

Charlie Toko
Displaced

Bush Theatre Protest Series

When I was young, my grandfather sat me down and told me about my history.

He spoke of that day, 30th of June, 1960, as the Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba stood before the people and said, let this day be engraved in your hearts. A date that you would explain to your children so that they might in turn relate to their grandchildren and great grandchildren the glorious victory in our struggle for freedom. On that day of independence, that was the dream.

I remember that conversation like it was yesterday. I remember his face, how proud he was to share with me this story. He said how for a moment, the future was full of hope and potential. Freedom was the cry that resonated throughout the land. And then the monsters came. And the vision was aborted before it had even begun.

Seven million people have been displaced by funded rebel armies. Children have died. Mothers have cried. And yet no major alarm is raised. The world is silent.

The DRC. My people, my community, my country.

It was late at night. I was inside the house when all of a sudden there was a lot of noise. The river was upset. We tried to run, but a house fell on us. And the next thing I know, I was in the hospital. They told me my father and my siblings had passed away.

I'm alone as you see me now. I carry nothing from my home. There was a market in my village that was always busy with people buying and selling. All those people have disappeared. Do you know what it's like to have to run for your life and not know where you're running? When anywhere is safer than home?

Before the war, we lived a good life before they came. And now, because we are displaced, everything has changed. And our children will know nothing of how things used to be. All I'm asking is that you stop supporting the rebels with your smartphones and your cars. We won't be in your news bulletins tonight.

We won't be in the papers tomorrow. We are the people of the forgotten war.

Credits:

Written and director: Charlie Toko
Cinematography and editing: Murray Cohen
Sound: Calum Bentley
Performer: Terique Jarrett

End slide reads:

Bush Theatre Protest Series

We believe the connection between art and protest is vital.
The Bush Theatre's Protest series is a platform for artists to shed light on injustices that persist in our world.
bushtheatre.co.uk/protest