



Africa in Motion Special Focus – Voices of the Bushmen

All members of the 'Voices of the Bushman' panel discussion are available for interview or to provide feature articles. For more information, please contact Kirsty Dickson, Press Officer, on 07826 850763 or kirsty@africa-in-motion.org.uk

AiM is pleased to present a spotlight on the Bushmen of Southern Africa. As part of this focus, there will be an exhibition of Bushmen art work and jewellery in the Filmhouse café as well as an exciting cinematic programme. The screenings of the documentaries *Bushman's Secret* and *Legends of the Bushmen* will be followed by a panel discussion chaired by Moragh Reid, Director of Positive Help, with panel members Ginger Mauney, a wildlife photographer and filmmaker and director of *Legends of the Bushmen*; Alan Barnard, Professor of Anthropology of Southern Africa at the University of Edinburgh and Honorary Consul of the Republic of Namibia for Scotland; and Sue Armstrong, a freelance writer and broadcaster who has written numerous articles and made feature programmes for BBC radio about the Bushmen. The panel discussion will explore the following themes:

In English, story and history are different words. In most other languages they are the same word. In the English speaking world we expect history to be about facts - facts which give order to how we think about our lives in relation to our past. Yet, storytelling is our history. It is the colour and chaos of images that shape the way we live now. It is our learning. It is our understanding of our world. Stories transport us out of the limits of that world. Stories inhabit every corner of our imagination. Stories bring magic and nature and the supernatural to our lives. Stories have no bounds and all things are possible. Yet stories bring an order, a moral code, a lesson to be learned and remind us all things on the earth and in the skies are connected. All stories embody a truth and to hear that truth, we must listen to the stories. Their narrative power is the secret of their survival down the centuries. To learn from the storytellers, we must give people an authentic voice.

The Bushmen are one of the oldest indigenous populations in the world. They lived for thousands of years as hunters and gatherers in the harsh environment of the Kalahari desert. Yet oppression, discrimination and dispossession have marked their lives. "Visitors" to their traditional lands have become occupants and today the Bushmen live in small groups scattered over different countries in Southern Africa. They are most usually found as "squatters" near towns, as labourers settled on the farms of big landowners, or in government-designated re-settlement camps, dependent on inadequate, inconsistent government hand-outs, unable to access or afford healthcare. They are losing their language. They have all but lost their voice. Yet their stories remain central to their healing and their sense of community and their identity and we have much to learn if we would simply listen.

Through these films we will explore the (hi)story of the Bushmen as they try to find their authentic voice in the modern world. We will consider the relationship of Westerners with the Bushmen. What happens when we listen to their stories and hear their voice? What happens when we don't? The Bushmen are Africa and Africa is the Bushmen. Why then are we Westerners compelled to keep returning to a continent on which we have no claim? Are the Bushmen part of our (hi)story and healing?

The Bushmen focus has been organised in partnership with Positive Help, an Edinburgh-based HIV charity which helped establish a healthcare clinic in the Omaheke region of Namibia, working to ensure the Bushmen had access to health care and support. The films screened are:

Bushman's Secret

Rehad Desai | South Africa 2006 | 1h5m | BetaSP | Afrikaans, Nu!, Ju'Hoan, English with English subtitles | 15

When South African filmmaker Rehad Desai travels to the Kalahari to investigate global interest in ancient Bushmen knowledge, he meets Jan van der Westhuizen, a fascinating Khomani San traditional healer. Jan's struggle to live close to nature is hampered by centuries of colonial exploitation of the San Bushmen and of their land. Unable to survive as they once did hunting and gathering, the Khomani now live in a state of poverty that threatens to see the last of this community forever. One plant could make all the difference. Hoodia, a cactus used by Bushmen for centuries, has caught the attention of a giant pharmaceutical company. It now stands to decide the fate of the Khomani San.

Bushman's Secret features breathtaking footage of the Kalahari landscape, and exposes us to a world where modernity collides with ancient ways, at a time when each has, strangely, come to rely on the other.

Legends of the Bushmen

Ginger Mauney | Namibia 1997 | 46m | BetaSP | Ju'Hoan and English with English subtitles | PG

Legends of the Bushmen combines wildlife filmmaking with the unique stories of Namibia's indigenous people, the Bushmen. As the film's producer, wildlife cinematographer and on-camera narrator, Ginger Mauney used a blend of natural history filmmaking and traditional storytelling to explore the unique connection the Bushmen maintain to wild animals as told through their legends. The trust that the filmmaker established with the Bushmen resonates in the footage and honours what is fundamental in the lives of the Bushmen.