a place engulfed in violence goes beyond the threat of direct violence. They survived bullets coming through the windows, but they were living in a constant state of insecurity. The dwindling supply of food and medicine made it impossible for the members of the L'Arche community to remain in Bouaké. However, leaving could be just as dangerous as staying. Something as simple as receiving a visitor's greetings could provide a vital reassurance.

- **Ordinary Heroes**

The film is full of examples of ordinary heroes. The assistants in the community refused to leave unless everyone could go. This way of prioritizing the community over the individual is heroic but it also speaks to the way of things. It is ordinary. Consider the way the community all got together and voted to decide whether or not to leave. Similarly, there are the heroic acts of Gabriel and Kuame when they offered to walk so that those who cannot walk could escape and Adrien's decision to drive back to find them. Adrien says, "It's perfectly normal that I would return and find them." This reminds us that, from the perspective of the people in the community, these acts are ordinary. The film focuses on how N'Da's determination to see his friends resonates as the model for how to be.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. N'Da is nicknamed the Colonel. What do you think is significant about this name?
2. Petit Koffi, the narrator at the beginning of the film, found some of the living conditions during conflict to be quite comical. What is your first response to this? Why do you think the director chose to open the film this way?
3. The film was shot with the help of three other people with intellectual disabilities. Petit Koffi assisted with sound, Honorine assisted with GoPro footage, and Grand Koffi assisted with filming and direction. Does this information change your thoughts about the film? Why or why not?
4. Reflect on the title of the film. Why do you think the word "beyond" was used? What other words could be used? What other titles could this film have?
5. Adrien says that when faced with the idea of going back into the violence, he had to borrow N'Da's courage. Every day, people make heroic decisions that impact the lives of others. Sometimes it is easy to see where they get their strength and courage from and sometimes there is no explanation. Have you ever made a courageous choice? Who or what did you borrow courage from?

BEHIND THE SCENES

It was difficult to capture N'Da's personality on camera. In the film, he is only recorded saying one word. This is not because he does not speak. In fact, N'Da tends to share his thoughts very energetically, even forcefully. People who know N'Da often describe him as both gentle and brutal. His determination to visit his friends although many people were trying to flee must not be mistaken as a lapse of judgement or indication of his intellectual disability. Climbing the wall was a perfectly sound decision for a man as tough and loving as N'Da.

IMAGINE THE WORLD DIFFERENTLY

There are times when the "walls" in our lives are necessary and times when we need to climb over them and go beyond. What are some of the "walls" in your life? What would it mean for you to go beyond those "walls"?