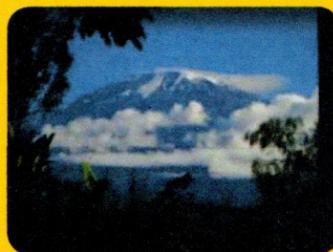


A Lot Like You: The Eli Kimaro Story



By Angela M. Peabody

In 1970, a baby girl is born in New York to a unique inter-racial couple, most especially the era in which her parents had been married. The father is from Tanzania in East Africa and the mother, from Korea in Asia. Mr. & Mrs. Kimaro called their little girl, Eliaichi.

Eli, short for Eliaichi is only 3-months old when the family moves to Tanzania and Mr. Kimaro gets a job at the University of Dar Es Salaam, the capital of Tanzania. But long before Eli begins her puberty years, her father lands a position at the International Monetary Fund and her mother at the World Bank in Washington, D.C. Both of Eli's parents are economists. The couple packs their bags and move their little girl back to the United States, where they set up a home in the Bethesda-Rockville, Maryland area, a Washington, D.C. suburban community.

Eli grows up in the western culture, though her parents teach her about their individual cultural backgrounds. She attends secondary school in the Washington, D.C. area, as she develops into a curious young lady. Eli goes off to college and begins to shape her own life and what she wants for herself. She becomes fascinated with photography and filmmaking.

Eliaichi decides to search her roots, as she traces her father's footsteps back to Mt. Kilimanjaro, where she discovers the beauty and brutality of the life he left behind. As she searches for her identity, she discovers that the very thing that she battles against as a community activist in the U.S., including sexual

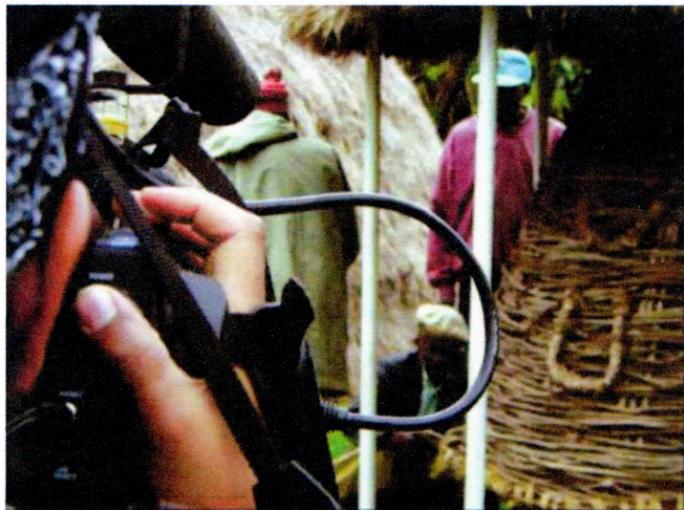
and domestic violence is part of her own history and culture on another continent.

"I had known about female genital mutilation and that it happened. I was an activist and in 2007, there was a large influx of East Africans to Seattle during the time I lived there. Women wanted Seattle hospitals to perform circumcision on their daughters. Feminists began to bring about awareness to it." Eli tells me in a private conversation about her film.

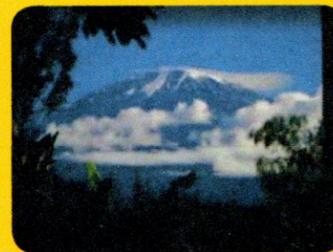
Though Eli has had some exposure to the knowledge of female genital cutting, she is in for a big surprise when she discovers that it is an old practice in her own paternal family. She meets her paternal aunts in Kilimanjaro, where she asks them to be included in her film. Her aunts begin to tell their childhood stories about how they had been cut as little girls and unwillingly married off to men twice their ages.

The 80-minute film is riveting and astounding. "The truce in this film resonates with me. It speaks about who I am as a human being". Eli continues in our conversation. Her aunts are in their 80's now and they have never shared their stories with anyone prior to the film. Eli is captivated by their stories and so am I as I listen to Eli and later watch the unedited DVD she has sent me for review.

"Their beliefs are to the core of their beings. Their belief is that you're going through the right of passage to adulthood. They had wanted to be grown ups and make their parents proud; they had wanted to be marriageable, according to their tradition", tells Eli about her aunts.



Photos provided by Eli Kimaro Film Company



Eli is passionate about the film and it shows in the footages, as she narrates the story in her own voice; you hear the voices of her maternal family and those of her paternal family, as you read the subtitles in English. Eli expects all public libraries, community centers and wherever people are hungry to see this story to have it available. She has entered it in film festivals. For a first time filmmaker, Eli does an excellent job with the narration and the production.

What inspired her to make the film? Eli says, "I was driving to work in the summer time, listening to Angelique Kidjo's song. The song took me back to Tanzania; as I looked out the window, I had a vision about telling my children about my childhood experience.

Eli has a 4-year old daughter, Lucy. She understands why she has to tell the stories of her aunts and other relatives. She wants her daughter to have access to that information. She wants to honor her aunts' stories. "I will not let their stories get swept under the rug. Stories are the core of activism. Get stories out from the voices of the people", she says.

A Lot Like You is a film that is highly recommended for every woman and man alike to see. The story gives you a different insight on the unexpected manner in which our lives are webbed together.

For more information on this film or to obtain a copy of the DVD, visit www.alotlikeyoumovie.com or write to info@alotlikeyoumovie.com.