

# RUINED

**OBSIDIAN**  
THEATRE COMPANY

in association with

**Nightwood Theatre** ●●●●

## STUDY GUIDE



**Written by Lynn Nottage**

**Directed by Philip Akin**

PRODUCTION SPONSORS



**BMO**  **Financial Group**

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supported by the Arts Council of England

Adapted by Nightwood Theatre, September 2010

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PROJECTS



Production stills found throughout this study guide are from Almeida Projects' production of *Ruined*

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This document may be used for educational purposes only.

**This play is suitable for students ages 14 and up.**

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## INTRODUCTION

***Ruined* was written by Lynn Nottage in 2007 and awarded the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.**



*Ruined* involves the plight of a group of women in the civil war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo. Set in Mama Nadi's bar - a haven for miners, government soldiers and rebel militia, where they come to forget the ruins of war, to drink and dance with women and feed their desires. The play centres on the lives of the women working in the bar and their resolve to survive despite the atrocities they have experienced.

Two new girls arrive at Mama Nadi's bar, both recent victims of militia violence. Mama reluctantly agrees to take them in, and she puts them to work. As the conflict around the bar intensifies, the women continue to entertain their male customers. But as loyalties become divided as the conflict fragments, Mama's attempts to shelter the women from the dangers outside threaten to put their lives - and Mama's business - in jeopardy.

The Democratic Republic of Congo has a long history of civil war and brutal conflict. The country has, in recent years, become a centre for mining valuable minerals including coltan, which is used in the manufacture of mobile phones and the technology the West takes for granted. The systematic rape of women - often extremely violent - has become a chief instrument of war, used both as a means of ethnic cleansing and tribal intimidation. This is the backdrop against which the play was written.

*Ruined* was commissioned by Chicago's Goodman Theatre, where it received its world premiere in a co-production with New York's Manhattan Theatre Club. In writing the play, Lynn Nottage travelled to the Congo with director Kate Whoriskey, interviewing women who had directly experienced sexual violence. The play was initially intended to be an update of Brecht's *Mother Courage*, transposed to the Congo; but as Nottage heard more and more of the women's stories, the Brecht connection became significantly less important and *Ruined* became a story of the women of Congo first and foremost.

## CHARACTERS

### **MAMA NADI**

An attractive woman in her early forties, proprietor of Mama Nadi's bar. She has an arrogant stride and a majestic bearing. She can be flirtatious to get her way and knows how to charm men in the system - an excellent business woman. She has a dark and troubled past which gives her a definite hard edge and steely toughness, but it also gives her an empathetic compassion for 'ruined' women - she takes in women who have been raped by soldiers and offers them a livelihood.

### **CHRISTIAN**

Christian is a travelling salesman, trafficking goods across the border for businesses in the war-torn parts of the Congo. He has a fondness for philosophising and poetry - hence Mama's nickname for him: 'the professor'. He despairs at the unpredictable conflict tearing his country apart and the ignorance of the young men who claim authority. He is in love with Mama and wants to settle down with her.

### **SOPHIE**

Sophie is a beautiful girl, aged 18. She was a very good student and preparing to take her university entrance exams. However she has been outcast by her village, after suffering some terrible and brutal abuse from the militia - she has been 'ruined', genitally mutilated. She is gentle and very compliant at first, but has a steely determination and sense of survival which ultimately drives her to start deceiving the very woman who took her in.

### **SALIMA**

Salima, also 18, is rather a plain girl with a stubbornness and defiance. She too has been attacked by militia men, who raped her, before abducting her and keeping her as their 'concubine' in the forest. Her husband has refused to take her back and she has been exiled from her village. She holds out hope that her husband will come back for her.

### **JOSEPHINE**

A prostitute at Mama Nadi's bar. She is resentful of the newcomers and makes little attempt to befriend them. Mr Harari regularly comes to see her, and she hopes he will take her out of the bar, eventually. Her father was the village chief and she was eldest born child. She was attacked by soldiers at her home but none of the villagers came to her aid.

### **JEROME KISEMBE**

Jerome Kisenbe is leader of the local rebel militia. He is a powerful man and dangerous, with an unpredictable, volatile temper. He commands a band of men known for their violent demanding of respect. He opposes the 'unjust' rule of the government, tackling violence with violence. He is a regular customer at Mama Nadi's bar.

### **COMMANDER OSEMBENGA**

He is high in the government, charged with bringing the area surrounding Mama Nadi's bar back into law and order. He is seeking out the rebel militia and destroying their army. He is a brash, loud man, commanding instant respect, but with a volatile temperament and violence concealed ever below the surface of his presence. He is a man used to getting what he wants without having to ask twice.

## **MR HARARI**

Mr Aziz Harari is a gemstone trader from the Lebanon, in the Congo on business. He has been coming to Mama Nadi's bar for some time and has built up a relationship with Josephine, though this is really no more than a business transaction. He is a gentle man, offering Mama advice and his wisdom as an outsider. He seems at once frustrated and bemused by the desperate situation he perceives in Congo.

## **FORTUNE**

Fortune is Salima's estranged husband. He was a farmer before being enlisted to the government army and is not happy with the soldier's life. He disowned Salima following her attack but now seeks her forgiveness as he still loves her and is full of regret. He stakes his place outside Mama Nadi's and threatens his safety by waiting for his wife.

## **SIMON**

Simon is Fortune's cousin, and they grew up in the same farming village. He has known Salima since childhood and is accompanying his friend to look for his wife, though he does not believe she is still alive. He too was a farmer but has joined the government army and is loyal to Commander Osembenga.

## **LAURENT**

Laurent is a young and hard-faced government soldier, working closely with Commander Osembenga. He is quick to carry out his boss' orders and execute violence where directed.

# PLAY SYNOPSIS

## ACT ONE

### SCENE ONE

A small mining town in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is mid-afternoon at Mama Nadi's bar, a worn-looking establishment; nonetheless a lot of effort has gone into making it look cheerful. Mama Nadi is there, serving a cold drink to Christian. Christian has been on the road for a long time - many of the roads are impassable with blockades - and having reached Mama Nadi's, relaxes. He has brought Mama Nadi some provisions she requested, including a red lipstick. He flirts playfully with her, it is clear they are old friends. Mama Nadi offers Christian a beer, but he declines - he has not drunken alcohol for 4 years. Christian notices the caged parrot, which belonged to a now deceased village elder. The bird annoys Mama Nadi - it speaks a pygmy language that no one understands. Christian tells Mama Nadi he has something else for her, and she guesses correctly - he has brought her girls. But three - and she cannot make room for three. Christian offers to give her a good price, reassuring her that business is good. Mama insists on taking just the one and they haggle about the price. They agree and Mama chooses one of the women. She instantly picks out Sophie, and Christian then offers Mama two girls for the price of one - she can take Salima as well. Mama is adamant that she will only pay for one - and this is exactly as Christian would have it. Mama is bemused, but accepts.



Mama calls Josephine, one of her girls, a sexy woman in a short skirt. Josephine surveys the two new girls with obvious contempt, but Mama orders her to take the girls to be washed and clothed. Before they go, Mama inspects Salima and Sophie a little closer, sensing them fit for business. Salima is at once nervous and defiant. Sophie is compliant but we see her walking with some pain.

Christian tells Mama about Salima's past - she is from a tiny village that has disowned her - her husband won't take her back after being raped by soldiers. Sophie, he tells her hesitantly, is ruined. Mama is furious that Christian has brought her a ruined girl - she's paid for another mouth to feed and a burden - though she is pretty, she is useless to Mama. Christian urges Mama to keep Sophie, who has been treated appallingly by the militia. Mama dismisses this as outside her responsibility but Christian reassures her that Sophie is a good girl and will work hard, she can clean and sings like an angel. He offers her anything she wants off his truck if she agrees, even Belgian chocolate. He reveals that Sophie is actually his sister's only daughter.

## PLAY SYNOPSIS con't

Mama calls Sophie back to inspect her closely. She quizzes the young girl and we discover that Sophie was a good student and about to sit for her university exams, before the soldiers hurt her. A ruined woman brings shame on the village, so her future was changed. Mama agrees to take Sophie in and then questions her about her skills - she can sing, and do math. Mama puts red lipstick on Sophie and admires her beauty. She gives Sophie a drink of liquor to help her pain down below. Christian gives Mama the Belgian chocolates - she eats, savouring every bite. Mama offers Sophie a chocolate, but not Christian. This amuses Sophie but she is quickly subdued when Christian gives her a warning - many men would have left her for dead. Before her uncle leaves, she promises to be a good girl for Mama.

### SCENE TWO

A month later, at Mama Nadl's bar. Colourful Christmas lights give a festive atmosphere and the bird still sings raucously from the back. At the bar, drunk and disheveled soldiers drink beers and laugh loudly, at the centre of the group is Jerome Kisémbé, the rebel leader dressed in military uniform. Salima, dressed attractively, is playing pool as the soldiers look on. Mama circulates the bar, wearing a red scarf, acknowledging the rebel leader's colours. Meanwhile, Josephine is lap dancing for Mr Harari, a Lebanese diamond merchant. Sophie sings. The song finishes and the soldiers ask for another, calling her over, but she ignores them. One soldier calls Mama over and shows her a lump of coltan he stole from a miner. He is proud of his steal, but Mama dismisses it as worthless not - there are too many prospectors, there's no more money in coltan. The soldier grows increasingly belligerent as Sophie ignores him and Mama won't take the coltan as payment for a girl. Mama intervenes and takes his coltan, offering him Salima - the soldier wanted Sophie, but Mama assures him Salima is the better dancer. They dance.



