

AYAMYE*

***goodness, kindness, generosity**

A documentary film by Eric Matthies & Tricia Todd

Ayamy* is a moving, life-affirming film that proves sustainable solutions to crisis are not always complex.



Running Time: 40:00

Screening June 30, 2007 at 7:30 PM
Program 6 of The Bicycle Film Festival
The Vine Theater, 6321 Hollywood Blvd, LA CA.

Additional global screenings with The Bicycle Film Festival
Including Paris, France in July
To be announced

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For additional photos and press materials please visit www.ayamy.org

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SYNOPSIS (Short)

In Ghana, West Africa, a rural village eagerly awaits a shipment of recycled bicycles from the United States. Inspiring, determined, resourceful, individuals let us into their daily lives in a dramatic look at how lack of transportation can impact the education, health and livelihood of the community. Ayamy* is a moving, life-affirming film that proves sustainable solutions to crisis are not always complex.

SYNOPSIS (Medium)

In Ghana, West Africa, a rural village eagerly awaits a shipment of recycled bicycles from the United States. This inspiring story begins in Boston where volunteers from Bikes Not Bombs (partnering with Village Bicycle Project) load a container with donated used bikes and parts. Through skillful packing, 450 bikes are loaded and the container is sent to Ghana. The majority of the bikes are sold in a colorful frenzy to pay for shipping costs, while the best bikes are set aside to take to the village.

Ayamy* chronicles the lives of Nurse Letitia and Seth before they get the bicycles and again, one year later. These two individuals are very different from each other, the common thread being the need for transportation and the wish for positive development in their community. We experience village life with them in dry season; mining salt and tending to their farms and in the rainy season when the biggest storm known to the people of the village wipes out the road and creates hazardous conditions and a compounded transportation problem. The determined and resourceful people of the rural village let us into their daily lives in a dramatic look at how lack of transportation can impact the education, health and livelihood of their community. Ayamy* is a moving, life-affirming film that proves sustainable solutions to crisis are not always complex.

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SYNOPSIS (Long)

In Ghana, West Africa, a rural village eagerly awaits a shipment of recycled bicycles from the United States. The shipment of donated bicycles and the workshop that distributes them is one of many orchestrated by the grassroots organization Village Bicycle Project. VBP was founded by David Peckham in response to a critical lack of basic, reliable, affordable transport for millions of Africans. When mobility is improved so is the standard of living.

This inspiring story begins in Boston where volunteers from Bikes Not Bombs (partnering with Village Bicycle Project) skillfully pack 450 bikes into a shipping container. Four months later the container arrives in Accra, Ghana. The majority of the bikes are sold in a colorful frenzy to pay for shipping costs while the best are set aside to take to one of the villages that have petitioned VBP for assistance.

Ayamy* chronicles the positive impact on a community that a sustainable solution such as a bicycle can bring. We focus on the lives of Nurse Letitia and Seth before they get the bicycles and again, one year later. These two individuals are very different personalities with the common need for improved, affordable transportation and a wish for positive development in their community. We experience daily life for Nurse Letitia as she tends to her arduous assignment; giving immunizations to infants and toddlers in the many villages that she serves. The task is difficult as she usually carries her many supplies on her back, walking long distances and setting up makeshift clinics to tend to her patients. She eagerly awaits her bicycle knowing it will enable her to have more time to provide more services and therefore improve the health of the community. The busy nurse knows that VBP will arrive soon so she must find time to learn to

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ride. Her enthusiasm for learning is not diminished as she falls over and over again on a borrowed bicycle in a constant down pour. The rain doesn't deter her. The pride in achieving a new skill is obvious despite her frustration of constantly falling. When Letitia gets a bicycle she hopes it will inspire other women in the community to also learn how to ride. Unfortunately most women in the village believe a local myth that riding a bicycle will make them barren and that it is something only men should use.

