

Lupita takes fight for albinos to the big screen

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A film that tells the plight of people living with albinism will premier next Thursday on the big screen. In *My Genes* is a 78-minute documentary that takes viewers into the experience of being an albino in Kenya. It tells the tribulations of eight people who have to cope with a medical condition that is rarely understood by most people. The film is directed and produced by Lupita Nyong'o. It is disturbing, informative and inspiring at the same time. It celebrates the resilience of a people stigmatised for no fault of their own and their struggles to claim their right of place in a society that vilifies them.



The film *My Genes* is directed and produced by Lupita Nyong'o.

really understanding them," she said.

Her film is filled with facts about the condition and acts as a powerful introduction to understanding albinism.

Al-Shaymaa Kwegyir, a parliamentarian from Tanzania, will grace the premier of the movie. It features music by Nyota Ndogo, Iddi Achieng and Harry Kimani. Lupita has worked on the production teams of internationally acclaimed films, including *The Constant Gardener* (2005) and *The Namesake* (2006).

The plight of albinos was put on the global map by the recent killings in Tanzania. Here, albinos are hunted for their 'body parts' believed to have medicinal value and also make people wealthy. Albinism — an inherited genetic condition that causes little or no pigmentation in the skin or hair — is often misunderstood in many African communities as a curse or bad omen.

"In the course of doing this film, I heard heart-wrenching stories from people with albinism. Some have found it extremely difficult to find jobs irrespective of their qualifications," says Lupita. Little research has been done about the condition in Kenya. However, in some parts of Africa where studies have been done, the condition is estimated to affect as many as one in every 1,000 people.

Lupita says she became aware of her own ignorance of albinism when she heard of the work her neighbour with albinism was doing. "I was really embarrassed that I knew nothing about his condition despite having lived next to her for 10 years. I realised that for a long time, I have been sub-consciously afraid of these people without

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