

# Iron Ladies of Liberia



# Iron Ladies of Liberia

Featuring  
President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

Also Featuring  
Beatrice Munah Sieh, Chief of Police  
Antoinette Sayeh, Minister of Finance

Director Daniel Junge  
Co-director Siatta Scott Johnson  
Producer Henry Ansbacher  
Producer Jonathan Stack  
Editor Davis Coombe  
Composer Gunnard Doboze  
Singer/Songwriter Marron Cassel

**IRON LADIES OF LIBERIA** is a co-production of  
Just Media, The Independent Television Service (ITVS),  
Gabriel Films & Steps International

Additional funding provided by the Sundance Documentary Fund and Cinereach.

2007 ● USA ● 78 minutes  
In English and Liberian English with English subtitles

**Just Media**  
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## **DANIEL JUNGE, Director**

Named by "Filmmaker" magazine as one of 25 up-and-coming filmmakers in 2003, Junge had his feature-length directorial debut with *Chiefs*, which premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival, winning the award for best documentary, and aired nationally on PBS. As creative director for Just Media, a Colorado non-profit production company dedicated to social justice, the environment, and education, Junge directed *Reading Your Rights* (PBS), *Big Blue Bear* (Australia Broadcasting Company), *We Are PHAMALy* (Tribeca Film Festival) and the narrative film *Road Movie*. Most recently, Junge has completed *They Killed Sister Dorothy*, the story of a nun murdered in Brazil because of her land reform work. The film premieres at the 2008 SxSW Film Festival.

As creative director for the series *Common Good*, Junge oversaw the writing and editing of all episodes, and personally directed four segments: *The Learning Zone*, *My PHAMALy*, *Neighborhood*, and *Down By the Riverside*. The series earned four regional Emmys, three of which were awarded to Junge for his work.

Junge was born in Sheridan, Wyoming and received his BA in Liberal Arts from Colorado College; he attended film school at New York University. Junge has worked in the Los Angeles, New York, and London film/television industries as an assistant director, assistant editor, researcher, and production assistant. Junge has taught as a guest professor at the Colorado College, and speaks regularly to classes at the University of Colorado. He lives in Denver, Colorado, with his wife Erin.



## **SIATTA SCOTT JOHNSON, Co-Director**

Siatta Scott-Johnson was born in Buchanan, Liberia in 1974 and raised in rural Grand Bassa County. She speaks English, Liberia Dialect English, and Bassa fluently and is the mother of two (Kundu, 13 and Mosiatta, 9). Johnson fled Grand Bassa in the early 90's with the outbreak of war, and eventually settled in Monrovia, where she was caught during the last of the violence in 2003.

Siatta earned her BA in Mass Communications from the University of Liberia after the school re-opened following the civil war. She holds certificates in Political Reporting from the University of Liberia and in Media from the Press Union of Liberia/UNMIL, and a diploma in Journalism from the Liberia Institute of Journalism. She has five years of experience as a reporter and producer at DCTV, one of Liberia's few broadcast television stations, and is a founding member of Omuahtee Africa Media.

**DANIEL JUNGE, Director**  
***Filmography***

***Come Back to Sudan*** – 2008 – Director, Camera

*In post-production*

Documentary short on three Lost Boys of Sudan as they return home for first time in two decades.

***No Strings*** – 2008 – Director, Camera

*In post-production*

Documentary short following the creators of the Muppets as they make children's puppet shows in Afghanistan to teach landmine awareness and in Sri Lanka for tsunami education.

***They Killed Sister Dorothy*** – 2008 – Director, Camera

Feature-length documentary about the murder of Sister Dorothy Stang, an activist nun working on land reform and sustainable development in the Brazilian Amazon.

Premiere – 2008 SxSW Film Festival

***Iron Ladies of Liberia*** – 2007 – Director, Camera

Feature-length documentary (77min) on Africa's first female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and the women surrounding her as they turn around the war-torn country of Liberia.

***Common Good*** – 2005 – Series Creative Director, Episode Director

6 x 30 min series on social entrepreneurs.

Broadcast regionally on cable.

Winner, 4 Regional Emmys, 2005

***Big Blue Bear*** – 2005 – Director, Camera

Documentary short (25min) following the creation of a landmark public art work.

Broadcast by Australian Broadcasting Company, regionally on PBS.

***Reading Your Rights*** – 2004 – Director, Camera

Documentary short (27min) on 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment court battle.

Screened nationally on PBS

Nominated, Regional Emmy, 2004

***We Are PHAMALy*** – 2003 – Director, Camera

Documentary short (27min) about a physically handicapped musical theatre troupe.

Distributed by Fanlight video.

Screened at Tribeca, Hot Springs, and numerous festivals worldwide.

***Chiefs*** – 2002 – Director, Camera

Feature-length (87min) documentary on Wyoming Indian High School basketball team.

Winner, Best Documentary – Tribeca Film Festival

Screened nationally on PBS

***Road Movie*** – 1992 – Writer, Director, Producer

Narrative short (38min) – thesis film project.

Screened handful of festivals, including Denver and New Orleans.



### **Producer – Henry Ansbacher**

Henry Ansbacher is the founder of Just Media and has served as its executive director since 2000. Just Media's mission is to raise awareness of current social and environmental issues in the broadest audience through the development and production of innovative and compelling media projects. Just Media is at the vanguard of a rapidly growing movement promoting media as a potent agent for community benefit.