Seth is the president of the community's Youth Group. He can no longer attend school due to lack of funds in his family. School fees add up to about fifteen dollars a year for secondary school in Ghana and most families can't afford the cost of education. To raise money for school, Seth takes a job at a poultry farm several miles away from his village. Because of the physical distance it's difficult for him to fulfill his obligations on the job and still function as a leader of the Youth Group. The group is an important asset of the community that uses music, dance and dramatic performance to teach lessons on topics like safe sex and teenage pregnancy. Seth has many dreams and one of them is to continue his education to become an accountant or a computer programmer. Seth's father shares his dream as he wishes the best for his children and hopes that one day his children can provide a proper home for him before he dies. The other dream Seth has is for everyone in the youth group to one day have a bike so they can take their plays to more villages and educate people across Ghana on the risk of Aids and other issues.

When we return a year later we see if Seth and Nurse Letitia have gotten closer to achieving their dreams. **Ayamy*** is a moving, energetic, life-affirming film that proves sustainable solutions to crisis are not always complex.

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Directors Statement

When so much of the news coming out of Africa is about crisis - civil unrest, genocide, AIDS, famine, draught - it's easy to give up as it seems that nothing can help. From the beginning we wanted to make a documentary about solutions; sustainable solutions that are easy to implement without a complex infrastructure. We wanted to make a film that would inspire people to keep looking towards Africa, to show the strength of the people and the continent. Bicycles are a major part of our own personal solution to reduce dependency on natural resources and cut back on pollution. Through involvement in the cycling community we knew that bikes were being used in resourceful ways to help people in need in Africa and elsewhere around the world. Our research led us to Village Bicycle Project – a very grassroots operation comprised of one American (David Peckham) and two Ghanaians (Samson Ayine and George Aidoo) in Ghana. The fact that such a small organization, with an annual budget of \$11,000.00, could instigate so much positive change inspired us.

When we talked to David we learned how a simple bicycle could implement far-reaching and positive change for an individual and in turn, aid in the development of their community. Many great ideas fail in Africa because they are complicated or because they lack the resources to be maintained for an extended period of time. Often these 'solutions' are dependent upon outsiders providing a service and are therefore disconnected from the communities who's problems they aim to solve. The bicycle as VBP presents it is at once a completely sustainable solution. The way VPB runs the workshops guarantees that the longevity of the bike is in the hands of the user. People are empowered to use their



own resources not only to obtain a bicycle, but also gain repair skills and access to tools. The tools and the knowledge from the program are invaluable assets to the bicycle recipient. These assets are shared not only with other participants in the workshop, but with all members of the community.

The determined and resourceful people of Songorinya, a community enveloping five distinct villages, let us into their daily lives for a dramatic look at how lack of transportation can impact the education, health and livelihood of an entire region. When a solution to that lack of transportation is presented in a sustainable way, the end result is a positive, progressive change that becomes a building block for the future of the community as a whole. We are honored to present **Ayamyé*** – the film could not have been made without the goodness, kindness and generosity of everyone we met along the way.

Eric Matthies & Tricia Todd

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FILMMAKER/CREW BIOGRAPHIES

Eric Matthies (Director, Producer, Cinematographer)

Eric Matthies current documentary film **Ayamy*** will have its world premiere at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival. Currently he is an award winning producer and director specializing in documentaries, video installations and special features for DVD's. His company, EMP Inc. has produced promotional packages and ancillary content for dozens of films and games including all of The Matrix titles, Frank Miller's 300 and A Scanner Darkly.

Between 1986 and 1994, Eric was a cameraman with the seminal production company H-Gun, shooting notable music videos for artists such as Nine Inch Nails, De La Soul, Public Enemy and Soundgarden. As a young director he received recognition from The Chicago International Film Festival for his work with the legendary band Suicidal Tendencies. He has produced video installations seen at both the Venice and Whitney Biennial, as well as in galleries and museums around the world. With experience working in the Americas, Africa, Oceania, Asia, Eastern and Western Europe, Eric has been responsible for an array of film and multi-media projects on diverse topics ranging from jazz theory to volcanoes. After many years of helping other directors realize their visions, **Ayamy*** is proudly his first independent documentary to produce and direct.

