RESISTANCE: the battle of philadelphia



A web series by M. Asli Dukan



ABOUT THE PRODUCTION SYNOPSIS:

Resistance: the battle of philadelphia is a six-part, short-form, speculative fiction web series about a clandestine collective of residents who mobilize to resist the pervasive surveillance and the repressive state violence of a powerful corporate government in a near future Philadelphia.

Inspired by films like Lizzie Borden's *Born in Flames* (1983), Ivan Dixon/Sam Greenlee's *The Spook Who Sat By The Door* (1973) and Gillo Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers* (1967), the series also subverts the dystopian genre to construct a complex and historically rich narrative about the struggle for justice and liberation.



TREATMENT:

Set in a near future West Philadelphia where militarized police, surveillance technology and security agents managed by an ominous entity called Cornega Corporation are a constant threat, *Resistance: tbop* follows five characters who unite to resist state violence in their community. The story is told in a nonlinear set of episodes which weave together the narrative.

Episode 1: The Lioness, 6:36 min, HD, color

Akewi, is a poet and graduate student on scholarship. One morning, after awakening from a nightmare in which she is shot, she reads about a possible ambush of a Cornega agent. Later after she argues with her boyfriend, Lester, about participating in an illegal protest in Center City, their home is raided by agents and Akewi is arrested. A flashback shows Akewi performing an inspiring poem at an illegal poetry reading, in the audience are Kurtis, Crystal and Zam.

Episode 2: The Hawk, 6:25 min, HD, color

Zam, a hacker, receives an audio message from a mysterious old woman challenging her to use her "gift". Later, while Zam recites her poem at the reading, a surveillance drone threatens the event. Zam and Akewi run away and discuss the checkpoint murder of resident, Angela Keene and their options for resisting further state violence. On a dead-end street, Kurtis watches as a Cornega agent climbs stairs to a secluded footbridge.

Episode 3: The Bear, 6:47 min, HD, color

Kurtis, a transit worker, is managing a trolley portal when he notices a mysterious old woman watching him. Zam appears and begins a conversation with him about justice for Angela Keene. Afterwards Kurtis nervously performs his first poem at the reading. Later, Kurtis engages with the Cornega agent on the footbridge, then leaves. The agent falls toward the ground. Kurtis approaches a parked car where an edgy Crystal is waiting for him.

Episode 4: The Chameleon, 6:35 min, HD, color

Crystal and her daughter Briana are at a Rainbow Center office, as she unsuccessfully tries to renew her health insurance with her case worker, Lester. When she gets home, she encounters Zam on her porch, who offers to help her, in exchange for help. Afterwards, Crystal recites a poem at the reading about the hardships in her life. Later, Crystal, in disguise, steals a car from off the street.

Episode 5: Mother Adu, 6:33 min, HD, color

The mysterious old woman, Mother Adu, shows up uninvited to Crystal and Briana's home. After an argument, Crystal is intrigued that Adu may know her fugitive mother. Elsewhere, Zam enters Jade House where activists argue about the action against the Cornega agent. When Kurtis joins them, he begs them to stay unified, while Zam encourages them to fight for a better world. Suddenly, a smoke grenade is thrown through a window. Jade House is under attack.

Episode 6: Umoja Academy, 6:53 min, HD, color

A beaten but defiant Akewi is interrogated by Detective Frank, who demands information from her about the action against the Cornega agent. He seems surprised when he is interrupted with a message that Akewi has been cleared to leave. Outside, Akewi is picked up by Lester, who hides a surveillance mic as he talks to her. Elsewhere, Mother Adu, Crystal and Briana arrive at Umoja Academy. Crystal gets a text message from Zam about the raid at Jade House.