Sophie, relieved, sings another song about the war. Mr Harari talks to Josephine about Sophie. Josephine tells him that Sophie's ruined - the other girls think she brings bad luck. Mr Harari asks Josephine to put on the dress he had brought her.

Whilst Josephine is changing, Mama asks Mr Harari where his shoes have gone. He tells her that a young rebel soldier stole them - this has happened before. Meanwhile Salima struggles briefly with the soldier, who is getting overly friendly. Mr Harari reviews the situation; he chides Mama for taking the man's coltan - he knows how much money that would fetch on the market, and cautions Mama against getting involved in that business. She dismisses his concerns - she cannot understand the fuss about coltan. Mr Harari explains how valuable it is in the age of mobile phones. Mama shows him some gems she has procured, including a raw diamond, and Mr Harari sets about valuing them - mostly worthless, but the raw diamond might make some good money.

Mama compares Mr Harari to her father; we discover Mama's father used to have a farm, before it was taken by a white man. She tells him how important she feels property rights

## PLAY SYNOPSIS con't

are - that land is what she wants. But this is not easy in Congo, without picking up a gun. Mr Harari would love to help find an answer to Mama's wishes, but demurs that he cannot even hold onto a pair of shoes in the country - let alone land. He criticizes the fickle nature of militia politics in the civil war, Mama agrees, but concedes that even the militia need entertainment.

Josephine returns in the new dress. Mr Harari admires her beauty and even suggests he might have to take her home with him, when he leaves Congo.

Jerome shouts Mama over - he orders more beer and complains at the lack of mobile phone reception in the bar.

Josephine tells Mr Harari about Jerome - he's fearless, the boss man, and dangerous.

Salima finally pushes the soldier away and makes for the door. Mama pulls her back in and makes her return to the soldier. Sophie asks if she is ok - the soldier bit Salima and she is upset and does not want to go back to him. Sophie urges that she must.

### *SCENE THREE*

Morning, in the bar's living quarters. Sophie is painting Salima's fingernails with Josephine's nail polish - they have to rush before she returns. Sophie senses there is something wrong with Salima, and questions her. Salima is frustrated and angry at having to work in the bar and be treated badly by soldiers. The soldier had told her that some men had been shot, and she thinks one of them could have been her brother. She says she misses her family, but Sophie silences her - they promised not to talk about home. But Salima continues, saying aloud the name of her baby; she wants to go home. Sophie sets her straight - they cannot go home. Where will they go? The village has thrown them both out and it isn't safe for a woman alone. Sophie talks of her physical pain - every step she takes is a reminder of her attack by the militia men, and the pain will never leave.

Salima tells Sophie that she is pregnant. She cannot tell Mama, who will likely turn her out. Sophie shows Salima a stash of money she has been hiding from Mama, taking it from the bar takings and adjusting the books. Sophie tells Salima they won't be at the bar forever, and swears her to secrecy.

Josephine returns and the girls bicker. She reveals an enormous black scar circumventing her stomach and comments that Salima is looking fatter. Salima and Josephine argue. Sophie tries to placate Josephine and they listen to a report on the radio, talking of more civil unrest. Josephine tells the girls that she is going to the city with Mr Harari next month. She provokes Salima more by referring to her family. Salima runs out and Josephine turns on Sophie, jealous of her beauty and seeming dignity. She tells Sophie that she is worse than a whore, she is ruined. She tells Sophie that she was attacked because her father was the village chief, and no one in the village came to her aid, they looked the other way.



## PLAY SYNOPSIS con't

### SCENE FOUR

Dusk in the bar, bustling with activity. Sophie sings, as Salima and Josephine talk with men. Christian enters, to surprise Mama. She gets him a soda and gives him a list of requests - Sophie has helped her write this. He tells Mama about his latest mission, and that the white pastor has been missing for some days. Rumour has it he had been treating rebel soldiers and upset local militia. The militia are battling with each other for control of the local area, it is a dangerous time for everyone.



Christian asks Mama to become his lover and business partner, they could move to a city and start again. She dismisses his ideas and proposal - she has her own business. Christian tells her she is too proud and stubborn. He asks for a dance. Mama chides his foolishness.

Just then the Commander Osembenga struts into the bar, a rival militia leader with a pompous stride and dark sunglasses, with a pistol at his side. He is accompanied by a Government Soldier in uniform. Christian stops dancing and nods deferentially. Mama welcomes him in and brings him a drink, though she asks him to leave his bullets at the bar - house rules, no matter who he is.



Mama asks him what brings him to the bar. The Commander tells her he is after Jerome Kisenbe. Mama denies knowing him personally, not mentioning that he is a customer. The Commander tells her Jerome is a dangerous man, and talks about his crimes as a rebel leader committed in the name of peace and reconciliation. He reveals his name, as the new boss man; Mama pours him a glass of her finest whiskey from the United States, taking great care of this important man. He issues a veiled threat to Mama: she is a practical woman, and knows better to allow rebel soldiers through her door. Mama agrees, and beckons over Josephine and Salima to entertain the Commander. She leaves the table. Christian urges her to be cautious with the Commander.

The Commander calls Mama over and asks about Christian. Mama assures him Christian is harmless. The Commander buys Christian a whiskey. Christian is in a dilemma - he urges Mama not to make him drink, he has not had a drink for 4 years and must refuse; but Mama knows the danger of refusing this gesture from the Commander. Christian drinks.

## PLAY SYNOPSIS con't

### SCENE FIVE

Morning in the bar. Sophie is reading to Josephine and Salima from a romance novel. The listening girls are rapt. Mama enters with her lock box of money and breaks up the gathering - she tells the girls she does not care for romance, as she knows already of the unsatisfactory ending. Salima spots a man approaching the bar, Mr Harari. Salima and Sophie tease Josephine about Mr Harari. Josephine rounds on Sophie, reminding her that she is ruined and men want a women who is complete - something Sophie will never be. Sophie is upset and Mama sends Josephine out. She tells Sophie to stand up to Josephine.

Alone with Sophie, Mama asks her to count last night's takings. Sophie begins. She finds Mama's rough diamond in the box and asks about it. Mama tells her it is her insurance policy against the war. Sophie suggests to Mama that she could charge a little more for beer, so they could buy a new generator. Mama admires Sophie's quickness with numbers and asks her if she has indeed counted everything. Sophie says she has but Mama reaches inside Sophie's top and produces the bundle of notes hidden there. Angry, Mama threatens to throw Sophie out onto the street. But Sophie tells her why she is saving - there is an operation available to repair the damage on her body inflicted by the soldiers. Mama relents. She takes the money from Sophie and puts it back in the box, congratulating her on being the first girl bold enough to steal from her.

### SCENE SIX

In the bar, the next morning. Josephine is struggling with a drunk miner, whilst Salima sneaks food from under the bar. Christian enters, winded and on edge, covered in dirt. Mama comes to greet him. Christian tells her the white pastor has been killed by Commander Osembenga's soldiers, brutally cut up beyond recognition. Christian asks for a whiskey and Mama is surprised. He gulps down the whiskey and talks about the murder, there were no witnesses and nobody seems to know anything. He criticizes the militia - ignorant country boys who don a uniform and assume control. He demands another whiskey - not a Fanta. He knows that killing a missionary means bad things for the conflict. Mama dismisses this - another dead man, but she still has a business to run - but she seems overwhelmed. Christian asks Mama to leave with him, to go to Kinshasa, set up a business, the two of them. Mama isn't convinced.

Suddenly two ragged soldiers, Fortune and Simon, enter, in ill-fitting uniforms with tatty weapons. Fortune is carrying an iron pot. They are very on edge. They ask if this is the place of Mama Nadi - she in turn confirms this. They ask for a meal and a beer and she demands



## PLAY SYNOPSIS con't

that they empty their weapons and they agree. Sophie enters, noticing the soldiers and the caution in the atmosphere. The soldiers greet her politely. Sophie goes to bring water for the soldiers to wash up.

Mama enquires after the soldiers' origins. They tell her they fight for Commander Osembenga. Fortune asks Mama if Salima is here. Christian starts to answer but Mama cuts him off, asking why the men are looking for her. Fortune gives a description of Salima, convinced Mama is hiding her - he is Salima's husband. Mama coolly tells him she will enquire inside, and exits into the back. Simon reassures his friend that they will find his wife. A man on the road had described Salima and they are convinced that she is at Mama Nadi's.

Mama re-enters and tells the soldiers that no one has heard of Salima: the soldiers are mistaken looking for her here. Fortune accuses Mama of lying - he is adamant she is here. He tells Mama to tell Salima that he will be back for her, and the men leave. Christian scolds Mama with his eyes.

