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Becoming the Lion's Historian

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Becoming the Lion's Historian

Khadija-Awa Diop

Professional Project submitted to the Reed College of Media at West Virginia University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Science in Journalism

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Abstract

Becoming the Lion's Historian

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This professional project examines the ways in which French colonial documentaries were used in conjunction with governmental legislation to enforce dominant narratives and repress marginalized perspectives about the nature of colonialism and the roles of the French and West Africans in its execution. Through the limitations and powers of documentary filmmaking, this project explores the ways in which counter narratives can allow media professionals today to remedy the one sided dominant narratives about marginalized communities that have existed for decades. The culmination of this project is in the creation of a documentary treatment and sizzle reel that will be the beginning of a documentary intended to put into practice the findings of this professional project.

Acknowledgments

I'd like to take this time to show my appreciation for the people who have been there to support me in my development as an individual, as a scholar and as a filmmaker. First and foremost, I'd like to thank my mother, Dr. Kani Diop. Without her guidance and wisdom I wouldn't be the woman I am today. She's the one of the only people in my family who has achieved the highest level of education and she often reminds me throughout this process that she knows exactly what I'm going through. Thank you for all your help and encouragement. Special thanks to my grandmother Nene Thiam and my grandfather especially, Babacar Diop; You allowed me the opportunity to learn more about you, and in turn learn more about myself.

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Chapter 1

The Problem and the 7 Misses

“Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt
will always glorify the hunter.”

-Chinua Achebe

Proverbs have always held some universal truth to disseminate, regardless of the time, or the place. This one in particular has been imploring us for decades, if not centuries, to look at history more critically. It emphasizes that because our perspective determines our relationship to the historical “truths”, our perspective is also the vessel by which we understand that historical truth.

Introduction

In 1934, the French government instituted the Laval Decree; This decree would allow the French government to enforce strict censorship of films made by French filmmakers and to prohibit African filmmakers from making films on their continent, and in their home countries (Kuhn & Westwell, 2012). The intent of the law was to increase the efficacy of the French government’s use of “cinema as a tool of empire, especially as an integral component of French cultural politics projected in its overseas territories and more broadly around the world” (Genova, 2006 p. 50). Visuals in the form of films were, and still are, a way for both Africans and Europeans to imbibe colonial ideals such as French cultural superiority, imperialism, and the

inferiority of African cultural, social, economic traditions and identities. This law continued to control who can make films (exclusively the French) and what those films can say (that colonialism is beneficial to both the French and the African populations) until the wave of West African Independence from France in the 60s.

In 1950, French documentary filmmaker Rene Vautier was commissioned by the French *Ligue de L'enseignement* (The Teaching League) to make a documentary for secondary-level (college) education in France's school system. They intended it to serve a similar purpose as all their other commissioned documentaries: to convince both Africans and Europeans of the benefits of colonialism in West Africa. The original aim of *Afrique 50*, according to the French government, was to persuade French citizens and its African colonial subjects that colonialism was a success and that it deserved their support. Throughout Rene Vautier's travels in West Africa, he saw that the reality differed from this prescribed narrative. The film's intended audience were French citizens who expected to be educated on an experience they were not privy to. Instead of an objective view of reality across the globe, they were shown propaganda in the form of ethnographic films. Despite the French government's intent, Vautier shows the devastation of colonialism in West Africa. He shows the desperation and destruction experienced under colonial rule, from police brutality in the colonies (people getting shot or beaten to death in interrogations) to trying to repatriate land stolen by colonial governments. Vautier narrates, "Loads of mahogany trees without the hope of seeing any furniture in their houses". He mentions the "products of the sweat of negro people" that leave on colonial boats to be shipped to places they've only heard of in stories (unless they were one of the millions of Africans stolen from their homes and/or enlisted to fight alongside Europeans in the World Wars (BBC)). Towards the end of the documentary, Vautier's narration comes closer and closer to a yell. He expresses

that colonialism is an evil that plagues colonized people, stripping them of their freedoms, their peace of mind, their countries, and their way of life. He closes his film by stating that the people he encountered, deserve to be free from colonialism and to be seen and treated as equals.

Because Vautier opposed censoring Francophone filmmakers by allowing them to only film certain topics with specific information and prohibiting African filmmakers from making films, France's means of disseminating disinformation imposed by the government through legislation like the Laval Decree, he was punished. As already established, the French needed control of the narrative to maintain support from the French public and the French government. Vautier challenged that, and so he was jailed and his film was banned for over 40 years.

Vautier's first run-in with film censorship occurred in 1949- 50 during the making of *Afrique '50* ("Africa 1950"), a work that prominent film critic Georges Sadoul has hailed as France's first militant anti-colonialist film. In his 1998 memoir titled *Camera Citoyenne* ("Citizen Camera"), Vautier relates in vivid detail the circumstances that led to the one-year prison sentence he received for making *Afrique '50*, a 17-minute documentary that boldly denounced France's pillaging of human and material resources in the heyday of its colonial rule in West Africa (1998, pp.29-47). The vigilance with which the government sought to restrict knowledge of its operations in Africa is evident in the special statute that barred any filming in French colonies that was not overseen by a representative of the French government, a provision which Vautier flouted and which led to his arrest order, to repeated government attempts to seize the footage he filmed in Africa, and finally to his one-year prison sentence. Vautier was tried under a 1934 statute introduced by then-Minister of the Colonies Pierre Laval that subjected to criminal prosecution any individual who failed to submit a film's complete scenario to the Commission de controle prior to filming in any of the colonies or who undertook shooting a film without being accompanied by a colonial official whose presence ensured that filmmakers recorded only pre-approved subject matter.... Vautier's film was originally commissioned by the Ligue de L'Enseignement (The Teaching League), an educational organization seeking to familiarize students in metropolitan France with life in far-flung regions of the country's vast colonial empire. Upon arrival in Africa, however, Vautier was stunned by the disparity between the glittering image of French colonialism that reigned in the *metropole* and the naked hyper-exploitation of indigenous peoples that Vautier and his fellow travelers were able to observe on the ground. (Guynn, 2011 pp. 130-131)

So we are faced with a problem: For too long, mass media dominated by Western, Eurocentric narratives has been attempting to repress African realities and replace them with a usually uninformed and incorrect Western take on that reality (MacBride, 2004 p.265). The reason why the lens does not fit is because there are a lot of contradictory social structures. Colonial Europe was imperial in nature, and so their economy depended on income from its colonies, in the form of raw goods like gold, peanuts, fish, spices etc, and labor in the form of forced labor for minimal if no pay, military labor for rescinded pay etc. Inherently this is incompatible because French dependency turned into oppression of West Africans for profit. For their benefit, the French government used their sole ability to fund projects in Africa to have control over the narrative that would be disseminated around the world. This control bought them enough time to take as many resources from the people and the land as possible, before their time ran out. Vautier was commissioned by the French Government to continue in this same purpose. When he got to West Africa and he saw the truth of the situation, he decided to expose the truth of how colonialism really affects the colonized.

The seriousness with which they punished Vautier in the case of *Afrique 50*, implies the gravity of attempting to deviate from the colonial narrative. He wasn't the only one. Another example would be the film “ ‘*Les Statues meurent aussi / Statues Also Die*’ by Chris Marker and Alain Resnais (France, 1955), whose crime was to show how colonial trade was killing black African art” (Barlet, 2012 p.205). The second half of their film, the portion with the critique, was banned until 1963. By constructing a widely accepted view of reality that differs from the truth, the French government was successful in using documentaries paired with legislation to imply a truth and reality that did not exist. Thankfully, Vautier sought out to use the same

medium for its original purpose: to represent reality as ethically, truthfully and accurately as possible.

As a daughter of Senegalese immigrants, these stories and perspectives, that have been purposefully swept under the rug for political and economic agendas, are an integral part of my history and reality. When I found out about Rene Vautier, and the reaction of the French government to his film, I found myself left with burning questions.

Before the Laval Decree was lifted, what images did the French choose to use, choose not to, and why? How did this law help them achieve their colonial objectives? Who were the intended audiences? What did they want the audiences to glean from these images? How did these images inform how the world perceives Africans and how Africans perceive themselves? Why did they choose to use documentaries in particular? What is it about the techniques, modes, and functions of documentaries that convey truth telling to audiences? How are audiences cognitively affected by documentaries? How do political narratives, played out globally over various forms of media, affect the subject of those narratives, and how do they inform the perspectives of the audiences? How can effective counter narratives be employed, using various forms of media, to shed light on historical facts, and repressed perspectives? What is an authentic counter narrative? How do you create one?

All these sub questions lead my research to three fundamental research inquiries: 1) Why and in what ways did the French, as political players, distort the truthfulness in the media using documentary films to change global narratives in their favor? 2) How does the fabricated media produced affect people and society as a whole? 3) Can we use counter narratives to include marginalized perspectives in the global narrative?

I am undertaking this professional project to help find ways of implementing solutions to the compounded impact of years of exclusionary dominant narratives with respect to differing historical and cultural perspectives and contexts. Throughout this project, we will explore the powers and limitations of documentary films, the historical context of repressed counter-narratives in Francophone West Africa and how we can put counter narratives to use in order to add a new historical perspective to the originally exclusionary narrative.

As we learn from both the French and from Vautier, documentary films can be used to disinform, as well as to inform (sometimes with the purpose of combating said disinformation). I will be using the same medium, documentary films, to create a counter-narrative that aims to express a representation of reality from the Senegalese perspective. The film I am proposing is one about my grandfather, Babacar Diop, a Senegalese Veteran of French Wars. He was born in St. Louis, Senegal, one of the *Quatre Communes de plein exercice* (Four Communes of full rights). Those born in the regions of Rufisque, Dakar, Goree at St. Louis were known as *originaires*, for whom “Citizenship was awarded on the basis of their birth within the Four Communes. Thus *originaires*, were the only West Africans gain French citizenship through the hazards of birth” (Zimmerman, 2011, pp. 43). My grandfather was born a citizen, like his father, Yakhya Diop. He even grew up to have a French military career, like his father. Two generations of men, rising to the duty of their citizenship, one fought in World War I, the other in Indochina and Algeria. Despite both being recognized for acts of bravery, putting their lives on the line for the protection of French interests, my grandfather was illegally stripped of his citizenship, its rights and benefits, including military pensions. For years he’s been trying to get back the citizenship taken from him.

His story will be used as a way to implement the findings of this Master's Professional Project, and test a counter-narrative's ability to include perspectives that have been historically neglected.

The French Colonial Empire and Media Propaganda

We are in an era where the truth is becoming more and more elusive, and therefore more and more important. Disinformation and fake news have relatively recently been outed, but the political tactics that are being used today to purposefully mislead large groups of people are not new. Misinformation and disinformation, despite being distinctly untrue or misleading, are still types of information, and are still disseminated and received as such. "In an article about the nature of information, Losee (1997) stated that misinformation may be simply information that is incomplete. Zhou and Zhang (2007) added to this discussion with additional types of misinformation, including concealment, ambivalence, distortion, and falsification (because they do not disambiguate between misinformation and disinformation)" (Fischer & Karlova, 2013). Disinformation is also defined as misinformation disseminated with the aim of misleading audiences. (Froehlich, 2017).

These misinformation and disinformation tactics have been used before by other governments for political and economic gain. Documentaries made in the U.S. between World War I until the 1950s were made with the aim of being propagandistic (Hoenisch, 2011). With that in mind, the main, relevant example of disinformation (defined by Fackler as "false information released in the effort to mislead people about the true state of reality" (2018 pp. 76)), in documentaries is the French use of it during colonialism to purposefully mislead colonial subjects and global media audiences to believe in the greatness of colonialism for all parties

involved. Even in much more recent times disinformation campaigns have been used by the Russians to influence the United States elections of 2016. Donald Trump uses the same disinformation tactics on Americans everyday, by subverting information with a constant bombardment of fake news.

The French government was using these same tactics in the 1930s. They went so far as to have specific organizations, and laws dedicated to creating, managing and globally exporting disinformation as educational tools about colonialism through many mediums, including the use of documentary films. The French colonial empire concealed distorted and falsified information about its affairs in its colonies, in order to gain moral support from French subjects, and make enough financial gains in the colonies to maintain government support (Chafer, 2002 p. 1). The colonial empire itself was too vast a concept for the general public to grasp, especially since most had never set foot in the French colonies. Hence the preservation of the empire was important only to a select few: the upper class looking for a solution to maintaining the social and economic order of the time, and looking to nurse the nation's bruised ego and global image after losing in the Franco-Prussian war (Chafer, 2002 p. 2). Therefore "a significant proportion of French expansion resulted not from policy decided in Paris but from the actions of over-enthusiastic or self-interested men on the spot... army officers in West Africa tended to dictate not only the pace of French conquests there but also the direction of French policy" (Chafer, 2002 p. 2).

But in order to sell this package to the French populace, that select few needed to show colonial expansion as a benefit to French society. They positioned colonialism not as the exploitation of raw goods from other parts of the world, but as a means of education through the establishment of geographical societies, and foreign culture societies that even went so far as to

endorse travelers on excursions (Chafer, 2002, p. 5). On these excursions travelers would map out and claim land for their governments, and those select few individuals benefiting from the expansion of the empire would be in charge of its management. In advertising colonial expansion the ability to make money from these ventures was minimized, and often publicized as an accidental gain. The expansion of the empire would be framed as an ideological unifier that emphasized race as the determining factor of who belonged in the in group vs. out group.

“... efforts to ‘educate’ the public about the empire were just as much propaganda and indeed were far more successful campaigns to encourage expansion itself. Textbooks, newspaper articles, films and exhibitions were designed to influence the public and ensure the dissemination of particular images of the colonies...” (Chafer, 2002, p. 7).

The proof of this is in the Laval Decree.

This French law first and foremost prohibited African filmmakers from making films in their own countries, which effectively eliminates an entire perspective from the global narrative about colonial expansion. Secondly it limited European filmmakers to pre-approved film topics and subjects (Kilian, 2010, p.148). This helped the French maintain a monopoly of images coming out of Africa, in order to persuade French citizens that colonialism is beneficial.

In 1934 the French government instated the Laval decree to monitor the content of filming in the colonies. The Laval decree restricted the filming of subject matter in the French ruled sections of Africa and also limited Africans' exposure to the art of filmmaking. Under the Laval decree, the request to film had to be made in writing and one was allowed to film only with the approval of the Lieutenant Governor, who had to approve film content, scripts, text and even any music intended to be used in the film; exercising strict censorship ensured there would be no films criticizing the colonial empire (Offord, 2009, p. 20).

At this time in the 19th century, films were becoming more globally accessible, and this monopolized narrative had a wider audience than just French citizens.

