

# R I S I N G   F R O M   A S H E S

*The Impossible Triumph of Team Rwanda*

a T.C. Johnstone Film

As Told By Forest Whitaker

## A Documentary Feature Film



Team Rwanda's Uwase Nyandwi

"A remarkable documentary. 'Rising from Ashes' is not just about a cycling team; it's a testament to what happens when human beings care for one another. Director T.C. Johnstone puts six years of work on this film to good use. The work has as little fat as his stars, yet his footage is rich, and his story is layered. Johnstone has confidence in all elements of filmmaking—images, interviews, narration (by actor and co-producer Forest Whitaker, used sparingly), sound, and a fantastic soundtrack—and uses each to vivid and captivating effect."

-Daphne Howland, [The Village Voice](#)

"Uplifting...moving. Narrated in unobtrusive fashion by Forest Whitaker and featuring a jaunty Afropop soundtrack, the film is crisp and economical, with the filmmaker carefully avoiding extraneous melodramatics. They are, after all, hardly necessary in a tale that already contains such inherently powerful drama."

-Frank Schneck, [The Hollywood Reporter](#)

"The wildly improbable story of the Rwandan National Cycling Team, a.k.a. Team Rwanda, delivers! Layers of suffering and joy mingle in 'Rising From Ashes', which gives you more than you expect - it turns out there are dramas going on that you wouldn't initially suspect. One pleasure of the film is experiencing the wonderful good spirits of the riders as they find their way in the strange new world of competitive cycling. Director T.C. Johnston knew a good story when he saw one, and we can all be grateful for that."

- Kenneth Turan, [Los Angeles Times](#)

the village  
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**Los Angeles Times**

**THE**  
*Hollywood*  
**REPORTER**

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## PURPOSE STATEMENT

The documentary feature film “Rising From Ashes was created with a common goal, to tell a story of redemption, hope, and second chances. It was not about the bike, however, the bicycle became a tool that has changed a nation.

Rising From Ashes has been produced by two partnering non-profit organizations, Gratis 7 Media Group and Project Rwanda (now known as the Rising from Ashes Foundation). Many have believed in the project over the past 6 years and have generously provided over \$800,000 in funding. The film has been completely donor funded and we currently have no debt on the motion picture.

Team Rwanda started out as a cycling organization however they quickly learned they had to care for the greater needs of each athlete. Many of the riders could not read or write, lived in homes without water, electricity, were malnourished, and had never received healthcare, or even knew what a dentist was. But there was still a greater issue, the issues of the heart. These riders were all recovering from the traumatic psychological effects of the 1994 genocide. Team Rwanda had to look deeper.

Team Rwanda has not solved all of these problems but it is making a difference.

- Riders are provided a modest salary to help provide for themselves and their families, equivalent to three times the national average income.
- Riders are given english lessons and taught how to read and write.
- Healthcare is provided for the ongoing issues of malaria and water born diseases. When funds are available, the riders are given regular health checks and dental care.
- The riders are given the responsibility of being ambassadors for their country to the World.

While the team has taken care of the physical and mental issues it has provided something greater... **hope**. Rwanda is a country recovering from one of the World’s most devastating genocides and they have longed for heroes. The riders of Team Rwanda have become more than just a cycling team, they have become ambassadors of hope and men to look up to. They have given the country a vision of something greater than themselves and a renewed sense of purpose.

Rising From Ashes is more than a movie, it’s a story tool that relates to each and every one of us. It’s a gateway of hope. But this is just the beginning. Since 2005 Team Rwanda has developed a model for caring for passionate athletes and it’s about to expand the vision. In 2012 Team Rwanda will begin the next phase, the development of Africa’s first all black, all African team to attempt the greatest cycling event in the world, **The Tour de France**.

For your consideration,

The Rising From Ashes Team

"Rising from Ashes" is a feature length documentary about two worlds colliding when cycling legend Jock Boyer moves to Rwanda, Africa to help a group of struggling genocide survivors pursue their dream of a national team. As they set out against impossible odds both Jock and the team find new purpose as they rise from the ashes of their past.

## CAST

### As Told By:

Forest Whitaker

### Team Rwanda:

Adrien Niyonshuti - Rwanda's first Olympic Cyclist

Rafiki Uwimana

Nathan Byukusenge

Abraham Ruhumuriza

Nyandwi Uwase

Jock Boyer - Coach and the First American to Ride in the Tour de France

Tom Ritchey - Founder of Team Rwanda and the Inventor of the Mountain Bike

## CREW

Forest Whitaker - Executive Producer

T.C. Johnstone - Producer / Director / Editor

Greg Kwedar - Producer

Jon and Linda Halbert - Executive Producers

Peb Jackson / Dan Cooper - Executive Producers

Nina Yang - Co-Executive Producer

Elisa Bonora - Editor

Joshua Myers - Composer

David Eggerichs / Ryan Scheer / Jeremy Rodgers / Jeffrey Waldron - Cinematographers

## FORMAT

TRT - 80 minutes

This Film is Not Yet Rated

Production Completed in 2012

English and Kinyarwanda with English Subtitles

High Definition

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

# SYNOPSIS

“Rising from Ashes” is a feature length documentary about two worlds colliding when cycling legend Jock Boyer moves to Rwanda, Africa to help a group of struggling genocide survivors pursue their dream of a national team. As they set out against impossible odds both Jock and the team find new purpose as they rise from the ashes of their past.