### ACT TWO

#### SCENE ONE

Fortune stands outside the bar, waiting. Inside, the girls entertain drunk customers, soldiers and a miner. Mama and Sophie sing: despite the atrocities of war, the door never closes at Mama's place. Josephine dances, beginning playfully; but her dancing becomes more frenzied as she releases her anger. Overwhelmed, reliving her attack in a painful flashback, she claws at the air. Sophie goes to her aid. Meanwhile, Christian is at the bar, drunk and struggling to remain upright.



#### SCENE TWO

In the back room at the bar. Josephine sleeps. Salima is looking at her pregnant stomach and, as Mama enters, quickly hides it under her clothing. Mama asks Salima to go out and entertain the customers. She is reluctant, so Mama wakes Josephine, who obliges, in a bad mood at being woken. Salima asks Mama if Fortune is still outside. Mama tells her that he is. Salima cannot understand why he won't leave - she doesn't want him to see her. Sophie knows he won't leave until he sees her - she believes he still loves her. But Mama coldly dismisses the romance of this idea - one day, it will turn bad, the questions will come, a man not understanding the violation of his wife by other men. Sophie argues but Mama reminds her that Fortune left Salima for dead: this is her home now. The simple life the girls remembered in the village has gone now. Mama tells Sophie she has read too many romance novels.

Salima cries. Mama goes to send Fortune away. Sophie urges Salima to talk to Fortune, but Salima resists, as Fortune does not know she is pregnant. Salima recounts the story of her brutal attack by the soldiers to Sophie, which happened whilst Fortune was buying her a new cooking pot. The soldiers gang-raped her in the garden and killed her baby by stamping

## PLAY SYNOPSIS con't

on its head. Nobody in the village came to her aid. Salima recalls the moment just before the attack, before everything changed. She tells Sophie that the baby she is pregnant with is not Fortune's. She remembers with pain how his family disowned her after the attack - Fortune beat her ankles. She cannot see him now.

### SCENE THREE

Fortune stands outside the bar in the rain. Mama comes out and advises him to leave - the woman he is looking for is not here. Fortune tells Mama to tell Salima that he loves her. He gives Mama the iron cooking pot for her - it is the pot he had gone to town to get on the day of her attack. Mama scorns his gift, once again telling Fortune to leave, as two drunk government soldiers tumble out of the bar.

Josephine comes out to call the soldiers back, but they leave. Simon appears for Fortune, out of breath. He tells Fortune that Commander Osembenga is gathering his forces and they will be moving on to the next village tomorrow. They have to leave, but Fortune cannot bring himself to leave Salima. Simon will go inside with Josephine and try to find Salima and have some fun at the same time. Fortune is repulsed at the idea. Simon tells him to give up on Salima - if Fortune stays, he will be killed by the rebel militia, and his fellow soldiers are mocking him, chasing his 'impure' wife. This last makes Fortune angry and they struggle, briefly. Simon tells Fortune to be angry at the men who took his wife instead of him, and urges him to kill the rebels to avenge them. Fortune is troubled, he just wants his wife and family back. Simon leaves with a warning that they have been ordered to kill all deserters - he tells his friend Salima is gone.

### SCENE FOUR

The bar. Christian, drunk, recounts a story of the violence of war and the evil of Commander Osembenga. Mr Harari, Mama and Sophie listen, until Mama quietens Christian - his opinions are dangerous.



Two rebel soldiers enter from the back, with Josephine and Jerome Kisembe following. Jerome is on edge. He pushes Josephine away. Mama greets Jerome who tells her that Commander Osembenga has been giving the rebel militia trouble, having set fire to several of their villages, and take machetes to anything that moves. The rebels have been forced deeper into the bush. Josephine spots Mr Harari and is at once torn as to where she should place her affection. Meanwhile Jerome issues a threat to Commander Osembenga - his troops will fight him.

Jerome continues his diatribe against the evils of Commander Osembenga, stating that they are only rebels because they do not respect the official rule of law, which has shown itself to be brutal and have no regard for mercy. Mama drinks to the truth of this. Christian hesitantly does the same.

## PLAY SYNOPSIS con't

Mr Harari introduces himself to Jerome and buys the rebel leader a drink. Mama encourages the rebel men to stay and enjoy the evening, but the men leave, with action in mind. There is a huge sense of relief at their departure. Christian does a crude impression of Jerome, and the girls laugh, Sophie playing along. Unseen, Commander Osembenga enters with Laurent, a sullen soldier. Abruptly Christian stops. The Commander asks about the truck he just saw leaving the bar as he arrived. Christian tells a lie about an aid worker. The Commander is unconvinced and remarks on the vehicle - expensive-looking.

Mama enters and greets the Commander nervously, anxiously glancing at the door. There would be trouble if the rebel leader returned. The Commander settles down for a drink, complimenting Mama. She asks him about any trouble with Jerome Kisembe. The Commander dismisses this 'trouble' - he states he is close to shutting down Kisembe's rebel militia, they are chasing him down. The Commander accuses Kisembe's men of committing atrocities at the local hospital, even removing one man's heart: they force his hand to retaliate with force. Sophie brings them drinks but cringes visibly at the thought of this violent man. The Commander calls her back over, but Sophie tries to pry herself loose. Christian moves to assist but the Commander persists with Sophie on his lap, struggling to get free. Mama takes notice, calling Sophie away but the Commander pulls her back. A struggle ensues as Sophie pushes him away. Mama promises him other women, but he insists on Sophie. Sophie spits at his feet and declares 'I am dead.' Mama is horrified and the Commander is furious. Mama tries to placate the situation to no avail and the Commander relents - if Mama will accompany him outside. She knows what this means and acquiesces.



Mama promises him other women, but he insists on Sophie. Sophie spits at his feet and declares 'I am dead.' Mama is horrified and the Commander is furious. Mama tries to placate the situation to no avail and the Commander relents - if Mama will accompany him outside. She knows what this means and acquiesces.

Mama re-enters, and slaps Sophie hard across the face, ordering to go out to the Commander and give him some pleasure. Christian is shocked but Mama knows how dangerous the situation is - offending the Commander is no light matter and is damaging to her business. Christian balks at her use of the word 'business'. Mama is indignant, criticising his hypocrisy: he is happy to drink there, and now he questions her morals. She tells of her struggle to survive, to build a business from nothing: she was not always Mama Nadi, but had to find her. Christian makes to leave. She warns that he'll be back when he wants another beer. Christian disagrees: he won't be back.

### *SCENE FIVE*

The Commander and Laurent stumble, laughing, out of the bar. They meet Fortune, who tells them he has seen Jerome Kisembe inside Mama Nadi's bar, that she was hiding him today. The Commander is incensed. Fortune tells him that Mama is also hiding his wife. The Commander and Laurent exit quickly, in pursuit of Jerome Kisembe.

## PLAY SYNOPSIS con't

### SCENE SIX

Dawn at the bar. Mr Harari paces, ready to leave and awaiting a lift out of the area with an aid worker. Mama wipes down a bar and offers him a drink whilst he waits, which he accepts. He is very anxious to leave this war-torn area. He talks about the nature of the war and the difficulty in having to befriend both everybody and nobody at the same time. Mama brushes it away - let the soldiers fight it out, is her attitude, because nothing will change in the end - the fighting is futile. Mr Harari expresses his concern for girls like Sophie and makes to leave. Mama stops him quickly, and asks him to sell the diamond: he will take Sophie with him and give her the money from the diamond. He does not entirely understand why but agrees. Mama calls Sophie, but before she can appear, Mr Harari has left in the car, taking the rough diamond with him. Fortune enters with Commander Osembenga and soldiers. He stands over Mama and accuses her of hiding Jerome Kitembe. She denies all knowledge, calling Fortune crazy. Once again the Commander challenges her to reveal Kitembe's whereabouts but again she denies all knowledge. She offers the Commander a drink but he refuses. The soldiers raid the bar, finding Mama's lock box. They break it open and take all the money. They throw Sophie, Mama and Josephine onto the floor - they will only stop if Mama tells his where Kitembe is hiding. Josephine lets out that he was here. Just then, Salima enters, a pool of blood forming in the middle of her dress; blood drips down her legs. She screams at the soldiers. They stop abruptly, shocked. Fortune sees Salima and rushes towards her. Mama calls urgently for some hot water to help Salima, trying to keep her alive. Salima dies.

### SCENE SEVEN

Some time later, in the bar. Sophie sweeps the floor, singing. Mama stands at the door, trying to attract business. It does not come. She despairs at the state of business now, times are hard.

Christian enters in a new suit. Mama pretends not to be pleased to see him, concealing her excitement. They greet each other sarcastically, but not without affection. Christian has managed to bribe his way past the road block and is surprised to find Mama is still here. Mama brushes this away, instead criticising Christian's dress. He flirts with her.

Sophie enters and hugs her uncle. He has brought her a book and a letter from her mother, though he tells her not to expect too much from the latter. Sophie is shocked to receive a letter at all, and exits to read it alone.

Mama expresses her surprise at seeing Christian again, after their last encounter. He fights with himself, but believes they have unfinished business. He once again asks Mama to settle down with him. Again she refuses and tries to change the subject, but he persists, hard. Finally she admits: she is ruined. Christian absorbs her words but does not leave. He comforts Mama in his arms and will not let her push him away. He kisses her. Finally, they dance together, Sophie and Josephine watching on.