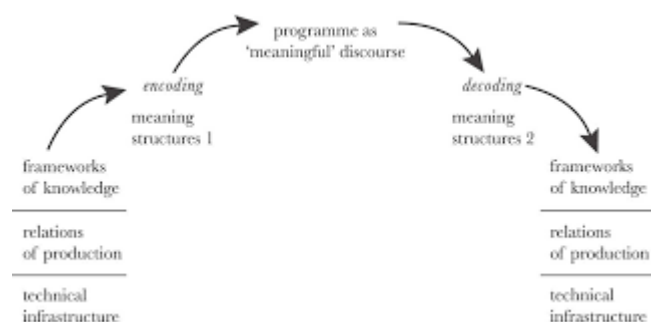
This manipulation of the truth is not a new phenomenon. “The representations can also be used to mask the absence of a basic reality. As Boorstin (1961) has described, the government and other powerful institutions manipulate words and images to create “pseudo-events” - occurrences that are chiefly located within the media and nowhere else” (Gergen, 1999, p. 202). The French government needed to maintain control of the narrative for economic purposes. Even France’s former president Jacques Chirac said, “Without Africa France will slide down into the rank of a third world power”. Colonialism has propped up the French economy to this day, and eventually became the check the French waited on every 1st and 15th. Without complete oversight of what information their citizens receive, the French government and colonial enterprises might lose the support of the French people, and it would’ve been difficult to maintain their source of income. Even to this day the French are dependent on and maintain a significant hold over their former colonies for a source of income. The former African Union ambassador to the US Arikana Chihombori-Quao, during an interview, describes in great detail how France pressured its former colonies to sign a contract, called The Pact for the Continuation of Colonization, to indefinitely pay a colonial tax. The two countries who refused to sign, Mali and Guinea, were sabotaged; Before leaving the French burned down their buildings, poured concrete into the water and sewage pipes, and took as much as they could in order to “devastate those two economies”. This was a warning to the other countries as to what would happen if they refused to sign the contract. The terms of this agreement state that all 14 former colonies should submit 85% of their economic reserves to the French. Total, this amounts to about \$500 billion a year. The only way those former colonies could access about a 20% portion of those reserves from the year before is through submitting financial statements for review from the French, which would upon approval be loaned to the former colonies at commercial interest rates.

Not only was there an economic motive but also an ideological motive as well. French colonial documentaries were supported by an ideology of superiority and xenophobia, and a culture that has an obsession with voyeurism (Slavin, 2003 p. 58). The French revelled and flourished in the idea that they were better than the subjects of those films, more civilized, more educated, more intelligent, and more sophisticated. The cinema was the place to go to reinforce those ideas.

Stuart Hall and Encoding/Decoding

Disinformation is so powerful because it uses a mixture of accurate and inaccurate information to create and disseminate erroneous messages that inform audiences of erroneous meanings behind historical and real world events. Part of understanding how misinformation and disinformation is created and spread is understanding how we process and comprehend information. Encoding/Decoding theory is a theory by Stuart Hall that outlines how media messages are made, circulated, and consumed. The encoding portion of the process takes place when the message is being produced and the decoding portion takes place when it is being received. Hall asserted that the message is not definitely determined by the sender, and that the recipients of the message do not passively receive the message's meaning as intended by the sender. What this means is that meaning is created between the sender and receiver. The sender frames his message based on his own personality, knowledge, background etc (encoding it) and the receiver (in decoding it) interprets it based on their own personality, knowledge and

background etc. These moments (production, circulation, distribution/consumption, reproduction) in which the message is being encoded and decoded is where meaning is created.



Hall calls this the “circuit of communication”. To Hall, what is important to understanding the message and creating a meaningful exchange is how accurately the receiver understands the message of the sender. In Jude Chukwunonso Abugu’s Essay: *A Critical Review of Stuart Hall’s Encoding and Decoding*, she emphasises this and states that the model is intended to help with textual analysis of media, focused on emphasizing the consumer’s participation in the creation of meaning in media messages (p. 1).

Another point to consider is, even if audiences accurately interpret the messages that were sent to them, are the messages themselves accurate information, or are they messages of dis/misinformation? The message sender has his or her own perspective, limitations and ideals that affect how they understand technical infrastructure, relations of production and frameworks of knowledge. Based on this perspective evaluation of the contextual veracity of the message being sent is just as important as the evaluation of how accurately the message is received. Abugu further goes on to caution that “Researchers should not make unwarranted assumptions about either encoding or decoding, but instead should conduct research permitting them to carefully assess the social and political context in which media content is produced and the everyday life context in which it is consumed” (p. 1). This piece is important because it takes Stuart Hall’s textual analysis and upgrades it to the more complicated, but more relevant

contextual analysis. With this we don't just question what the message is, but how the message relates to us, and the world we live in.

Stuart Hall and the 7 Misses

Stuart Hall's encoding and decoding theory, is a model of communication that accurately describes the responsibilities of all parties in the process of communication. Unfortunately, it does not show how a mismanagement of information in the first steps (in the sender's portion of the model) affects the sender's contextual understanding of the information, and creates limitations in terms of the "meaningful discourse".

In the case of the French and their purposeful dissemination of mis/disinformation, Stuart Hall's model cannot describe its effects on the audience and on the created social discourse. By adding "The 7 Misses" I aim to take Stuart Hall's textual further into deeper contextual analysis, specifically in the cases of content creators who have no intimate understanding of the ingroup they are trying to portray, and of content creators who purposely warp information to fit their agendas.

The 7 Misses is a poem I learned when joining my sorority, Sigma Gamma Rho, Sorority, Inc. Although I learned this several years ago, the collection of 7 Misses stuck with me because it was a way for me to manage my own communication with people. The 7 Misses were things to be wary of and try to avoid in communications between myself and other people. The poem is simply a collection of 7 words, starting with "mis-".

Miscommunication

Misconstruction

Misinformation

Misinterpretation**Misrepresentation****Misunderstanding****Miseducation**

This is the original order of the poem, but for the purposes of this project I would like to reorder them to fit the ways in which information can be mismanaged throughout Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding communication process. It should be applied specifically to media practitioners attempting to create mis/disinformation for the media and/or make media about a group of people and a culture they are not a part of, whose inner workings they are not privy to.

Misinterpretation - the act of interpreting something wrongly. (Webster)

Misconstruction - the act of misconstruing words or actions (Webster)

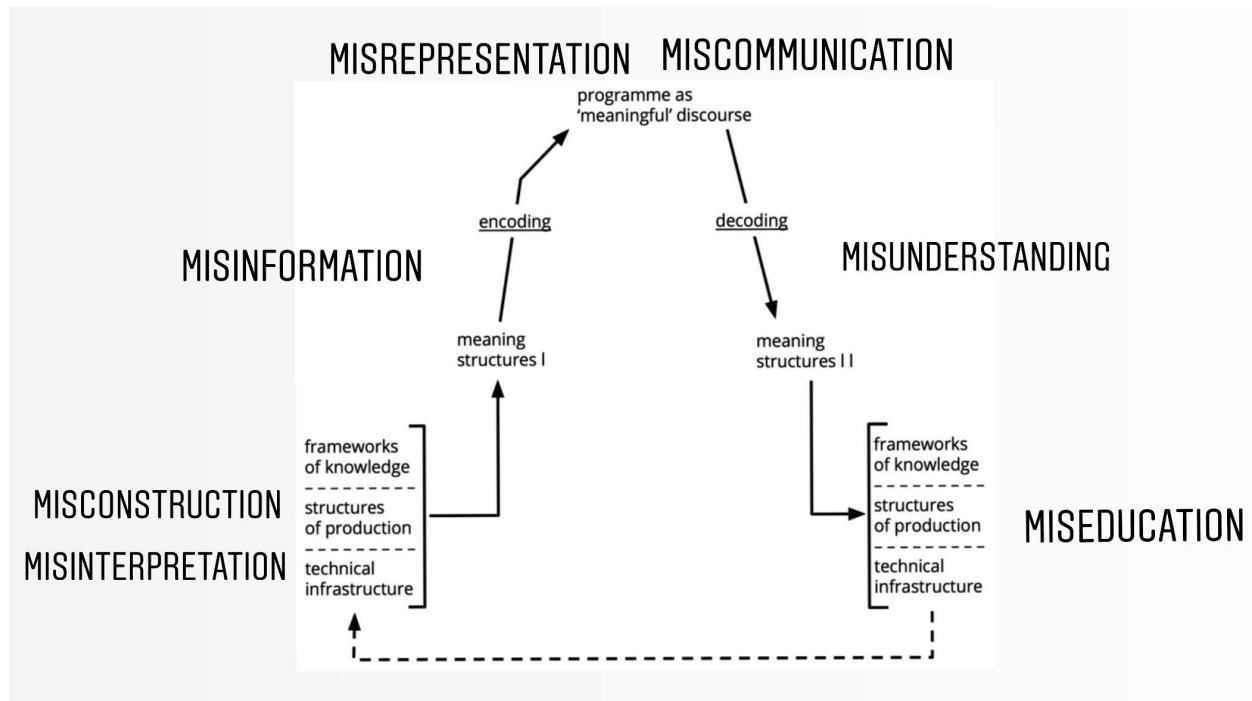
Misinformation - false or inaccurate information, especially that which is deliberately intended to deceive. (Webster)

Misrepresentation - the action or offense of giving a false or misleading account of the nature of something. (Webster)

Miscommunication - Failure to communicate adequately (Webster)

Misunderstanding - A failure to understand something correctly (Webster)

Miseducation - The act of being educated, taught or informed wrongly (Webster)



The first step in my new conceptual model includes Misinterpretation and Misconstruction. In the misinterpretation and misconstruction phase, content creators interpret cultural information inaccurately and misconstrue their meanings. An example that stands out to me is shown in *When They See Us*, the Ava Duvernay film about the Central Park 5. In an article by Bustle, they described how the phrase “wilin’ out”, meaning to hang out with friends and have a good time, was misinterpreted by detectives to mean “wilding”, which instead signified violence committed by savage groups of young black people. “In an interview with *The Hollywood Reporter*, DuVernay said that when the case was first publicized, she was shocked at how the media’s misinterpretation of slang in the Central Park Five case led to the further dehumanization of the boys....”

Many aspects go into the misinterpretation and misconstruction of AAVE (African American Vernacular English), whether it be due to bias or lack of context. According to Glasper and Curtshone (2009) in *Cracking the Code: A Look at a Misinterpreted Dialect*, “A dialect is

often viewed as the language of the uneducated and if one cannot adequately use the standard language that person is setting him or herself up for doom.” The Bustle article echoes this sentiment, through the studies by linguists and sociologists in Philadelphia that have come to find that none of the court reporters (who are mandated to 95% accuracy in interpretation of court proceedings) could score 95% accuracy in interpreting AAVE. Whether it be their biases or their lack of contextual comprehension due to not being a part of that in group, their misinterpretations and the misconstruction of information of all those involved in the case, led to disproportionately more negative outcomes for black people across the judicial system. This emphasizes that to the majority of the population, the minority population’s means of communication and ways of living are “something that is undesirable or indicative of unintelligence, criminality, or depravity... When neither court recorders, jurors, lawyers or judges possess a grasp of this valid form of language, it can lead to injustices that take years to correct - if they are ever meaningfully addressed. The men of the Central Park Five case lost years of their lives because of linguistic discrimination. How many are still suffering?” (Burton, 2019).

Not only was there a lack of contextual understanding of the phrase “wilin’ out”, but the misinterpretation of the phrase served a purpose for the prosecution looking to indict anyone for the greusome rape and murder that took place, even if it was the wrong people. Through the misinterpretation of the phrase they were able to paint a picture in the media that these 5 young boys were monsters capable of the crime. The purposeful reportage of this misinterpretation colors how the case was viewed in the eyes of the public. “ ‘The fact that wilin’ became wilding, became wolf pack, became these boys are animals... I remember for the first time realizing that the news might not be true, that the news is something that you have to really think about and

question...’ DuVernay told *The Hollywood Reporter*.” On a more personal note, I wonder how many white people caught on to the misinterpretation of the phrase when they were watching *When They See Us*. Those of us who participate in speaking AAVE were immediately aware of how the phrase was misinterpreted and misconstrued. I was angry watching it, at the way the meaning was bent to serve the purpose of the prosecution. I found myself thinking over and over again, everytime it was used to demean those boys, “That’s not even what it means!” I wonder how many people’s heads that went over, and how many people were just as enraged as I was.

It is imperative to mention that this much of a level of divergence evidently exists within the same language (as dialects are part of its umbrella language group, AAVE is still English), and within the same country. Just the differences in groups of people within the same social context can create this much dissent, let alone groups of people from totally different social contexts in a way similar to the French and Senegalese relationship. There are similarities in dominant narratives in France and the U.S. Western cultures: They both similarly create a limited understanding through missing information and missing context, that would otherwise allow us to be educated on the stories of marginalized groups. This is exactly why counternarratives are necessary because they bring to light repressed realities through non-traditional means of collecting marginalized stories. Without including those perspectives, stereotypes on both ends are what is largely disseminated to the masses. This creates a larger misunderstanding even between African Americans and Africans, people who look alike and share a common tragic history. For those who don’t look alike and didn’t share this history in the same way we did, we can only expect the misunderstandings and miscommunications to be more numerous and carry much more weight. The greater the cultural differences the higher likelihood of misinterpretation

and misconstruction of information that is encoded with the aspects outlined by Hall: technical infrastructure, relations of production and frameworks of knowledge.

So far I've used the example of the Central Park 5 case, and did so in order to illustrate another example in which the mismanagement of information by content creators tied to the state affects disadvantaged groups in a proportionately negative way. This type of media mismanagement affects all marginalized groups. The only thing that differs is the details. African American communities face similar forms of media discrimination and mis/disinformation as African communities in the way they are portrayed by the media. Obviously, this is still applicable to the main case study of this thesis: the relationship between France and Senegal and the ways the French media has been used to iterate and reiterate negative mis/disinformation about Senegalese people.

Which leads me to the second step: Misinformation. Misinformation is the direct result of misinterpreting and misconstruing the information gleaned by content creators who lack intimate knowledge of the group being portrayed and who may have agendas that would be served better by said misinformation.

In the third step the misinformation in turn Misrepresents the original information put out by the marginalized group during the “programme as ‘meaningful discourse’”. Again, the definition of misrepresentation according to Webster’s Dictionary is: “the action or offense of giving a false or misleading account of the nature of something”. Whether it was on purpose to further a personal or state agenda or accidentally due to a lack of knowledge, misrepresentation is the outcome of misinterpretation, misconstruction and misinformation in Stuart Hall’s model of communication. By this stage, the meanings inherent to the content creators, the outgroup in the scenario, have already been encoded in the message. The meaningful discourse is based off

of inaccuracies, but is still meaningful discourse as it is presented as information for people to consume. The audiences unknowingly consume mis/disinformation as information causing the original information to be Miscommunicated in the meaningful discourse.

To better illustrate this I will reference the French general DeGaulle's campaign called "blanchiment" meaning "whitening". In the fall and winter of 1944-1945 before the end of the war, DeGaulle retracted West African, North African and other colonial troops, and replaced them with white French troops.

Although colonial troops formed the majority of Charles de Gaulle's Free French Army, the photographs of the liberation of Paris in 1944 feature mostly white-looking soldiers. This was no coincidence: France's allies insisted that Paris should be liberated by white troops only. The absence of blackness is particularly significant because the liberation has been an iconic object of national collective memory since 1945. (Bishop, 2018).