ABOUT THE CAST



JENNIFER KIDWELL as "Zam"

Jennifer Kidwell is a performing artist. Her recent projects include *Underground Railroad Game* (FringeArts, Ars Nova fall 2016), *Antigone* (The Wilma Theater), *I Understand Everything Better* (David Neumann/advanced beginner group), *Demolishing Everything with Amazing Speed* (Dan Hurlin), *I Promised Myself to Live Faster and 99 Break-Ups* (Pig Iron Theatre Company), *Dick's Last Stand* (Whitney Biennial 2014, as Donelle Woolford) and *Zinnias: the Life of Clementine Hunter* (Robert Wilson/Toshi Reagon/Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon). She has also had the opportunity to work with The Public Theater, 600 Highwaymen & Hoi Polloi (NYC) as well as with Orbiter 3 and The Bearded Ladies Cabaret (Philly). She is a co-artistic director of the theater company Lightning Rod Special as well as a Wilma Theatre Associated Artist (Philadelphia) and a co-founder of JACK (Brooklyn). Her writing has been published in movement research Performance Journal #45 and hyperallergic.com. In 2013 she was awarded the TCG/Fox Resident Actor Fellowship (with PITC) and is a 2016 Pew Fellow.

LINDSAY SMILING as "Kurtis"

Lindsay Smiling is thrilled to be back on the Wilma stage where he most recently appeared in *Blood Wedding, Passing Strange* and *Passaage*. Mr. Smiling has performed Off-Broadway and at many regional theaters including: InterAct, Arden Theatre Co., Shakespeare Theatre of NJ, Theatre Exile, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Milwaukee Rep., Syracuse Stage, Walnut Street Theatre, People's Light and Theatre Co., Pittsburgh Public, Two River Theatre, Victory Gardens, ACT, Dorset Theater Festival, Human Race Theatre, Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Mixed Blood Theater, Bristol Riverside Theatre, Ensemble Studio Theater, Lantern Theater Co, and Shakespeare on the Sound. He is a proud Wilma HotHouse Company member.



KENNEDY ALLEN as "Akewi"

Kennedy Allen is an actor, podcaster, writer, freelance journalist, sci-fi/comic book nerd, baseball fan, and cat mom. Born and raised in Philadelphia, Kennedy comes from an acting background with separate emphases on Shakespeare and improvised theatre. She co-produces and hosts the award-winning weekly podcast Black Tribbles, which enabled several opportunities, including a year-long contribution to Philadelphia Weekly, her participation in the 17th Annual Arturo Schomburg Symposium, and her hosting of events such as the 3rd Annual Afro Futurist Affair and the WINS 30th Anniversary Luncheon & Award Ceremony of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University. In her spare time, Kennedy, a.k.a., Storm Tribble, can be found pondering the lack of diversity in comics, chipping away at that sci-fi novel that's taking her forever to write, and training for her next Spartan Race.

DOMINIQUE LONDON



DAQUAN WRIGHT



LORETTA GRAHAM



BRIANA HORN



JOS DUNCAN



DAVE DOUGHERTY



STEVE CLARKSON



TYLER COHEN

FULL CAST

Jennifer Kidwell as "Zam" Lindsay Smiling as "Kurtis" Kennedy Allen as "Akewi" Dominique London as "Crystal" Loretta Graham as "Mother Adu" Daguan Wright as "Lester" Jos Duncan as "Sister Carol" Briana Horn as "Briana" Dave Dougherty as "Detective Frank" Steve Clarkson as "Agent Wilson" Tyler Cohen as "Yelling Agent" Erin Aja Grant as "House Comrade #1" Alex Wiles as "House Comrade #2" Kima Baffour as "House Comrade #3" Tanya Jackson as "Body-Angela Keene"



FULL CREW

Director|Producer|Writer: M. Asli Dukan Producer: Sara Zia Ebrahimi **Executive Producer: Anissa Weinraub Writer: Alex Smith** Director of Photography: Aidan Un **Assistant Camera: Marie Alarcon Sound Boom: Fred Schmidt-Arenales Wardrobe Designer: Kima Baffour** SFX&MU|Hair: Mary Arlynda Williams Set Decorator: Tanya Jackson Gaffer|Grip: Bryan Oliver Green Sound Designer Sound: Jeffrey Bethea **VFX Designer: Jose Mazariegos Theme Composer: John Morrison** Editor: M. Asli Dukan **Catering Craft Services: Dorine Horn** Production Assistant: Melissa de Leon **Production Assistant: Noel Quiles Production Assistant: Gabe Castro Production Assistant: Petra Floyd**