## Rwanda

In Rwanda, ‘The Land of a Thousand Hills’, the bicycle is essential to life. It is how you move. It is how you work. And during the Genocide, it is how you survived. Stand on any corner of any village throughout the country, and farmers will scream down hillsides barefoot on 25 year old bikes loaded with 100 pounds of potatoes, taxi drivers peddle diligently with a mother and daughter in tow, and a child amuses himself for hours guiding a bent wheel down alleyways. It seems natural, maybe destined, that bike racing has a rich history in Rwanda. For decades the country has participated in the sport, hosting local races for bragging rights, riding barefoot, many times without brakes or gears. During 100 days in 1994, as five and half lives were systematically murdered per minute, thousands of Rwandans escaped certain death on their bikes. When the dust settled and the perpetrators were subdued, the country mourned the death of nearly one million of their countrymen. Amidst the heartache and trauma, a committed group of young cyclists began importing racing bikes into the country with the hopes of resurrecting the sport. In 2005, legendary bike builder Tom Ritchey explored the country on his bike, and upon meeting a group of cyclists who called themselves Team Rwanda, left with the vision there was potential for a National Team, and a question. What if they could make it to the Olympics?

## Jock

Jock Boyer is one of America’s most fabled cyclists. He grew up battling Tom Ritchey in Northern California’s competitive cycling leagues, out of this rivalry a mutual admiration and friendship was born. At the age of 17, Jock left the U.S. to compete professionally against the World’s elite in France, and in 1983 he made history as the First American to ever ride in the Tour de France. Upon his return to the United States, after a prolific racing career, he would lose it all. In this period of darkness Tom reconnected with his long lost friend with an unlikely proposition, an offer to become the Coach of Rwanda’s first National Cycling Team.

## Adrien

Adrien Niyonshuti lost 60 of his family in the Genocide. Six. Zero. Sixty. Six of his brothers, his mother’s entire line of heritage. Maybe because he sought purpose behind his pain, maybe because it was the only way to stop his overpowering headaches, maybe he just had a gift, but Adrien started cycling in 2003. His family couldn’t understand his dream, but Adrien felt it inside. Three months later, Adrien’s father passed away. Tragedy seemed to follow him. In 2006, Adrien rode a Mountain Bike for the first time, catching Jock and winning a local race, forging the beginning of a relationship between two broken men. In 2011, Adrien qualified for the Olympic Games, a bold achievement that would send shockwaves throughout Rwanda and the World, a living example that the ghosts and demons of our past have no power over our future.



Team Rider Adrien Niyonshuti



Coach of Team Rwanda Jock Boyer





Adrien Niyonshuti in London

# PRODUCTION NOTES

Over six years in the making, Rising from Ashes was an epic undertaking. With production covering three continents, in some of the most challenging shooting environments in the world, the Rising from Ashes crew led by Director T.C. Johnstone chased this incredible story. Near the end of the journey, Emmy Award Winning Zacuto Films, a Chicago based production studio, approached our team with a vision to document the dramatic climax of our most intense shoot of the production in Rwanda.

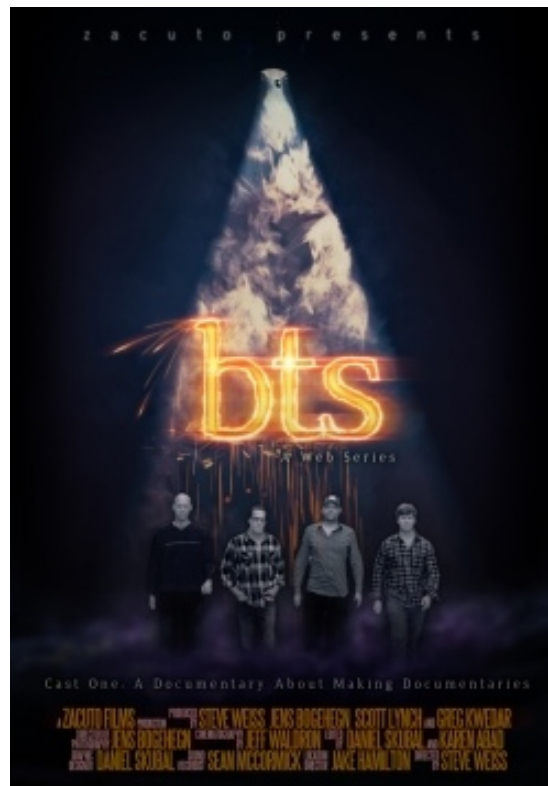
## **BTS: Behind the Scenes of Rising from Ashes**

BTS is a three part web series produced by Zacuto Films about the passion, struggle, process, and purpose behind the making of Rising from Ashes.