## **CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM**

**Mama Nadi** Yanna McIntosh  
**Christian** Sterling Jarvis  
**Harari** Richard Alan Campbell

**Osembenga** Lucky Ejim  
**Josephine** Abena Malika  
**Simon** Muoi Nene  
**Laurent** Anthony Palmer  
**Sofie** Sabryn Rock  
**Fortune** Marc Senior  
**Kisembe** Andre Sills  
**Salima** Sophia Walker  
**Musician** Daniso Ndhlovu

**Playwright** Lynn Nottage  
**Director** Philip Akin  
**Stage Manager** Michael Sinclair  
**Production Manager** Doug Morum  
**Set Design** Gillian Gallow  
**Costume Design** Nadine Grant  
**Lighting Design** Rebecca Picherak  
**Sound Design** Chris Stanton  
**Property Master** David Hoekstra  
**Poster Design** Art Group 22/Geffen  
Playhouse

## ABOUT OBSIDIAN THEATRE

Obsidian is Canada's leading culturally diverse theatre company. Their threefold mission is to produce plays, to develop playwrights and to train emerging theatre professionals. Obsidian is passionately dedicated to the exploration, development, and production of the Black voice. Obsidian produces plays from a world-wide canon focusing primarily, but not exclusively, on the works of highly acclaimed Black playwrights. Obsidian provides artistic support, promoting the development of work by Black theatre makers and offering training opportunities through mentoring and apprenticeship programs for emerging Black Artists.

## ABOUT NIGHTWOOD THEATRE

As Canada's national women's theatre since 1979, Nightwood has launched the careers of countless leading theatre artists in the country. We have won Canada's highest literary and performing arts awards and more than ever our success proves the need for theatre that gives voice to women and celebrates the diversity of Canadian society. We remain actively engaged in mentoring young women and promoting women's place on the local, national and international stage.

## ABOUT LYNN NOTTAGE

**Lynn Nottage was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1964.** Her parents were a schoolteacher and a child psychologist. Keen on theatre from an early age, she attended New York's High School of Music and Art, before Brown University and Yale School of Drama. Her work often deals with the lives of African Americans and the struggles of women.

Apart from *Ruined*, *Intimate Apparel* is probably Nottage's best known play, centred on the story of an African-American woman's journey to independence, with her moving to New York to pursue her dreams and becoming a seamstress. *Fabulation, or the Re-Education of Undine* could be seen as a thematic sequel to this, and once again involves an African-American woman dealing with change in New York. Undine is a successful publicist living in Manhattan until her husband leaves her taking all her money. She is forced to return to Brooklyn, to her former existence, and to deal with her working-class relatives.

Nottage was awarded the Guggenheim Grant for Playwriting in 2005. In 2007 Nottage won the MacArthur Foundation Genius Grant and the National Black Theatre Festival's August Wilson Playwriting Award. *Ruined* itself won several high-profile awards including an Obie for Best New American Play in 2008, the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2009 and most recently, co-winner of the newly established Horton Foote Prizes, awarded on August 30/10 named in honour of the late legendary writer. Lynn Nottage is a visiting lecturer at Yale School of Drama and sits on The Dramatists Guild Council, an alumna of new American dramatists.

### Selected Plays

**1993** *Poof*

**1995** *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*

**1998** *Mud, River, Stone*

**1998** *Por'Knockers*

**2002** *Las Meninas*

**2003** *Intimate Apparel*

**2004** *Fabulation, or the Re-Education of Undine*

**2007** *Ruined*



## LYNN NOTTAGE ON *RUINED*

**Lynn Nottage writes here about the journey she went on in search of *Ruined*.**

Six years ago, I travelled to East Africa to interview Congolese women fleeing the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. I was fuelled by my desire to tell the story of war, but through the eyes of women, who as we know rarely start conflicts, but inevitably find themselves right smack in the middle of them. I was interested in giving voice and audience to African women living in the shadows of war.

The circumstances in the DRC are complicated; there is a slow simmering armed conflict that continues to be fought on several fronts, even though the war officially ended in 2002. You have one war being fought for natural resources between militias funded by the government and industry, you have the remnants of an ethnic war, which is the residue of the genocide in Rwanda that spilled over the border into Congo, and then you have the war that I examine in my play *Ruined*, which is the war being waged against women. To throw some statistics at you, according to International Rescue Committee, nearly 5.4 million people have died in that country since that conflict began; every month, 45,000 Congolese people die from hunger, preventable disease and violence related to war. The fact is the war in Congo is the deadliest conflict since World War II. It is sometimes called World War III, because of the international interests that fuel the conflict in order to exploit the land, which is rich in minerals such as gold, coltan, copper and diamonds.

In 2004 I went to East Africa to collect the narratives of Congolese women, because I knew their stories weren't being heard. I had no idea what play I would find in that war-torn landscape, but I travelled to the region, because I wanted to paint a three dimensional portrait of the women caught in the middle of armed conflicts; I wanted to understand who they were beyond their status as victims.

I was surprised by the number of women who readily wanted to share their stories. One by one, through tears and in voices just above a whisper, they recounted raw, revealing stories of sexual abuse and torture at the hands of both rebel soldiers and government militias. The word rape was a painful refrain, repeated so often it made me physically sick. By the end of the interviews I realised that a war was being fought over the bodies of women. Rape was being used as a weapon to punish and destroy communities. In listening to their narratives I came to terms with the extent to which their bodies had become battlefields.

I remember the strong visceral response that I had to the very first Congolese woman who shared her story. Her name was Salima, and she related her story in such graphic detail that I remember wanting to cry out for her to stop, but I knew that she had a need to be heard. She'd walked miles from her refugee camp to share her story with a willing listener. Salima described being dragged from her home, arrested and wrongfully imprisoned by men seeking to arrest her husband. In prison she was beaten and raped by five soldiers. She finally bribed her way out of prison, only to discover that her husband and two of her four children were abducted. At the time of the interview she still had not learned the whereabouts of her husband and two children. I found my play *Ruined* in the painful narratives of Salima and the other Congolese women, in their gentle cadences and the

## LYNN NOTTAGE ON *RUINED* con't

monumental space between their gasps and sighs. I also found my play in the way they occasionally accessed their smiles, as if glimpsing beyond their wounds into the future.

In *Ruined* Mama Nadi gives three young woman refuge and an unsavoury means of survival. As such, the women do a fragile dance between hope and disillusionment in an attempt to navigate life on the edge of an unforgiving conflict. My play is not about victims, but survivors. *Ruined* is also the story of the Congo. A country blessed with an abundance of natural beauty and resources, which has been its blessing and its curse.

**Lynn Nottage, April 2010.**

## INTERVIEW WITH PHILIP AKIN

### **Why did you decide to direct *Ruined*?**

I love Lynn Nottage's plays. From the first time I heard about *Ruined* I was intrigued by what she would do with it and so I followed the development of play and finally saw it in New York. I was so taken with the fact that it was an African story. One that was not told via a Western character and that it speaks with hope. The characters and their stories spoke to me in a profound way and I just knew that I needed to bring this play to Toronto



### **What attracts you to the Berkeley Theatre? What appeals to you about the space?**

The Downstairs space at the Berkeley has both a breadth of space and an intimacy that will allow the play to sit deep in the audience. It allows one to wrap the action around the audience and pull them in.

### **Why do you think *Ruined* is relevant to audiences now?**

*Ruined* is relevant now because it lives in the ongoing now. The survivors in this play are based on real survivors. Their stories are continuing to this day and in fact new stories of war and its devastation of women continue to be written even as you read this. But it is also relevant because it shows people who continue with their lives. People who can find hope and friendship even in the most horrific of circumstances.

### **What research do you do before rehearsals start?**

I have done more research on this play than on any other that I have been involved in. Part of it is online at <http://ruined-obsidian.blogspot.com/>. Of course I have read as much about the ongoing war, mining issues, music, dance, road conditions and accents etc. All help to frame the stakes for each character and give a rich texture to every word. It is also imperative that to keep in mind that while the research leads to some pretty dark places that darkness needs to have light to fully exist.

### **How did you go about understanding what life is like for women in the play?**

By listening. It's funny because when I talked to Lynn after seeing the NY production I asked her why it wasn't as bleak as I had expected. She said, "Because it was directed by a woman." I figured that there was a lot of merit in why she said that and so I have tried to listen and fully understand how those differing sensibilities could manifest themselves.

### **None of the characters is entirely virtuous or malicious. Why do you think that is?**

Kate Whoriskey who directed the premier production wrote the introduction to the published version of the play. She speaks of a conversation that Lynn had with a survivor of the Rwandan genocide and asked him about life after the genocide. He said, "We must fight to sustain the complexity." That phrase became the guiding spirit to their production and I have taken it on for this one. Thus no one is entirely one thing or the other and that makes them universally human. It is that complexity of character that Lynn creates so well and

## INTERVIEW WITH PHILIP AKIN con't

thereby brings to life people we can understand and relate to. Without that deep human involvement what we would get are ciphers or mouthpieces for propaganda. Instead we have people we are viscerally affected by.