In his leadership position at Just Media, Ansbacher has produced over 25 documentary shorts featuring social entrepreneurs trying to make the world a better place. This effort culminated in 2004 with the launch of *Common Good*, an Emmy-winning half-hour magazine format show featuring social entrepreneurs.

The feature film *Chiefs*, a documentary about the Wyoming Indian High School basketball team, was Ansbacher's first feature film producer credit; the critically acclaimed film won the award for Best Documentary at the Tribeca Film Festival. Since that time Ansbacher has collaborated with *Chiefs* director Daniel Junge on *Reading Your Rights*, *We Are PHAMALy*, *Big Blue Bear* and a number of other broadcast documentaries. He is currently producing *Sister Dorothy*, a feature length documentary about the murder of an American nun who was engaged in land reform in the Brazilian rainforest.

Ansbacher received his BA from Colorado College and his MA in psychology from the University of Denver and has worked around the state as a counselor. Short films by Mr. Ansbacher have screened in festivals in New York, Vienna, Barcelona, Rio de Janeiro and Denver.



### **Producer – Jonathan Stack**

Jonathan Stack is an Emmy Award winning and two-time Academy Award nominated documentary filmmaker. In 1991 he founded Gabriel Films, and has since gone on to produce over seventy-five films for nearly all of the cable channels in the US and many television partners abroad. He has released several films theatrically and shown his work at many of the major festivals.

Jonathan's career highlights include producing a 1991 documentary about arts censorship in the U.S. (directed by Paul Yule) called *Damned in the USA*. The film won the International Emmy for Arts Documentary. In 1994 he made *Harlem Diary: Nine Voices of Resilience*, a feature length documentary that tells the story of nine young men and women constructing positive lives as they face the challenges of growing up in a racist world. The film was shown in 45 countries and a winner of the prestigious Golden Eagle Award.

In 1996, Jonathan produced and directed the two-time Emmy winner *Final Judgment: The Execution of Antonio James*, which explores the process by which the State puts an inmate to death. After Antonio James was executed, Jonathan was left to ponder the lives of the 5,000 inmates, most of whom were serving life sentences and would never get out. He wanted to tell the story of their lives, and began documenting the experience over the course of a year. This is *The Farm: Angola, USA*. *The Farm* (with Liz Garbus) has gone on to win the Grand Jury Prize at the 1998 Sundance Film Festival as well as an Oscar nomination. Again, in 2000, Jonathan was nominated for an Oscar for the documentary *The Wildest Show in the South*, which brings the audience into the crazy world of prison rodeos (directed by Simeon Soffer). *Justifiable Homicide* premiered at the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) 2001. The film tells the story of one woman's pursuit of justice following the brutal death of her son and nephew at the hands of two New York City police officers. It had its theatrical premiere in New York City.

In 2003 Jonathan spent his summer following the chaos of war in West Africa. *LIBERIA: AN UNCIVIL WAR* is considered one of the most intimate portraits of war and was praised in the New York Times as one of the most powerful documentaries of the year. The film has won Special Jury Mention at the 2004 AFI/Silverdocs Festival and the Special Jury Prize at the 2004 IDFA film festival. In addition, his work in Liberia also earned him the 2004 Courage Under Fire award from the International Documentary Association.

As part of his effort to make his work more effective, Jonathan has created a non-profit program, Gabriel Media, whose goal is to get social issue films into the hands of those who need them the most. Gabriel Films is currently producing many hours of factual programming annually, including cutting edge single films as well as continuing programs and series for television.

## **IRON LADIES OF LIBERIA**

### **300 Word Synopsis:**

After nearly two decades of brutal civil war, Liberia is a nation ready for change...and the women are ready to take a turn.

In November 2005, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf won a surprise victory over international soccer star George Weah to become Africa's first elected female president. A former finance minister known as the "Iron Lady," Sirleaf quickly appointed a team of strong women around her, including the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Commerce, and the Chief of Police. *Iron Ladies of Liberia* follows these women over the course of their turbulent first year in office – a year which will determine the future of their country. The stakes are high, and the outcome uncertain, but the commitment of the Iron Ladies will not falter.

Liberia's problems are huge – crippling debt, rampant corruption and cronyism, and a shattered infrastructure. During her first year in office President Sirleaf faces challenges from all directions, including attacks from corrupt political rivals, street protests by angry mobs of decommissioned soldiers, and bureaucratic hurdles from the international community. With incredible access, director Daniel Junge and Liberian co-director Siatta Scott Johnson are able to record and these pivotal moments throughout this historic year, in a uniquely redemptive African story with a new paradigm for leadership around the world.

*Iron Ladies of Liberia* is a unique look behind the scenes at the rebirth of a nation and democracy in action, under the steady hand of women determined to make history and move their country forward.

The film was broadcast internationally as part of the "Why Democracy" series in October of 2007, and will be seen in the US on the PBS series "Independent Lens" in March, 2008.

### **100 Word Synopsis:**

In November 2005, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became Africa's first elected female president. A former finance minister known as the "Iron Lady," Sirleaf quickly appointed a team of strong women around her, including the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Commerce, and the Chief of Police. *Iron Ladies of Liberia* follows these women over the course of their turbulent first year in office – a year which will determine the future of their country.

*Iron Ladies of Liberia* is a unique look behind the scenes at the rebirth of a nation and democracy in action, under the steady hand of women determined to make history and move their country forward.