Following through the 7 misses, DeGaulle and the French government purposefully misinterpreted and misconstrued data about who was fighting in their wars. They actively replaced people in order to change the makeup of the soldiers in the war, before filming, photographing and creating the media that would be disseminated around the world. This led to misinformation in the form of photographs and other visual documents surrounding the final battles and subsequent victories over Germany at the end of WWII. In order to appease their allies the French misrepresented actual data and therefore miscommunicated to the world the reality of who was participating in the war efforts and the eventual victory of the allied powers. African participants were erased from historical memory due to the blanchiment campaign.

This leads me to the 4th step: Misunderstanding. The people who consumed the media produced by DeGaulle's blanchiment campaign, would likely have no idea of the background tactics that went into the creation of those photographs and archival films. They won't even know that they are being misled, because as audiences we have a tendency to believe that verite

media is truthful and accurate. While they may be accurately interpreting the message that was constructed, the message itself is a warped version of the truthful and accurate information. It's here in Hall's model that the audience decodes the misinformation leading to step 5:

Miseducation. This final step shows the compounded effects of the 7 Misses. Information that has been misinterpreted, misconstrued becomes misinformation. The misinformation is misrepresented and miscommunicated to the media message's audience. The audience misunderstands the original message and is miseducated about the realities they were seeking information on.

Summary

The French colonial government has a longstanding history of manipulating media images for their own political and economic benefit. It is evident in their campaigns, their modes of censorship enforced through legislation, and in their punishment of those who deviate from the narrative they have been benefiting from. As shown by Rene Vautier and his film *Afrique 50*, the same mediums used to spread mis/disinformation in order to miseducate the masses, can be used to accurately reeducate them. I am undertaking this professional project to help find ways of implementing solutions to this problem, that will allow practicing journalistic and documentary professionals to evaluate the veracity of our representations of reality in respect to historically and culturally marginalized perspectives and contexts. My medium of choice will be documentary films.

Chapter 2:

History of Documentary

Defining Documentary

Since their debut in the early 1900s, documentaries have been a point of fascination for viewers everywhere. “The underlying premise of a documentary: we feel a distinct fascination when we witness the lives of others who seem to belong to the same historical world that we do” (Nichols, 2017, p. xii). I agree that this is true of people. The world is large, and we are naturally curious. Even a dedicated traveler might have trouble making it to every little corner of the globe. For those who can make it to a place or two or are privy to some interesting events, cultural customs or people, they now have the opportunity to share that real life experience with basically the whole world. The audience walks into a documentary expecting a slice of reality. We expect to believe that what we see is real. “When we believe that what we see bears witness to the way the world is, it can form the basis of our orientation to or our action within the world” (Nichols, 2017, p. xiii). Not only are we interested in observing another part of our historical world, but we are interested in learning things that will affect our understanding of and subsequently our actions in everyday life.

Despite documentaries having been around for a long time, there is much contestation over a definition that encapsulates all the art forms that could be considered a ‘documentary’. The degrees of fabrication are major points of contestation for many scholars. For example, one common point discussed often is: How much subjectivity can the director impart in a medium meant for truth telling? The answers have differed and will continue to differ, as they do with all

major points of contestation about a concrete definition of documentary films. And yet, a definition of some sort is still necessary to understand the phenomenon that we all participate in.

Many people have attempted to define documentaries, only to find that the definition is always changing. According to Bill Nichols (2017), “The definition of a ‘documentary’ is always relational or comparative” (p. 20). What Nichols describes is a phenomenon similar to Boorstin’s (1961) idea of pseudo-events. *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, outlines how people are participants in the creation of memory, history, and culture, instead of passengers along for the ride. The idea of pseudo-events was created by Boorstin to describe how we create events and attach meaning to them. What can be defined as a documentary changes because the way we engage with the participation of cultural and historical memory changes with the times, based on conventions that change or evolve, with the emergence of different modes, and with the evolution of the needs of both filmmakers and audiences.

The problems that arise from defining documentary films, revolve around ideas of truth and trust (Eitzen, 1995). This is where the definition of documentaries gets murky; Reality and truth are subjective ideas. Taking that fact into consideration, as well as the added subjectivity of artistic constraints (run time, technology, editing, artistic license etc.), it’s imperative to understand that no matter the difference of definitions, documentaries across the board can only be a representation of reality. What we are watching is a fabricated representation of real people in the real world. If we tie in Boorstin’s ideas of pseudo-events, we can understand documentaries as being contrived constructs produced for a purpose and laden with subjectivity (Eitzen, 1995). The question then becomes: Can we believe that this fabrication is truthful in its representation of reality?

Throughout the years documentary has been defined in several other ways, including

... as ‘a dramatized presentation of man’s relation to his institutional life,’ as ‘film with a message,’ as ‘the communication, not of imagined things, but of real things only’ and as films which give up the control of the events being filmed. The most famous definition, and still one of the most serviceable is John Grierson’s, ‘the creative treatment of actuality.’ None of these definitions is completely satisfactory. (Eitzen, 1995, pp. 81-82)

The last definition is the one most generally used. The issue that arises from this definition is the tension between “creative treatment” and “actuality” (Nichols, 2017).

Many scholars have come up with various definitions for documentary films, and the only consensus is that despite the necessity of a definition, we should be flexible with it because the dynamics that of culture, society and art that inform the production and observation of documentary films is also always in flux (Nichols, 2017)

Empirical Description

Despite this belief Nichols (2017) was able to cement down three distinct characteristics of documentary films.

1. Documentaries are about reality; They’re about something that actually happened.
2. Documentaries are about real people.
3. Documentaries tell stories about what happens in the real world.

These three characteristics are generally agreed upon, not just by scholars, but also by audience members of documentaries. Nichols (2017) also outlined 6 modes of documentary that generally inform story type, style and execution.

1. Poetic
2. Expository
3. Participatory
4. Observational
5. Reflexive

6. Performative

The two modes most utilized are the expository and the participatory modes. Many of the different modes have different forms because they serve different functions all centered around reconstructing the truth using indexical images. The poetic “reassembles fragments of the world poetically” (Nichols 2010, p. 102). The observational mode aims to show you an uninterrupted version of the natural setting. It is most used in nature documentaries, and when used on people, calls into question whether it is ethical to film someone without their consent. The two used least are reflexive and performative.

Some major considerations in defining documentaries are

1. Labeling a film as a documentary

Part of creating a context for documentaries is labeling a film as such. “This definition ... functions as an initial cue that a given work can be considered as a documentary. The context provides the cue ...” (Nichols, 2017, p. 22). Hearing the label of a documentary allows us to assume certain things about the film. When you turn on Netflix, and you search through the documentary section, you know what to expect when you finally make a selection and hit play.

2. Correspondence (Henrik, 2015)

How truthful are the details of the film?

3. Coherence (Henrik, 2015)

The film should not contradict itself.

4. Pragmatic or conventionalist view (Henrik, 2015)

It should be based off of a general agreed upon reality

5. Intentions of the Filmmaker (Henrik, 2015)

6. Subject Matter, themes or content (Henrik, 2015)

7. Expectations of the (general) audience (Henrik, 2015)

8. Audience/Target Groups (Henrik, 2015)

9. Communicative function (Henrik, 2015)

It functions to impart knowledge, express, inform or discuss.

10. Context of actual use (Henrik, 2015)

What specific purpose was in mind when making the documentary? Ex: educational, campaign, PSA etc

11. Recordings (Henrik, 2015)

Location shots, interviews etc.

12. Context of viewing or distribution (Henrik, 2015)

13. Obligation to truth (Henrik, 2015)

14. Ethics (Henrik, 2015)

We expect to be told the truth, and that the director does his best at expressing neutrality and objectivity.

15. Editing (Henrik, 2015)

Should be manipulated as little as possible to ensure it's not changed by a structure that is highly rhetorical and suggestive. "It's in *cinema verite*,' explains Ellen Hovde, co-editor of *Grey Gardens*, 'that the editing takes on the same importance as the camera work - and camera work and editing combined *are* directing, in *cinema verite*'" (Rabinowitz, 1994. p. 21)

Proposed Conceptual Definition

The general consensus among scholars was that the definition of documentary films should be constantly in flux due to the fact that its definition is relational to society and culture,

which is also always in flux. “The best way to define documentary, therefore, may be to say simply that it is whatever people commonly mean by the term. ...What saves this argument from circularity, as Tudor pointed out, is that how people use genre terms and what they mean by them is pretty strictly delimited by culture.” (Eitzen, 1995, p. 83) This takes into consideration three considerations of documentary films:

1. Intentions of the filmmaker
2. Expectations of the Audience
3. Correspondence: truthfulness of the film

If the film represents reality, is intended to be a documentary, and is received as a documentary, then we can call it a documentary.

Proposed Operational Definition

Documentary films are films made to represent actuality, with an emphasis on correspondence (the truthfulness of the film), the intentions of the filmmaker, and the expectations, and later understandings gleaned by the audience, from the film.

Methods and Results

In order to test the truthfulness and accuracy of documentaries we can measure two things:

1. Key Takeaways

One of the aims is to measure the understanding people takeaway after watching a documentary film. By doing interviews we can ask participants for a summary of what they saw, and markdown common phrases, themes and takeaways. The independent variable would be the film and the dependent variables would be the responses from the audience members If future

researchers were looking into intent vs reception, you could compare the data with the key phrases, themes and takeaways the director and production team intended for its audience.

Once the documentary is completed (as the final film will be completed after the culmination of this thesis), I plan to use a survey before and after the viewing of the film to test key takeaways. The one beforehand will look into what the audience knows about the topic. Open ended questions will be utilized, and themes will be picked from their answers to also ascertain their political leanings, and their level of bias towards the subjects of the documentary. The post film survey will measure how much their perspective has changed since the viewing.

2. Measuring documentary claims against objective historical fact.

I feel compelled to write objective historical fact, because true objectivity, even with historical fact, is rare. Bias is always present. We all know the common phrase: History is written by the victor. This is especially relevant because “Clearly the premise of the ethnographic film, that the medium itself is transparent and thus will give us direct insight into the “mind” of the Other, presents a special, racialized ideology about the logic of the apparatus as a construction of knowledge.” (Rabinowitz, 1994. p. 123). The victor (or the person with the privilege of media control) dominates over more marginalized perspectives, and that is the major limitation to measuring documentary claims against historical fact. Still, there is a general consensus on most historical facts, and so you can measure the claims of a documentary, and what people understand from it, against what the majority of us agree happened.

History of Documentaries

Documentaries have been revived in the past several years with a breath of fresh air. New technology is allowing us to be more connected, to share our experiences and to participate in the experiences of others. As we are increasingly becoming more globalized and more connected

it's important to understand how such a prolific medium affects the way we understand the world around us.

The birth of cinema began with documentaries. In 1872, Eadweard Muybridge lined up cameras that took pictures of a horse running by. He put the separate pictures together and played them in succession with speed to make the first motion picture. This first motion picture was documenting something as simple as a horse running in real life. In March of 1895, when the Lumiere brothers debuted the *cinematographe*, they projected images of *Workers Leaving the Factory*. The Lumiere Brothers believed that the art of film should be “Motivated by ‘scientific curiosity,’ since they were convinced that cinema should seek to capture real life *sur le vif* - on the fly.” (Barbash & Castinga-Taylor, 1997).

“In the 1890s, they even sent teams of camera operators along with film processors and projectors across the continents both to document and display their inventions by filming the daily lives and environments of common people. One of the money making schemes the Lumieres devised was a quasi-simultaneous filming and projecting tour of the big cities of the Americas, Europe and Africa. The Lumiere cameramen would place their stationary cameras at a busy downtown intersection and capture the passerby on foot, then that they could see themselves that evening at the cinema. These images were juxtaposed with those from other parts of the world so that Egyptian pyramids rose up on Broadway, the exotic and the mundane becoming interchangeable. Credited as the fathers of newsreel and documentary cinema, the Lumieres also pioneered interactive viewing, a kind of direct cinema years ahead of its institutional practice. The Lumiere’s cinematographe represented an important moment in achieving the simultaneity of image and experience.” (Rabinowitz, 1994 pp. 122-123)

This shows that the history of film and cinema indeed begins with documentaries.

Documentaries have been an important part of our media culture since film’s inception, and their impact is widely seen and recognized. They are shown in classrooms, watched on our phones

and laptops, and streamed on Netflix or Hulu, all for our personal viewing pleasure. It is about time we revisit the impact documentaries have on its audience.

Bill Nichols, in *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, argued that

The linkage between documentary and the historical world is the most distinctive feature of this tradition. Utilizing the capacities of sound recording and cinematography to reproduce the physical appearance of things, documentary film... proposes perspectives on and interpretations of historic issues, processes and events. (Nichols, pp. ix)

By proposing a perspective to an audience reliant on a narrative monopoly, documentaries participate in creating an idea of reality through social constructionism. The theory of social constructionism revolves around the idea that we construct a personal and socially accepted understanding of the world by communicating with others in society (Hurwitz 2018).

Because of the use of documentary forms and conventions, it was easy for the audience to consider them to be the truth. “A good documentary stimulates discussion about its subject, not itself” (Nichols, 2010). Western cinema tradition aims to make the camera as invisible as possible, with variations made purposely to convey meaning. Documentaries have been successful at steering the conversation away from the form and function. But with an exponentially increasing global world, where our opinions can find themselves accessible to a peer continents away in under a second, the degree of factuality of our opinions has further reaching consequences than ever before. Everything from our political opinions, to the music we choose to listen to, is affected by how we understand and perceive our world. Because of the propagandistic documentaries commissioned by the French during colonialism, they were able to convince their citizens to support their colonial campaign.

Carey (1989), argued that not only have documentaries been used to craft an idea worth disseminating, they also have been a means to receive that same idea. The main focus of this

research is to understand how documentaries create a representation of reality that may or may not be true, by taking a look into the documentary form, what they imply in the audiences' rationale, and what impact they have on our perception of reality.

“Documentary cinema is intimately tied to historical memory. Not only does it seek to reconstruct historical narrative, but it often functions as a historical document itself. This essay describes and dissects the history and rhetoric of documentary cinema tracing its various modes of address from the earliest moments of cinematic representation through its uses for ethnographers, artists, governments and marginal organizations in the present. The different uses of documentary result in a wide variety of formal strategies to persuade the audience of a film's truth. These strategies are based on a desire to enlist the audience in the process of historical reconstruction. The documentary film differentiates itself from narrative cinema by claiming its status as a truth telling mode. However as a filmic construction, it relies on cinematic semiosis to convince the audience of its validity and truth. By looking at the history of documentary addresses, this essay outlines the rhetoric of persuasion and outlines its effectiveness. The documentary calls upon its audience to participate in historical remembering by presenting an intimate view of reality. Through cinematic devices such as montage, voice-over intertitles, and long takes, documentary provokes its audience to understandings about social, economic, political and cultural differences and struggles. The films actively engage with their world; however, often viewers respond to the same devices motivating classic Hollywood narratives. Thus the genre reinforces dominant patterns of vision.” (Rabinowitz 1994, p.119)

To this day we can see that documentaries affect our historical memory and our understanding of the world around us. If used to its full potential, this medium is perfect for expressing the unique ideas, traditions and wonders this world has to offer.

