

T H E R E ' S O N E C H I L D H E M U S T F I N D



"VISUAL POETRY"  
SFFILM

# THE RESCUE LIST

A FILM BY  
ALYSSA FEDELE & ZACHARY FINK



A COLLECTIVE HUNCH PRODUCTION  
**THE RESCUE LIST** DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY **ZACHARY FINK** MUSIC BY **WILLIAM RYAN FRITCH** EDITED BY **ALYSSA FEDELE** AND **DAVIS COOMBE**  
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER **JOHN DEGRAFT SAM** CONSULTING PRODUCER **SARA DOSA** CO-PRODUCER **ALISON GREENBERG MILLICE** CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCER **JOHN CAULKINS**  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER **STEVE JAMES** PRODUCED BY **DAVIS COOMBE** EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS FOR AMERICAN DOCUMENTARY - POV **JUSTINE NAGAN** AND **CHRIS WHITE**  
PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY **ALYSSA FEDELE** AND **ZACHARY FINK**



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TUNE IN OR STREAM

# THE RESCUE LIST

PRESS KIT

MONDAY, MARCH 23 @10PM 



Directed By  
Alyssa Fedele & Zachary Fink

**79 min - USA - 2018**

In English, Twi, Fante, Effutu, Ewe, Ada, Ga

## WEB

[www.therescuelist.com](http://www.therescuelist.com)

[www.facebook.com/therescuelist](https://www.facebook.com/therescuelist)

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## OFFICIAL SELECTION

San Francisco International Film Festival  
Full Frame Documentary Film Festival  
DocLands Film Festival  
Mountainfilm Telluride  
Black Star International Film Festival  
BendFilm Festival  
Heartland International Film Festival  
Denver Film Festival  
DOC NYC Film Festival  
Big Sky Documentary Film Festival  
Greater Farmington Film Festival  
Sebastopol Documentary Film Festival  
Ashland Independent Film Festival

## AWARDS

Best Documentary Award - BendFilm Festival  
Richard D. Propes Social Impact Award - Heartland International Film Festival  
James Blue Award - Ashland Independent Film Festival

## SALES CONTACT

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## LOGLINE

In a hidden safehouse in Ghana, social workers help two children recover from a childhood enslaved to fishermen. But their story takes an unexpected turn when their rescuer embarks on another rescue mission and asks the children for help.

## SYNOPSIS

In a hidden safehouse in the Ghanaian forest, social workers help two children recover from a childhood enslaved to fishermen on Lake Volta - the largest man-made lake on Earth. But their story takes an unexpected turn when their rescuer embarks on another rescue mission and asks the children for help. *The Rescue List* charts the unfolding drama of these rescue operations alongside a stirring portrait of the boys' recoveries as they prepare to return to their families. The film depicts a moving story of friendship and courage that transcends the trope of victimhood, exploring what it means to love and to survive.

## STORY

In a hidden safehouse in the Ghanaian forest, social workers help two children recover from a childhood enslaved to fishermen on Lake Volta - the largest man-made lake on Earth. But their story takes an unexpected turn when their rescuer embarks on another rescue mission and asks the children for help.

Haunted by the memory of his friend who disappeared on the lake, twelve year old Edem is reluctant to talk about his experience. Meanwhile, seventeen year old Peter is burdened by a sense of responsibility to help his best friend, who is still enslaved to their master on the lake. When Kwame, their rescuer, announces that his team is setting off on another rescue mission and needs the children's help, Peter seizes the opportunity, setting in motion a journey that will change the boys' lives forever.

*The Rescue List* charts the unfolding drama of these rescue operations alongside a stirring portrait of the boys' recoveries as they prepare to return to their families. The film depicts a moving story of friendship and courage that transcends the trope of victimhood, exploring what it means to love and to survive.



## FILMMAKER STATEMENT

Several years ago, we met a Ghanaian man who told us his story of being trafficked into modern slavery as a child. He described enduring six years enslaved to fishermen who forced him to work on fishing boats on Lake Volta in Ghana. Eventually, he managed to escape, return home, and start kindergarten at age 13. As an adult, he assembled a courageous grassroots team to rescue and reunite trafficked children with their families.