Tricia Todd (Director, Producer)

Tricia Todd is a photographer and documentary filmmaker living in Los Angeles. Her current documentary will be premiering at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival. **Ayamy*** is a moving, life-affirming film that proves sustainable

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solutions to crisis are not always complex. This beautifully shot documentary was filmed mainly in a rural village in Ghana with a stop along the way to visit Bikes not Bombs in Boston. A love for Africa was born early in her life through National Geographic magazines she read while growing up in Texas. She has traveled through four different countries in Africa in her photography and documentary adventures.

Tricia Todd studied film and photography at the San Francisco Art Institute. Her photographs have been exhibited in art galleries in New York and Los Angeles as well as exhibits at the California Museum of Photography, The Los Angeles Center for Photographic Study and the Museum of Fine Arts, Florida.

After graduating from the San Francisco Art Institute with a B.F.A. degree she moved to Los Angeles. Her first job in Hollywood was working for Lisa Kudrow as Lisa's personal assistant. After a few fun years in that role she became a production coordinator on commercial jobs working with directors Tony Kaye, Little X and Matthew Rolston. In 1998 she joined forces with Eric Matthies to expand EMP, Inc. She worked as line and field producer worldwide on several DVD content projects for major studios. In 2005 she created the documentary division of EMP, Inc. Under her direction, "Project Lab" will put out independent documentaries destined for television, pod cast and theatrical release. Currently in production is a documentary on rock'n'roll legend Andre Williams titled *Agile, Mobile & Hostile*. *Agile, Mobile & Hostile* will wrap in summer 2007.

Ayamy* is her directorial debut.

Austin Meredith (Editor)

Austin Meredith has recently finished editorial work on Doug Aitken's SLEEPWALKERS, a 7 channel video installation projected on the exterior of the MOMA from January 16-February 12th. Austin completed editing the short film **Ayamy*** with Tricia Todd and Eric Matthies in early 2007. Austin graduated



from The Art Institute of Chicago in 2003 where he focused on Film, Video, and New Media. He has worked as DP and Composer for the short film *Killer Sound* in 2006. He has also been involved with sound design and Music Composition for multiple web based short films in 2006 and 2007 including works with The Glorious Internet.

Haines Hall (Editorial Advisor)

Haines Hall is an award winning editor living in Venice, California. His projects include the feature film *Thumbsucker* directed by Mike Mills; *HellHouse* by Dewey Nicks and numerous music videos, commercials and multi media art installations. His awards include: MVPA Best Editing, Gold Cannes Award, an Emmy, and an MTV award for Best Editing.

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Production Notes: Filming

Adventures in making a documentary film in Ghana. These are excerpts from Eric's blog while in Ghana.

"Accra bike market"

At around one week in, we're still stuck with no shipment and no clear answers as to when something might happen. The best the shipper can do is tell George that the boat is closer to Ghana than Singapore, somewhere out in the Atlantic. What is certain is this; we have no control over our situation. Sampson takes us to the central bike market, which is really just a section of the giant outdoor market near the Jamestown section of Accra. It's madness. We shoot around a half hour of footage with the stealthy little camera, having left the main bit of machinery safely locked away at Philo's. Now is not the time to have our gear stolen or confiscated, or to raise any questions by using more 'pro' looking kit. As I collect footy with the 'tourist' camera, I am secretly pining for how great it could be if I had the bigger rig. C'est la vie. The market is a cacophony of parts, frames, new and old bikes, mechanics and vendors. It is a brief opportunity to do something and we relish it.