Final Notes on Documentary and my use of it

Throughout my life, and especially in college when a lot of us are mingling with people different from them for the first time, I've been asked questions like “Does your dad hunt lions for fun?”, “Do you have a pet giraffe?”, and “Do Africans have houses?”. I've heard and

overheard statements like “I would love to visit the country of Africa.”, “Africa is a poor country.”, and that “Africans come here to steal jobs and educational opportunities from African Americans after selling us to be slaves ”, the latter of which is more painful, as it usually is, because it comes from someone whose skin is just as dark as mine. The miseducation about Africa and more importantly the people who inhabit the continent, are numerous. Though they vary in type, all are detrimental to the truth of the complexity of Africa. Luckily, I was more prepared to deal with these stereotypes and more that I’ve been confronted with, than some of my peers. When I was young, my mother’s own experience with these types of questions and stereotypes prompted her to write a children’s book of poems called *Eye on Africa*. She answered the very real questions she’s been asked like “Do people sleep on trees with birds?”, and tackled poignantly concepts like kings and queens long forgotten. One in particular she made me read quite often was a poem called *To My Children*. At such a young age, the poem was painful to read. My mom would ask me to read it, and I remember telling her a few times that I didn’t want to read that one again. It talked of how slavery affected both sides of the Middle Passage, how families were torn apart and how the ties that were cut in the process between Africans and African Americans is one that, still to this day, scars both parties deeply. She describes a mother severed from her child, who now across the ocean is angry with her for the situation they've both found themselves in. Yet, as a mother, her only hope is for her child to one day return. Although these were ideas that quite simply made me sad, they were formative in the way that they opened my eyes to two sides of history. In class I’d see pictures of big bellied African children, sitting with their mothers outside of their huts, but in my family photo albums I’d see houses with sprawling verandas lined with beautiful trees and chairs filled with laughing and happy people. I knew that in class they taught us that Africans sold African Americans into slavery, but from my

family I'd hear of the members of my family who were taken as slaves, and how there were revolts across the continent lead to stop the taking of slaves. I know that the media may paint educated Africans as opportunists willing to push down African Americans further, but I saw first hand as well as hearing stories from my mother, father, aunts and uncles struggling to make it in similar ways due to similar institutional methods, and under a barrage of the effects of both similar yet different stereotypes. I knew what I learned from the outside world, but what I learned from home was the same story from the perspective of people whose stories I never heard anywhere else. Because I never saw these stories anywhere, I also figured that I was one of the only people getting to hear and see them.

For those people who only know what they've learned in this outside world, I wondered how I could visually convey the intricacies of people they never imagined, in a very specific situation at a very specific moment in time, that was a culmination of events over time, they also probably had one sided information about? How can those with no idea that originaires existed, and fought as French citizens understand that they have lives, families, hopes, fears, decisions to make, triumphs and regrets,. How can they understand that these people who they have never heard of, experience life in the same nuanced detail that we experience in our everyday lives? How do I convey a history to these people, that shows a neglected perspective that is also understandable despite it being in the context of the Other.

“Filming an essentially ephemeral event, a vanishing custom, a disappearing species, a transitory occurrence is the motivation behind most documentary images” (Rubinowitz pp. 120). This is the case with part of my motivation in making a documentary about Papou. There is a timely aspect to this. Papou is getting old. He just turned 89 this past December. As he was part of the last group of people to fight for the French as African Veterans of French Wars, he is

among the last living survivors in a group of people who have been misled by a political entity for the personal gain of that entity, and therefore the last possible chance we have to see them and hear them tell their stories for themselves. If anymore time passes, their stories could be lost, or remain incomplete.

I've also decided to start my film with an intro that explains the context in which the film is meant to be viewed. This idea will continue to be more fleshed out, but the idea is that by letting people know why this perspective of the story has been withheld historically and systemically, we can understand its importance. This, if nothing, gives the story its credibility. If you have something you need to cover up, it makes its existence that much more apparent.

Documentary is the perfect means by which to tell his story. We get a chance to hear his voice, see his face in interviews, see the places he's been, and visualize the data that would be lost if left to the ravages of time and circumstance.

Chapter 3:

Counter Narratives

Ethical Considerations

In order to understand how to handle information ethically we have to first understand what information is and isn't. Information is inherently assumed to be true, but objective truth is impossible to produce. And yet "All theories of truth have consequences for the way we create true statements, for what counts as evidence and how we collect it" (Gergen, 1999). They are closely linked to our understanding of the nature of being (ontology) but also to our view of right and wrong (ethics) or the nature of humankind (anthropology)" (Stahl, 2006 pp86). We must strive to achieve as close to an objective truth as we can for our dissemination of information to be considered ethical.

Information ethics considers ignorance, lies and deception, missing information, misinformation, and disinformation as challenges to the ethical dissemination of information (Froelich, 2017). Through factors such as repetition, authoritarianism, prejudice and minimal contact with other groups of people the negative impacts of mis/disinformation can be amplified in today's society, especially as we are becoming increasingly globalized. The only thing we as media professionals, journalists, verite filmmakers and the like can do is to actively combat misinformation and disinformation with facts.

"...to avoid occasions of violating information ethics or practicing the ethics of ignorance, we must remain current, competent, and knowledgeable (including knowing when our skill set has been exceeded) and we must seek programs that promote individual and collective information literacy. Only in this way can we move out of the cave and into the light." (Froehlich, 2017)

It's information ethics that essentially dictates the use of counter narratives to combat mis/disinformation. By using the voices who have been silenced by disinformation tactics to create a new body of knowledge, we can remedy its negative effects. We can do so through critical research that will allow content creators to expand their knowledge and understanding of their chosen topics, and more importantly question their own perspective and responsibility through their work. (Stahl, 2006 pp. 92).

The Pre-existing Narrative

Narratives are “a spoken or written account of connected events; a story” (Oxford). For so long the narrative regarding colonized countries and its people has been set by European perspectives. French ethnographic travel films, eventually known to be documentaries, were not just a cinematic wave, but were also backed up by an ideology that focuses on voyeurism, travel and a superiority complex (Macmillan, 2014). Not only did French men travel to create these travelogues, but used the narrative dominating images to influence the monetary relationship between the imperial country and the colonized country. Economics played a major role in popularizing a certain image out of Africa, and the impact was made via the travelogues and ethnographic films of traveling Europeans; The most impactful travelogues and documentaries of the time were French made (Macmillon, 2014). These travelogues were popular because those who were not able to travel got the chance to see something different and exotic from a lens similar to theirs, and an understanding similar to theirs. This engagement with the audience through documentaries and travelogues became a major part of French culture, not just because the images were different and interesting, but because the images of empire increased a sense of pride for being French. O'Riley 's book, *Cinema in an age of terror: North Africa, victimization,*

and colonial history. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press "underlines the importance of France's colonial role in the development of French society and culture after 1870. Whether it was as a unifying factor or as a foil for the development of a sense of French identity, the empire was crucial to popular culture." (p.9). Throughout its many chapters, it outlines several facets of the French colonial machine during the Third Republic, and how those facets lead to structural, and social changes in France. Three major tactics were used: Public relations and personal contacts, writings and propaganda speeches, and colonial exhibitions (O'Riley, 2010). Many of these individuals, who were usually stationed in the colonies for periods of time, used these methods and had a successful campaign in swaying the right people to support their agenda of furthering colonization. The major theme though, is that many if not all of the decisions made to further the empire and its interests were made by a select few individuals, and their manipulation of the facts. The audience's participation was only in consumption, albeit consumption of disinformation. The creators of this media were public officials, government workers, and French officers stationed in the colonies. They were privy to the information, and used this privilege along with their Eurocentric perspectives in order to control the information for the benefit of the empire.

Whilst it is common for groups to take their own culture as a reference when evaluating what is unfamiliar to them, the Eurocentrism that became established in nineteenth-century thought is particularly problematic for the study of African film given, as is now widely acknowledged, that this attitude was originally couched in notions of racial superiority. European cultural norms such as Universalism,, Reason and Humanism were not simply taken as normative and therefore exportable, but were later used to justify the belief that European civilizations could and should be universally imposed through empire-building projects. These functioned by excluding, silencing or explicitly reviling all that deviated from these established 'norms'. Any group not conforming to and/or having alternative

thought systems or modes of reasoning was thus negatively marked as ‘other’, as representing all that Europeans were not (Thackaway, 2003 .p17).

These officials made a habit of disseminating images such as that of the hungry naked children, the sickly, the poor, and the strong but unintelligent and subsequently obedient “natural man”, in need of French humanitarian aid to bring them all closer to civilization (Baron, 2010). Their implementation of the Lavale Decree helped solidify a narrative about French West Africa that depicted its inhabitants in a way they would not depict themselves. It was also a means by which they could “discourage the development of any African filmmaking activity, apparently recognising the potentially subversive nature of film” (Thackaway, 2003 pp. 7). African filmmakers do not exoticise themselves, nor do they limit or silence their own perspectives, and the French could not afford giving them the opportunity to challenge their dominant narrative.

CRT- Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory is a methodology that can be used specifically with documentaries to shed light on and tackle social justice issues “Friend and Caruthers assert that adopting documentary film as a [CRT] research paradigm creates opportunities to share stories from schools that illuminate diverse perspectives of voice, which can be used to transform...” (Friend & Caruthers, 2016). It allows us to critically analyze media from the lens of social justice, allowing us to bolster the perspectives of those who have had injustices done to them systematically. This is beneficial not just in the case of Africans relative to colonialism, but to African Americans, Native Americans, Latinx populations, etc in the US and other marginalized groups around the world. “CRT provides our field with the tools by which to interrogate the

effects of racial bias that actively impede success and retention in rhetoric and composition.”

(Martinez, pp.68) . Critical Race Theory utilizes counternarratives as its means of achieving its social justice goals. CRT can be utilized “as an interpretive theoretical frame to both situate and challenge ahistorical, decontextualized, and one-dimensional explanations.” (Castro-Salazar, 2010 p. 24) The inherent assumption in needing to use CRT as the methodological framework by which you construct a counter narrative is the fact that the dominant context is one that suppresses certain realities. The dominant context is one that practices racism in multiple ways in society so much so that it is ingrained into the culture of the society. CRT, through the use of counter narratives by means of collecting oral histories, interviews, performances, etc., aims to challenge this sense of normalcy and force us to look deeper into our mentalities surrounding non-majority groups in media representation.

“CRT counterstory recognizes that the experiential and embodied knowledge of people of color is legitimate and critical to understanding racism that is often well disguised in the rhetoric of normalized structural values and practices... It instead critically examines theoretical concepts and humanizes empirical data while also deriving material for counterstory’s discourse, setting, and characters from sources. These include, but are not limited to, statistical data, existing literature, social commentary, and authors’ professional/personal experiences concerning the topics addressed.” (Martinez, p.69)

The normal narrative upholds deficient and racialized ideas of minority groups (Soloranzo, 2002). Critical race theory as a methodology for counter narrative is a solution for the dominant narrative filled with those negative racialized ideas. This is emphasized by the writings of Thackaway. She says “Western modes of thought cannot always be satisfactorily applied to non-Western art forms... European cultural norms... were later used to justify the belief that European civilisations could and should be universally imposed through empire building projects. These functioned by excluding, silencing or explicitly reviling all that deviated from these established ‘norms’” (2003 p.p 16-17) . By understanding this research we can begin to come to a well-rounded conclusion about the context in which the African narrative that has been

hijacked by European perspectives, and pervasively disseminated globally, was constructed. But this set of knowledge is not complete without understanding how African counter narratives have been constructed to start dismantling the main narrative that has been globally amplified. Melissa Thackaway's book *Africa Shoots Back: Alternative Perspectives in Sub-Saharan Francophone African Film* has been a great tool for understanding the overall historical lineage of the Francophone West African counter narrative, its inherent political and social commentary, its styles and its modes, its special concerns and its limitations artistically and structurally. With this perspective, we can finally understand the full context of the Francophone West African counter narrative, in order to see how this theoretical knowledge can be put to practice to achieve the counter narrative aims of dismantling the false narrative and replacing it with a narrative that more accurately represents Francophone West African realities.

The Counter Narrative

Melissa Thackaway states that the problematic “application of Western paradigms can produce misguided or reductive readings of culturally divergent works by failing to recognize their own specific influences and models” (2003, p.5). This is why it is so important to implement counter-narratives as a means of remedying the misinformation disseminated by the media produced by the French state in any capacity.

First and foremost what is a counter-narrative?

Counter narratives are “the stories which people tell and live which offer resistance, either implicitly or explicitly, to dominant cultural narratives.” (Andrews, 2004 p. 1) In the context of African Cinema counter narratives address questions of representation, identity and voice through addressing the 4 intrinsic struggles of African filmmakers (Thackaway, 2003 pp. 3):

1. How do we repair colonial damage?
2. Who has been misrepresented and in what way?

3. How do we represent people who have historically been unable to represent themselves?
4. How do we provide alternative representations?

The previously mentioned *Afrique 50* was a means of using a counter-narrative. This film is important because it was a counter narrative created during the time of the Laval Decree. All other counter narratives were made after it was retracted. While Vautier is not an African, he focused on some key concepts that African filmmakers consider when creating their films. “As they challenge the stereotypes and the absences of Western images of Africa, filmmakers have sought to formulate more representative and empowering images and to foreground their own concerns. (Thackaway, 2003 p.3) By focusing his efforts on the concerns of Africans being oppressed by the colonial system he was able to serve the purposes that African filmmakers also cater to.

Since the Laval Decree was lifted right before the African wave of independence in the 60s, African filmmakers have taken advantage of films as a way to explore and express their realities. The father of African filmmaking is a Senegalese man by the name of Ousmane Sembene. He directed the first film made by an African in Africa. *Borom Sarret* made in 1963 is a film that explores the economic, social and political realities of a Senegalese man in the 60s. It tackles issues of poverty, hypocritical cultural traditions, and the emergence of an elite class of citizens bolstered by the French need for puppet rulers. As Sembene eloquently puts it, African cinema has the unique privilege and responsibility of allowing us to see, feel and understand ourselves “through the mirror of film” (Thackaway, 2003. p.1). Whether intentionally or not, African narratives are inherently counter narratives as they position themselves as responses challenging the narrative about them that has been historically and socially dominant. Sembene

is famous for his social critique, as is evident in the opening of his film *Xala* (1975) where he calls out the new African elite elected to the Senegalese government for becoming the puppets of the French. His voice is not the only one in the mix, as many West African filmmakers, even now follow this tradition.

Counter narratives are still important today because France still maintains some level of control over the film funding, production and distribution process in its former colonies. When I reached out to Dr. Zimmerman, the author of a dissertation centered around Senegalese veterans of French Wars, she was in Senegal. It was such a shame we weren't there at the same time. But it nevertheless excited me in two ways. First, through her writing, I felt that she had taken a second narrative into account, and looked objectively at two sides, and weighed them equally. By taking the time to interview about one hundred African veterans and their families she balanced the history written and projected across the globe for decades with a counter narrative based on a perspective whose platform had historically been repressed economically, and governmentally. Zimmerman says, "The tirailleurs sénégalais demonstrate that the core-periphery model of historicizing colonialism, where information and historical causality flow unidirectionally from the French metropole into its colonies, is limited in portraying how people experienced colonialism" (2011, p.1). What does this mean for how we understand the story of African Veterans of French Wars? How does this shape how we understand this history? Second it allowed me to ask her questions specific to the things she witnessed that I had personal reference to, and things I had witnessed that she had personal reference to. As soon as I found out, I immediately wanted to ask her what she thought about the educational video that was produced, directed, made and distributed by France, that was playing in the Musée des Anciens Combattants (Veterans Museum) in Thiaroye, Senegal. It was something that bothered me on

my visit there and I haven't been able to stop thinking about it since then. It was one more piece of evidence that not only do they spread a controlled image of our shared history to the outside world, but they do among us, further controlling our access to our own narratives, and changing how history will always be remembered. She had not been to that specific museum but she was not surprised to find out that the French were in control of the information being spread even in Senegal.

