



## ***Short Synopsis~***

“Asa, A Beautiful Girl” is a short film based on a true story. It's a dramatic tale of the last 24 hours before a young girl embarks on her journey to the United States. It takes place in two cities (Lagos and Benin) in Nigeria, West Africa.

The film chronicles Asa's life from age 7 to age 17, showing pivotal moments from her past, leading up to these final 24 hours. In 13:30mins, we glimpse a micro fraction of what 10 years in the life of girl like hers' like, and gain an understanding for why she absolutely has to leave, even if it means being kidnapped.

What's most incredible about Asa's story, is it could be anyone's; regardless of race, class, religious beliefs or culture. It's one of hope.

## ***Medium Synopsis~***

“Asa, A Beautiful Girl” is a short based on a true story. It's a dramatic tale of the last 24 hours before a young girl embarks on her journey to the U.S. It takes place in Lagos and Benin, in Nigeria, West Africa.

The film chronicles Asa's life from age 7 to 17, showing pivotal moments from her past, leading up to these final 24 hours. In 13:30mins, we see fragments of what 10 years in the life of girl like her is like. We begin to understand why she absolutely has to leave, even if it means being kidnapped. Though at any moment, her plans could falter.

Asa's story crosses many boundaries. It could be anyone's, regardless of race, class, religious beliefs or culture.

It opens with a kidnapping plot to get Asa out of the country. Through a series of flashbacks, we see what she has had to endure from the moment she was placed at a foster home in Lagos, Nigeria, to her meeting and living with her biological dad in Benin City. After years of abuse, she's reunited with her mother, who gives her the opportunity of a lifetime. She's taking it.

She's leaving. Taking her chances and not looking back. If it comes down to it, by any means necessary; which is how this film got made. To create “Asa,” the Bronx, and parts of Westchester, was turned into Lagos and Benin, Nigeria, bringing her to life in the city she now calls home.



## ***Long Synopsis~***

'Asa, A Beautiful Girl' is a short film based on a true story. It's a dramatic tale of the last 24 hours before a young girl embarks on her journey to the United States. It takes place in two cities - Lagos and Benin cities, in Nigeria, West Africa.

'Asa, ...' chronicles her life from age 7 to age 17, showing pivotal moments from her past, leading up to these final 24 hours. In 13:30mins, we glimpse a micro fraction of what 10 years in the life of girl like her is like, and gain an understanding for why she absolutely has to leave, even if it means being kidnapped.

What's most incredible about Asa's story is that it crosses many boundaries. It could be anyone's story, regardless of race, class, religious beliefs or culture. It's also a story of hope.

The film opens with a kidnapping plot to get Asa out of the country. Through a series of flashbacks, we see what she has had to endure from the moment she was placed at a foster home in Lagos Nigeria, to her meeting and living with her biological dad in Benin City. After enduring years of abuse, she's finally reunited with her biological mother who gives her the opportunity of a lifetime, and she's taking it.

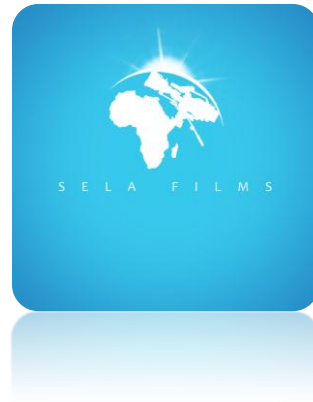
She's leaving. She's taking her chances and she's not looking back. SHE'S LEAVING. If it comes down to it, by any means necessary.

However, she is her father's daughter after all. The thought of leaving and never having contact with him again, or with her younger siblings whom she helped raise, or with a land that though it's mostly brought her pain, has given her many moments of joy as well, and after all is said and done, IS her land... is unbearable. Maybe, just maybe there's another way?

As the day progresses, after obtaining her passport from the embassy, and beginning the kidnapping process, Asa bounces back and forth on whether or not to go through with it. The turmoil of the battle she's fighting inside is written all over her face. She flashes back to early years when her innocence was snatched right out of her. She thinks about the endless beatings, rapes, days of hunger, the tattered clothing, the fight to get an education... 'But my babies...' She questions - 'Can I do this?' 'Is there no other way?'

In the end, she makes a decision and everyone involved vows to stand by her. What has she decided to do? Has she put everyone in danger? Have they all made a terrible mistake?

Throughout the making of this film, that very last question was particularly haunting. One of the questions asked by many was "Are you sure you should be sharing this?" Others asked "Aren't you worried about making people uncomfortable?" To those questions I answered, I don't know what the proper response is. All I know is that this story has to be told, and if it makes you as uncomfortable as it makes me still, even after having worked on it this long, then I'm pleased. I've done my job.



