

SLAMDANCE FILM FESTIVAL 2024

# AFRICAN GIANTS

# FACT SHEET

## **Directed by**

Omar S. Kamara

## **Written by**

Omar S. Kamara

## **Starring**

Dillon Daniel Mutyaba

Omete Anassi

Tanyell Waivers

Josh Lopez

## **Producers**

Omar S. Kamara

Leo Blumberg-Woll

Jordan Tyner

## **Logline**

Over a weekend visit in Los Angeles, two first-generation Sierra Leonean American brothers navigate the changing dynamics of brotherhood after a surprise announcement.

## **Runtime**

106 minutes

## **Slamdance 2024 Screening Info**

The Yarrow - 1800 Park Ave, Park City, UT 84060

Fri, Jan 19th, 11:45 AM @ The Summer and David Theater

Tue, Jan 23rd, 2:30 PM @ The Summer and David Theater

# SYNOPSIS

Alhaji (28), an aspiring actor living in Los Angeles, is visited for a weekend by his younger brother, Sheku (25), a law student. Unknown to Alhaji, Sheku has come with a specific intention: to reveal the secret that he will be dropping out of law school and moving to LA to pursue acting, just like his older brother. Over the course of the weekend the brother's relationship is tested and tensions rise as they converse about a variety of subjects with differing views and life philosophies. Alhaji pushes back on Sheku's newfound dream as the facade of his own life begins to show. When bad news leads Alhaji to put himself in a precarious position, Sheku, the younger brother, comes to his aid and is a hero to his normally domineering older brother. Sheku leaves for the weekend and both brothers realize their relationship has changed for the better forever.

# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

“ When I was 9 years old, my mother told me in her thick West African accent, “Be careful how you behave. Your little brother is watching you. You’re his hero.” I remember feeling an immense amount of pressure from that point forward.

Fast forward to about 15 years later, I threw a party at my apartment. As always, my little brother was in attendance. On that particular night, I was heavily intoxicated. A friend of mine had edible brownies, which I had never tried before. Always the life of the party, I took one. My brother urged me to slow down however I felt I wasn't feeling anything. Like a rookie, I took another. Before I knew it, I was the most intoxicated I had ever been in my life.

I threw up in the middle of the party. My brother took pity on me and took me to my bedroom. As I lay on the floor, vomiting in a trash can, my brother began to leave. I remember reaching up to grab him. “Please don’t leave me...” I said. Then — my little brother, the one who I was supposed to set an example for, sat beside me and rubbed my back the entire night. At that moment, my brother was my hero and I knew the dynamic of our relationship was changed forever.

AFRICAN GIANTS is a love letter to brotherhood. A film that we hope captures what it truly means to grow, change, and navigate the shifting relationship dynamics of siblings. My team and I scrappily made this film because we didn't want to wait for the industry to give us permission to tell our story. I am immensely proud of the result especially given the budget constraints. This film is a thank you to my brother. For pushing me, for inspiring me, for being my hero. I hope the audience will see themselves in these African characters and come along for the journey. Thank you.



**-OMAR S. KAMARA**



CAST & CREW

# OMAR S. KAMARA

Director/Writer/Producer

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Writer/Director Omar S. Kamara is a first-generation Sierra Leonean American, Virginia native, and graduate of the College of William and Mary and AFI. His debut feature film, *AFRICAN GIANTS*, which he independently wrote, directed, and produced, will have its World Premiere at Slamdance Film Festival in 2024.

In addition to winning the Franklin J. Schaffner Fellow Award at AFI, Kamara was selected as an inaugural Resident for the Rideback Rise BIPOC Content Accelerator as well as a filmmaker for the Rising Voices Program, a collaboration between Lena Waithe's Hillman Grad and Indeed, to write and direct a short that will premiere at Tribeca in 2024.

His previous short film, *MASS AVE*, won the Grand Prize at the DGA Student Film Awards, was named a Finalist in HBO's Short Film Competition at ABFF, and was nominated for the Grand Prix at Clermont-Ferrand International Film Festival. The film was licensed by HBO and is currently streaming on HBO Max.

Kamara's films touch on his first-generation experiences and strive to highlight and honor the African Diaspora.



# LEO BLUMBERG-WOLL

Producer

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Leo Blumberg-Woll is an independent producer focused on impact storytelling. His works include the young-adult coming of age story, CHESTNUT, the short film, THE FAMILY MEETING (Soho House,) as well as AFRICAN GIANTS. Born in the Washington, D.C. area and now based in Los Angeles, Leo also works for Represent Justice, a non-profit dedicated to using the power of media to engage audiences in reimagining the justice system, and creating real demand for change.



