

NZARA '76

## Synopsis:

In 1976, Doctors James Howell and Peter Franklin arrive in the African country of Sudan as part of a team sent to investigate an unknown deadly epidemic. With the rest of their team stuck at the boarder, the two doctors make their way to the town of Nzara, where the outbreak has decimated the local population. Their presence sets the town on edge, as their containment procedures tread on local custom. While caring for his patients, James is stuck with a needle and fears being contaminated. He is forced to live as a patient in the quarantined hospital and watch as Nzara's mysterious disease becomes his own.



## From the Director:

Before I began my career in film, I wanted to be a doctor. In fact, I wanted to be an epidemiologist, the doctors who study disease. I found the world of infectious disease to be utterly fascinating. I worked for years in a Virology lab, where I participated in vaccine research and studied biology at the University of Rochester (where I also pursued a dual major in Film Studies). Through finishing my degree at Rochester I came to the realization that, while fascinated with the world of biology, it just wasn't what I wanted to do. I envied my friends and colleagues, who endeavored to devote their lives to the sciences.

Ebola is by no means an unknown disease. First identified in Sudan in the mid 1970's, Ebola made headlines in 1989 during a suspected outbreak in Reston, Virginia and again in the mid-1990's in popular entertainment. But Ebola is a very real story of disease, of scientists and doctors who risked, and continue to risk, their lives to document, contain, understand and ultimately protect. I was awe struck by the doctors involved in the first Ebola investigation. The country was unstable, communication was almost impossible and supplies were limited. Reports detailed a disease that was fast and devastating. Yet, these men and women entered into the fray undaunted, risking life and limb. These men and women were on the front lines, fighting against an unknown enemy, one who only revealed it self through the destruction it wrought. This kind of bravery and sacrifice often go without recognition. We don't usually think of scientists and doctors risking their lives, but they are. Their stories may soon be my friend's stories.

This is where the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation comes in. I was aware of the Sloan Foundation and the wonderful work they do, supporting Science and Technology research, but it was not until my time at USC's School of Cinematic Arts that I learned the Foundation's dedication to promoting science and technology in the arts. I was inspired by their challenge, to depict science and technology realistically. Films that portray the scientific process realistically are few and far between. The assumption is that it is to boring; real science is just not engaging. I don't agree. There are real men and women, right now, risking their lives to learn about the next unknown disease. The diseases are real, the danger is real and their stories are important to tell.

I am genuinely surprised and grateful for the level of talent that this project as already been able to draw. Their immense talent is only matched by the dedication they've shown to bring this story to life. They give their time, their energy, their passion and love. I am proud to embark on this adventure with them. I hope you will join us.

- Jon Noble



CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL  
AND PREVENTION

September 18, 1976

Dr. James,

As per our previous conversation, I have enclosed your EPI 1 and ticket to Germany. Your EPI 1 clears you for contract work with the W.H.O only. Their people should handle clearance once you enter Sudan. Your flight will depart September 22nd from Manchester/ Boston Airport with a layover at LaGuardia, arriving in Berlin (BER, SXF) the morning of September the 23rd. A representative from the Berlin office should be there to meet you. The W.H.O. has agreed to arrange lodging and transport to Sudan once you arrive. No need to pack your equipment, they'll provide feild kits. Frank Stanton has sent over the preliminary data on the outbreak, I have included copies for you to look over. There's not a whole lot to go on with this one, feild reports are sketchy at best. Frank will be your CDC contact in Berlin, as it may be difficult to get a direct line to Atlanta once you've reached Sudan.

Good Luck with this one, James. Let me know if you need anything. We'll get it to you.

