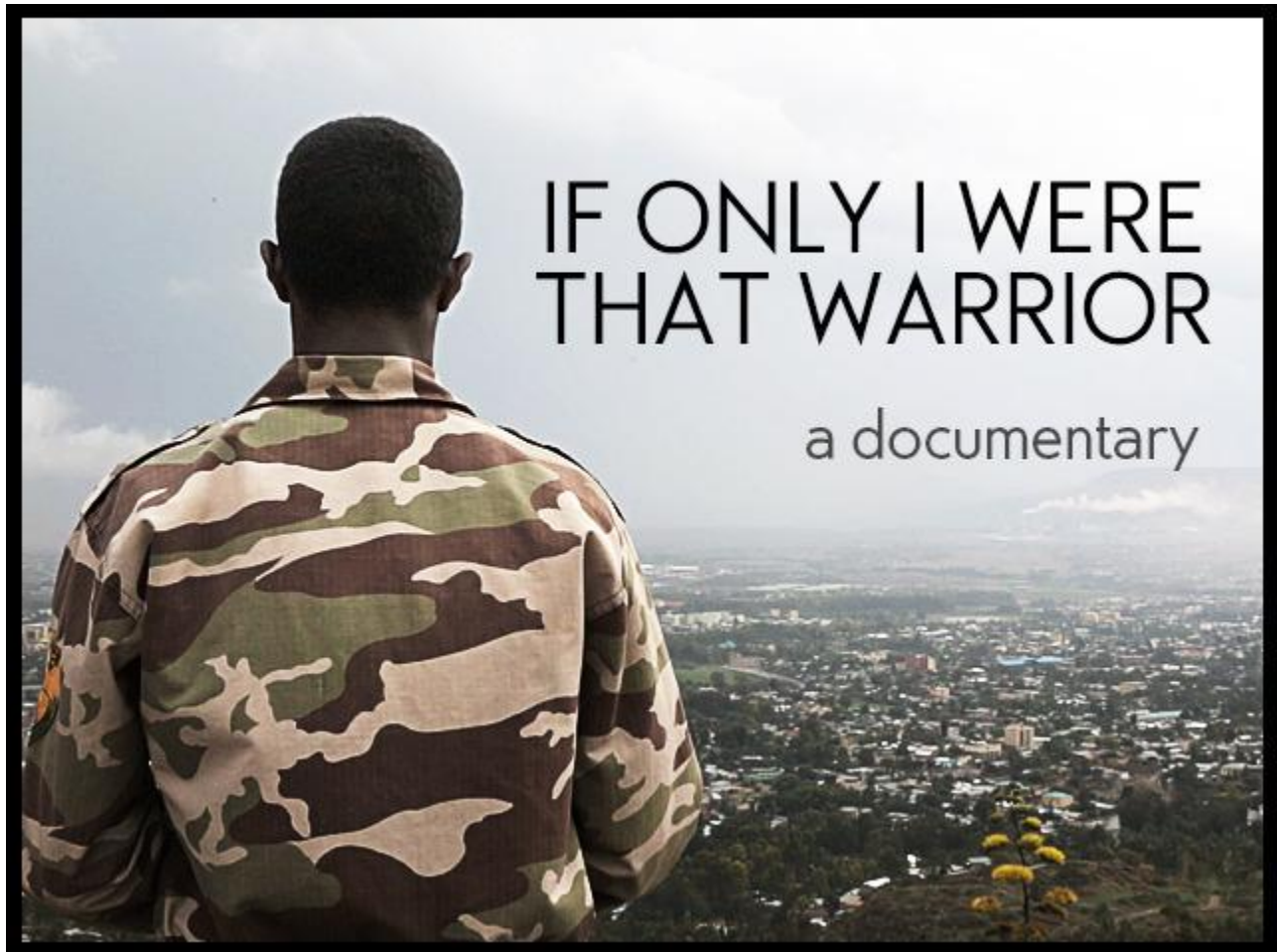


[IF ONLY I WERE THAT WARRIOR — A Documentary](#)

by [Awen Films](#)



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A journey through the memories of the Italian occupation of Ethiopia reveals an unresolved legacy that still today binds two nations.