# JORDAN TYNER

Producer

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Jordan Tyner is a Class of 2020 Producing Fellow from the American Film Institute Conservatory. During his two years at AFI, Jordan produced ten short films, and four of them entered the festival circuit as award-winning films with world premieres at Urbanworld, Outfest, and Hollyshorts. His thesis film, WE WERE MEANT TO, premiered at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival and is currently being developed into a feature film. Additionally, Jordan has produced two feature-length films, most recently AFRICAN GIANTS, directed by OMAR KAMARA, a Silver Screen winner at the Cannes Lions Young Director, which is targeting a 2023 festival release. Jordan's career began as an assistant on shows such as TNT's THE LAST SHIP, Marvel's AGENT OF SHIELD, HBO's INSECURE, and FX's AMERICAN CRIME STORY & AMERICAN HORROR STORY. He has interned in Film & TV development at Scott Gardenhour's The Institute, Charles King's MACRO, and as an international sales intern with Blue Fox Entertainment. Jordan currently works at Ava DuVernay's ARRAY Filmworks as a Coordinator of Physical Production after joining the company in 2020.





# JONAS FISCHER

Director of Photography

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Jonas was born in Zurich, Switzerland and after an initial education in automation engineering he returned to his childhood passion of filmmaking and cinematography. Being entirely self taught and looking for a way into the Swiss film industry, he teamed with two partners and together they started the still ongoing film production company 'Dynamic Frame' in the early 2010's. He has shot numerous commercials, music videos and narrative films including THIN AIR which was featured at Palm Springs Short Fest, Foyle Film Festival and many others, THE AFFRONT, which premiered at Winterthur International Film Festival and MASS AVE, which after a very successful international festival run, is currently streaming on HBO Max. In 2018 he moved to Los Angeles to study cinematography at the American Film Institute Conservatory from which he graduated in 2021. In 2022 he lensed his first feature, AFRICAN GIANTS, which is premiering at the 2024 Slamdance Film Festival.



# MBONI MAUMBA

Production Designer

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Mboni Maumba is a Tanzanian-Chinese filmmaker based in Los Angeles. As a designer, she is a two-time Student Oscars winner for *THE CHEF* and *SHEDDING ANGELS*. Her first feature film, *THE LISTENER*, directed by Steve Buscemi and starring Tessa Thompson premiered at The Venice Film Festival, Giornate Degli Autori section.

Mboni loves story and production design fiercely, perhaps more than anything in the world. She is steered by a passion to mold images into speaking more than words ever could, with a strong belief that the truth is often what is not spoken but exhibited subtly.



# ASHLEY N.V. MINGO

Costume Designer

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Ashley N. V. Mingo (known as Mingo) is a visual storyteller through costumes. From script to screen she helps create characters' identity and bring them to life by way of her diverse set of skills and creativity.

In 2018 Mingo decided to move to Los Angeles to study Fashion Design and Costume Design for Film and Television. By 2020 she earned both A.A. in Costume Design for Film and Television + A.A. in Fashion Design from Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising. While there she formed relationships with American Film Institute's class of 2020 Directors, Writers and Producers. Since then she has Costumed Designed four films with AFI fellows and worked in the costume department for numerous productions. Mingo believes in the power of costumes, that they are able to tell stories and move people without words.



# LILY JUDGE

Editor

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Lily Judge is an editor and director originally from Austin, TX and based in Los Angeles, CA. She received an undergraduate degree in Music Industry at the University of Southern California in 2016 and a Master of Fine Arts degree in Film & TV Editing at the AFI Conservatory in 2021. She has edited films that have screened at numerous Oscar-Qualifying festivals domestically and abroad and one that has been licensed by HBO and HBO Max.



# JUSTIN SCHORNSTEIN

Composer

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Justin began his scoring career in Los Angeles in 2011, taking a year off of school at Berklee College of Music to work on TV shows like EUREKA for SYFY and THE CAPE for NBC. In LA, Justin began writing his first feature film score, OFF SEASON, before returning to Boston to finish school. Justin graduated with honors from Berklee College of Music in 2014 with Degrees in Film Scoring and Performance and minors in Orchestral Conducting and Video Game Scoring. Justin has also studied conducting at The Juilliard School. In 2019, Justin returned to Los Angeles to attend the prestigious Screen Scoring MM Program at The University of Southern California, and graduated in May 2020 with a Master's Degree in Music. Justin's project, MASS AVE, a collaboration with director Omar S. Kamara, is now streaming on HBO Max. He recently re-teamed with Omar on his debut feature film, AFRICAN GIANTS, which is premiering at the 2024 Slamdance Film Festival.



# CREDITS

## **DIRECTED BY**

OMAR S. KAMARA

## **WRITTEN BY**

OMAR S. KAMARA

## **STARRING**

DILLON DANIEL MUTYABA

OMETE ANASSI

TANYELL WAIVERS

JOSH LOPEZ

KATHLEEN KENNY

SCOTT BENDER

## **PRODUCERS**

OMAR S. KAMARA

LEO BLUMBERG-WOLL

JORDAN TYNER

## **DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY**

JONAS FISCHER

## **PRODUCTION DESIGNER**

MBONI MAUMBA

## **COSTUME DESIGNER**

ASHLEY N. V. MINGO

## **EDITOR**

LILY JUDGE

## **COMPOSER**

JUSTIN SCHORNSTEIN

# **PRESS CONTACT**

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