



# CHILDREN OF GOD

A FILM BY KAREEM J MORTIMER

Press Kit

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Nassau , Bahamas

## Short Synopsis

Set against the backdrop of a nation grappling with violent homophobic crime and offering a scathing examination of the underlying hatred for gays rampant in Caribbean societies, Bahamian Kareem Mortimer's debut narrative feature tells the stories of three very different individuals: Lena, the conservative, deeply religious wife of a secretly gay firebrand pastor; Romeo, a handsome young black man hiding his sexuality from his close-knit and loving family; and Jonny, the conflicted and creatively-blocked white artist in search of himself. All three head for the spectacularly beautiful and tranquil island of Eleuthera, each with a different reason for escaping current circumstances. Soon, their disparate worlds collide in unexpected and affecting ways. This uncommon portrayal of love, loneliness, tolerance, secrets and self-acceptance takes viewers on a poignant multifaceted journey that is enlightening, courageous, and disquieting all at the same time, and which shocks to the very core with its startling conclusion.

## Director's Statement

I am a Bahamian filmmaker committed to showing the diversity of my people in the art form that I know and love best. I live in a beautiful country that is grappling with the after-effects of colonialism and forging an identity, only being an independent country since 1973. This can be a daunting experience, but is also exciting. This film was made as love letter to the different people that live in the Bahamas, a declaration of who we really are by making a film that is honest, risky, beautiful and self-assured. A film that showed us how we see ourselves, a view that people around the world would take notice of and identify with. A perfect film for my feature debut.



## Long Synopsis

Children of God is the story of two individuals who learn some universal life lessons that in order to live a truly happy life. First, you have to risk speaking and acting on your true feelings. Secondly, in order to fulfill your potential, you have to risk emotional vulnerability.

The year is 2003 when the Caribbean world is rocked by the emergence of Rosie O'Donnell's gay family cruise ship decides to have the Bahamas as a port of call. Actual documentary footage details the mass hysteria that divides the island in factions as some fundamentalists lead widespread rallies.

Jonny is a young depressed white Bahamian artist who faces losing his scholarship at a local University if he does not live up to the potential his professors believe he has. Faced with this challenge, after severe beatings from homophobic bullies, and rejection from his alcoholic father, Jonny escapes from his gritty inner-city life in Nassau to the under populated and dramatic Bahamian island of Eleuthera.

Lena Mackey is an extremely conservative forty year old anti-gay activist who upon finding out that her husband is not who he represents himself to be, believes that the only way to fix problems in her life is to limit the rights of homosexuals. She heads Eleuthera for the purpose of galvanizing the community to oppose gay rights.

When Jonny arrives he meets a mysterious man by the name of Romeo. Together these two embark on a series of physical adventures that not only inspire Jonny to paint but also give him a new zest for life. A gregarious local pastor who challenges her beliefs and slowly opens her mind to new experiences takes in Lena. However things are shaken up when Romeo's family shows up and puts an end to Jonny's romantic dreams and Lena's husband decides to fix the problems in their marriage. After opening up about himself, Jonny retreats into his former closed self. He must choose between finally giving up on love, career and his happiness or moving forward fearless and courageously. Lena is left with the decision of choosing between what her head tells her to do or following what is in her heart. The audience is taken on a journey that is humorous, brave, shocking and a one of a kind surprise ending that will shake them to the core.

## About The Production

Children of God was shot in twenty-four days with five days in Nassau and another 19 days on the island of Eleuthera. Eleuthera and Nassau have an opposing aesthetic in terms of landscape even though they are only ninety miles apart. Nassau is flat and crowded, while Eleuthera is hilly and sparse which allows the characters to open up their hearts and minds. Also of note, during production local newspapers were reporting that there was a gay serial killer on the loose, because in the seven months prior to production five prominent gay males were killed violently on different occasions within the same vicinity where we shot Jonny's confrontation with bullies. Those murders have continued remain unsolved which frightened us but gave us a sense that the work that we are doing was extremely important.