If Only I Were That Warrior is a feature documentary film focusing on the Italian occupation of Ethiopia in 1935. Following the recent construction of a monument dedicated to Fascist general Rodolfo Graziani, the film addresses the unpunished war crimes he and many others committed in the name of Mussolini's imperial ambitions. The stories of four characters, filmed in present day Ethiopia, Italy and United States, spliced with archival material and interviews with experts, bring to light this often overlooked historical legacy and its repercussions today.



Rodolfo Graziani

AFFILE

Completed in August 2012 in Affile, a small town not far from Rome, the monument was meant to serve as a mausoleum for the late Rodolfo Graziani, who lived out the last years of his life there. Sentenced to only four months of jail time for his involvement in the Nazi-allied Republic of Salò, Graziani was never put on trial for his conduct during the colonial campaign in Ethiopia. A remarkable oversight, considering the widespread use of chemical weapons and the violent

repression of the civilian population that took place under Graziani's authority, first as a commanding officer during the invasion and later as viceroy of the new colony.



The monument to Rodolfo Graziani in Affile

DALLAS

News of the monument quickly spread around the world, and was met with particular outrage in the United States. In a quiet suburb of Dallas, we follow retired UN consultant Kidane Alemayehu, founder of the *Global Alliance for Justice — The Ethiopian Cause*, a nonprofit fighting for the recognition of Fascist war crimes in Ethiopia and official apologies from the Italian government. Kidane's objective is to mobilize an international protest on February 19, the date of one of the bloodiest massacres of the Italian occupation. Spanning three days and leaving 30,000 thousand dead according to Ethiopian estimates, the slaughter took place in Addis Ababa in the wake of an attempt on viceroy Graziani's life. It was a vicious reprisal against innocent civilians that carried on with Graziani's endorsement and left a traumatic mark in the collective memory of the Ethiopian people.



Kidane in front of his home in Dallas, Texas

NEW YORK

Kidane's e-mails eventually reach Nicola De Marco in New York. Nicola works four jobs to make ends meet, but sees himself first and foremost as a political activist. The issue of the monument catches his interest because his grandfather, born in a small town near Naples, was one of the many young peasants who fled the destitution of the Italian countryside in hopes of making a new life in Ethiopia. When the troops were expelled from the country, Nicola's grandfather returned to Italy, but soon thereafter he set off again, this time for New Jersey. Raised among his family's African memories, Nicola himself would later travel Ethiopia extensively to see with his own eyes the effects of the Fascist occupation.



Nicola waiting for the bus in New York

ADDIS ABABA

Unlike Nicola's grandfather, many colonists remained in Ethiopia after the military withdrawal. This was possible mainly thanks to the famous "pardon speech" that Emperor Haile Selassie delivered on the radio the day of his return to the Ethiopian throne, in which he beseeched his people to abstain from retaliations against the Italians left behind by the Fascist regime. Under the emperor's protection the Italian community thrived, playing an important role in the emerging Ethiopian business and administrative communities. One of their most popular meeting places in Addis Ababa was the Juventus Club, a sporting club and hub of Italian culture that has remained active through the years, attracting more recent transplants as well. Among these is Giuseppe Debac, coordinator of an agricultural development project in the northern region of Tigray, who travels often to the capital to play tennis at the Juventus Club. He holds a deep fascination with history, and in particular with the Italian-Ethiopian war — a nostalgia that keeps him always on the lookout for historical documents and takes him on motorcycle trips to the sites of famous battles. Asked about the monument to Graziani, Giuseppe explains that the controversy was barely discussed in Ethiopia, and that Italy is mostly remembered in a positive light. In truth, the Italian presence had a substantial impact on the modernization of Ethiopia through the development of infrastructure and other public works. Italian contributions to the growth continued after the emperor's pardon, and lasted until 1974, when a communist military

junta known as the Derg took power, expelling most Italians from the country and nationalizing their properties in the process.