Lizelle Bisschoff's article Sub-Saharan African Cinema in the Context of FESPACO: Close-Ups on Francophone West Africa and Anglophone South Africa takes a look at Francophone West African films from around 2009 and looks at the trends they exhibit now. This can easily be compared to the Francophone West African films that were made between the 60s (post African wave of independence), and the late 2000s.. "Attempts to classify African film in terms of social realism, return to pre-colonial sources etc. ignore the variety of inspiration and technique, already in the founding work of Ousmane Sembene, and increasingly today" (2009). African film has its own culture, and its own traditions that were for a while heavily influenced, controlled, and censored by colonial powers, but are resilient in retaining core values that inform their art of filmmaking. An example of a more modern counter narrative, and its ability to create change is a film about Algerian Veterans of French Wars. *Indigenes* (translated in English to *Days of Glory*) is a film by an Algerian filmmaker named Rachid Bouchareb. Algerians, as part of the French colonies, were subject to a lot of the similar policies, issues and effects of French colonization as Senegal did. The story follows a group of Algerians through WWII, and the discrimination they face for not being of French descent. Their story is similar to the story of my grandfather, and generally only differs in the fact that my grandfather was born a citizen and they

were not. Still, they all put their lives on the line for France in its time of need. For years the stories of these individuals have been swept under the rug, and purposefully so.

Distribution as a means of counter-narrative

Bisschoff's article states that a major difficulty with films made in Francophone West Africa is that they have difficulty being widely distributed (2009). They are barely even distributed locally. This has to do with the efficiency of foreign distribution methods and a lack of being able to make it to the market due to foreign countries being choosy about what films are allowed to enter the market. To this day France has a strong hold on funding and distribution of films made in its previously colonial countries (Thackaway, 2003 pp.7). More future research must be done to find ways in which problematic distribution structures can be circumvented. In the meantime suggestions from African film studies professors like Amadou Fofana have been to take distribution into your own hands via mobile cinemas that would give access to those in remote areas of Senegal.

Chapter 4:

Putting Theory to Practice

The Professional Project

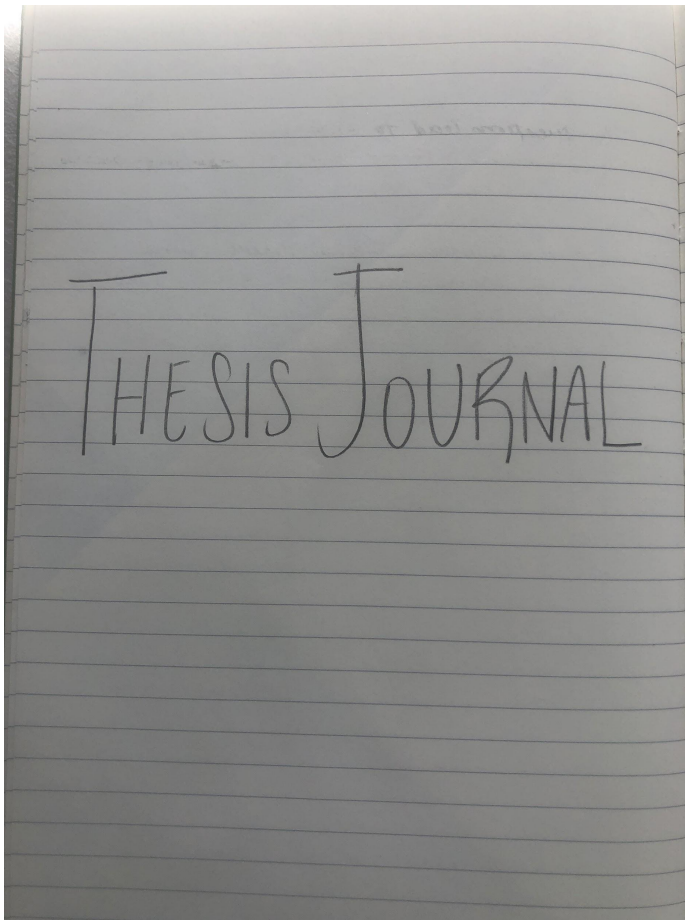
My professional project will include two parts. The first is a written component meant to describe what documentary films are, their hallmarks, techniques, and modes, and when/how they've been used by governments over time to push certain political messages. It also will include a brief history of France's relationship with Senegal, what messages they exported about their relationship, and what the reality of their relationship was. Lastly I'd like to add a counter narrative to this to help remedy the issue of a dominant narrative. I'll talk about traditional African narratives and African film traditions, and how I'll use the techniques and culture of storytelling and filmmaking to create a story that is authentically African in perspective, theme, and execution. I want to explore what I believe to be a purposeful false advertisement by the French, and begin to explore the history of western media doing this, through the French example.

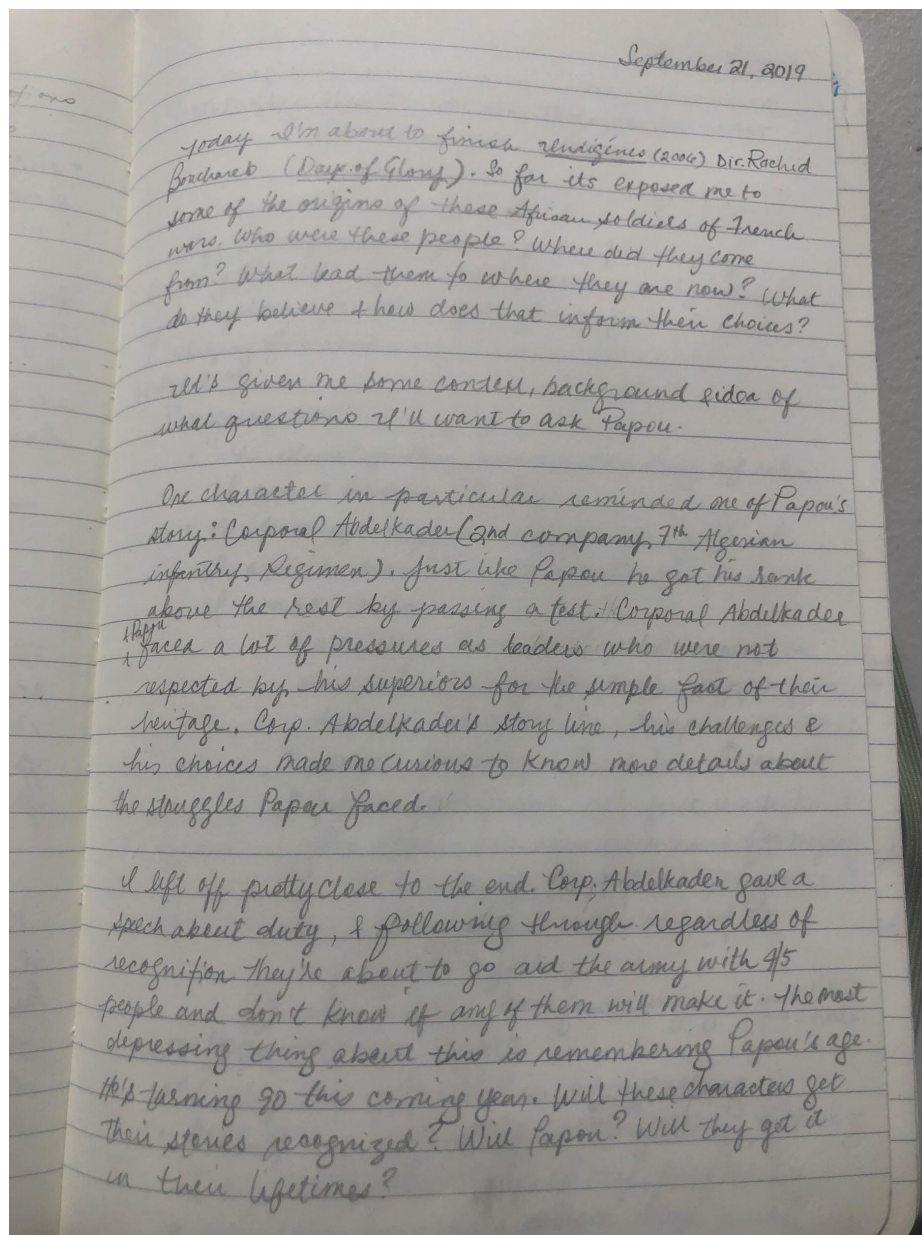
The second part will be a short documentary film that incorporates those techniques and culture of storytelling and filmmaking to talk about the story of my grandfather, who is an African Veteran of French Wars. To continue the theme of purposeful false advertisement, he was told he would get citizenship, pension, benefits etc for fighting with the French, but as they have a history of doing (Thiaroye, Algerians, Moroccans, etc), they did not intend to fulfill their side of the bargain. This continues their habit of misleading people for personal gain. This

documentary will be the counter narrative because it explores in depth the stories of those who are affected by the actions of the French, that they are, by design, eager to sweep under the rug.

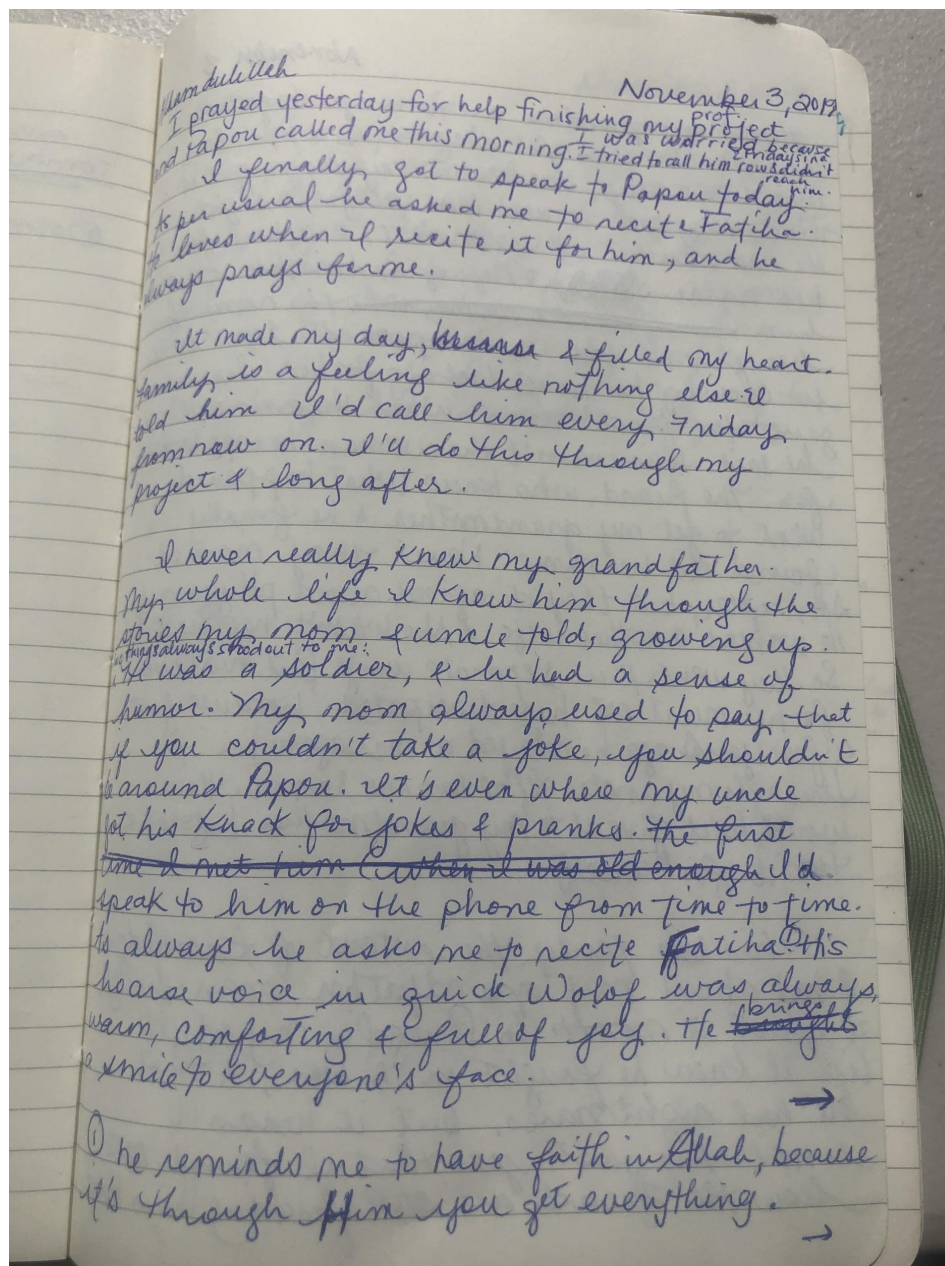
Journal

This portion will be filled partly with journal entries, as I've kept a notebook of the feelings, questions, limitations, struggles and solutions I've experienced since the beginning of the documentary filmmaking process. It will be paired with the research and findings I've gathered about documentaries and counter narratives as a way to tie theory and practice together.





The film *Indigènes* (translated to English as *Days of Glory*) is essentially a counter narrative film that caused the French government to make small strides towards restitutions to its African veterans. President Emmanuel Macron gave some Tirailleurs their citizenship after watching this film and so I thought watching and analyzing the film would be a way to help me understand why it made such an impact.



I never really grew up knowing about my grandfather. I have met him twice in my life before the start of this project, and the first time I was too young to remember. The Atlantic separated us, and calling cards were our only means of communication, albeit infrequent, before WhatsApp. This project excited me because it is a way to get to know my own family and my own story and little bit better.