## ***Director's Biography~***

**Aimiende Negbenebor Sela** is an upcoming writer and filmmaker. "Asa, A Beautiful Girl," marks her debut.



Descendant of Nigerian parents, but born in the United States, Aimiende better known as Aimi, spent the first years of her life in Lagos and then Benin City, Nigeria, before returning to her birth place of New York city in 1997 as a teenager.

She obtained a degree in Computer Engineering and English Literature from Stevens Institute of Technology, and pursued a career in the field of Information Technology for a few years, before deciding to pursue her true passion - Performance and Visual Arts.

Aimiende studied acting at HB Studios and at Donna Marazzo Studios after her departure from the I.T. world, and dove head first into that of Theatre; where she garnered numerous theatrical credits in successful off-off and off-Broadway productions.

"Crossings" a piece she co-wrote alongside fellow ensemble cast members and directors, toured New York City, NY and made it into the 2008 New York City Fringe Festival. It was also accepted into the annual "Close Strangers" Festival in Poznan, Poland where it played for an international audience. Following her success with "Crossings" and other projects, including a handful of indie films that followed, Aimiende became a member of the Bedlam Ensemble Theatre company, at its inception, in 2011. While here, she acted under the direction of a few talented directors, including Michel Chahade, whom she previously met and worked with the year before, on a critically acclaimed Fringe Festival play, "Flesh-Light Stories."

Her most recent portrayal of Martirio, in Bedlam Ensemble's adaptation of Federico García Lorca's "The House of Bernarda Alba," directed by Michel Chahade, was breath-taking. It was her swan song with Bedlam Ensemble. She took a leave of absence in March 2013, following the close of "The House of Bernarda Alba," to focus on the completion of her debut short film "Asa, A Beautiful Girl."

For more information on Aimiende Negbenebor Sela, visit [www.selafilms.com](http://www.selafilms.com) OR

Visit her facebook fan page at [www.facebook.com/aimiendenegbeneborsela](http://www.facebook.com/aimiendenegbeneborsela)



## ***Director's Statement~***

**“Asa, A Beautiful Girl,”** started long before I put pen to paper. It began when I met my "adopted" dad, David Silverberg. An incredibly giving human being, just simply amazing, flaws and all. I like to joke that he has a lot of them, but who doesn't. One of those flaws I joke about is how pushy he can be. Funny thing is, his pushiness is what got the ball rolling on making "Asa,..." and here I am today, shocked that it really got made and absolutely terrified about what I'm getting myself into.

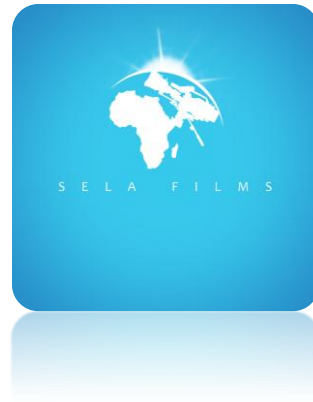
"Asa,..." is a true story. My story. Standing outside of it and looking in, it doesn't feel like it. I watch Asa and ask myself if that's really me and I'm not sure. As strange as this may sound, it's what pulls me in. Asa could be anyone. The world is a strange place. There's so much beauty and ugliness co-existing under one roof, it's simply astounding; but that's what makes it "life." The script was developed with that in mind. The notion that even when everything's ugly, some small beautiful thing touches you.

I'm not a writer-director who's stuck on the words I put down on paper. I give solid hints and leave space for air. I like to see where the actors will take me. One of the most gratifying things for me, is to watch a beautifully nuanced performance speak such volume, everyone on set or watching the finished film on the big screen is left speechless.

Being restricted by time, as "Asa,..." is a short film running 13:25mins, so much had to be compressed and told in bold visuals. Recreating the feel of being in Nigeria, accent and all, became even more important. Especially considering the fact that there's an unusual rhythm in the way things are said and done in every culture. The basic action of the film however, is like that of one watching a dam with a tiny crack in it, knowing it'll break if that tiny crack isn't fix, deciding to fix it and then going "so, how do I do that?"

Asa has endured so much abuse in the hands of those who were charged with protecting her. Now her mom's here to "save her." Or is she? Might she be jumping from the frying pan into the fire? The main premise here is that Asa has to be removed from her current living conditions, and the goal of the film is to share why. In watching "Asa,..." my hope is that everyone connects with her on some level, and come to the understanding that though such terrible things, and worse, do happen, they sometimes make us into the beautiful people we are. Of course, it helps if you have an Aba like mine (Dave Silverberg.) I do, however, have no intentions of sharing him, so you'll have to find yours :)

~Aimi N. Sela



## **MEDIA ADVISORY:**

Media Contacts:

Aimiende Negbenebor Sela  
(646)535-7352  
[selafilms@gmail.com](mailto:selafilms@gmail.com)

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***Asa, a beautiful girl***  
**New Short Film on the Last 24hours Before a Young Nigerian Girl Embarks  
On A Journey Of A Lifetime**  
**Filmed in the Bronx & Westchester County, NY**

It Chronicles the Trials, Tribulations and Ultimately the Triumphs of Asa from Age 7 to 17,  
leading up to the moments before she leaves the country for the United States.