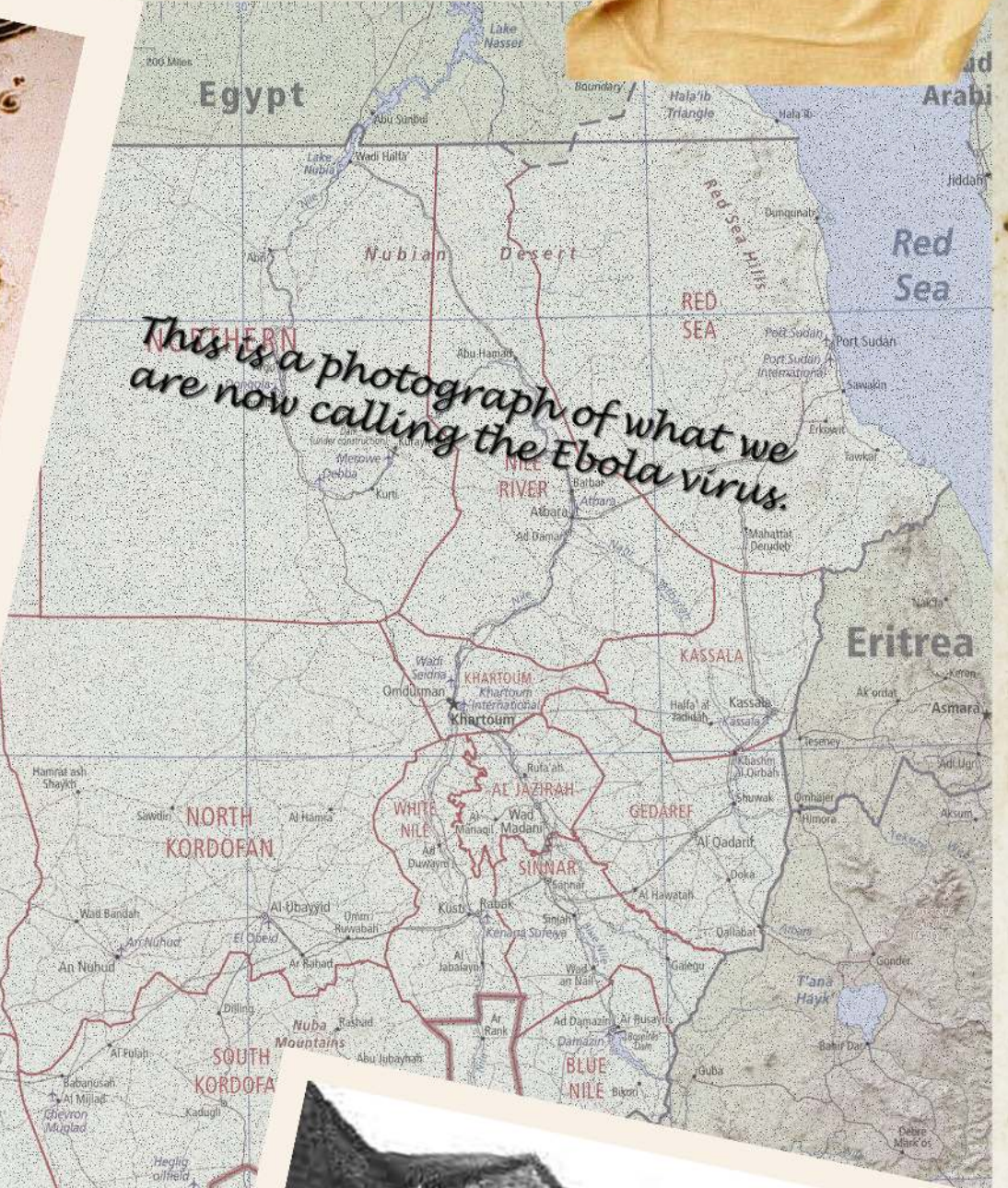
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "David Moore".

David Moore  
Director. General CDC



*This is a photograph of what we are now calling the Ebola virus.*



*first outbreak occurred in a cotton factory in Yambuku, southern Nzara.*





*Much of the area looks like this.*

*This was our main source of water.*



# The Characters of Nzara 76'

N.F.



