



**AU LENDEMAIN
DE L'ODYSSÉE**
ALL'INDOMANI DELL'ODISSEA

UN FILM DE HELEN DOYLE

LOGLINE

An ensemble film about the reception in Italy of young Nigerian women struggling with human trafficking.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

After a Dantean journey, women from Nigeria arrive alone and ever younger in Italy, looking for a better life. Such horrors as human trafficking and sexual slavery are waiting for them, as we discover in this ensemble film featuring harrowing stories told in a sensible way that spares us from the unbearable. These tales provoke a broader reflection on migration and otherness.

LONG SYNOPSIS

A documentary feature about the arrival in Italy of underage, unaccompanied minors from Nigeria – particularly the Edo State. Such horrors as human trafficking and sexual slavery are waiting for them in this film featuring harrowing stories told in a sensible way that spares us from the unbearable. With a poetic, intimate approach, we discover what these young women went through and how they attempt to rebuild and free themselves, thanks to extraordinary instances of female solidarity. These tales provoke a broader reflection on migration, the fate of young women around the world, and how we welcome them.

TECHNICAL SHEET

Documentary

Year: 2024

Duration: 85 minutes

Country of production: Canada (Quebec)

Filming location: Canada (Quebec), Italy (Catane, Palerme, Castel Volturno, Rome)

Spoken language in the film: Italian, French, English

Subtitles: French, English, Italian

TEAM

Script and direction: Helen Doyle

Cinematography: Philippe Lavalette, Nathalie Moliavko-Visotzky

Editing: Annie Jean | Complementary editing: Denis Pilon

Sound recording, drone and underwater shots: Olivier Léger

Sound design and editing: Catherine Van Der Donckt

Mix: Bruno Bélanger

Special collaboration, photography: Elena Perlino (*Pipeline*)

Special collaboration, music and songs: Katia Makdissi-Warren, Daniela Fiorentino, Pier Mario Giovannone, Lise Massal, Martha Wainwright, Kate McGarrigle

Animation: Farzin Farzaneh, Linda Marie Bluteau (*Bluto*)

Production consultant: Nathalie Barton

Production: Germain Bonneau and Helen Doyle – Tatouages de la mémoire

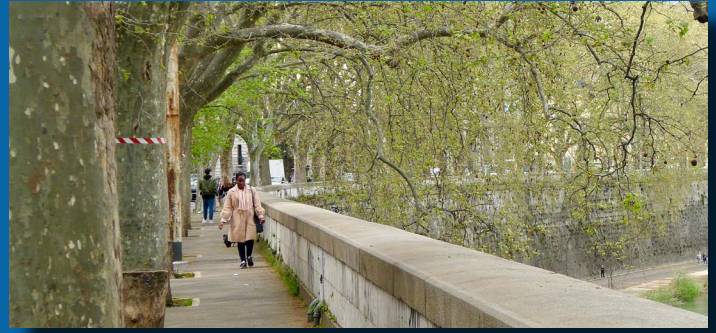
Distribution: SPIRA



STILLS



Stephanie, a few steps from the La casa di Maria shelter near Catania. In the background, Mount Etna.



Joy Ezekiel in Rome. Hailing from Benin City, she bravely escaped from her traffickers and found shelter at New Hope in Caserta (near Rome).



Carmela Comes. La casa di Maria foster home. Stephanie lived there for close to 2 years.



Sabrina Efonayi, author of *Addio, a domani – La mia incredibile storia vera*, in her hometown of Castel Volturno.



A Castel Volturno neighbourhood. “The Parco Saraceno complex was built thirty years ago as a residence for the U.S. Navy, but after they departed from Castel Volturno, it became sort of a deserted ghetto slated for demolition.”

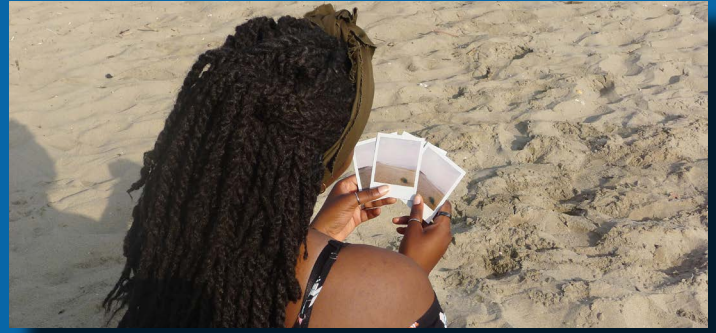


Alessandra Sciarba, Palermo. Worked on many innovative justice and resistance projects with local youth. We meet her in 2019 as she has just experienced a rescue at sea. Among others she wrote the memoir *Salvarsi insieme (Saving ourselves together)*.

STILLS



Sand animation by Marie-Linda Bluteau (Bluto): *Portrait of a young girl from Benin City.*



Sabrina examines the results of Polaroid pictures of the sea in Castel Volturno, while reflecting on all the people lost at sea.



Sand animation by Marie-Linda Bluteau (Bluto): *Story of Ulysses by Homer.*



Joy Ezekiel, still in Rome. Joy was able to study to become cultural studies, studies which she passed with flying colours.



Elena Perlino, photographer (*Pipeline*) – Palermo



Stephanie and performance artists Elena Rosa and Sara Firrarello in Catania. They dress up for the 'Ntuppatedde ritual on the occasion of the Feast of Sant'Agata on February 3rd.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

"The world lacks love, justice, beauty...".