November 3

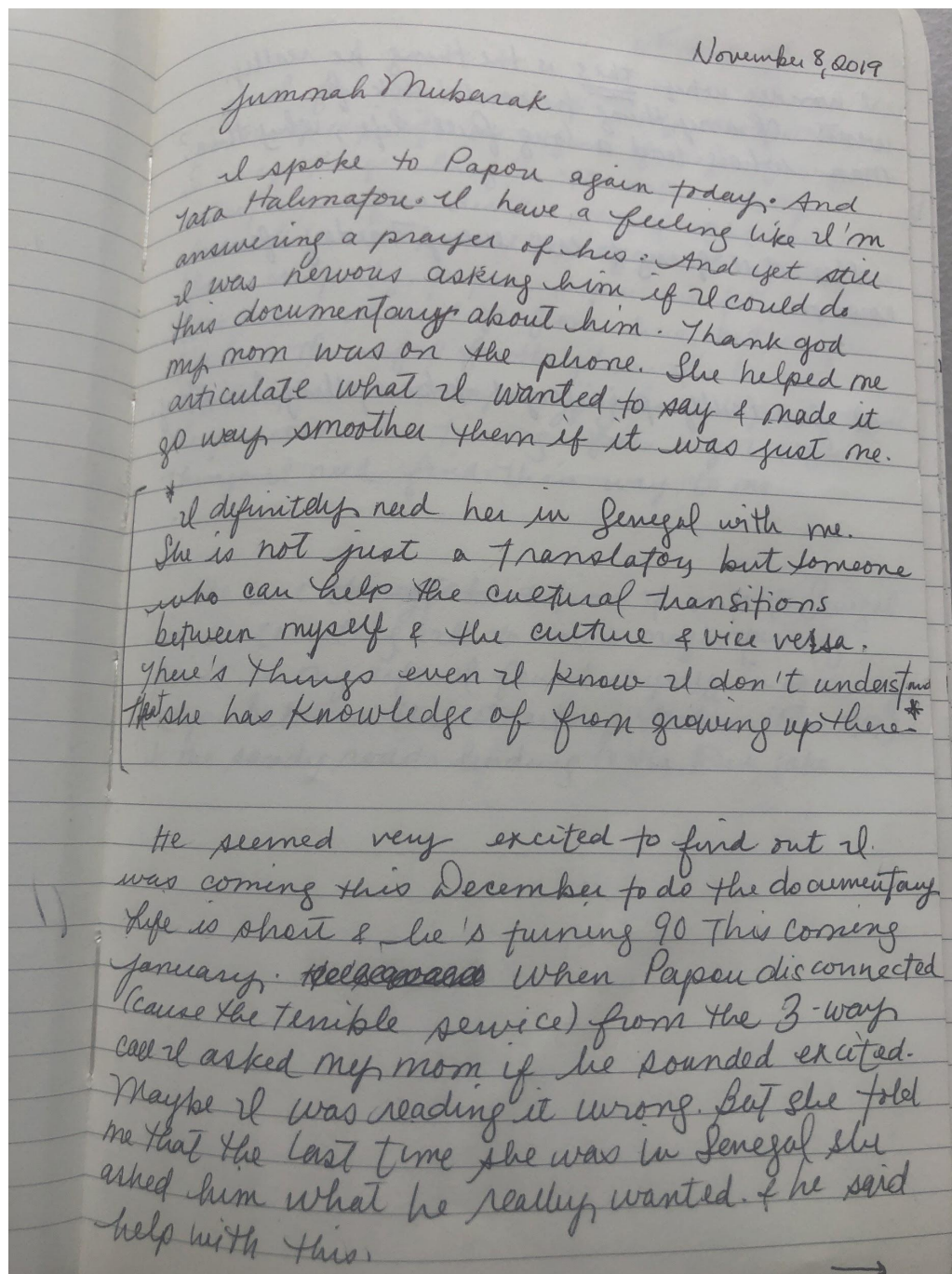
Him & my grandma are no longer together. They haven't been for decades. As a kid I wondered why, because as my mom put it, when they met it was love at first sight. He had seen her at the market, & asked for her name. ~~My~~ My grandmother gave him ~~her friend's name~~, who the name of her friend who accompanied her. When he came by her house looking for her, he gave the friend's name. When she came out he said, this wasn't the woman he was looking for. The friend, who knew what happened went to get my grandmother & he finally found out her name: Neve. They married soon after, but they disagreed about polygamy. He wanted another wife & she wasn't having it. So they went their separate ways. But his love for her must not have dissipated, because just a few years ago he relayed a message to her through my uncle: if I had one room in this world, he'd give it to my grandmother before he took it for himself.

This was truly the extent of knowledge I had about my grandfather, even though I spent a month in Senegal in my adult life. I knew he fought in a war, & that he had nightmares, but it wasn't until this past year that I found out how the French are still ~~screwing~~ screwing him over.

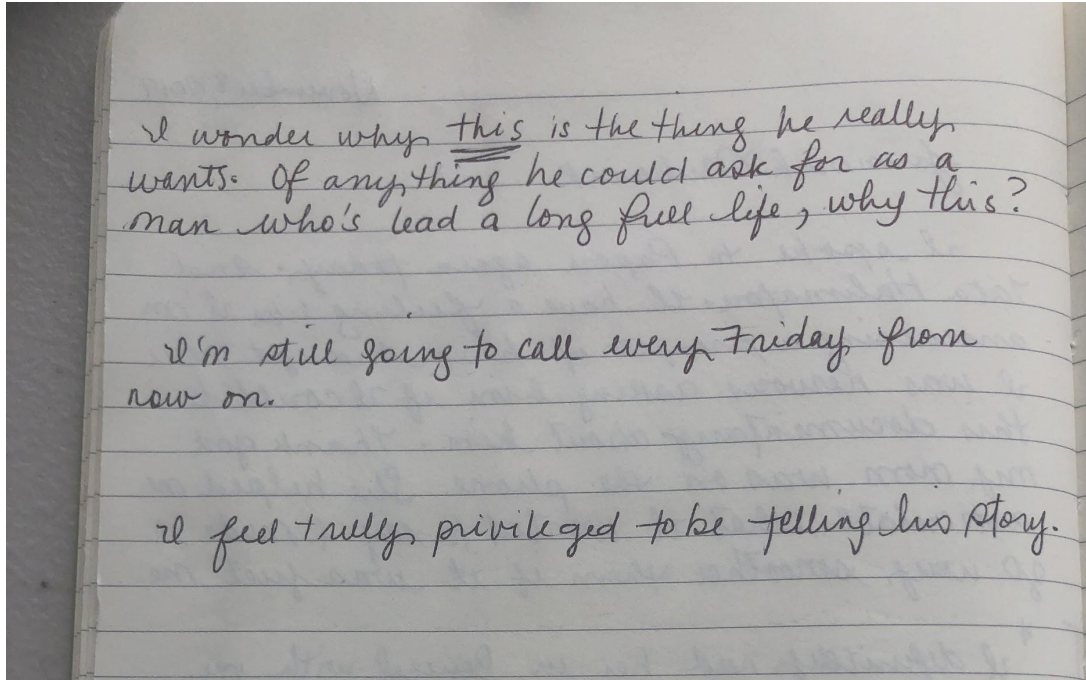
As
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November 3, 2019

As someone who is extremely aware of political corruption & almost morbidly intrigued by colonialism, I want to know how they did this to my grandfather & why. What's the story of this man? How did a hilarious, pious, romantic end up a war vet with PTSD who can't get the care he needs simply because those he fought for refuse to acknowledge his ~~existence~~ dignity & existence.



This is the beginning of my correspondence with my grandfather specifically for this project. It also made me realize how valuable my mother will be in this process because she will be able to help me in terms of some translation and more importantly small cultural nuances.



This question was one that followed me throughout the project: Why does he want French citizenship so bad. In the beginning it was difficult for me not to equate French citizenship with French identity so I often asked myself "Why does he want to be French?" But as I continued through the project and through my research I realized this question is not nuanced enough to incorporate the fine lines between ethnicity and nationality, and how they fit in with how he identifies himself as an individual. All those lines were blurred for the political benefit of France and in this project we explore what they mean to my grandfather. In hindsight I should not have been so rigid in my understanding of those nuances because I face similar challenges in my everyday life. I am Senegalese by ethnicity, but an American citizen, dealing with navigating multiple ideas of what it means to be black (as an African and as an American).

→ define actual
 - define historical fact as opposed to what is accepted as true hist. fact
 - define the truth vs. the actual truth

November 9, 2019

The specific problem:

Fake news is fake news today, because it is verifiable. The phenomenon of straight lying to the public through the media is one that's ~~been~~ been practiced for a very long time. The change is in our ~~speed~~ ^{24/7} ability to access large quantities of information with high speed all at the tip of our fingers. This is the globalization of media. Through social media & other technological advancements we can connect with people from all corners of the globe & hear their stories.

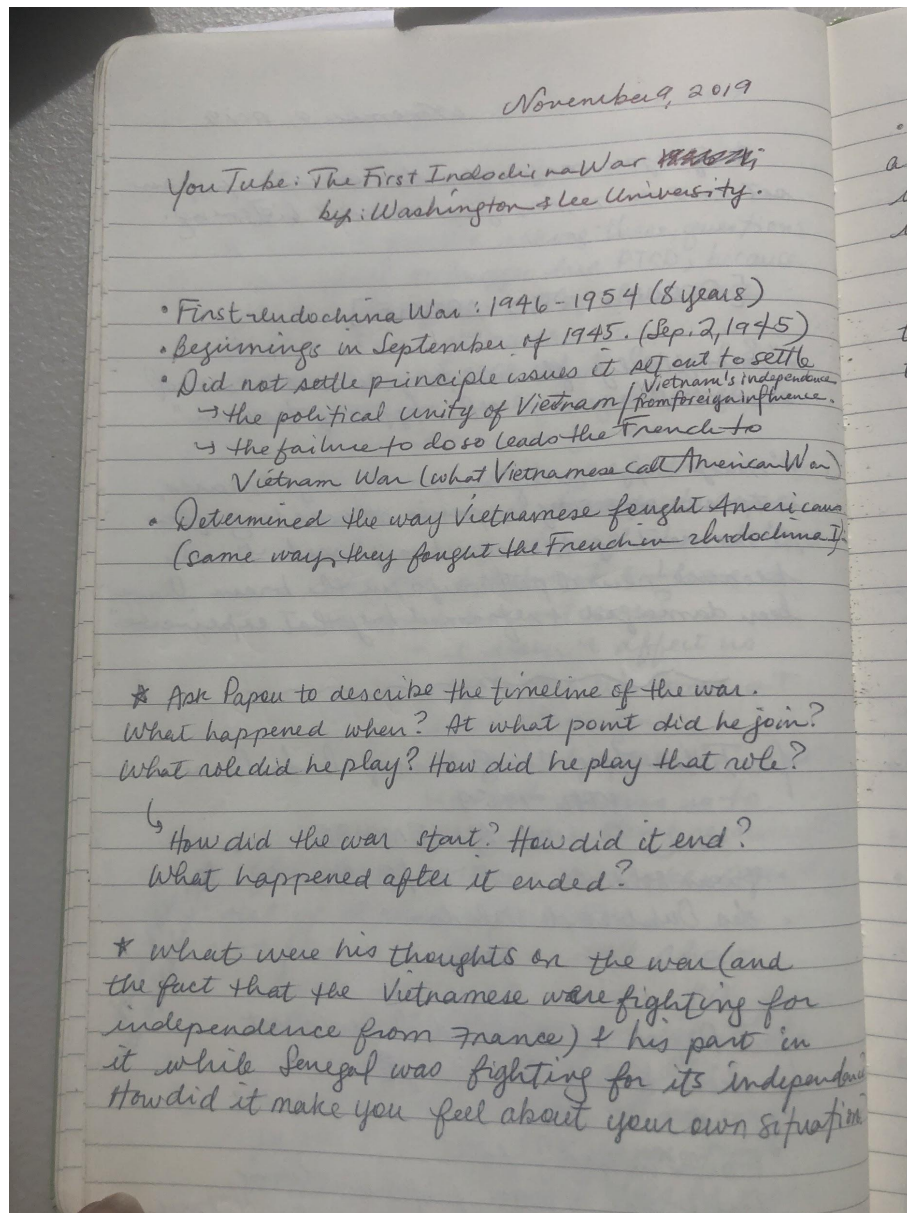
These are many stories suppressed by ^{if a false narrative is accepted as true (secretly suppresses the actual truth) it naturally suppresses the actual truth based off of *} mainstream narratives. Whether these narratives were put into play by those who stand to benefit from a certain message or they were popularized organically, (i.e.: stereotyped images: Sambo, black people love watermelon, the mammy, African booty scratcher, etc.) they minimize opposing images, forcing them to use their images for the purpose of correcting the falsehoods of the main stream narratives.

↓

This is the intrinsic struggle of African filmmakers, which inherently raises questions of representation, identity & voice. How do we accurately represent what has been misrepresented as the truth? How do I accurately represent →

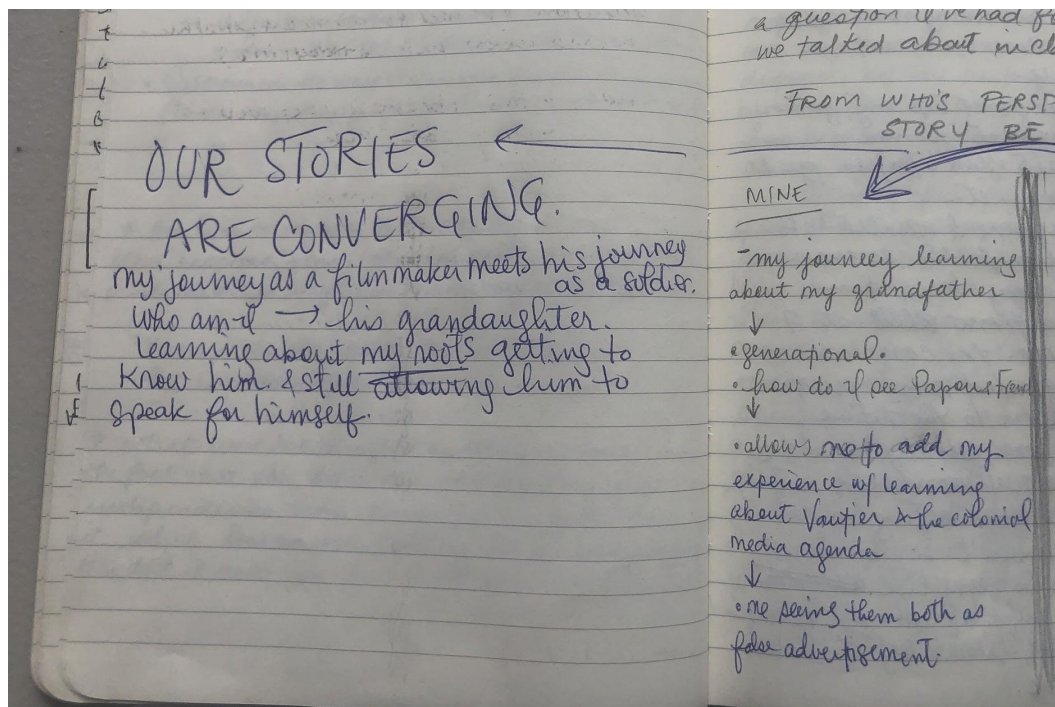
In this filmmaking process I faced the same intrinsic struggles of African filmmakers as outlined by Melissa Thackaway. It excites to me to feel like, other than in just ethnicity, I am qualified to call myself an African filmmaker. I inherited certain themes, understandings and perspectives through struggle, and through watching my family struggle with certain issues in life. My experience has lead me to this.

last in France they repainted his office and moved all his papers around. Because they were disorganized it took me a long time to convince him to let me scan the ones he could find and explain. It was only a few days before I was due to return that he finally let me sit in his office all night and scan the documents that would show proof of his citizenship, his participation in the French army, and the way they took his citizenship.