Giuseppe at the Juventus Club in Addis Ababa

ROME

The coup that overthrew Emperor Selassie's government was supported by wide swathes of the population, as well as by the EPRP (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party), a movement calling for the end of the monarchy and the formation of a democratic republic. The dream of a true democratic revolution however was soon crushed as the Derg moved to consolidate its power as a military dictatorship, which led to severe crackdowns against all opposition, the EPRP included. Among the many activists who were forced to flee the country to avoid persecution, the film focuses on Mulu Ayele, a member of the EPRP who sought refuge in Rome. Despite living in Italy for 23 years, she has never cut the ties with her country and its political fates. As president of the Ethiopian Community of Rome, and host of an independent radio show on Ethiopian issues, she was one of the first to be contacted by Kidane and to actively oppose the monument. Accompanied by her friend Carmelo Crescenti, president of the FARI (Italian Rastafari Federation), Mulu travels often to Affile, where she is a member of the local antifascist committee, an organization that demands the demolition of the monument, which was

constructed using public funds by the local administration under the leadership of mayor Ercole Viri.



Mulu and her friend Carmelo at Radio Onda Rossa in Rome

The monument to Graziani is not merely a reactionary tribute to a bygone era. It is an expression of a disconcertingly widespread historical revisionism that, while minimizing or altogether ignoring the crimes of Italian Fascism as an occupying force, also rehabilitates figures such as Rodolfo Graziani. This dark chapter of foreign policy has often been overlooked in mainstream historical narratives, which have tended to consolidate the myth of “italiani brava gente” (Italians are good people), that portrays Italians as kind and tolerant compared to other invading nations, notably their Nazi allies. Starting where these myths were shaped, *If Only I Were That Warrior* takes the audience on a journey through the living memories and the tangible remains of the Italian occupation of Ethiopia — a journey that crosses generations and continents to today, where this unresolved legacy still ties the fates of two nations and their people.

YOUR CONTRIBUTION

Your pledges will be instrumental in bringing this project to completion. This Kickstarter campaign is aimed at raising enough funds to complete the production of the film — it will allow our small two person crew to return to Ethiopia, Italy, and Dallas, and secure the necessary equipment to get the most out of these trips.

The money will go to:

- Equipment rental
- Airfare
- Lodging and meals
- Car rental and gasoline
- Taxis
- Interpreters (in Ethiopia)

First time on Kickstarter? Detailed instructions for donating can be found below in the FAQ.



The exclusive t-shirts we are offering to our backers

PROJECT GOAL

If Only I Were That Warrior will be a visual testimony to a forgotten chapter of history, and each screening will be a step further in clarifying the facts of the past and dispelling the myths accumulated over decades of revisionism. In a time in which far-right movements openly harkening back to Fascist ideology are gaining traction in Europe, we believe that a process of recognition of the crimes committed by Fascism, and specifically the reasons behind the callous invasion of Ethiopia, can go a long way in reinforcing democracy and promoting civil society. This film, giving voices to unheard communities and displaying evidence of the war crimes committed, aspires to remind the audience that we have to work to defend our democratic values from the existential threat that xenophobic and militaristic ideals poses to them.



PROJECT TIMELINE

Currently we are in the middle of production, with about 50% of footage already collected. We will be heading back to Ethiopia, Italy and Dallas in the next months in order to finish shooting. Over the summer and into the fall we will work on editing, color correction, sound mixing and other final adjustments. By the winter we hope to have a final cut, and we'll be able to submit for

the 2015 festival season. The official release date for *If Only I Were That Warrior* will be February 19, Ethiopian Martyrs' Day. We are hoping to organize a series of screenings around the world on that day, when commemorative events will be held in various cities.

Risks and challenges [Learn about accountability on Kickstarter](#)

Making an independent documentary is always difficult, and there are many obstacles that can present themselves as the production moves forwards. However, we have already passed some of the most difficult phases in this process: finding and gaining access to our characters, creating a professional network to support the technical side of production, and getting in touch with the people and organizations that will give this project an audience once completed. A lot of ground has already been covered.

Now we are facing the next challenge: raising the necessary funds to make the most out of this story. We are confident that with your help we will be able to produce a great film. Whatever obstacles we might encounter along the way, this project will be finished in timely fashion.