His story shocked us and the statistics staggered us. Today, there are more than 45 million people enslaved worldwide, including over 18,000 children enslaved on Lake Volta alone. Despite its prevalence, human trafficking and modern slavery remain a hidden issue. Traffickers operate in the shadows of society, preying on economically and socially disadvantaged populations around the world. In part, it is the invisibility of modern slavery that allows it to persist.

As our relationship with the rescue team developed, we felt that we had a unique opportunity to shine a light on this issue through their work.

From the beginning, we wanted to empower the children in our film by telling the story from their perspectives, but it was of critical importance to us that their recoveries be paramount. We decided to make the film observationally. Our film intimately follows Peter and Edem as they work to recover from their trauma, viscerally portraying our protagonists' day-to-day lives in recovery, rather than focusing on their past. By bearing witness to their daily lives, we sought to provide the children with a forum to tell their own stories through their words and actions. We found that this process of following the action, and telling the story through slow disclosure, conveyed the children's gaps in memory and knowledge of what happened to them, while also revealing the steadfast friendships that enabled them to survive - something we had not expected. Through this observational process of discovery, authentic themes emerged: friendship, belonging, and survival. These themes are human universals that we all identify with and experience. We believe that character-driven stories like these humanize issues of global importance, moving audiences through the power of this universal connection.

Our observational approach is guided by our backgrounds in ethnographic filmmaking and our commitment to cross-cultural understanding. As outsiders to this community, we endeavored to understand the complexity of this human rights issue from a culturally relative point of view and to reflect that in the film. It was not our intention to villainize anyone, but rather to reveal the circumstances that create an environment in which children are exploited. We worked as a small three person team, embedded in the community, and immersed in our participants' daily lives. Collaboration, reciprocity, and trust lay at the heart of our process. This allowed us to build strong relationships with our participants and create a film grounded in respect and understanding. By taking this approach, we witnessed a moving story of friendship, courage, and belonging that transcends the trope of victimhood, and shows us what it truly means to love and survive. We hope that audiences connect with the individuals in our film on a personal level, and come away with a better understanding of the complexity of trafficking, as well as a sense of hope for the future.

- Alyssa Fedele & Zachary Fink, Directors, The Rescue List



## CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

### KWAME

Kwame, a commanding and charismatic man in his thirties, surveys the horizon from the bow of a large wooden canoe, navigating the vast waters of Ghana's Lake Volta – the largest man-made lake on Earth. He directs the captain past a swath of ancient trees rising from the lake's surface, and towards a small canoe paddled by two young boys. As they draw near, Kwame begins his practiced and patient line of investigation: *Where are your parents? Do you go to school? Would you feel safer if I took you away from here?* Kwame is part of a local team dedicated to rescuing and rehabilitating children who have been trafficked and enslaved to fishermen on Lake Volta. As the story progresses from rescue operation to rehabilitation shelter, Kwame reveals his deeply personal connection to this work.

### PETER

Peter, a kind and courageous seventeen year old, joins his new friends at the shelter to do laundry by hand in five-gallon buckets. As they wash and chat, Peter says he's happy to be rescued, but admits he is worried about his friends who are still enslaved on the lake, especially his best friend Teye. "I want the rescuers to go back and bring him here," Peter says. When their rescuer, Kwame, shows up at the shelter to ask the children for the names of other enslaved children, Peter seizes the opportunity, setting in motion a journey that changes the boys' lives forever.

### EDEM

In the shelter's classroom, children eagerly recite their ABCs; all except one. Edem, chin tucked and face solemn, is too distracted to participate. Despite being rescued from slavery months earlier, Edem is overcome with grief. For years, Edem worked with another enslaved child who became his protector and best friend. But one day, the child disappeared. Without him, Edem was terrified and heartbroken. Social workers believe that Edem's shyness and lack of focus in school are signs that he is wrestling deeply with the disappearance of his friend. As they coax him to reveal the truth of his friend's fate, they also search for a way for Edem to come to terms with this trauma in order to heal and move forward - which he must do in order to be reunited with his mother.



## FILMMAKER BIOS

### **ALYSSA FEDELE – DIRECTOR, PRODUCER**

Alyssa Fedele is a documentary filmmaker and anthropologist based in San Francisco. Alyssa directed and edited *The Rescue List*, which screened at Full Frame and DOC NYC and won awards at Bend Film and Heartland International Film Festival. *The Rescue List* will broadcast on POV in 2020. She produced and edited *The Ride of Their Lives (2016)*, a short documentary directed by Steve James, about competitive youth rodeo bull riding. It premiered at Sundance and is distributed by Amazon Studios in the series *The New Yorker Presents*. Alyssa's work has appeared on National Geographic Channel, Amazon Studios, ARTE, and PBS, and has screened at Sundance, IDFA, Full Frame, and DOC NYC. Alyssa has a master's degree in visual anthropology from the University of Manchester.

