

## Former Child Soldier, Best-Selling Author to Visit Salt Lake City

--Ishmael Beah to Host Free Public Discussions, Films

--Beah and Professional Storyteller, Laura Simms, to Help Develop The Leonardo's Center for the Story

SALT LAKE CITY, May 4, 2006—Best selling author and former child soldier Ishmael Beah will be in Salt Lake City May 15 – May 17. During his visit, Beah and his adopted mother, award-winning storyteller, Laura Simms, will host several public events.

In addition to the public events, Beah and Simms will work with local educators, storytellers and staff, partners and supporters of The Leonardo to help further develop the Center for the Story, a program in The Leonardo that will combine performances, archives and master classes that help visitors examine and celebrate story in its varied forms and usages.

Following is a list of public events held in conjunction with Beah and Simms' visit, and in partnership with The Leonardo, Center for Documentary Arts, SLC Film Center and Kings English Bookshop (see event details on attached sheet):

Tuesday, May 15, 3 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Salt Lake City Library Auditorium, 209 East 400 South

Films: *Operation Fine Girl* and *Diamond Life*, presented by the SLC Film Center

Tuesday, May 15: 4 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Granite Education Center, 2500 South State Street, Room D202

Workshop: *The Power of Story and Storytelling for Language Arts*, featuring Laura Simms (for teachers in Salt Lake City and Granite school districts)

Wednesday, May 16: 3 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Salt Lake City Library Auditorium, 210 East 400 South

Film: *Witness to the Truth*. Introduction by the SLC Film Center's GERALYN DREYFOUS and Ishmael Beah. Presented by the SLC Film Center

Wednesday, May 16, 4 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Salt Lake City Library, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room, 210 East 400 South

Discussion: *Coming Home to Oneself: The Healing Nature of Memory and Listening*, featuring Ishmael Beah and Laura Simms

Wednesday, May 16: 6 p.m. – 9 p.m.

Rose Wagner Performing Arts Center, 138 West 300 South, Salt Lake City

Food Tasting and Film:

6 p.m.

*A Taste of Sierra Leone*, Prepared by the Sierra Leone community

Dance Performance: Brief performance of traditional dances by Sierra Leone youth

7 p.m.

Film, Q&A: Sierra Leone's REFUGEE ALL STARS. Presented by the SLC Film Center

Reading: Ishmael Beah (prior to film)

Q&A: Ishmael Beah and Zach Niles, director (following film)

Thursday, May 17: 6 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Calvary Baptist Church, 1090 South State Street

Reading: *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, featuring Ishmael Beah, introduction by Laura Simms

Hosted by Kings English Bookshop

Tickets: \$22 (includes book and priority place in signing line); \$5. On sale at The King's English Bookshop, or at Calvary Baptist on the night of the event. All proceeds to benefit the Center for Documentary Arts.

### **About the Center for Documentary Arts and The Leonardo**

For over 20 years, the Center for Documentary Arts ([www.cdautah.org](http://www.cdautah.org)) has provided a candid vision of Utah's people by using the tools of documentary work – photography, oral history, filmmaking, narrative writing, radio, poetry, dance and music. CDA, along with YouthCity Artways ([www.youthcityartways](http://www.youthcityartways)) and the Utah Science Center ([www.utahsciencecenter.org](http://www.utahsciencecenter.org)), are founding partners in The Leonardo ([www.theleonardo.org](http://www.theleonardo.org)), an exciting new art, culture and science center being developed in the heart of Utah's capital city.

### **About the SLC Film Center**

The Salt Lake City Film Center brings the world of film to local audiences through community screenings and discussions, outreach programs, and visiting artists and professionals. Emphasizing social content and artistic excellence, we present the best documentary, independent, and dramatic cinema year-round. We collaborate with various educational and community organizations to promote a diversity of ideas, to provide forums for underrepresented groups, and to develop new audiences for film.

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## Event Details

Tuesday, May 15

3 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Salt Lake City Library Auditorium, 210 East 400 South

Film: *Operation Fine Girl: Rape Used as a Weapon of War in Sierra Leone* (2001, 43 minutes)

Director: Lilibet Foster

Distributor: *Witness* ([www.witness.org](http://www.witness.org) [≤http://www.witness.org≥](http://www.witness.org)).

Abstract: A Witness production in association with Oxygen Media; produced by Lilibet Foster.

This documentary is about the use of sexual violence against women as a weapon in the Sierra Leone civil war.

