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RE-EMERGING: The Jews of Nigeria

by Jeff L. Lieberman

OPENS MAY 17 – New York’s QUAD Cinema

*“Every so often a documentary comes along and changes the way you view the world.
RE-EMERGING: The Jews of Nigeria is just such a movie.”*
-The Jewish Advocate, November 9th, 2012

NEW YORK – April 25, 2013 – After its festival debuts at the Boston, Washington DC, Phoenix, Toronto and Vancouver Jewish Film Festivals and New York’s African Diaspora Film Festival, the QUAD CINEMA and Re-emerging Films are proud to present the New York Theatrical Premiere of Jeff L. Lieberman’s documentary, **RE-EMERGING: The Jews of Nigeria** (93 minutes) on May 17, 2013.

Praised by *CNN*, *BBC Radio*, *Newsday*, *Indiewire*, *D’Afrique*, and *Jewcy*, RE-EMERGING: THE JEWS OF NIGERIA begins as a journey into the heart of Igbo land and into the lives and culture of the Igbo people. But who could have imagined what it finds there?

Unknown to most of the world, across Nigeria there are dozens of village synagogues, maintained by a handful of passionate, committed Igbos, who believe that they are descendants of Jews who had migrated to western Africa, fleeing the destruction of the 1st and 2nd Temples in Jerusalem. With precious few resources they continue to fulfill their historical legacy as Jews.

RE-EMERGING traces a fierce spirit of independence in the Igbos from Biblical times through rebellions during the slave trade and the brutal 1960s Biafran War (which killed over one million Igbos) to the rediscovery of Judaism today. The luminous individuals featured in the film powerfully demonstrate the Igbo’s resilience as well as their firm commitment to Judaism.

Samuel Chukwuma aka Shmuel Tikvah is a young man whose story exemplifies the turn toward Judaism. Today, Shmuel is a leader in his community who teaches and chants Torah and dreams of one day becoming a rabbi. But like almost every Igbo, this gentle and committed spirit grew up in the aftermath of Christian colonialism, and the road to his discoveries has been fraught with antagonisms and misunderstanding, wrong turns into Messianic worship, exile from his family, violent prejudice from both Muslim and Christian neighbors, indifference from Jews he has contacted in the Western world, and a dispiriting lack of funds to further his education beyond what he can discover on the internet. Yet, his has also been a profound recognition of the beauty and inspiration of Judaism in the embrace of his Jewish community.

There is one thread of connection between Shmuel and the Diaspora. Shmuel was discovered by an American Rabbi, Howard D. Gorin, who, since 2001, has been invited to participate in the education and conversion of Native Africans with Jewish aspirations. With generous love and single-minded dedication, Rabbi Gorin has volunteered to work with Shmuel and others to see their dreams become reality. Recently retired, Rabbi Gorin’s former congregation, Tikvat Israel, in Rockville, Maryland, has shipped two 40’ containers to Africa; their contents included Jewish books, computers and an assortment of items ranging from crutches, walkers, bicycles, housewares, and recycled clothing to boxes of matzos.

The film is causing a stir for many African-Americans interested in determining their genetic and ancestral background. With the help of American historians, the film sheds new light on the origins of hundreds of

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thousands of African slaves brought to American shores—a large number of whom were Igbo. The film breaks new ground by uncovering a previously unknown letter from 1803 that confirms a legend that Igbo slaves revolted in the waters off of St. Simon's Island, GA at a site still known today as “Ibo Landing”. The film also establishes that several prominent African-Americans such as actors Forrest Whitaker and Blair Underwood, and Bishop T.D. Jakes have discovered an Igbo DNA connection, and further, that in areas like the state of Virginia, 60% of African slaves were Igbo.

RE-EMERGING is the first independent film for Director, Jeff L. Lieberman. Lieberman is a Journalist and Producer in New York, whose work has been seen on CBS, HBO, CNN, FOX, Starz Encore, Fox Movie Channel, The Discovery Channel, E! Entertainment, and on the websites of *Yahoo!*, *The New York Post*, *CBS Moneywatch*, and *The Huffington Post*.

PRODUCER JEFF L. LIEBERMAN IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS AND WILL ATTEND SELECTED SCREENINGS FOR Q&A SCHEDULE PLEASE SEE QUAD WEBSITE AT: www.quadcinema.com

OFFICIAL WEBSITE FOR STILLs, TRAILER, REVIEWS, SYNOPSIS, BIOS, ETC: www.re-emergingfilm.com

RE-EMERGING (93 minutes) Not rated. **Opens Friday, April 12** at New York’s **QUAD Cinema**, 34 West 13th St., New York, NY 10011 p: (212) 255-2243 f: (212) 255-2247; www.quadcinema@aol.com

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