### **ZACHARY FINK – DIRECTOR, PRODUCER**

Zachary Fink is a documentary filmmaker and cinematographer. His immersive observational approach to storytelling is deeply influenced by his academic roots in cultural anthropology and visual ethnography. He recently lensed Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman's SXSW opening night premiere, *State Of Pride*, which takes an unflinching look at the diverse expression of Pride 50 years after Stonewall. Last year he spent a month at McMurdo Station in Antarctica where he shot a forthcoming PBS NOVA series about how science is conducted on the harshest continent. In 2016, Zachary produced and filmed *The Ride Of Their Lives*, a short directed by Steve James about youth rodeo bull riding. It premiered at Sundance as part of the Amazon Studios series, *The New Yorker Presents*. His work has appeared on PBS, HBO, National Geographic Channel, and Discovery Channel. Zachary has a master's degree in cultural anthropology and an MFA in film production from California Institute of the Arts. Together with Alyssa Fedele, he runs the production company Collective Hunch.

### **DAVIS COOMBE – PRODUCER, EDITOR**

Davis Coombe is an award winning editor, producer, and writer. His two most recent films, *Casting JonBenet* and *Chasing Coral* premiered at Sundance in 2017, where *Chasing Coral* won the audience award for best documentary. Both films were acquired by NETFLIX. Davis produced and edited *Saving Face*, which won the Oscar for Best Short Documentary in 2012. He also edited *Chasing Ice*, which premiered at Sundance in 2012 and was shortlisted for an Academy award. He co-produced, co-wrote, and edited *Being Evel*, which premiered at Sundance and broadcast on History Channel. Davis co-wrote and edited *Keep On Keepin' On* and *Beyond the Brick: A Lego Brickumentary*, both films premiered at the 2014 Tribeca Film Festival. In 2013 he won two national Emmys for Editing and Best Documentary at the News and Documentary Emmys. In 2009 he shot, edited and produced *The Last Campaign of Governor Booth Gardner* which was nominated for an Academy Award and broadcast on HBO. Coombe also edited *Iron Ladies of Liberia* (Toronto Film Festival 2007, Winner AFI-Dallas, Independent Lens, BBC), *They Killed Sister Dorothy* (Winner Audience Award and Grand Jury Prize at SXSW 2008, HBO, shortlisted for an Academy Award).

**WILLIAM RYAN FRITCH - COMPOSER**

William Ryan Fritch is a composer, multi-instrumentalist and producer based in the San Francisco Bay Area. He has scored and contributed music to numerous award-winning documentary and narrative films; including recently the 2016 Academy Award nominated documentary "4.1 Miles." His music has been featured in films, shows and miniseries for Netflix, HBO, Amazon, AMC, CBS, IFC, Showtime, Discovery, and PBS as well as for numerous dance and theatre productions, art installations and in national ad campaigns and PSA's. In addition to his commissioned multimedia work, he has an active recording career, releasing more than 30 albums of his unique amalgam of Folk, Contemporary Classical, and Experimental music. His distinct, organic sound is the product of his diverse talents as an instrumentalist and recordist, utilizing a vast and varied arsenal of live, acoustic instrumentation to fully realize his compositions and scores as a solo endeavor.

**STEVE JAMES – EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

Steve James produced and directed *Hoop Dreams*, winner of every major critics prize including a Peabody and Robert F. Kennedy Award. Other award-winning films include *Stevie*, winner of the IDFA Grand Jury Prize and the Yamagata Mayor's Prize, among others; the Independent Documentary Association Award-winning miniseries *The New Americans*; Tribeca Grand Prize winner *The War Tapes*, which James produced and edited; *At the Death House Door*, co-directed with Peter Gilbert, and winner of numerous festival awards; *No Crossover: The Trial of Allen Iverson* for ESPN's Peabody winning "30 for 30" series; and *The Interrupters*, which won an Emmy, Independent Spirit Award, and the DuPont Columbia Journalism Award, among many others. James recent documentary on film critic Roger Ebert, *Life Itself*, premiered to critical acclaim at Sundance and was named the best documentary of the year by over a dozen critics associations, and won the Rotten Tomatoes Golden Apple Award as the best reviewed documentary of 2014. It also won the best documentary award from the Critic's Choice Awards, The National Board of Review, and The Producers Guild of America. James' most recent documentary *Abacus: Small Enough to Jail* was nominated for a 2018 Academy Award for best feature documentary.