Film: *Diamond Life*

Director: Stephen Marshall, Josh Shore. Distributor: Witness

Abstract: The Revolutionary United Front's (RUF) attack on Freetown in January of 1999 was the culmination of a decade-long and bloody struggle between the RUF and the government of Sierra Leone. The rebel forces, bolstered by the former Sierra Leonean Army, which had turned on the government, swept into the city, killing, mutilating, and raping thousands in the continuing war over the control of the country's rich diamond fields. RUF units burned houses with civilians inside, shot and raped people at random, killing an estimated 6,000 people in the span of three weeks. Since 1990, half the country's population of five million has been displaced. Today, Sierra Leone produces more refugees than any other country in Africa. The country is full of war victims, whose amputated limbs serve as living testimony to the brutality of the rebels. The *Diamond Life* provides a disturbing glimpse into the greed and violence that fuels the Sierra Leone region's brutal diamond war.

Tuesday, May 15

4:00 - 6:30 p.m.

Granite Education Center, 2500 South State St. - Room D202

Educator Workshop: *The Power of Story and Storytelling for Language Arts*, featuring Laura Simms, mother Ishmael Beah and internationally recognized storyteller.

For language arts teachers in the Salt Lake City and Granite school districts

Ishmael Beah, a child soldier from Sierra Leone, met Laura Simms in New York in 1996. Ishmael was attending a conference at the United Nations on the effects of war on the children in his country, and the two began a special relationship. In 1998, Laura invited Ishmael to live with her as her son and to continue his education in the United States

Wednesday, May 16

11:30 – 3pm

Salt Lake City Library, 4th Floor Conference Room, 210 East 400 South

Discussion: Ishmael Beah, author of *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier* and Zach Niles, director of *Refugee All Stars* discuss the role of young activists using pop culture as a vehicle for social change

3 p.m.

Salt Lake City Library Auditorium, 210 East 400 South

Film: *Witness to Truth*. The WITNESS project in partnership with Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission. 55 minutes. Ishmael Beah to introduce the film and his work with Peter Gabriel's Human Rights Foundation, WITNESS.

Abstract: In a groundbreaking use of video documentation, WITNESS was invited by the Sierra Leonean Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to produce the first video accompaniment to an official TRC report. 'Witness to Truth' summarizes the key findings and recommendations of the TRC's report -- highlighting the key causes and consequences of the war, raising public awareness of the TRC's peace-building efforts throughout the country, and encouraging civil society in Sierra Leone and beyond to hold the government accountable for implementing the binding recommendations that will be issued by the TRC.

4:00 p.m.

City Library, 4th floor Conference Room, 210 East 400 South

Discussion: *Coming Home To Oneself: The Healing Nature of Memory and Listening*. Local refugee and now SLC citizen Rozina Bahlibi, from Eritrea, a former child soldier will be in attendance.

Ishmael Beah, author of *A LONG WAY GONE*, and storyteller and adopted mother Laura Simm will discuss the unique connection they have as mother and son – each deepening the other's recognition of the vital role of story in our lives to heal, to promote trust in basic sanity, to replace hopelessness with joy, and to work in the world to transform aggression into compassion.

6:00 p.m.

Rose Wagner Center for the Performing Arts, 138 West 300 South

Tasting: *A Taste of Sierra Leone*, presented by Salt Lake's Sierra Leone community. Sierra Leone youth will perform traditional dances of Sierra Leone.

7:00 p.m.

Rose Wagner Center for the Performing Arts, 138 West 300 South

Reading and Film: The SLC Film Center presents as part of their African Film Series: *Sierra Leone's REFUGEE ALL STARS*. Ishmael Beah will introduce the film.

Q&A: With Director Zach Niles and Author Ishmael Beah

Film Abstract: Refugee All Stars are a band of six Sierra Leonean musicians who have been living as refugees in the West African nation of the Republic of Guinea, since a brutal civil war (1991-2002) forced them from their homes. Many of their family and friends were murdered, leaving them with physical and emotional scars that may never heal. Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars have found refuge, purpose and a source of power by giving a voice to the experiences of so many struggling to survive. This documentary reveals unique and inspiring personal stories of struggle and rebirth through the universal language of music. As violent conflicts multiply around the globe and the worldwide refugee crisis deepens, this film is a humanizing tribute to all the innocent victims of war. Through the music and stories of these musicians, we are witness to the ability of individuals to sustain hope in a landscape dominated by rage and loss.

The band will play at Red Butte on August 5th and their album *DON'T LIKE TO LIVE LIKE A REFUGEE*, has won various awards, and has been on Oprah.

Thursday, May 17

6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Calvary Baptist Church, 1090 South State Street

Book Reading and Signing: Ishmael Beah and Laura Simms

King's English Bookshop hosts Ishmael reading from *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*. Laura Simms will introduce him. A book signing will follow.

Tickets: Yellow tickets (\$22 + tax) include a copy of the book and a place in the signing line. Green tickets are \$5 and include admission only. Doors will open at 5 p.m. for all general admission seating. Tickets are being sold at Kings English Bookshop or at Calvary Baptist on the night of the event. Proceeds benefit the Center for Documentary Arts.