

Nairobi Half Time

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HI-150-EL: World History Through Film

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Film Review

Nairobi Half Life is a 2012 Kenyan Drama Film that David Gitonga directed. It focused on a boy named Mwas who lived in a village and follow his dream to move to Kenya's Capital, Nairobi to become an inspiring actor. His potential could lead to disappointment for his brother and parents. He wanted to live in the main city to fulfill his purpose to find better opportunities.

Mwas learned from his life experience in Nairobi. He learned the dark side which was popular as Nariobbery as he stole all the money and people's properties or belongings that he does not understand a soul. Consequently, his unsuccessful of it could lead to his downfall to challenge him with two sets of gang members that he made friends with to take him under their wings.

Drained into a society of police corruption, theft, and violence, he continued to step out of his comfort zone to follow his heart to find his talent to reach his goals. Maintaining the two different worlds created to be a competition for him to find a way to hustle and be alive in Nairobi.

Thoughts and Idea

Nairobi Half Life combined the 1952's British Film, *The Boy Kumasenu* with a mixture of African-American films, 1996's *Set It Off* and 2005's *Get Rich and Die Tryin'*. There is an article that explained the main character, Mwas, where it focused more on the aspect of American life than what is like to live in Africa. Writer, James Hodapp, wrote about how they copied the ghetto lifestyle in the United States, "In terms of Mwas's character in the play, *Nairobi Half Life* looks abroad at times by mimicking straightforward Hollywood-style gangster movies, while at other times it looks inward to problematize filmic violence."¹

¹ Hodapp, James. *Nairobi Half Life David Gritonga*. Vol. 57, 2014.

<https://discovery.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=f8689583-0d85-37cf-a6de-4cd86e63e05a>

Nairobi Half Life showed similarities with *The Boy Kumasenu* where it both showed the main characters who lived in a village that they wanted to live in a big city to find a bright future. However, there is a difference between Nairobi Half Life and *The Boy Kumasenu*. Nairobi Half Life was the opposite side of 1975's *Pressure* where it showed Police Corruption. It was finding his way out through poverty and robbery. *The Boy Kumasenu* was about finding his family and figuring out who he is.

As a Kenyan-American woman, I grew up in a very confusing country where people came from different countries with different cultures. *Nairobi Half Life* spoke in two languages that I hear at home: Kikuyu, and Swahili. English is my native language, however, when I go somewhere in public, I hear different foreign languages such as Spanish, Portuguese, and Vietnamese, which shows why this country is a melting pot due to the impact of immigration.

Nairobi Half Life taught me that there is a dark side to Kenya. I had a conversation with my family about and they told me that it happens everywhere. Many people think that Kenya is a beautiful country, however, it is not as perfect as they think. Whatever issues that they have in Kenya, it would always happen in the United States.

The Theme of Nairobi Half Life

Police Corruption showed the involvement in the theme of Nairobi Half Life. Police Corruption is misapplying police authority for unique profit. It is described as a money purchase or other form of benefit. The benefit adds illegally and consequently to the officer's attitude or domination. It explained that police corruption allowed the identification of socially exception, untruthful, unsuccessful, virtuous unsatisfactory that tolerates any criminal activity from the police. "It can include the institutionalized and sanctioned networks of corruption within the police services, whereby junior officers are given daily targets (extortion) by commanding

officers as discussed below in this Kenyan case.”² It involves any type of behavior that are relevant to the police including embezzlement, shoplifting, and purchasing the police positions.

Poverty and Violence were also part of the theme of Nairobi Half Life. Many youth participants faced a huge risk in their lives such as prostitution, poor neighborhoods such as slum areas, crime, and other danger factors. Violence is the majority of the film. Violence could create the negative influence of poverty. Domestic violence could cause a huge crisis in the mental health stigma. “Many youths in countries such as Kenya are now exposed to crime and violence in urban areas, where rapid urbanisation has led to a decrease in kinbased communities and an increase in informal economic opportunities (Muggah and Krause, 2009).”³

Conclusion

Nairobi Half Life is the form of film that create the real-life drama in Nairobi, Kenya. It shows the dark side of the city to understand three ways that many young people faced in poverty, violence, and police corruption. It made me to observe that Kenya is meant to be unique, and beautiful, not perfectionist.

² Kempe, Ronald Hope, Sr. "The Police Corruption “crime Problem” in Kenya." *Security Journal* 32, no. 2 (06, 2019): 85-101.

doi:<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxyworc.helmlib.org/10.1057/s41284-018-0149-y>.

<http://ezproxyworc.helmlib.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxyworc.helmlib.org/scholarly-journals/police-corruption-crime-problem-kenya/docview/2226622366/se-2?accountid=29121>.

³ Parks, Michael J. “Urban Poverty Traps: Neighbourhoods and Violent Victimization and Offending in Nairobi, Kenya.” *Urban Studies* 51, no. 9 (2014): 1812–32.

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