### **How is directing a new play different to working on other, older texts?**

I have never worked on older texts where the playwright is not alive so this is really what I am used to. I like having that direct connection with the playwright and have built several long lasting friendships because we work together to reveal the playwright's message.

### **What does this play mean to you personally? What's your inspiration?**

It was in 2008 that I first heard of this play and I have been working to produce it ever since. *Ruined* is a necessity for me. Well perhaps more of an obsession really. This story has hit me deep inside and no matter what I needed to bring this play to the stage. This is a play of survivors. Not victims. And that is an African story that you do not see very often. The women in this play are the distillation of many women who have survived horrors we can only imagine and yet they are still wrapped in humanity. How could I not want these people to live here for our audience?

## **DRC: THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

**The Democratic Republic of Congo is a vast country in central Africa, one rich in economic resources; and yet the country is one of the worlds poorest, with a long history of rife corruption and civil war.**

The first European known to have visited the region was Portuguese navigator Diogo Cao in 1482 who established ties with the then King of Kongo. During the 16th and 17th centuries, British, Dutch, Portuguese and French merchants engaged in the slave trade. In 1884 European powers recognised King Leopold II's claim and he announced himself head of the 'Congo Free State'. King Leopold expanded and consolidated his control and exploitation of the region at the cost of millions of deaths of Congolese people.

Known as Zaire until 1997, the DRC has faced constant civil unrest, with government corruption widespread and militia groups forming and fragmenting and re-forming almost constantly over the last century. The region is made up of several peoples, notably the Hutus and Tutsis. As the power structures oscillated between the various interest groups, often reinforced by the control or influence of residual colonial powers, so communities of exiled and refugee populations were established throughout the region, many of whom formed armed groups and rebel factions within and across country borders. Other countries in the region and further afield also fuelled conflict through the profitable arms trade and the exploitation and control of the region's rich mineral deposits. The country was a Belgian colony until 1960, whereupon independence brought the country immediately into an army mutiny and a bold attempt at secession by the province of Katanga, an area hugely rich in natural mineral wealth. In 1961, the then prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, was seized and killed by troops loyal to army chief Joseph Mobutu. Mobutu himself seized power in 1965, when he renamed the country Zaire and himself Mobutu Sese Seko. He turned the country into a centre for campaigns against the Soviet-backed Angola and in doing so guaranteed US backing. But he simultaneously made Zaire synonymous with corruption.

Following the Cold War, the US lost interest in Zaire and the country's internal corruption intensified. In 1997 neighbouring Rwanda invaded the country to flush out extremist Hutu militias. This gave a sharp boost to the anti-Mobutu rebels, who quickly captured the capital, Kinshasa, overthrew Mobutu's government, installing Laurent Kabila as president and renaming the country the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Despite the new government, political unrest continued apace. A new rebellion was provoked by a surging rift between Mr Kabila and his former allies, the latter backed by Rwanda and Uganda. Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe in turn took Kabila's side, and the whole country effectively became a battleground of continental proportions. This conflict, known as the Second Congo War, raged between 1998 and 2003, and has been termed Africa's world war. The five-year war pitted government forces, supported by Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, against rebel militia backed by Uganda and Rwanda. The war was one of the worst emergencies in Africa in recent decades and claimed approximately three million lives, in a combination of war violence or its by-products of disease and malnutrition.

Despite a peace deal and the formation of a transitional government in 2003, civil unrest has never entirely ceased. In 2008 an escalation of coup attempts and localised violence caused

## **DRC: THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO con't**

renewed fighting in the eastern part of the country. Thousands of civilians were displaced when Rwandan Hutu militias clashed with government forces. Another rebel militia group led by General Laurent Nkunda had signed a peace deal with the government, but clashes broke out just months later. Gen Nkunda's forces advanced the provincial capital Goma in the autumn, attacking government bases and causing civilians and troops to flee. UN peacekeepers desperately tried to hold the line alongside the remaining government forces. In January 2009 the government attempted to bring the situation under control by inviting in troops from neighbouring Rwanda to engage in a joint campaign against the rebel Hutu militias active in the east of the DRC. General Nkunda was arrested by Rwanda, who had until then seen him as a key ally. At present eastern areas remain beset by widespread localised violence. This unending conflict may be in no small part due to the war's economic as well as political motivations. The country's vast mineral wealth is often at the centre of points of conflict, fuelling fighting by rival factions and splinter militia groups taking advantage of the continuing anarchy to make personal gain. The West's persistent reliance on technology manufacture demanding the Congo's mineral ores brings a sustained fan to the fire of a war turned in on itself.

### **CONGO FACTFILE**

**Full name:** Democratic Republic of the Congo

**Population:** 66 million (UN, 2009)

**Capital:** Kinshasa

**Area:** 2.34 million sq km (905,354 sq miles)

**Major languages:** French, Lingala, Kiswahili, Kikongo, Tshiluba

**Major religions:** Christianity, Islam

**Life expectancy:** 46 years (men), 49 years (women) (UN)

**Monetary unit:** 1 Congolese franc = 100 centimes

**Main exports:** Diamonds, copper, coffee, cobalt, crude oil

**GNI per capita:** US \$150 (World Bank, 2008)

# WOMEN AND THE CONFLICT

## Article from Amnesty International

We have been campaigning to Stop Violence Against Women against the legal background of the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. One of our concerns has been the impact of conflict on women – most commonly reported as rape, though war and conflict affect women in many different ways. *Ruined* is about the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) but the effects of conflict on women are similar everywhere, be it in Northern Ireland, Israel/Occupied Territories, Balkans or Afghanistan. During and after a conflict, civilians try to go about their normal daily lives – feeding their family, earning a living, seeking education, keeping healthy and maintaining a semblance of dignity and family life. All civilians, men, women and children, face great hurdles in trying to keep things together. But the particular challenges faced by women are often poorly understood. In peace negotiations and reconstruction efforts, the policies, solutions and resources proposed often fail to target the root problems and traditionally focus on men, the returning soldiers. Women are usually completely absent from the decision-making process and their needs, and the key role they can play, are not highlighted in reconstruction programmes. UN Security Council Resolution 1325, passed in 2000, is very clear that we cannot expect to achieve a lasting, sustainable peace and economic regeneration unless the whole society, including the at least 50% who are women, are able to play a full economic and political role in designing, delivering and implementing the peace. However, these are fine words which often fall short in practice. A recent example was in Liberia, where there were many women ex-combatants. Some had chosen to join armed groups, others were abducted; almost all suffered mass rape, were often forced to act as ‘army wives’ and bore many children. In the first attempted peace initiatives, the UN programme of disarmament and re-integration, conceived by men, failed to factor in the experiences of these women ex-combatants. Some well-intentioned reintegration initiatives offered access to education and training, and to small funds to start income-generating schemes. To benefit from these schemes, ex-combatants had to come forward, hand in their weapon and declare themselves ex-combatants. In many cases, however, the women had either not been given weapons or male commanders had taken them away. As a result it was almost exclusively men who benefited from the programmes. The training and education schemes, with no childcare, were set up in locations and at times making it difficult or unsafe for women to attend. Women were deterred from declaring themselves ex-combatants as they faced being stigmatised and ostracised in their communities – either because they might have committed violent acts, or because they had been raped. The UN initiatives did not take account of the reality and severity of stigma against such women, or offer any measures to tackle it.

Encouragingly, many local women are taking the initiative and developing schemes to help women rebuild their lives and those of their children, to the advantage of the local community and economy. The most successful of these precisely address the need to create safe women-only spaces to tackle stigma. They also always include income-generating schemes to give women some independence, as they are often rejected by the men on whom they have traditionally depended.

Such schemes not only benefit the women themselves but also strengthen the long-term

## **WOMEN AND THE CONFLICT con't**

economic stability of their communities. Their income generation is usually reinvested in local businesses and their community, which raises the general standard of living, creates employment and stimulates trade and stability. According to the World Bank Gender Action Plan: 'A host of studies suggest that putting earnings in women's hands is the intelligent thing to do to speed up development and the process of overcoming poverty. Women usually reinvest a much higher portion in their families and communities than men, spreading wealth beyond themselves. This could be one reason why countries with greater gender equality tend to have lower poverty rates.'

### **NUMBERS: IN THE KIVU PROVINCES**

About 1600 women are raped every week, mainly by armed men.

More than 8000 cases of rape were reported in 2009.

At least 1,350,000 people are displaced; around 1,000,000 of these were displaced in 2009.

Source: UN Office of Humanitarian Affairs, 9 February 2010



## RAPE: A WEAPON OF WAR

### **Heather Harvey, a Stop Violence Against Women campaigner from Amnesty International speaks of Rape: A Weapon of War**

There is a tendency to assume that rape is a natural fallout of war, or a few bad apples running wild. In fact, during wars, attacks on civilians have always been termed War Crimes but it was never taken that seriously. The use of rape as a systematic tactic of warfare though only began to be really widely recognised in the Balkans conflict.

The Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Tribunal of (the former) Yugoslavia 1998 was unusual in being drafted with input of women's groups following that conflict. As a result it included the most extensive definition of rape of any country, even today. The ICT of Rwanda and Yugoslavia have reaffirmed that rape – even just one rape – is a war crime, but that rape on a mass and widespread scale as a tactic or weapon of war is a crime against humanity and can be a constitutive element of genocide.