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### MODERN SLAVERY

Despite the fact that slavery was abolished by most countries 150 years ago, there are more than 45 million people trapped in modern slavery today. One in four of these is a child. *Modern slavery is a human rights violation that is defined as the recruitment, movement, harboring or receiving of children, women or men through the use of force, coercion, abuse of vulnerability, deception or other means for the purpose of exploitation.* Farming, fishing, mining, domestic servitude, sex work, manual labor, and factory work are among the most prevalent forms of modern slavery.

In Ghana, where *The Rescue List* takes place, there are 100,000 people living in modern slavery. Of these, 18,000 are children enslaved to fishermen on Lake Volta. Many of the children are trafficked into modern slavery by families living in extreme poverty who believe they are sending their children to a better life.

### LAKE VOLTA

In 1965, shortly after Ghana's independence from Great Britain, the World Bank, the UK, and the United States (including the American corporations Kaiser Aluminum and Reynolds Aluminum) funded the construction of the Akosombo Hydroelectric Dam on the Volta River in Ghana. The main goal of the dam was to power the aluminum industry and spur economic growth. The dam created Lake Volta. Spanning 3,000 square miles in the central region of Ghana, Lake Volta is the largest man-made lake on Earth.

While the Akosombo Hydroelectric Dam Project was sold as "the largest single investment in the economic plans of Ghana," the flooding of the Volta River Basin forced the relocation of 80,000 people from 700 villages. This loss of land resulted in the dismantling of the region's primary economic practices from riparian fishing and agriculture.

Meanwhile, coastal fishermen began moving inland to the lake to fish for tilapia, establishing a direct connection between southern seaside communities and remote villages forming on the shores of Lake Volta. It is through these connections that traffickers now move children from seaside towns, inland to the lake, where they are sold to fishermen for slave labor.

Traffickers target economically disadvantaged families, often single mothers struggling to meet their family's basic needs, and coerce them to send their children to the lake where they say they will receive food and clothing, and attend school in exchange for helping out with fishing activities. The traffickers offer a small sum of money in exchange for the child, typically around \$20 US dollars. They are often deceptive about how long the child will be away, promising that the child will return home in a few month's time.

In fact, these children are separated from their families and enslaved indefinitely on the lake, far from their hometowns, with no means of communication or escape. They are fed and clothed minimally, withheld from school, and forced to work long days on fishing boats, setting and pulling in nets. Many children endure physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. It is in this socio-political context that *The Rescue List* is set.



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## PRESS KIT



### CREDITS (abbreviated)

**directors**

ALYSSA FEDELE  
ZACHARY FINK

**producers**

ALYSSA FEDELE  
ZACHARY FINK  
DAVIS COOMBE

**executive producer**

STEVE JAMES

**co-executive producer**

JOHN CAULKINS

**cinematographer**

ZACHARY FINK

**editors**

ALYSSA FEDELE  
DAVIS COOMBE

**composer**

WILLIAM RYAN FRITCH

**co-producer**

ALISON GREENBERG MILLICE

**consulting producer**

SARA DOSA

**associate producer**

JOHN DEGRAFT SAM

**field sound recording**

ALYSSA FEDELE

**additional sound recording**

PATRICK KOLLMAN

**fixer and field translator**

JOHN DEGRAFT SAM

**associate editor**

BEN ZWEIG

**assistant editor**

SARAH CANNON

**additional editing**

ZACHARY FINK  
DAVE KRAHLING

**post production services**

MILKHAUS

**colorist**

DAVE KRAHLING

**title**

CHAD HERSCHBERGER

**compositing and graphics**

JAMES DURÉE

**post coordinator**

CATHY TREKLOFF

**online**

DAVE KRAHLING

**post production sound services**

SOUNDSPACE STUDIO

**dialog editor**

JASON MCDANIEL

**sound designer and mixer**

MATTHEW POLIS