*Excerpts from  
James' Journal*

**James Howell M.D.**

It's about a 10 hour flight to Berlin. I'll be there for about a week. The usual briefings and prep work. After a week I'll board a plane to Sudan. They tell me it won't be the same and I'm sure they're right. I was young then, no experience. Lassa was complicated, but I've learned from it. You can't be expected to do any good if you can't protect yourself. But, the truth is I am scared, from the preliminary reports it seems many people are dying. If I can help, I have to. So I'll go back. For some reason, I want to go back. If only just to prove I can. That I've learned my lesson.



## Peter Franklin M.D.

I've not see Peter Franklin since we left Nigeria. He's barely changed since I last saw him. A little weathered maybe, but just as hard headed as ever. We met shortly before the Lassa investigation. We were two of the younger doctors on the team. Where the older team members were jaded, apathetic, only cared about their numbers, Peter cared. He kept a journal, wrote down each of their names. Colleagues have told me his "bedside manor" has left something to be desired as of late. I wonder if kept his journals.



## Nyawela

From what I can gather there were two doctors in Nzara, one died from infection, the other fled. Nyawela, a trained nurse, is now the senior medical official for the town. She does everything she can to help the infected, make them comfortable at great risk to her personal safety. She's relied heavily on a number of local "healers" for assistance and was unhappy with their dismissal. She seems to put a great deal of stock in local methods, but it does not seem to affect her medical judgment.



## Shifaa

We believe her name is Shifaa. She's been in and out of consciousness since we arrived. Records show she was brought into the hospital 5 days before our arrival. We believe she was exposed to the disease by her family (Dead). She had no symptoms upon arrival. That tells us the incubation period is very fast. In addition to massive gastro and respiratory disruption,

N.K

# The Hospital:





## Visual Elements And Design:

Our goal is to represent this story as realistically as possible. To that end we will strive for an almost Docu-Drama based visual style to cement our characters within their world. We will be constructing the hospital set from scratch, building a full 360 degree world in which we can truly follow our characters. Rather than piece together a scene, we will be able to follow our characters, to document their lives as they interact with the world we've created. Through a slight handheld ascetic, longer takes, naturalistic lighting, and a fully realized 360 degree set will allow the audience to truly believe these doctors are in a make-shift hospital in Sudan, surrounded by the victims of a deadly disease.

The camera will be free, the characters confined. The space will feel at once both deep and dark, filled to the walls with the sick, and small and confined; trapping James in what may be his final resting place.







**Jonathan Noble - Director/Writer**

Originally from Potomac, Maryland (right outside Washington D.C.) Jon Noble spent much of his formative years in front of a television or in a movie theater. He received his Bachelors degree from the University of Rochester in 2009 with a dual major in Biological Sciences and Film Studies. Jon moved to Los Angeles in 2009 working in postproduction. Wanting to further his education, Noble started at USC's School of Cinematic Arts in 2011, where he has focused in both directing and writing. During that time, he has interned for a number of different companies, including Prospect Park and Twentieth Century Fox Television. In 2012 Noble was one of two recipients of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Grant for Production, for his short script, Nzara '76.



**Bernardo Duran, Jr. - Producer**

Bernardo Duran, Jr. was born and raised in East Los Angeles, California. He graduated from Roosevelt High School in Boyle Heights and received a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Business from Cal State LA and the University of La Verne, respectively. He worked in the banking and finance industry for nearly a decade before pursuing his dream of making films. His goal is to one day make films with cultural influences and is passionate about Latin-American cinema.



**Micaela Colman-Producer**

Micaela Colman was born in Boston Massachusetts, but made her way across the country until finally settling in Seattle Washington. She graduated from Kent-Meridian High School and was given The Bill and Melinda Gates Achiever's scholarship. She received her bachelor's degree from The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington where she studied film and communications. She took two years off before pursuing a Masters Degree at USC's School of Cinematic Arts.