'Rape as a weapon of war' refers to the deliberate, strategic and widespread use of rape as a tactic to achieve military goals. The aim of war is generally to gain control of a territory and its resources. To do this you have to exterminate, subjugate, win over or cause to flee the enemy or target population; you also aim to minimise the cost, outlay and loss of your own soldiers' lives, and ensure that the enemy is not able to regroup or form any viable opposition or resistance. Rape is a cheap and easy means to achieve this. It requires no major financial outlay, weapons, ammunition, or transport systems. It spreads terror and causes populations to flee the land you want to take over. It is so utterly destructive that people cannot look each other in the eyes let alone form a working resistance. In many cases the rapes take place in front of family and community, men and boys may be forced to rape their own relatives. And of course men and boys themselves may be raped. Mass rape is not a 'fair' way to fight: this is precisely why it is prohibited in the laws of war.

The problem is that as long as mass rape as a strategy goes unchallenged it will continue to be a preferred weapon or tactic. Women who are victims of rape in conflict will often be pregnant from the rape with little or no access to choices or services on how to deal with this. There are of course severe risks of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV aids. Many of the women will be subjected to horrific injuries and mutilations. In many cases they will have severe long-term internal vaginal and anal injuries. These are often life-threatening but can also result in problems in childbirth and fertility for the future and can often result in severe tearing and laceration that can cause haemorrhaging, fistula and severe infections. Women who bear such disabling illnesses and injuries or who have been victims of rape, particularly in the context of the DRC, are 'ruined'. They will be rejected and ostracised by their husband, family and community. This will mean that in societies where few women have been given access to education or to the labour market and where a woman's status and access to income is dependent on her role as a wife and mother then she will also be unmarriageable, undesirable and destitute having to turn to anything at all as a survival strategy.

## **RAPE: A WEAPON OF WAR con't**

War crimes have been committed by all those involved in fighting in the DRC. The UN has also clearly identified that if you do not prosecute and provide redress for war crimes such as rape and other human rights violations committed in a conflict then the conflict will be reignited, prolonged and deepened (UN resolution 1820). Amnesty is calling for better implementation of both Resolution 1325 involving women in post conflict decision making and Resolution 1820 challenging impunity for war crimes notably rape in conflict.

Amnesty International welcomes this brave play as an illustration of many of the horrors of the conflict in DRC and conflicts around the world. We hope you will join us in our struggle for human rights.

# CONFLICT MINERALS IN THE DRC

**Sexual violence in Congo is often fuelled by militias and armies warring over “conflict minerals,” the ores that produce tin, tungsten, and tantalum – the ‘3 Ts’ – as well as gold.**

Armed groups from Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda finance themselves through the illicit conflict mineral trade and fight over control of mines and taxation points inside Congo. The story does not end there. Internal and international business interests move these conflict minerals from Central Africa around the world to countries in East Asia, where they are processed into valuable metals, and then onward into a wide range of electronics products. Consumers in the United States, Europe, and Asia are the ultimate end-users of these conflict minerals, as we inadvertently fuel the war through our purchases of these electronics products. This trail has been well documented by the United Nations and others.

The principal conflict minerals are:

## **TIN (produced from cassiterite)**

Used inside your mobile phone and all electronic products as a solder on circuit boards. The biggest use of tin worldwide is in electronic products. Congolese armed groups earn approximately \$85 million per year from trade in tin.

## **TANTALUM (produced from coltan)**

Used to store electricity in capacitors in iPods, digital cameras, and mobile phones. 65 to 80 percent of the world’s tantalum is used in electronic products. Congolese armed groups earn an estimated \$8 million per year from trading in tantalum.

## **TUNGSTEN (produced from wolframite)**

Used to make your mobile phone or Blackberry vibrate. Tungsten is a growing source of income for armed groups in Congo, with armed groups currently earning approximately \$2 million annually.

## **GOLD**

Used in jewellery and as a component in electronics. Extremely valuable and easy to smuggle, Congolese armed groups are earning between \$44 million to \$88 million per year from gold.

## ITURI CONFLICT

***Ruined* is set in the Ituri region of the Democratic Republic of Congo. This page outlines the specific conflict that has plagued the North Eastern part of the country.**

The official dates of the conflict are 1999-2003, however there was 'low-level' violence, requiring an EU peace keeping force until 2008. The conflict in the North Eastern Region is between the agriculturist Lendu tribe and the pastoralist Hema tribe. The Nationalist and Inegrationalist Front (FNI) represent the Lendu and the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC) fight for the Hema. Increased violence as a result of 'borrowing' ethnic ideology from the Hutu-Tutsi conflict. Human Rights Watch reported that the Lendu began thinking of themselves as kin to the Hutu, whilst the Hema began to identify themselves with the Tutsi.

Background: The Belgian colonists favoured the Hema, resulting in them being wealthier and better educated than the Lendu. This divergence continued into modern times. However, the two peoples have largely lived together peacefully, practicing extensive intermarriage. Northern Hema people speak Lendu, southern Hema people speak Hema.

Longstanding grievances about land issues erupted on at least 3 previous occasions 1972, 1985, 1996. A lot of the animosity revolves around the 1973 'land use law', which allows people to buy land which they do not inhabit and then force residents to leave two years later when ownership can no longer be legally contested. Some Hema were allegedly using this tactic in 1999. The 1994 Rwandan genocide made people even more aware of their tribal and linguistic affiliation. Influx of Hutu refugees into the region, which led to the 1st Congo war served as further emphasis. However, when the 2nd Congo War began in 1998, the situation between the Hema and Lendu tribes reached the level of regional conflict. The area was occupied by the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) and the Ugandan backed Kinsangani faction of the rebel Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD-K) under the leadership of Ernest Wamba dia Wamba.

The Ituri province was created out of the eastern Orientale province in June 1999 by James Kazini, commander of the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF). He ignored the protests of the Rcd-K leadership and appointed a Hema to be the new governor. This convinced the Lendu that Uganda and the RCD-K backed the Hema over them and violence erupted between the 2 groups. Reports indicate that Lendu trainees refused to join the RCD-K and instead set up ethnically-based militias. Fighting began to slow in late 1999 when the RCD-K named a neutral replacement to head the provincial government. However in 2001, it flared up again after the UPDF replaced the government with a Hema appointee. The RCD-K appointee was moved to Kampala and held by the Ugandan government without explanation. Wamba dia Wamba's (RCD-K) military base collapsed shortly after as it was now without Ugandan support, largely because it was perceived to have a pro Lendu stance.

Although the official conflict ended in 2003, the low level conflict that continued has killed tens of thousands more people. The continued Ituri conflict has been blamed both on the lack of any real authority in the region, which has become a patchwork of areas claimed by armed militia, and the competition among various armed groups for the control of natural resources in the area. 50% of militia members are under 18 and some are as young as 8.

## **PLACES IN RUINED**

**A guide to some of the key places mentioned in *Ruined*.**

### **BUNIA**

Bunia is a city in Democratic Republic of the Congo and is the capital of Ituri Province. The city was formerly the headquarters of Ituri district when it was part of the former Orientale Province. As of 2009 it had an estimated population of 106,197. Bunia lies at an elevation of 1275m on a plateau about 30 km west of Lake Albert in the Great Rift Valley, and about 25 km east of the Ituri Forest. The city is at the center of the Ituri conflict between the Lendu and Hema. In the Second Congo War the city was the scene of much fighting and many civilian deaths were incurred. Consequently the city is the base of one of the largest United Nations peacekeeping forces in Africa, and its headquarters in northeastern DRC. There are White Christian Missions in Bunia and have been since the Belgians occupied DRC.

The main dirt highways connecting north-eastern DR Congo with Kisangani to the west and Butembo and Goma to the south pass through Bunia, but have fallen into disrepair and are virtually impassable, especially after the frequent rains. Bunia is only 40km from the Ugandan border running down Lake Albert, but there are no road connections across the Great Rift Valley to the closest Ugandan towns of Toro and Fort Portal. Instead a dirt highway going north-east reaches Arua and Gulu north of the lake. Before the war made the route impassable, this was the chief trade route between the DRC and Uganda, as well between the DRC and Juba in Sudan, and Bunia was an important market city, for cross-border trade as well as internal trade. Bunia is linked to the small port of Kisenye on Lake Albert by a 60-kilometre dirt track via Bogoro, which has a spectacular and dangerous 600-metre descent of the western escarpment of the Great Rift Valley. Kisenye has a jetty from which boat transport can link with Mahagi-Port at the north end of the lake, and with Butiaba on the Ugandan side and Pakwach on the Albert Nile.

### **CHINA**

From the DRC, coltan is exported to facilities, such as Ningxia Non-ferrous Metals Smeltery in China, for processing and is manufactured into consumer and industrial goods sold in North America and Europe.

### **ITURI RAINFOREST**

The Ituri Rainforest is about 63,000 km square in area, and is located between 0° and 3°N and 27° and 30° E. Elevation in the Ituri ranges from about 700 m to 1000 m. The average temperature is 31°C and the average humidity is about 85%. The Ituri forest is the home of the Mbuti pygmies, one of the hunter-gatherer peoples living in equatorial rainforests characterised by their short height (below one and a half metres, or 59 inches, on average).