Letizia Battaglia

What can I say about the genesis of the *After the Odyssey* project, a quest that began seven years ago, about a subject that often forced me to adapt, in the perpetual motion and transformation of migration? The pandemic cut off my momentum, but ultimately I couldn't give up, I couldn't remain silent, for the simple reason that I had seen!

Going to Sicily to visit photographer Letizia Battaglia, who fought proudly against the Mafia, was the trigger. I discovered a horrifying situation: the arrival of a large number of unaccompanied minors. While travelling in Europe, I had already noticed the presence of young men from all over and, naturally, I asked myself a question that later became an obsession: "Where are all the girls?" I learned of the existence of well-organized criminal networks. "In Italy, 80% of women subjected to sexual slavery now hail from Nigeria" read an article in *Le Monde diplomatique* (Mathilde Harel, November 2018).

From 2008 to 2014, photographer Elena Perlino, a regular at the *Rencontres de la photographie en Gaspésie*, travelled through Italy from north to south and documented the life of women in the grip of sexual exploitation. At around the same time *Ragazze di Benin City*, co-written by Isoke Aikpitanyi and reporter Laura Maragnani, was released.

Elena and Laura marked out my path, but when I began my quest in 2016, the situation had become more complex and the demand was growing for younger and younger girls...

Following several meetings, I chose the testimonies of three young girls. Stéphanie, the one who escapes trafficking thanks to the intervention of a few women upon her arrival. Joy, who falls into the clutches of the traffickers but who bravely flees and finds help. Finally, a second-generation tale, that of Sabrina Efionayi, who was determined to write and publish her own story.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Three stories that end well – a conscious choice. I'm aware that other women continue to suffer, still caught in the tentacles of traffickers... We must therefore not close our eyes to the unacceptable reality that is human trafficking.

During our journey – from Rome to Catania, from Castel Volturno to Palermo – I discovered what welcoming – making you feel welcome – truly meant through the initiatives of civil society and associations such as NewHope, Action Women, and BeFree. Italian women meet and welcome victims, listening to them and working hard with modest means to unleash the potential of these girls who arrive “shattered,” but with such vitality.

In Palermo – a place of resistance – author and activist Alessandra Sciorba embodies the leitmotif of my quest when she tells me, following a rescue at sea: “And they save us!”

These themes could be approached in a sensationalist, “victimizing” way, which I wanted to avoid at all costs. The same goes for angelism, which is equally problematic. There are plenty of pitfalls and traps when you tackle such sensitive subjects. Yet for all its seriousness, I wanted my documentary to be luminous, hopeful even.

When I see how some Italian women look at these girls, beyond a sense of sisterhood, I detect admiration, trust, but also humility. They offer a moment of respite, of encouragement, because they know that these are strong young girls with dreams, who can transform and enrich our societies.

For this project, I challenged myself to write in a poetic/political manner in order to direct not a hard-hitting film, but an invitation to collective reflection, a meaningful encounter between the Other and the Host, with a capital H for Human.

HELEN DOYLE - DIRECTOR



Photo credit © Livia Saavedra

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Independent writer and director Helen Doyle is one of the co-founders of the Quebec City collective Vidéo Femmes, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2023. She has directed and produced many powerful documentaries about women's issues over the years. In 2000, she founded her own production company – Tatouages de la mémoire. Her films have won many awards in Canada and abroad, notably *Soul Murmur* (2004), awarded at the FIFA, the Créteil Festival, and the Golden Sheaf Awards in Yorkton ; and *Frameworks* (2014), winner of the Best Canadian Film award at the FIFA, three Géméaux Awards, and one Étoile prize from SCAM. In 2008 she received the first Film Career Grant from the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (CALQ), and in 2009, a retrospective of her work was presented at the Cinémathèque québécoise. 2015 saw the release of the book/box set *Helen Doyle, cinéaste: La liberté de voir*, featuring several essays and four DVDs. *After the Odyssey* is her 14th medium- or feature-length film.

DISTRIBUTION

SPIRA is a cooperative devoted to independent filmmaking, born in 2015 from the merger of Spirafilm and Vidéo Femmes, which had both been around for nearly 40 years. Spira's core mission is to support the production and distribution of independent films, whether short or feature. Each year, about thirty works benefit from its various creation support programs, including its well-sought-after equipment rental program. SPIRA also distributes documentaries and fictions on various Canadian and foreign markets, including festivals, theatrical, television, the web, etc.

PRODUCTION

Founded in Longueuil (Quebec) in 2000 by writer-director Helen Doyle, the production company Tatouages de la mémoire borrows its name from the title of her 1985 film, which highlighted the poetic touches that have always graced her documentaries. Signs, marks, prints, scars, tattoos and memories are all mainstays of her work. Her partner, line producer Germain Bonneau, lends his talent and skills to the director for the production of her films and projects.

SPIRA ∞

TATOUAGES DE LA MÉMOIRE



CONTACTS

DISTRIBUTION:

Robin Miranda das Neves

SPIRA

distribution@spira.quebec

+1 418-523-1275

PRESS RELATIONS:

Caroline Rompré

pixelleX communications

caroline@pixellex.ca

+1 514-778-9294