## THE TEAM

### **KAREEM J. MORTIMER – PRODUCER**

Kareem Mortimer considers himself as an Eleuthera, Long Island, Inagua, and Turks island, Trinidadian boy. He first started his career in the film industry when he wrote and served as one of the producers for the 1998 Bahamas Games Documentary at the age of seventeen. Since then, Kareem has made short music documentaries for the NBC show Hip Hop Nation: Notes from the Underground; produced the film Varmint Day, winner of Best Comedy at the Made In Miami Film Festival; served as a producer and edited the feature length documentary Where I'm From, the short narrative, Chance; produced and directed The Eleutheran Adventure, Winner of the 2006 Audience Award for Best Documentary at the Bahamas International Film Festival; Directed the documentary Chartered Course: The Life of Sir Durward Knowles; and has written and directed the short Narrative film Float that has won 5 international awards and distribution in North America, Germany, and Austria. Most recently he has completed the documentary I Am Not A Dummy, completed the documentary SHE which will screen in 2009. Children of God is his narrative feature debut, Kareem is in production of his second feature Windjammers and has three feature films in development that he will produce with his team over the next five years.

### **TREVITE WILLIS- PRODUCER**

Trevite Willis is a producer of Southern Fried Filmworks LLC. Ms. Willis is responsible for production from the conceptual stage through completion. She controls all aspects of the film process, and is involved on a daily basis with the creative, financial, Technological, and administrative processes. She holds an MBA in International Business and has been continuously engaged in the production since 1999. She has produced international, national, and regional commercials, music videos and feature films including the romantic comedy “What a Man Wouldn’t Do for a Woman,” and the African-American gay coming-of-age “Blueprint” and the independent feature “Her music video productions have included works with Grammy nominees and winners including Shawn Mullins and Speech of Arrested Development.

### **RICHARD LEMAY- PRODUCER**

Richard LeMay has produced five feature films and directed four of them as well. Most recently, Richard’s film WHIRLWIND, which he produced and directed, won the audience award for Best Feature Film at OUT ON FILM Atlanta, the movie’s first festival stop. WHIRLWIND was released in late 2008 on DVD throughout the United States. Richard’s last feature 200 AMERICAN, went on to get worldwide distribution in 2005 and became one of the top selling movies for WOLFE RELEASING of that year. It remains on their best seller list to this day. Richard’s producing credits also include the feature WATER starring Idina Menzel (ENCHANTED, RENT, ASK THE DAWN) and Michael Shannon (BUG, 8 MILE, SAVING PRIVATE RYAN). Last year Richard also produced and directed the half hour documentary MOVE in conjunction with a global charity event sponsored by HUGO BOSS. MOVE was picked up by Pan-Asian MTV and Fox-Tel network in Australia.

## **JAY GOTLIEB- EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

Jay Gotlieb was born Toronto Canada and currently resides Nassau Bahamas. He has been involved in music, fashion, television and some film as he is a businessman experienced in finance and fluent in English Spanish and French

## **IAN BLOOM- DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY**

Ian Bloom is a cinematographer skilled at shooting both film and video. He prefers to shoot film but also owns and operates a Panasonic HVX200 camera which is the highest quality true HD camera in its class and capable of true slow motion at up to 60 frames per second. Ian has shot films, music videos and commercials on 35mm, Super16 and HD using variety of camera systems. He also works regularly as a gaffer, and prides himself on his lighting ability and speed. He is known to work with films that include subtle and dynamic film-making.

## **MARIA CATALDO- EDITOR**

Maria Cataldo is a New York City based filmmaker and theater artist. As an editor, she has worked both independently and through The Weinstein Company, where she assisted and coordinated the post-production on films including Bobby, Factory Girl, Dedication, The Protector, and The Dixie Chicks' Documentary Shut Up and Sing. Maria's film/video design and theater has been presented in NYC through St. Ann's Warehouse, HERE Arts Center, The Looking Glass Theater, The Tank, and elsewhere, including The Blue Theater (New Orleans), and The State Theater (Ithaca, NY). Over the past several years, while in summer residence through the Arts Conservatory at Choate Rosemary Hall, Maria wrote and developed a series of scripts for young actors. In 2008, she became a member of the Brooklyn Writers Space and edited the feature film RAIN that premiered at the 2008 Toronto International Film Festival.



## **FILMMAKERS**

Executive Producer	Jay Gotlieb
Writer/Director	Kareem Mortimer
Producer	Trevite A. Willis
Producer	Richard LeMay
Associate Producer	Nia Hatsopoulos
Associate Producer	Jonathan Morris
Editor	Maria Cataldo
Line Producer	Kim Jackson
Music Supervisor	Terneille Burrows
Director of Photography	Ian Bloom
Production Designer	Margot Bethel

## **CAST**

Jonny Roberts	Johnny Ferro
Romeo Fernander	Stephen T. Williams
Lena Mackey	Margaret Laurena Kemp
Ralph Mackey	Mark Richard Ford
Reverend Ritchie	Van Brown
Rhoda Ritchie	Leslie Vanderpool
Mike Roberts	William Craig Pinder