**New York**, N.Y. (April 18, 2013) – On Thursday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Sela Films, creator of the new short film **Asa , a beautiful girl**, completed the production of the short dramatic film – “Asa, A Beautiful Girl.”

This remarkable film, shot in the Bronx and parts of Westchester County, is written and directed by Bronx native - Aimiende Negbenebor Sela. Starring Harlem resident - MaameYaa Boafo as Asa, and co-directed by Scarsdale resident - Michel Chahade, “Asa ...” showcases a cast of 18 incredibly talented New York native actors.

When asked why he agreed to work on **Asa, a beautiful girl**, Michel Chahade, co-director, said “it is a story that simply has to be told. Everyone needs to hear it.” Clarence Nisbett, 2<sup>nd</sup> Unit DP, and a native of St. Croix answered, “I know so many people who have the exact same story, it’s time people listened.” David Silverberg, Executive Producer emphasized how much “this story crosses all cultures.” The dedicated actors and production team members all expressed similar sentiments, some exclaiming that “they can’t wait to hear what the world has to say once the film’s out, as it promises to transcend stereotype and expectations.” **Asa, a beautiful girl**, is currently being submitted to festivals for the 2013 – 2014 Festival seasons.

Sela Films, LLC is a New York based production company that was born out of a need to create films that tell diverse stories; ones that span the globe, overlooking stereotypes, and digging right into what makes the world a global one.

# # #

For more information on Sela Films LLC, please visit [www.selafilms.com](http://www.selafilms.com)



## Production Stills...



Asa, 7 (slipper scene)



Asa & Ebuwa sharing a moment



Egg concoction scene



Adesuwa (kidnapping plot scene)



The confrontation



Alfred Rutherford  
(Ehigha's contemplation)



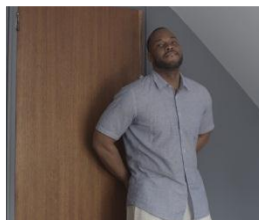
Jaiden!



Nanavi



The "I'm screwed" scene



Rommell Sermons  
(Greek mythology)



The talk



Shaka Malik (the tutor)



## Behind the Scenes...



MaameYaa Boafo & Mariah Franklin (Asa & her aunt Ovie) Taking a breather



Dave Silverberg (Executive Producer) on set



Jaiden Kaine (Kunle) getting mic'ed



Donna R.W. Mariscal, working her makeup magic



Setting up a scene (Aimiende & Michel)



DP - Dan Witrock, doing his thing



Michel at work



The Ladies



Everybody was Kung Fu fighting...



Bilaal & Doug prepping for a scene (Femi & Efosa)



Boys will be boys (Alfred catching a quick shut eye, Clarence...)



Beautiful Adria (Asa @ age 7)





## ***FA.Q. ~***

**Q:** Why “Asa?”

**A:** Actually, the film was originally called “Journey.” Funny, when the cast members were being interviewed as part of the filmmaking process, they asked why “Journey?” The title evolved overtime as we honed in on what the story is really about. Yes, it is about a journey, both literally and figuratively or metaphorically, but it is primarily about a life, one life, a girl’s life. And her name is Asa.

**Q:** You’ve said on many occasions that the story could be anyone’s story. How does apply here if the story’s about one life, one girl’s life?

**A:** Good one. It’s usually very difficult to relate to a vast majority when it comes to anything brutal or sensitive issues, because we generally don’t want to believe such things happen or exist, and when their masked by many faces, the sheer magnitude of it is overwhelming, so we shut down – most of us at least. When you make it about one person, one individual that everyone can easily see and hear, you are able to share things you wouldn’t have been able to otherwise. When you put a singular face to any issue, people usually have a hard time forgetting that face, and consequently, the issue. Usually.

**Q:** Why the Bronx?

**A:** Because it is home.

**Q:** What were some of the difficulties you encountered in making this “Asa?”

**A:** Do you have a year? It might take that long to list! Money was one, being a first time writer –producer-director was another. People don’t know you well enough to make up their minds on whether or not to trust you. Working with a large cast – there were 18 total, was also tough. And then came post production! I have to say though, that all in all, things ran fairly smoothly. I was very lucky.

**Q:** Who or what was your inspiration for making “Asa”

**A:** That’s an easy one, my dad, more specifically, my adopted dad, Dave Silverberg. The most wonderful human being on the face of the planet, and no, I am not biased!