• Indochina is the last war Senegal fought as a colonized country. Between the first Indochina war & Vietnam, Senegal fought for & won its independence.

↓
What changed? ^{for 1 thing,} Soldiers came back & were tired of being exploited, mistreated, unpaid, their sacrifices devalued.



This shows me trying to decide how I want to tell this story. I could have made it entirely about my grandfather, but I don't want to hide the filmmaking process in this documentary. I want it to be more obvious and out in the open in order to bring attention to its purpose as a means of expressing the realities of my group of people. In order to achieve this, I will explain why I started this documentary, what inspired me and how I will be using it as a way to get justice for his mistreatment.

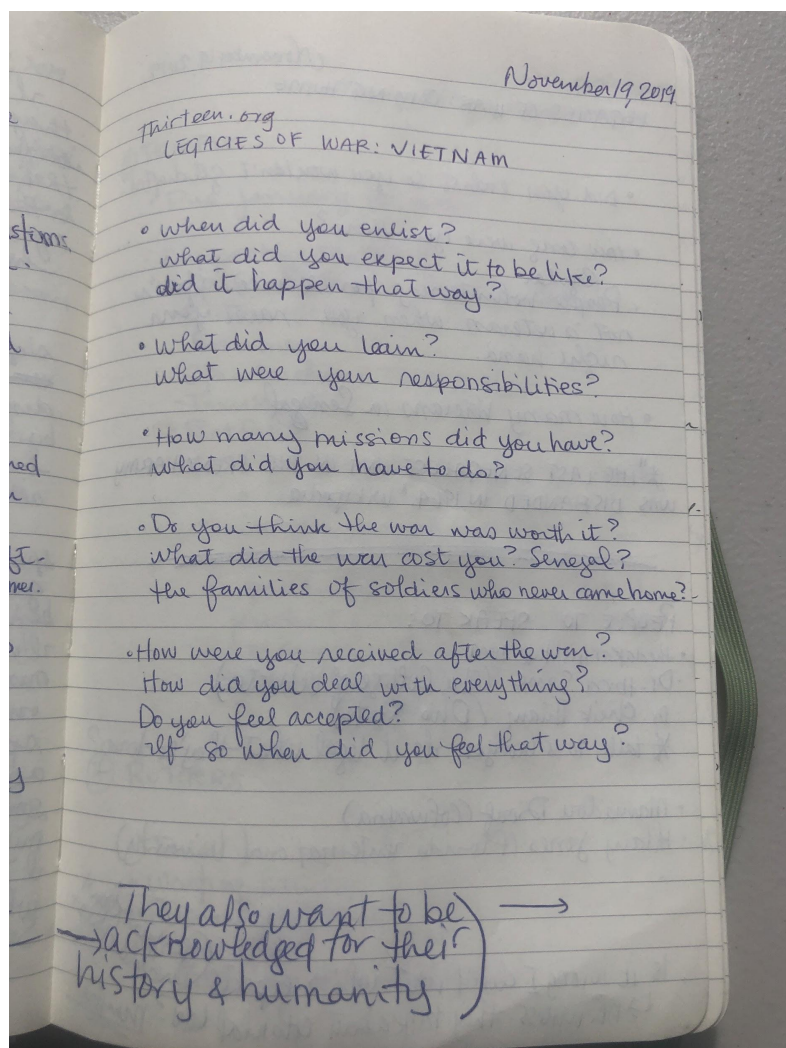
Learning more about my country
means learning more about my people
& my family.

I started with the things I know
from home: language, food, music, customs,
my name, my farming, my way of life.
I then looked into the history &
found that all of the things I knew
were informed by what had happened
to my people.

I'm both fascinated & haunted by this
history. The life & vibrancy is matched
by loss & devastation. Centuries of pain
& exploitation give way to beauty &
a resolve to make the most of what is left.
A tradition that ~~was~~ ^{brought about} soul food in Amer.
also brought about dance, music, art
& life in Senegal. My grandfather is no
different.

Through his struggle ^{& his fight} I am getting
to know more about myself, my history
& more about ~~decrease~~ my grandfather.

(This is happening in an age where
many Africans are calling for restitution of
artifacts & for their colonial countries to
be held accountable for
their actions



As noted on the bottom of the last two pages, this is a time in which the conversation of reparations is being pushed forward. Many African countries are looking for their artifacts to be returned from European museums. One such artifact was returned to Senegal recently: The sword of El Hadj Omar Tall (who is one of my great great great grandfathers on my maternal grandmother's side). Our lineages, our inheritances, and our history have been stolen from us and put up for display for others to misconstrue. This is all the more reason for me to do this work.

November 19, 2019.

LEGACIES OF WAR: COMING HOME

- Did you enlist so you wouldn't get drafted?
- How long were you there?
- ^{Regular} People volunteering for service. You're not a veteran when you raise your right hand.

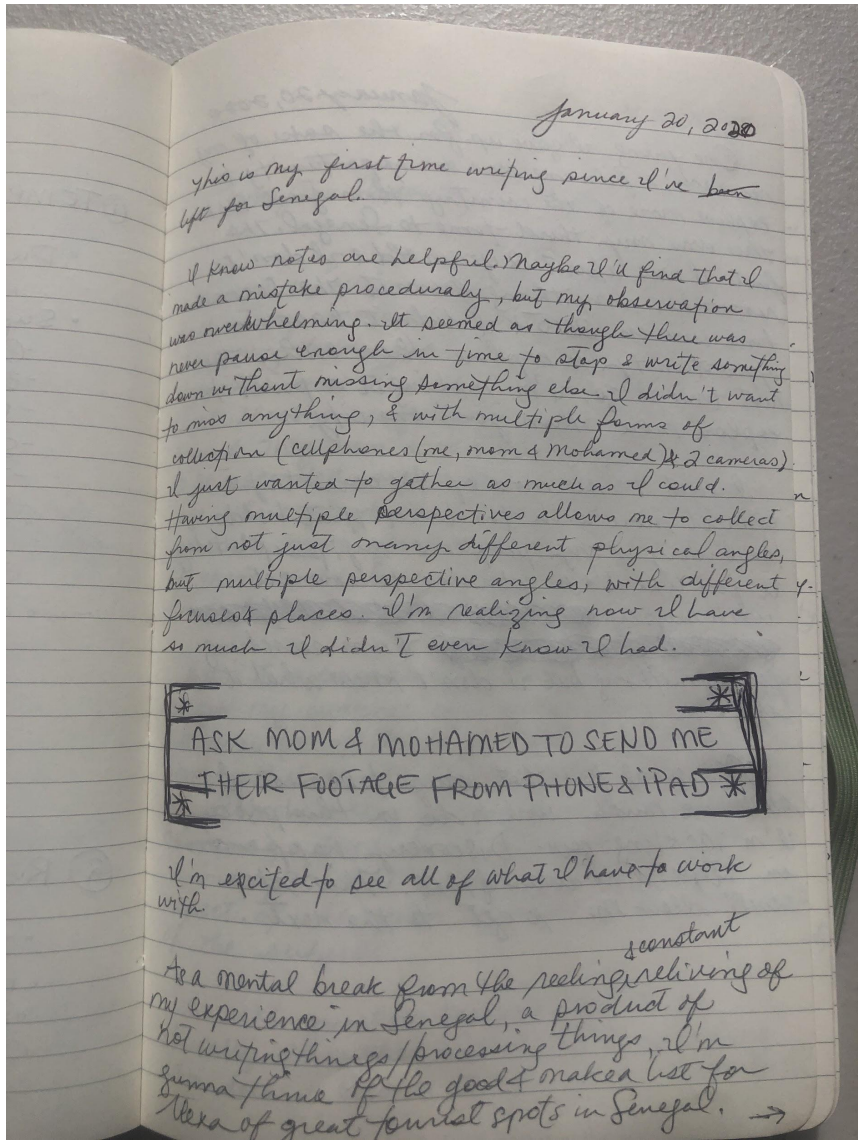
• How many Veterans in Senegal

* "THE LAST SENEGALESE UNIT IN THE FRENCH ARMY WAS DISBANDED IN 1964." wikipedia

PEOPLE TO SPEAK TO:

- the dakar institute.com
- Dr. Ibra Sene (The College of Wooster)
- Dr. Cheik Thiam (Ohio State)
- talk to a lawyer: rls it legal what they're doing?
- Mamadou Diouf (Columbia)
- Hilary Jones (Florida International University)

Is it wrong I don't want white experts (OR just don't include them)
 ↳ no. unless they talk about colonial law? maybe



I realized while I was in Senegal that the observation portion of my research was overwhelming. Not only was it overwhelming in terms of research, but in terms of my own cultural and familial obligations. I found myself so exhausted from constantly chasing interviews and gathering B-roll while still going to visit all my extended family I hadn't seen in 5 years. Where my brother had time to go and enjoy a vacation, I was working trying to film, figure out more interviews, figure out more of the story and learn as much as I could. So I chose to just observe, ask questions and gather as much as I could, and process it all when I returned home.

January 22, 2019

Today is Papou's birthday!

I was thinking on my hesitance to always pull out my camera. When natural moments are happening adding a camera changes the dynamic. And I see it if I'm not subtle. People become careful when a camera is around. They seem to be aware of what it means to be recorded, especially in today's day & age where playbacks are more easily accessible & reach much farther. They become aware of themselves along with more aware of their situation. I'm hesitant to upset the balance.

But is it responsible of me as a filmmaker to not give my audience some of the raw moments that allowed me to decide how & why I put the film together as I will? The easiest thing for me was to have my phone (or any other small camera) & try to be as subtle as possible in moments that are important to some aspect of the film, usually in the characteristics of the subjects.

The next question becomes, when do you ethically draw the line of subtle recording. When does it become compromising to your subject?

I am sensitive to this, not just because it's
 re my family, but because the aim of my
 ex documentary work is to ^{help} increase understanding
 // not to increase misunderstandings between
 lin cultures & groups of people. In my experience
 re in reading literature & watching films from
 to many different cultures, there are common
 of themes & ideas that are pervasive over
 re geographical location, language, race, religion
 ex etc. These ideas like love, betrayal, loss & family
 & themes like [FIND THEMES IN THE AFRICA SHOOT
 BACK BOOK THAT MATCH] exist across all
 co cultures, even with their different details.
 re (It's why the Hero's journey arc can be found
 // even in other cultures).

Finding these themes that people can connect
 to regardless of culture, & finding the ways to
 visually express them in ways anyone can understand
 is the central struggle of my work. How can I tell
 the story of human beings through the story of
 one? How do I show this one person's story
 re is a part of a larger human(hi)story? How do
 // I document this piece of human(hi)story?

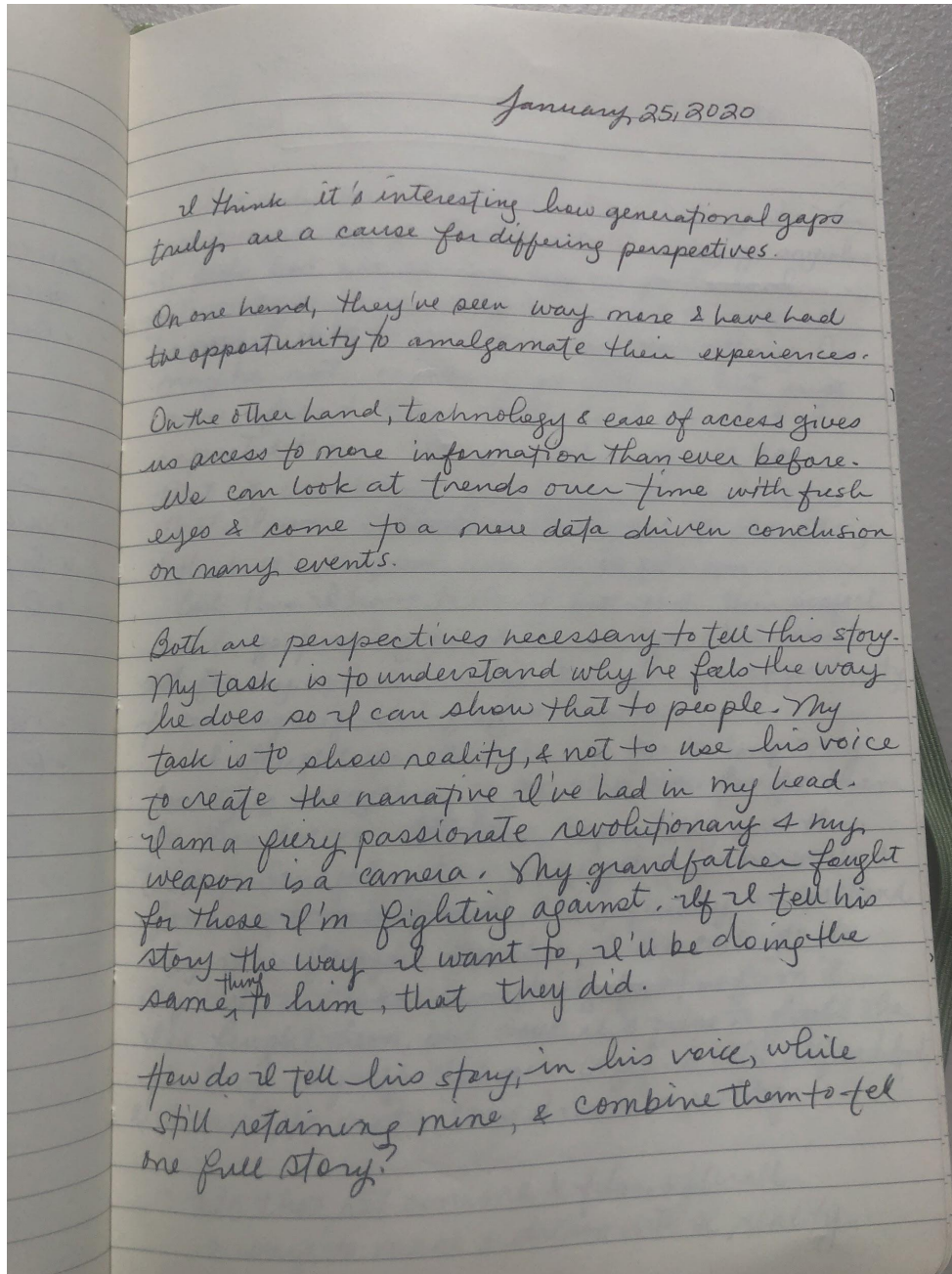
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*

*

Add Fula flute music & other Toucouleur
 instruments to the parts about Papou's
 childhood.



Perspective is an important concept in this project. Even within the same social groups, and within the same families there will be differences in perspective. This journal entry looks into the differences in perspective based on generational gaps, and how understandings on French imperialism, and colonialism have differed because of it.

January 29, 2020

I'm going to start a playlist on Spotify for this project. Songs that I might use in the doc, or inspired by the ^{and some of} spirit of the counter narrative as ^{an} activism. Solution-seeking by ~~adding~~ adding the perspectives that will round out the general view of world history & equalize

Why is this activism?

Because reparations are due. There was a wrong done. We are asking for them to repair all the many forms of wrongs. In this case, for robbing us of our history, our heroes, kings & queens, our stories & the mental, social, & economic ramifications it's caused.