### **KISANGANI**

Population in 2004 was 682,599, 447 m above sea level, 696 km from Bunia and 2912 km from Kinshasa. The city's land area is estimated at 1910 square kilometres. The City of Kisangani has a density of 229 inhabitants per square kilometre. The language most spoken at home by the population in the city is Swahili and Lingala, followed by French. The official language of Kisangani is French as defined by the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Kisangani is the 3rd largest city in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the

## **PLACES IN *RUINED* con't**

largest of cities that lie in the tropical woodlands of the Congo. It is the provincial capital of Tshopo. Formerly known as Stanleyville in French, the city takes its present name from Boyoma, the seven-arched falls located north of the city, whose name was also initially given to the landscape on which the city is located. Kisangani is the Swahili name of the city, whilst in Lingala it is called Singitini (or Singatini), each of which share the same meaning of 'the City on the Island'. Kisangani is the nation's major inland port after Kinshasa, an important commercial hub point for river and land transportation and a major marketing and distribution centre for the north-eastern part of the country. It has been the commercial capital of the northern Congo since the late 1800s. Kisangani has been home to influential politicians, including the national hero Patrice Emery Lumumba, the first prime minister of the country. Before the country gained independence from Belgium in 1960, Kisangani was reputed to have more Rolls-Royces per capita than any other city in the world. In 1999 the city was the site of the first open fighting between Ugandan and Rwandan forces in the Second Congo War. This followed the fracturing of the anti-government rebel Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) into camps based in Kisangani and Goma. The fighting was also over the gold mines located near the town. The local population were caught in the crossfire between Ugandan and Rwandan military forces which led to the destruction of about a quarter of the city and some 3000 fatalities.

### **LEBANON**

Mr Harari is a Lebanese diamond merchant. Beirut is 2,256 miles North East of Bunia.

### **MBUTI**

The Mbuti people have lived in the Ituri Forest for many thousands of years, and it is even speculated that they might be the earliest inhabitants of Africa.

### **ORIENTALE PROVINCE**

Orientale (formerly Haut-Zaïre, then Haut-Congo) is a province of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It lies in the northeast of the country, and its provincial capital is Kisangani. It borders Equateur province to the west, Kasai-Oriental to the southwest, Maniema to the south, and Nord-Kivu to the southeast. It also borders the Central African Republic and Sudan to the north, and Uganda to the east. The Ituri district of Orientale was the scene of Ituri conflict. The Ituri province was created out of the eastern Orientale province in June 1999 by James Kazini, commander of the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF).

### **UGANDA**

Christian imports cigarettes from over the border in Uganda. Uganda borders the Ituri region of the DRC. The Ugandan People's defence force created 4 provinces out of the Orientale region in 1999, including the Ituri. The Ugandan's backed a Hema to become leader of the Ituri province twice, in 1999 and in 2001. They also support pro Hema militia.

### **YAKA YAKA MINE**

The Yaka are an ethnic group of Southwestern Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola. They number about 300,000. They live in the forest and savanna areas between the Kwango and Wamba rivers. They are very artistic. Many of their religious and cultural customs transcend ethnic boundaries, and are shared with the Suku and Lunda.

## PRACTICAL EXERCISE ONE

### Exercise 1. There's no blood on my mobile!

**Duration:** 25 mins

**Aim:** To understand the context of the play, particularly in relation to the mining of coltan and the impact that this has on those living in the DRC

**Practical Work:** Read through the context articles. An article in *The Independent* in May 2006 said: 'Men, women and children – lots of children – pick desperately with makeshift hammers or their bare hands at the red earth, hoping to find some coltan or cassiterite to set on the long conveyor belt to your house, or mine.' Brainstorm the supply chain, or 'conveyor belt', of coltan – how does it reach the consumer and what are the consequences of mobile phone consumerism in the West? Now think about this physically. Create six, eightbeat phrases – three relating to the use of coltan and three highlighting its impact in the DRC. Now try playing these all together – a literal conveyor belt from the mines to the consumer.

**Evaluate:** Ask the students to consider who should take responsibility for the situation in the DRC. Is it the consumer who willingly upgrades his or her mobile phone and consequently fuels the demand for more coltan? Is it the mobile phone companies who all have Corporate Social Responsibility Policies, yet claim that they do not know the origin of the minerals used in their products? Or is it the rebel groups in the DRC using coltan to fund weapons? Or is it the corrupt Congolese government and its army, with its horrific human rights record? Ask volunteer students to represent each level in the supply chain, from the miners in the DRC through to the consumers in the West and have them arrange themselves first in order of supply/demand and then in order of overall responsibility.

## PRACTICAL EXERCISE TWO

### Exercise 2. Playing with Status

**Duration:** 30 mins

**Aim:** To explore hierarchy in the everyday lives of people in the DRC – particularly the women.

**You will need:** Multiple copies of Script Extract #1

**Practical Work:** To warm into this exercise, have students silently order themselves in a line by age, height, colour of hair, birth date etc. What gives a person status? Is it positions of authority or are there other factors? Have students read the following scene between Mama Nadi and the Commander – how does the status play out between them? Try playing the scene on a line with the actors taking a step forwards or backwards on every line, depending on their status. This is a very visual way of seeing how status shifts.

**Evaluate:** Ask the group how they felt playing the scene on a line? Was it clear who gained status and when? Was it always obvious who had the higher status? What does this exercise say about the role of women in the DRC? Using this analysis, it might be worth replaying the scene using the original text.

## PRACTICAL EXERCISE THREE

### Exercise 3. Salima's Story

**Duration:** 30 mins

**Aim:** To explore the horrific impact that the conflict in DRC has on women

**You will need:** Multiple copies of Script Extract #2

**Practical Work:** Read Salima's story. She is confiding in Sophie about the atrocities inflicted on her when she was kidnapped by rebel forces – and it is the reason why she is ignoring her husband, Fortune, who has come to find her, and leaves him sitting in the rain. In groups, try playing this scene, in slow motion, while Salima tells her story. Try to physically exaggerate her ordeal - the kidnap, the rape and torture, the fact that she is forced to clean and serve the soldiers and then the fact that her family turns her back on her.

**Evaluate:** It is the job of the director to make the audience feel Salima's pain – as well as visualising it. How did physicalising the story help to achieve this? Try replaying the story through a series of between three and six emotional feelings – both vocalising and physicalising them – from anger, to blame, to shame, to pain... How does this help you to get into the mindset of the character?

## PRACTICAL EXERCISE FOUR

### Exercise 4. Verbatim Theatre

**Duration:** 20 mins (plus share back time)

**Aim:** To try out verbatim theatre techniques to explore and understand some of the methods that were used by Lynn Nottage in the writing of *Ruined*.

**You will need:** Dictaphones/recordable MP3 players and earphones (one per pair)

**Practical Work:** Get into pairs, each pair with a dictaphone/MP3 player or pen and paper. Interview each other in turn on a subject of your choice (favourite food, last time you went shopping, earliest memory). The interviewer should record or write down the exact words of their partner. The interviewer then re-enacts the recording, using the same words, tones and gestures, as realistic as possible, back to the whole group.

**Evaluate:** Verbatim theatre is a type of documentary theatre created using the exact words of people interviewed about a particular topic or event. How did the actors feel? Was it easy? When might this be a useful tool for telling a story through theatre? Can the group think of any examples of verbatim theatre or television they have seen?



## SCRIPT EXTRACT #1

**Mama:** Can I get you something?

**Commander:** Bring me a cold Primus. A pack of cigarettes, fresh.

*Mama guides the Commander to a chair. She signals Sophie to fetch the beers.*

**Mama:** Monsieur, I must ask you to leave your bullets at the bar, otherwise you don't come in.

**Commander:** And if I choose not to.

**Mama:** Then you don't get served. I don't want any mischief in here. Is that clear?

*The Commander, charmed by her tenacity, laughs with the robust authority of a man in charge.*

**Commander:** Do you know who I am?

**Mama:** I'm afraid you must edify me, and then forgive me, if it makes absolutely no difference. Once you step through my door, then you're in my house. And I make the rules here.

*The Commander chuckles to himself.*

**Commander:** All right, Mama. Forgive me.

*The Commander makes a show of removing the bullets from his gun and placing them on the table.*

**Commander:** And who said I don't respect the rule of law?

*A drunk Government soldier dirty dancing with Josephine spots the Commander and jumps to attention.*

**Gov't Soldier 1:** Commander, beg my pardon.

**Commander:** Take it easy, young man. Take it easy. We're all off duty. We're in Mama's house. Clean up.

*The Commander sits down, and unzips his jacket. Mama opens a pack of cigarettes and passes them to the Commander.*

**Mama:** Monsieur, I don't recall seeing you here before.

**Commander:** No.

*Mama lights the Commander's cigarette.*

## SCRIPT EXTRACT #1 con't

**Mama:** What brings you to mon hotel?

**Commander:** Jerome Kisémbé, the rebel leader.

*The Commander studies her face to gauge the response.*

**Commander:** You know him, of course.

**Mama:** I know of him. We all know of him. His name is spoken here at least several times a day. We've felt the sting of his reputation.