"Reflections on Accra"

La Pas. Along this chaotic bramble of tarmac exists a reminiscent pattern mirroring every other downtrodden municipality of the globe trying to bootstrap itself into second world status. To wit: mid-traffic hawking of toilet paper, chewing gum and bags of purified water proffered by young men clutching greasy wads of local currency. Row after row of unfinished cinderblock and rebar two story buildings, skirted at the ground floor by steel folding doors painted to reflect the goods and services provided in each cube. This set back from the sealed road

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and buffered by a dirt and debris no-mans land dotted with delivery trucks, swerving drop taxis, hire phone stands, clapboard shanties plying warm sodas of unfamiliar name, the odd grill of corn or dried fish, fly ridden rotting fruit, polyvinyl water cisterns, furniture on pallets and the occasional darting goat or clucking cock. Shop signs are hand lettered mis-spelled aberrations of western pop references or out-right hieroglyphics, unrecognizable beneath layers of soot even to born and raised denizens of whichever Gotham we're discussing. In this case, the Gotham in question is the Abeka region of Accra, but it might as well be Lopburi, Managua, Georgetown or Cuernavaca. Homogeny is the price paid by the mollified corners of the world trying to look and act like everything is okay; as seen on TV. Globalization is the race to the bottom of the barrel, or looking down the barrel of the long gun, or both.

"outdooring"

When it rains here it comes as a squall from the sea. Straight up the estuary, the lagoon, the salt flats - roaring. Straight into the village- roaring. By morning it is past. We depart for Mr. Ayim's to partake in his new son's outdooring ceremony. Wary of precipitation, I rig the camera in its protective coat. The outdooring is a traditional naming ceremony; a gathering at which the child is given his name and presented to the village as a member of the community. It is an honor to attend and be allowed to shoot. It also bestows a bit of prestige on the Ayim household to host our crew at their event. Mr. Ayim is a subject of our film, the Songorniya Water/Sanitation Committee representative for his village and a farmer. He needs a bicycle to expedite his many tasks. On a given day there are fields to tend, meetings to attend and visits throughout the village to communicate the Wat/San agenda with his constituents. The outdooring presented us with a rich filming experience, as well as a profound cultural one. Song, dance, chant, prayer, sermon; it was quite a festival. The sun graced us all morning, 7 til 10 when we departed with five hours of footage from two cameras.



Production Notes - Technical

As a production company owned by a camera junkie, we are fortunate to have a number of options when it comes to selecting gear for a project. Choosing a camera to shoot with on this film was based on a few simple guidelines. Video was the obvious format to go with, and both a 24p frame rate and 16:9 aspect ratio gave just enough of a nod to my old 16mm days to make me comfortable. I wanted something that could be easily maintained and operated by both of us. Tricia would be carrying her own medium format equipment and there wasn't time for a review of a complex DVCPRO or HD package. The camera had to be easily cleaned and also rugged enough to stand up to potentially harsh environments. The kit also needed to pass through numerous security checkpoints without need for carnets, press credentials or media permits. There was a chance that we would sneak into the shipping port and film the bikes being unloaded from the container vessel, so stealth became a factor. This put our range of options squarely in the 'prosumer' market. As we already owned a Panasonic VX100a and a complement of accessories it quickly became the camera for the job. I spent some time waffling over the option of bringing our larger workhorse camera, the SDX900. Obviously a higher picture quality would have come from the pro package, but in the end I determined production value would be increased by our ability to go fast and light and not attract unwanted attention if we ended up filming on the streets or in the port. Another key factor in using a smaller camera was that we had to be able to carry all of our gear on our backs while on bikes, sometimes for 25 mile journeys. An added bonus once we got to the village where we based our operations was that two of our local guides ended up learning the equipment and got involved with shooting some footage for us. The VX100a was augmented by a set of Century optics wide and telephoto diopters, Audio Technica and Sennheiser microphones,



spare batteries and a Miller carbon-fiber tripod with fluid head. I also brought along a small 1 chip Sony modified to accept a helmet-mounted lens for riding POV's. An old monopod and some tricks picked up from Steadicam operating gave us a very rudimentary stabilization platform for tracking shots. Everything but the tripod fit snugly into a 25 lb. backpack.

