

Research Africa Reviews Vol. 3 No. 2, August 2019

These reviews may be found on the *RA Reviews* website at:

<https://sites.duke.edu/researchafrica/ra-reviews/volume-3-issue-2-august-2019/>

ATLANTIQUE: Director: Mati Diop, written by Mati Diop and Oliver Demangel. Co-produced by Oumar Sall (CINEKAP). Runtime: 104 minutes. Country: Senegal, Language: Wolof with French subtitles, 2019.

Reviewed by: Bouna Semou Ndiaye, Independent Producer & Host of Bonjour Africa on WNCU 90.7FM, and WRTU, San Juan, Porto Rico.

It was in 2009 that Mati Diop came to Dakar to work on her short film called *Atlantiques*, a film describing the story of a young man named Serigne who decided to cross the Atlantic Ocean to go to Spain. Diop came to Dakar to explore the dialogue among the Senegalese youth of her generation, and to engage in dialogue with her uncle Djibril Diop Mambety (a Senegalese film maker) on the issues of exile and migration. While preparing for that film, the issue of illegal migration caught her attention. Diop then decided to focus her entire short film on a young man who would recount his saga of crossing the sea. In 2012, Diop returned to Senegal at a time of political anxiety and public protest against the former President Wade. However, despite the political crisis, she was shocked to learn that a record number of young people were drowning at sea in their attempt to reach Europe. She tailored the title of the movie to James Baldwin's essay *The Fire Next Time*, a book that she read when she was young. However, the title was later solidified to be *Atlantique*.

Atlantique talks about heart breaks, gender, economics, labor relations, and corruption. It was a strong and insightful dialogue. Diop knew that writing a film on a girl and a group of girls whose boyfriends tried to cross the ocean and drowned mirrors the writing of a ghost movie. In her production efforts, she interviewed a young man Serigne after his first unsuccessful attempt to reach Europe. It is clear that the hardships he experienced never discouraged him from trying to go cross the sea again. Serigne shared with Diop that he was physically there in front of her speaking, but he was not mentally or emotionally present saying, "we decided to cross the ocean and to brave the sea, because we were already dead". An inclusion of this powerful story aptly conveys the pathos of illegal immigration. To say more on the content, *Atlantique* starts at a construction site. The laborers after four months without pay decided to leave the country by crossing the ocean, hoping to have a better future in Europe. Among them was Souleiman, Ada's boyfriend. Ada, however, was promise to marry another man. A few days after the guys boarded the pirogue, a mysterious fire ruined the wedding. There was no doubt in Ada's mind that Souleiman will return home. Souleiman did indeed come back as a reincarnation of Issa the police Inspector. He (Souleiman) mainly came back to say no to the forced marriage and also to bid a last farewell.

There is an interesting story behind Diop who is described as "Une femme Métisse Franco-Sénégalaise remporte Le Grand Prix à Cannes". It was on October 23, 2003 while I was the Program Coordinator of the John Hope Franklin Center for Multidisciplinary and International

Studies at Duke University that I invited the Franco-Cameroon singers Les Nubians for a program titled: “Mixed Cultures, Mixed Origins. How to make it in transnational business”. The purpose of that program was to look at the stratification of race (Black) in France, and ultimately to see what they can learn in the US with regards to race. As sisters with a mother from Cameroon and a French father living in France, they knew enough of race relations to share their experiences in that matter. The conclusion from the Nubians point of view was that in France they have two words for the same thing, but one is given more respect and consideration than the other: Black, and Noir. In France when you are an African-American, you are Un Black. But when you are a Black African, you are Un Noir. Un Black in France is more respected than any other Black person in France. The hierarchy of Blackness from top to bottom goes as follow: under the Un Black from the US comes the black people from the French territories such as Guadeloupe, Martinique..., and under them, the Métisses (Mixed race), and after that comes Blacks from Africa. The main difference between the US and France with regards to the Black race is that there is no Métisse in the US. We therefore can deduct that “Femme Métisse Franco-Sénégalaise” was not used innocently.

Research Africa

Copyright © 2019 by Research Africa, (research_africa-editor@duke.edu), all rights reserved. RA allows for copy and redistribution of the material in any medium or format, provided that full and accurate credit is given to the author, the date of publication, and the location of the review on the RA website. You may not distribute the modified material. RA reserves the right to withdraw permission for republication of individual reviews at any time and for any specific case. For any other proposed uses, contact RA’s Editor-in-Chief. The opinions represented in the reviews and published on the RA Reviews website are not necessarily those held by RA and its Review editorial team.

ISSN 2575-6990