**Commander:** So, you do know him.

**Mama:** No, as I said I know of him. His men control the road East and the forest to the North of here.

*The Commander turns his attention to everyone. Scrutiny. Suspicion.*

**Commander:** Is that so?

**Mama:** Yes, but you must know that.

*The Commander speaks to Mama, but he is clearly addressing everyone.*

**Commander:** This Jerome Kisémbé is a dangerous man. You hide him and his band of renegades in your villages. Give them food, and say you're protecting your liberator. What liberator? What will he give, the people? That is what I want to know? What has he given you Mama? Hm? A new roof? Food? Peace?

**Mama:** I don't need a man to give me anything

**Commander:** Make a joke, but Kisémbé has one goal and that is to make himself rich on your back, Mama.

*The Commander grows loud and more forthright as he speaks. The music stops. The Bar grows quiet. Tense.*

**Commander:** He will burn your crops, steal your women, and make slaves of your men all in the name of peace and reconciliation. Don't believe him. He, and men like him, these careless militias wage a diabolical campaign. They leave stains everywhere they go. And remember the land he claims as his own, it is a national reserve, it is the people's land, our land. And yet he will tell you the government has taken everything, though we're actually paving the way for democracy.

**Mama:** I know that, but the government needs to let him know that. But you, I'm only seeing you for the first time. Kisémbé, I hear his name everyday.

## SCRIPT EXTRACT #1 con't

**Commander:** Then hear my name, Commander Osembenga, banga liwa.

*A moment. Mama absorbs the news, she seems genuinely humbled. Christian backs away as if to disappear.*

**Commander:** You will hear my name quite a bit from now on.

**Mama:** Commander Osembenga, forgive me for not knowing your name. Karibu. It's a pleasure to have such an important man in our company. Allow me to pour you a glass of our very best whiskey. From the U.S of A.

**Commander:** Thank you. A clean glass.

**Mama:** Of course. Karibu.

*Mama fetches the Commander a glass of whiskey. She makes a show of wiping out the cloudy glass. She pours him a generous glass of whiskey and places the bottle in front of him.*

**Mama:** *(seductively)* We take good care of our visitors. And we offer very good company. Clean company, not like other places. You are safe here. If you need something, anything while—

**Commander:** You are a practical woman, I know that you have the sense to keep your doors closed to rebel dogs. Am I right?

*The Commander gently takes Mama's hand. She allows the intimacy. Christian looks on. Contempt.*

**Mama:** Of course.

## SCRIPT EXTRACT #2

**Salima:** Do you know what I was doing on that morning?

*A calm washes over Salima.*

**Salima:** I was working in our garden picking the last of the sweet tomatoes. I put Beatrice down in the shade of a Frangipani tree, because my back was giving me some trouble. Forgiven? Where was Fortune? He was in town fetching a new iron pot. "Go," I said "Go, today man or you won't have dinner tonight!" I had been after him for a new pot for a month. And finally on that day the damn man had to go and get it. A new pot. The sun was about to crest, but I had to put in another hour before it got too hot. It was such a clear and open sky. This splendid bird, a peacock had come into the garden to taunt me, and was showing off its feathers. I stooped down and called to the bird. "Wssht, Wssht." And I felt a shadow cut across my back, and when I stood four men were there over me, smiling, wicked school boy smiles. "Yes?" I said. And the tall soldier slammed the butt of his gun into my cheek. Just like that. It was so quick, I didn't even know I'd fallen to the ground. Where did they come from? How could I not have heard them?

**Sophie:** You don't have to—

**Salima:** One of the soldiers held me down with his foot. He was so heavy, thick like an ox and his boot was cracked and weathered like it had been left out in the rain for weeks. His boot was pressing my chest and the cracks in the leather had the look of drying sorghum. His foot was so heavy and it was all I could see, as the others..."took" me. My baby was crying. She was a good baby. Beatrice never cried, but she was crying, screaming. "Shhh" I said. "Shhh." And right then...

*Salima closes her eyes.*

**Salima:** A soldier stomped on her head with his boot. And she was quiet.

*A moment. Salima releases-*

**Salima:** Where was everybody? WHERE WAS EVERYBODY?!

*Sophie hugs Salima.*

**Sophie:** It's okay. Take a breath.

**Salima:** I fought them!

**Sophie:** I know.

**Salima:** I did!

**Sophie:** I know.

## SCRIPT EXTRACT #2 con't

**Salima:** But they still took me from my home. They took me through the bush, raiding thieves. Fucking demons! "She is for everyone, soup to be had before dinner," that is what someone said. They tied me to a tree by my foot, and the men came whenever they wanted soup. I make fires, I cook food, I listen to their stupid songs, I carry bullets, I clean wounds, I wash blood from their clothing, and, and, and...I lay there as they tore me to pieces, until I was raw...five months. Five months. Chained like a goat. These men fighting...fighting for our liberation. Still I close my eyes and I see such terrible things. Things, I can not stand to have in my head. How can men be this way?

*A moment.*

**Salima:** It was such a clear and open sky. So, so beautiful. How could I not hear them coming?

**Sophie:** Those men were on a path and we were there. It happened.

**Salima:** A peacock wandered into my garden, and the tomatoes were ripe beyond belief. Our fields of red sorghum were so perfect, it was going to be a fine season. Fortune thought so too, and we could finally think about planning a trip on the ferry to visit his brother. Oh God please give me back that morning. "Forget the pot, Fortune. Stay,"..."Stay," that's what I would tell him. What did I do, Sophie? I must have done something. How did I get in the middle of their fight?

**Sophie:** You were picking sweet tomatoes. That's all. You didn't do anything wrong.

*Sophie kisses Salima on the cheek.*

**Salima:** It isn't his baby. It's the child of a monster, and there's no telling what it will be. Now, he's willing to forgive me, and is it that simple, Sophie? But what happens when the baby is born, will he be able to forgive the child, will I? And, and...and even if I do, I don't think I'll be able to forgive him.

**Sophie:** You can't know that until you speak to him.

**Salima:** I walked into the family compound expecting wide open arms. An embrace. Five months, suffering. I suffered every single second of it. And my family gave me the back of their heads. And he, the man I loved since I was fourteen, chased me away with a green switch. He beat my ankles raw. And I dishonored him? I dishonored him?! Where was he? Buying a pot? He was too proud to bear my shame...but not proud enough to protect me from it. Let him sit in the rain.

**Sophie:** Is that really what you want?

**Salima:** Yes.

**Sophie:** He isn't going to leave.

**Salima:** Then I'm sorry for him.

## FURTHER READING

***Amnesty International Canada***

**[www.amnesty.ca/campaigns/svaw\\_overview.php](http://www.amnesty.ca/campaigns/svaw_overview.php)**

Stop Violence Against Women Campaign

***BBC: DR Congo gang rape crisis 'spreading', new study says***

**[news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/8621394.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/8621394.stm)**

A very recent article on the rise of violent sexual attacks on women in the DRC. (2010)

***V-Day: Stop Raping Our Greatest Resource***

**[drc.vday.org](http://drc.vday.org)**

A campaign raising awareness of and combating the systematic rape of women in the DRC. (2010)

***The Guardian: Lynn Nottage: A Bar, A Brothel and Brecht***

**[www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2010/apr/20/lynn-nottage-ruined](http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2010/apr/20/lynn-nottage-ruined)**

Lynn Nottage interviewed in the Guardian about her inspiration behind the play, coinciding with the European Premiere of *Ruined* at the Almeida Theatre's production. (2010)

***The Guardian: Lynn Nottage's Ruined: A worthy Pulitzer prize winner?***

**[www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2009/apr/21/lynn-nottage-ruined-pulitzer-prize](http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2009/apr/21/lynn-nottage-ruined-pulitzer-prize)**

Interesting Guardian Blog post debating the awarding of the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for Drama to *Ruined*. (2009)

***Bad Connections***

**[www.danchurchaid.org/where\\_we\\_work/denmark/campaigns/roskilde\\_festival/bad\\_connections](http://www.danchurchaid.org/where_we_work/denmark/campaigns/roskilde_festival/bad_connections)**

A detailed but clear report by Danish charity DanWatch on how your mobile phone is linked to abuse, fraud and illegal mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo. (2008)

***Rape of the Congo***

**[www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2009/aug/13/rape-of-the-congo/](http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2009/aug/13/rape-of-the-congo/)**

South African journalist Adam Hochschild writes in depth about the continuing violence in the country. (2009)

***Doctors Without Borders / Médecins Sans Frontières***

**[www.doctorswithoutborders.org/news/article.cfm?id=1836](http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/news/article.cfm?id=1836)**

A field report into the situation faced by women in the DRC. (2006)

***The Rape of Nation, Marcus Bleasdale***

Schilt Publishing, 2009. Collection of photographs of the conflict in the DRC by photojournalist Marcus Bleasdale with a foreword by John le Carré. A selection of Bleasdale's candid and evocative photographs can be viewed online at

**[www.marcusbleasdale.com](http://www.marcusbleasdale.com)**

## ALMEIDA PROJECTS

Almeida Projects Resource Pack Written and designed by Charlie Payne, with contributions from Amnesty International UK, Abigail Graham and Samantha Lane.

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