ABOUT THE PRODUCERS

CREATOR | PRODUCER | DIRECTOR | WRITER | EDITOR

M. Asli Dukan is a filmmaker and visual artist who subverts the genres of speculative fiction (SF) as a way to explore the possibility of the transformation of society. She has written, produced and directed nearly a dozen short films, several that have screened in festivals around the country including most recently, the BlackStar Film Festival in Philadelphia. In 2017, her mixed-media installation, "Resistance Time Portal", which centered Black radicalism in a futuristic narrative, made its debut in the Distance #Time exhibition, co-presented by Philadelphia's Black Quantum Futurism collective. She has been the recipient of several grants, awards and fellowships, including an Art and Change Grant and the Transformation Award from the Leeway Foundation in 2016. The same year, she was named an NBPC 360 Fellow by Black Public Media and in 2018, she was named a Flaherty Seminar Fellow. Her newest project, Resistance: the battle of philadelphia, is a six-part, SF web series about a community's struggle against state violence. She is in post-production on Invisible Universe, a feature length documentary about Black creators in the genres of SF and in development on the anthology horror film, Skin Folk, based on the book by the award-winning SF writer, Nalo Hopkinson.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

"Resistance: the battle of philadelphia, is an attempt to make a politically adept and socially relevant near future web series, steeped in the futuristic mechanisms of speculative fiction, but essentially about the world we live in today. More and more, our society teeters on the edge of a structural implosion - driven by white supremacy and plutocratic forces who continue to appropriate more of the resources, power and the future from the commons. But even in the face of this pending calamity, historically marginalized populations are stepping forward and putting themselves on the line, to reclaim their humanity and their human rights. From Black Lives Matter, to the Water Protectors, to the New Sanctuary, Me Too and Not One Movements, people across the country are speaking truth to power and are taking action to make transformative changes in their lives and in the world.

Essentially, this is the core of the Resistance web series. Originating from the traditional science fiction proposition of, "What If?", the story makes a jump 15 or so years into the future and ponders the idea of what would it look like if a group of residents in one community decide to build a different future for themselves, in the face of insurmountable odds? And what if these people are different from how we usually experience this type of narrative? What if they are women, people of color, queer, immigrant, poor and/or working class? What if they are the protagonists through which we experience the story? What if they got to make decisions about how the future could and should change? What would this look like as an independently produced web series? Inspired in tone, theme, style and politics by films like Born in Flames (1983), The Spook Who Sat By The Door (1973) and The Battle of Algiers (1967), Resistance: the battle of philadelphia, is simultaneously a familiar narrative and something radically different."



PRODUCER

Sara Zia Ebrahimi is a digital media maker, curator and producer working primarily in short film, web series and streamed media formats. An MFA graduate of Temple University, her own work uses humor to weave together the personal with the political and show the interconnection between national/international policy decisions and individual lives. As a producer and community curator, she brings together and produces work that centers women, immigrants, and people of color and helps widen the spectrum of representation of marginalized communities. Her recent work includes The FBI Blew Up My Ice Skates (writer and co-director), Remember When: a collection of short films capturing the intersections of girlhood (co-curator) and Recurrence Plot: The Family Circle (producer) and Resistance: the battle of philadelphia (producer). By day she works as the Program Director at the Leeway Foundation, which supports women, trans and gender nonconforming artists using their art as a tool for social change. Her previous positions have included working as a Community Engagement Coordinator for Independent Television Service (ITVS) and as the Director of Development at Bread & Roses Community Fund.

8 Q&As ABOUT RESISTANCE: THE BATTLE OF PHILADELPHIA

1. What inspired you to produce this series?

As the show's créator and director, I was primarily inspired by three films when I decided to produce this web series. The queer, feminist, woman-of-color led near future film, Born in Flames (1983) by Lizzie Borden; The CIA agent turned Black radical leader speculative film, The Spook Who Sat By the Door (1973) by Ivan Dixon based on the book by Sam Greenlee; and, the docu-styled revolutionary reenactment from the Algerian struggle for independence, The Battle of Algiers (1967) by Gillo Pontecorvo. I wanted to use these inspirations to create something new, something that spoke to my own reality. I wanted to produce a futuristic and radical web series.