"You don't know what's going to happen," says Johnstone. "This is Africa and you're walking into a risky situation to shoot these types of films."

Says Producer Greg Kwedar, "I'm frustrated because I want control. I'm not getting it. I'm not going to get it and I've gotta let go of that."

See the action unfold at:  
[www.Zacuto.com/BTS](http://www.Zacuto.com/BTS)





# BIOGRAPHIES

## Forest Whitaker - Executive Producer and Narrator



**Forest Whitaker** is a distinguished artist, humanist, and the co-founder of the International Institute for Peace. Most recently he was sworn in as a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Peace and Reconciliation. In 2008 he served as a member of the Urban Policy Committee and currently sits on the board of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH).

Whitaker's social awareness has compelled him to seek ways of using the film media as a means of raising consciousness. For the last decade he has dedicated his time towards extensive humanitarian work. He serves as a spokesperson for the Ugandan child soldier orphanage Hope North, providing community and hope to young victims of the civil war. He has aided in the development of new buildings and fundraising which helps sustain the school today.

On June 21, 2011, Forest was sworn in as a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Peace and Reconciliation. In this role, he focuses on global peace building through anti-violent education research, training and community building. Through a partnership with Rutgers University, Forest co-founded the International Institute for Peace, which focuses on conflict resolution and community empowerment through education-based programs. The institute builds partnerships worldwide working with grass-root organizations, anti-violence educators, youth visionaries and building environmental conflict awareness in an effort to spread the message of peace and reconciliation.

**T.C. Johnstone - Director / Producer / Editor**

T.C. began making films in Steamboat Springs 10 years ago. After producing his first feature he moved to Santa Monica, California and began working as a DP and documentary director on a wide variety of projects ranging from television to independent films. As a story hunter, T.C. has traveled to over 40 countries and has a deep desire to see people live out their dreams and contribute to the common good. With a passion for redemptive story and world issues, T.C. began writing and directing films with redemptive themes 7 years ago. The vision was simple... allow audiences to dream. He believes a well told story can create a catalyst for change.

**Greg Kwedar - Producer**

From narrative films, music videos, and documentaries to nationally televised commercials, Greg has created stories that are designed to capture honest human emotion. His work has been screened in festivals both domestic and abroad, garnering awards and starting conversations. Greg is currently developing multiple feature film projects.

**Jon and Linda Halbert - Executive Producers**

(Bio Coming Soon)

**Peb Jackson / Dan Cooper - Executive Producers**

Peb Jackson lives in Colorado Springs with his wife of 40 years, Sharon. Has been an executive with Saddleback Church/Purpose Driven, Generous Giving, Young Life, Focus on the Family, Azusa Pacific University and Spartan Oil. Active in global issues and solutions including Africa. Currently Principle of Jackson Consulting Group.

Dan Cooper co-founded Team Rwanda with Tom Ritchey and Jonathan Boyer. He has played a critical role in gaining support for the documentary film through the Friends of Rwanda network that he has grown over the last six years.

**Nina Yang - Co-Executive Producer**

Nina Yang started her entertainment career over 17 years ago in the music industry, managing and representing international artist & repertoire for Asia's largest independent music label Rock Records based in Taipei. In 2010, Nina joined Forest Whitaker's Significant Productions based in Hollywood as Vice President and Head of Production covering feature films, television, documentaries and new media projects. She continues to produce international projects on behalf of Significant Productions.

# COMPANY INFORMATION

## **Gratis 7 Media Group**

Gratis 7 Media group is a small non-profit (501c3) organization that produces media based on hope and purpose. We help organizations create movies and media that matter. We exist to tell compelling, entertainment stories that inspire people to help where there is need. Whether it's feature films, documentary or short film series, Gratis 7 believes stories can penetrate our hearts and create enormous change.

## **The Rising from Ashes Foundation**

The Rising From Ashes Foundation has been formed in response to the overwhelming support from around the world and our desire to bring the message of hope to as many people as possible. Our goal is to use the Rising From Ashes documentary feature film as the core messaging tool to build out a global movement around the bike for peace, reconciliation, and life transformation.



Rwanda, "The Land of a Thousand Hills"

HOPE IS AN AMAZING RIDE

# RISING FROM ASHES

AN INSPIRING TRUE STORY AS TOLD BY  
FOREST WHITAKER



PROJECT RWANDA IN ASSOCIATION WITH SIGNIFICANT PRODUCTIONS PRESENT A GRATIS 7 MEDIA GROUP PRODUCTION A T.C. JOHNSTONE FILM "RISING FROM ASHES"  
WRITTEN BY JOSHUA MYERS DIRECTED BY ELISA BONORA EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS DAVID EGGERICHS RYAN SCHEER JEREMY RODGERS JEFFREY WALDRON PRODUCED BY KRISTEN JOHNSTONE  
PRODUCED BY LEE ALFRED PRODUCED BY NINA YANG PRODUCED BY PEB JACKSON DAN COOPER EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JON AND LINDA HALBERT PRODUCED BY FOREST WHITAKER PRODUCED BY GREG KWEDAR  
COMING SOON PRODUCED BY T.C. JOHNSTONE