

When we were kings



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ When We Were Kings” directed by Leon Gast is a documentary about the boxer Muhammad Ali and the culture of African-American people. The music is used as one of the ways to provide information for the audience about what is happening within the film. The music helps the audience establish what it was like back in the 1970’s. It also shows African-American singers and how they are proud of their heritage like BB King and James Brown. The music also functions as a symbol to get information across, for example “ The Succubus. The documentary songs relate to the theme of racial relationships and African-American identity. Setting: The film is set in the 1970’s within Zaire, Africa when Mobutu Sese Seko was in charge. It shows that the village life is very poor and crowded as it was a 2nd world country because it was still developing. There were power struggles e. g. Belgian Congo and also Mobutu was ruthless as he killed 10% of the criminals in Zaire. Even though this was all happening within the country the people of Africa were proud to be African.

They showed this through the 3 day musical festival, where they had their traditional singing and dancing. The film shows footage of the African children and women dancing to the beat of the drum in their traditional clothing. During the 1970’s it was an insult to call African-American people African, but when Muhammad Ali came to Africa he saw how African people were proud of their heritage and that Africans and Americans shared similar loves for things like music.

Ali then realised he should be glad to be African and apart of this exciting new way of life. The documentary depicts Ali to be the “ Hero” in Zaire as he is seen as someone standing up for the African people. Similarities between

Africans and African-Americans: African-American people were seen unequal to white people. Their social status was seen as unworthy and below the standards of white people. The musical performances, from James Brown's screaming, soul singing and dancing, to B. B. King's sweat, smooth strumming on the Lucille, inspired both the African's and American's who travelled there. The music united and influenced the people within Zaire to watch the fight between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman. Muhammad Ali started to realise that black and white people aren't much different, they care and love similar things such as education and music, specifically, the drums. The drums provided a sense of communication and rhythm between the two different cultures.

The drum was the oldest instrument that the Africans used and now the African-American singers like James Brown uses it in his songs. It in his songs. Miriam Makeba – Mama Africa: Throughout the film Miriam Makeba (Mama Africa) is singing the song "Am Am Pondo." This is used to symbolise "Succubus." Succubus is a woman who has sexual intercourse with men in their sleep, until they tire out. This symbol was used since this is how Ali won against Foreman, as he let Foreman hit him until he became exhausted and then he struck with one punch and knocked him out.

George Plimpton tells the story of the witchdoctor who predicted that a "woman with trembling hands" or a succubus in Zaire would take hold of George Foreman and that he would not win the boxing match as the succubus will take all his strength and then bring Ali to victory. The filmmakers illustrate this by having Miriam Makeba perform the succubus. Everytime Foreman was shown on the documentary Miriam Makeba would be

singing “ Am Am Pondo” in the background to indicate the Foreman does not belong in Africa and that he will get caught in Africa’s trap or being cursed by a female “ Succubus. African children and women dancing to the beat of the drum in their traditional clothing. During the 1970’s it was an insult to call African-American people African, but when Muhammad Ali came to Africa he saw how African people were proud of their heritage and that Africans and Americans shared similar loves for things like music. Ali then realised he should be glad to be African and apart of this exciting new way of life. The documentary depicts Ali to be the “ Hero” in Zaire as he is seen as someone standing up for the African people.