2. Why do you call it speculative fiction, instead of science fiction?

I believe that science fiction originated as a white supremacist narrative genre. Instead of calling my work science fiction, I am more interested in using a term that has the potential to be transformative and that addresses and confronts the nature of the genre. Speculative Fiction is a phrase that has meant many different things over the years in the genre's community. I think it is an adequate term for what I have always tried to do, without the

3. Why is the story set in West Philadelphia?

problematic historical baggage attached to it.

West Philadelphia has a distinctive history of police brutality (e.g., the MOVE Bombing) but also has a consistent history of Black resistance to police abuse and other state violence. I wanted to make reference to this history and imagine a story where similar issues are happening in the future but with outcomes that are much different than what has been experienced in history. It is basically a "What if?" story. What if marginalized people fought back against state repression and were in a position to transform their realities?

4. What was it like working with actors with different levels of acting experience?
It was both amazing to work with award-winning theatre actors, as well as with my 10 year old niece in her debut role. I have been a self-funded filmmaker for almost 20 years now, so while I'd love to always work with experienced actors, by the very nature of the kind of budgets I work within - a lot of my films have included so-called amateur talent. On another level, there is a certain type of artistic challenge and reward in approaching people with no formal acting background and work with them in my films, based on my gut-feeling of a successful outcome.

5. How did you raise the money to produce the web series?
The production funding, which eventually amounted to about \$15,000 came from various sources. Initially, I used some funds that I received from a cash award from the Leeway Foundation to go into development and then preproduction. Later, I brought on another producer and we began an online fundraiser on GoFundMe.com to raise the budgeted amount. We raised \$9000 through this online mechanism through small donations from contributors, as well as through a couple of real-time fundraisers and a post-production grant we received from the Scribe Video Center based in Philadelphia. I invested the remaining balance myself as one of the projects producers.

6. You've produced and directed numerous short films. How is the process different and similar from a web series? I feel like I did a lot more preparation around the story when I decided to do the web series. Each episode had to tie into the other episodes for it to really feel like a serial work. Each episode had to end more or less in a cliffhanger to make audiences interested in coming back for the next installment. I also thought about distribution and marketing in a different way than I have for my one-off short films in the past. I feel like I spent more time building the audience for it and branding it as a product that may eventually come back for another season in the future. Ultimately, I felt more engaged with it as a product than I have in the past with my other short films.

7. You've mentioned that this project was a community endeavor. Who are the people/organizations that you worked with to produce this web series?

Behind the camera, I worked with several artists and media professionals that I have met since I moved to Philadelphia from New York City. They are writers, visual artists, music producers, videographers and other

filmmakers. These are people who are making their own work and are really engaged with the artistic communities in Philadelphia, like Sara Zia Ebrahimi, Alex Smith, Jeffrey Bethea and Jose Mazariegos. In front of the camera, I worked with some highly experienced and talented actors, some I knew beforehand, like Jennifer Kidwell and Kennedy Allen, and others I met in the process like Lindsay Smiling. I must also mention that I received great support from several community organizations and venues like BorrowLenses.com, All Ages Productions, One Art Community Center, Media Mobilizing Project and the Paul Robeson House. It was fantastic to work with folk with such a wide range of talent, skills and resources on this production.

8. Who is the audience for your web series? I think the audience for this project are the people who are imagining and working to build a transformed world.



SERIES TESTIMONIALS

"AWESOME AWESOME! I love the concept, story, mood, tone. It's very well produced. You and your team have done a great job."

- Ayoka Chenzira, Director: Hair Piece, Alma's Rainbow, Queen Sugar



SERIES SPECIFICATIONS

Season/Year of Production: Season 1/2018
Country of Production: United States

Language: English (American)

Genre: speculative fiction, dystopian, afrofuturism

Runtime: 40 minutes total (6 episodes)

Format: HD

Aspect Ratio: 16x9
Sound Mix: Stereo

WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA

WEBSITE: resistanceseries.com

FACEBOOK: facebook.com/resistanceseries TWITTER: twitter.com/ResistanceTBOP

INSTAGRAM: instagram.com/resistanceseries

MEDIA: vimeo.com/album/5136281 (please request password)

#thebattleofphilly

#theresistancesooncome



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