Shooting in Africa presents a number of problems for the cinematographer. You have incredible light and color everywhere, but the light is often quite harsh and the exposure range from hotspot to shadow is usually at least eight stops. West Africans are blessed with particularly unique features often enhanced by ceremonial markings. They also have some of the darkest complexions I've ever photographed. Because we weren't carrying lights, only a small flexible reflector package, my main challenge quickly became balancing light levels while maintaining compositions that best illustrated the scene and captured the expressions of the wonderful people we were interviewing. Given that I had selected the smaller 3-chip mini-DV format, I was limited a bit by what range of exposure variance the camera could handle. Careful selection of camera position and framing usually did the trick.

Aside from lighting, maintaining camera gear on any expeditionary assignment is always a full time job. Having previously worked with a full Arriflex package in among other places The Skeleton Coast of Namibia, I was fully aware of how rough the African environment can be on gear. At the end of every day in Ghana I would clean and repack the equipment, make sure all of our batteries were topped off and label the day's tapes. I always treat smaller tape formats as if they were film negative, and I never rewind or review the footage because of the potential for tape damage. Of course, after a few days of stressing about proper exposure this became a source of torment, but I chose to have faith in my abilities and trust the winds.

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Cinematography - Eric Matthies

Additional Camera - David Branigan, Tricia Todd, William Ajumani

Location Sound (Boston) – Rob Massey

Editor - Austin Meredith

Additional Editorial – Chris Haber

Editing House - EMP, Inc./Project Lab

Editorial Advisor – Haines Hall

Assistant Editor – Taku Hazeyama

Sound Design – Noa Winter Lazerus

Graphics – Cyrani Ackerman

Transcripts – Production Transcripts

Website Design – Taku Hazeyama

Mixing Facility – Chace Audio

Tape Stock – Media Distributors

Dubbing Facility – Modern Video Film

Featuring:

David Branigan
Moses Torgbenu
David Mozer
Angela Moman
David Peckham
Mr. Ayim
Carl Kurz
Samson Ayine

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George Aidoo
Faustina Torgbenu
Seth Agbofu
Mr. Agbofu
Nurse Letitia

Music

“Awurade Yesu”

Performed by: The Baptist Disciple Singers
Used by permission of: Earthworks/Sterns Music
www.sternsmusic.com

“Mama Shile Oga”

Performed by: Salaam & His Cultural Imani Group
Used by permission of: Earthworks/Sterns Music
www.sternsmusic.com

“Momma Mo Akoma Ntutu”

Performed by: Genesis Gospel Singers
Used by permission of: Earthworks/Sterns Music
www.sternsmusic.com

“Awurade Aseda”

Performed by: Roadmaster & Agyemang
Used by permission of: Art Hurts Records
www.arthurtsrecords.com

“Obi Abayiwa”

Performed by: Roadmaster & Agyemang
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“Bor Bor Bor”

Performed by: Bolga Zoohdoomah
Used by permission of: Art Hurts Records
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“Waarebada”

Performed by: Bolga Zoohdoomah
Used by permission of: Art Hurts Records
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“Wana, Na-Na, Nana”

Performed by: Mustapha Tettey Addy
Used by permission of: Weltwunder Records
www.weltwunder.com

“African Jao”

Performed by: Nyanyo Addo
Used by permission of: Weltwunder Records
www.weltwunder.com

“Womba Djo”

Performed by: Nyanyo Addo
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www.weltwunder.com

“Otofo Yo”

Performed by: Nyanyo Addo
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www.weltwunder.com

“Wo Ba Wo Ba Shue”

Performed by: Nyanyo Addo
Used by permission of: Weltwunder Records
www.weltwunder.com

“Down The Congo”

Performed by: Saka Acquaye
Used by permission of: Nonesuch Records,
A division of Warner Music Group Company

“Akudonno”

Performed by: Saka Acquaye
Used by permission of: Nonesuch Records,
A division of Warner Music Group Company

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“Beyond Africa”

Performed by: Saka Acquaye
Used by permission of: Nonesuch Records,
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“Kenya Sunset”

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Used by permission of: Nonesuch Records,
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