Solution-seeking?

The proof is what they've strategically hidden from the books of history. By controlling what is recorded & how, they change how history ^{is} remembered. The solution is to give our proof. We can bring our witnesses to the table, those affected by their actions, allow them to speak for themselves, & give them the documentation & other facts to corroborate their stories, through documentation.

2020

February 1st, 2020I'm reading Africa Shoots Back.

INTRODUCTION p.5.

"Identities themselves are multiple & evolving. The chapter looks at how these representations have diversified to reflect Francophone Africa's own changing contexts."

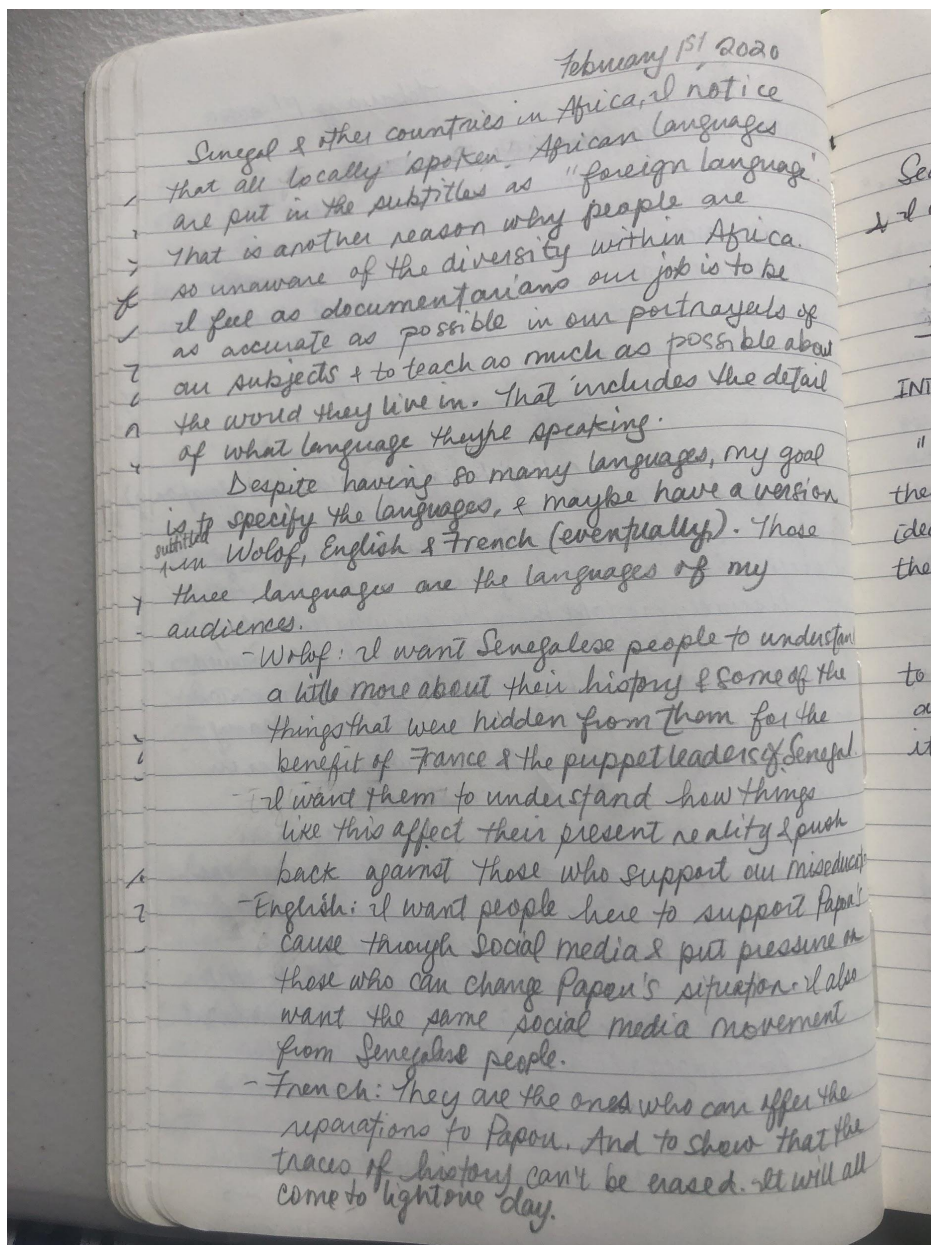
It reminded me of how big of a consideration language has been throughout this process. Everyone I interviewed asked me what language I prefer them answering in.

Usually, I told them to use whatever they felt most comfortable in. Everyone I interviewed was fluent in both French & Wolof. Some wanted an opportunity to practice their English. Many, if not all began their interview with a prayer in Arabic.

Some of the interviewees, because of their proficiency in both French & Wolof asked me which I preferred. In that case I said Wolof. I preferred it because part of having our voice normalized in the main stream, while still maintaining our identity, is normalizing the sound of our language. It also helps increase the awareness of diversity in Africa's countries & ethnicities.

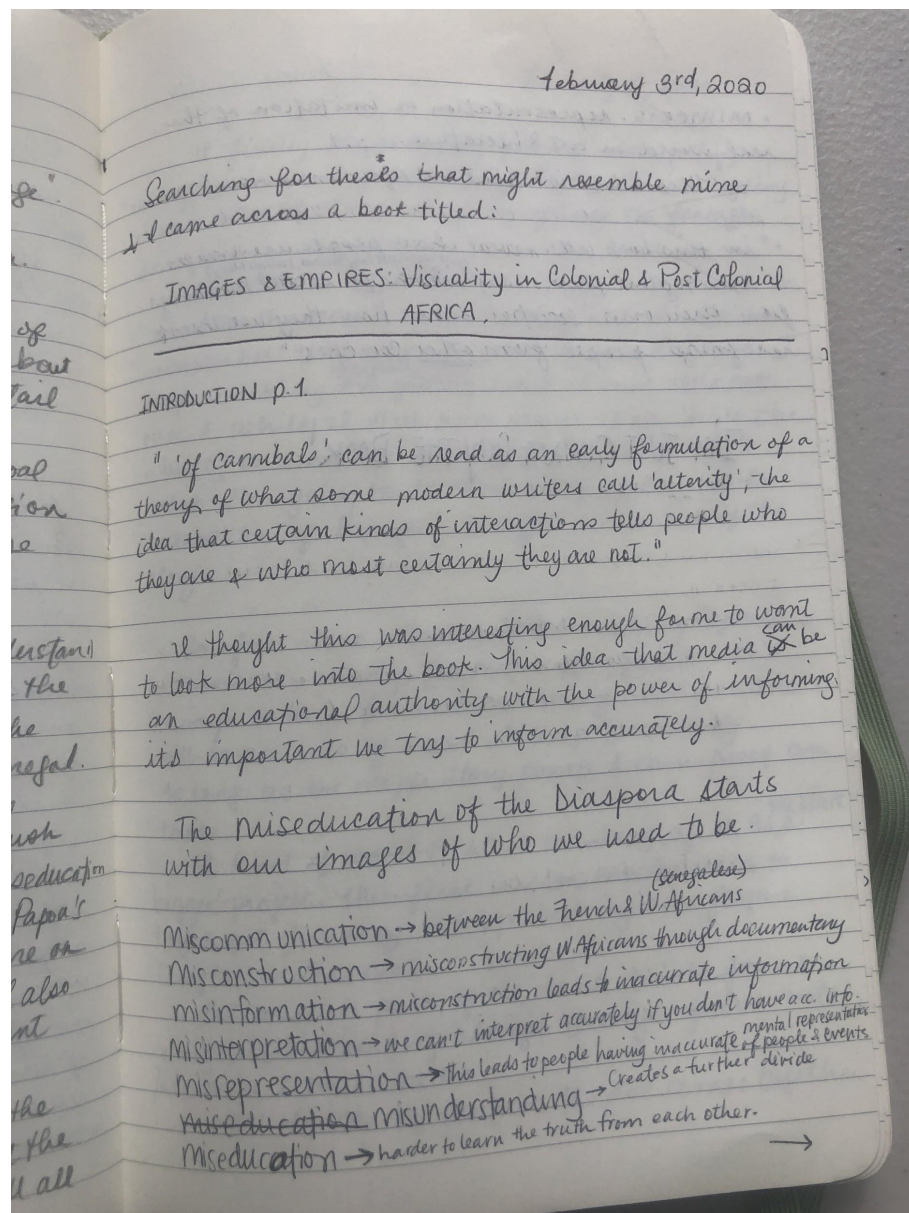
When I watch these documentaries about

→



Language is an important factor in this documentary project. Thankfully I speak Wolof and French, but even still my understanding isn't as inherent as that of someone who spent their whole life in that environment where both languages are spoken simultaneously. The distinction between the two languages is a nuance understood by people who live there, because they usually know when to choose which language. If they're in school or doing something official, many will choose French. Those who choose Wolof in those milieus usually do so as a means of

resistance. So I found myself answering the question "Should I speak in French or Wolof" in literally every interview I've done there. My answer was always whatever is most comfortable for you in the moment. I wanted to see what people would gravitate to. Many times they chose French to start off with, and as they got more relaxed or wanted to express certain realities, switched to Wolof.

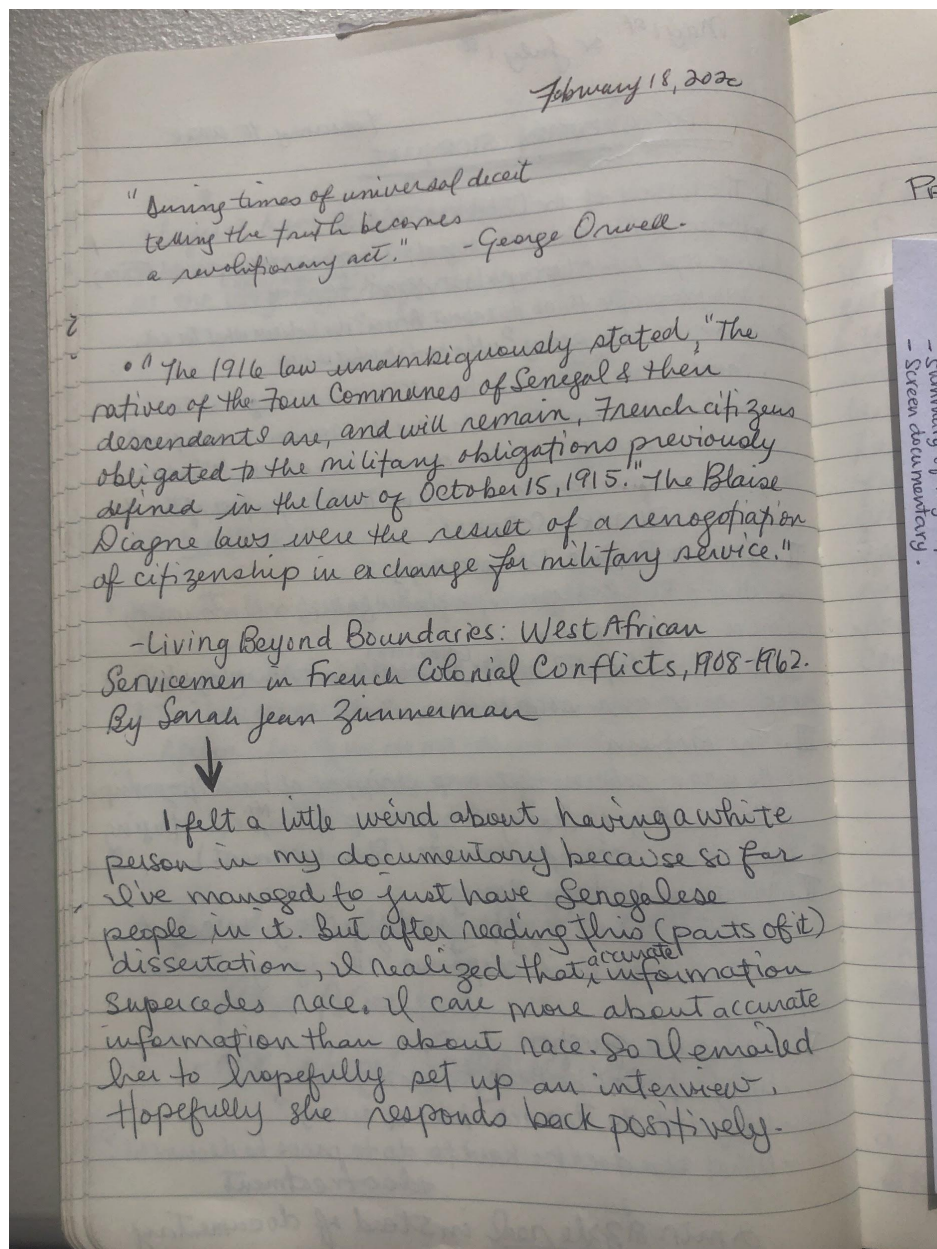


• mimesis: representation or imitation of the real world in art & literature. p. 1

→ "This book is about ... Africans & visual mimesis."

• "in this book, all reveal how people use images to draw together previously ^(just begun, not fully formed, rudimentary) incoherent social meanings from their own societies, & then how they use them to 'recognize' people from other societies."

I'M JUST GUNNA BUY THE BOOK!



I questioned quite a bit who can be involved in the counter narrative. I originally wanted it to be solely Senegalese people the same way a lot of dominant narratives about us feature only French people. But I realized that exclusion was the major issue to begin with. Instead the focus should be on the information gathered, and the way the information can help inform us of the realities of marginalized peoples.

March 3, 2020
Tonton Mouhamed's B-day

SUGGESTIONS DURING PROPOSAL

- Interviews with African filmmakers
 - was the counternarrative intentional
- What are the similarities in dominant narratives in France, the U.S. & other Western Cultures
- Distribution mode as a counternarrative protocol.
- Survey before & after
- Format bibliography now instead of later.
- Address the ethical reflection necessary to accurately represent the story & not use it for selfish purposes.
- Sizzle reel & documentary treatment instead of full documentary.

March 5, 2020

DOCUMENTARY TREATMENT: A detailed report that can inform potential investors or contributors about a project, including its budget, production timeline & other processes.

Key Components

- 1° LOG LINE: 2 to 3 sentence summary of the film
- 2° SUMMARY OF TOPIC: longer more detailed version of your log line. One to two pages (not like an essay → write in a captivating, entertaining way).

30

STORY, PURPOSE & IMPACT

Talk w/ Deborah

- Set up hypothesis → who, what, when & why, ^{where.}
- background
- why is this valuable to me & to others
- how did this background lead to hypothesis.
- lead you to exploring **3** story lines

how these
3 meet.

- grandfather
- dom. narratives
- how African filmmakers navigated dom. narratives.

→ wrap up: what I hope to deliver.

- No budget.

- 90 Sec. elevator pitch. → Sizzle Reel.



Papou's Story

BEFORE MARCH 15th send to
Deborah

2020
rewards
allowed
probably
benefit,
fact.

March 9, 2020

Season 1 Episode 2 Altered Carbon 30:34
"cause when the victors rewrite history,
it's just another kind of war, waged after
the battlefield killing is done to murder the
memory of the defeated."

SIZZLE REEL.

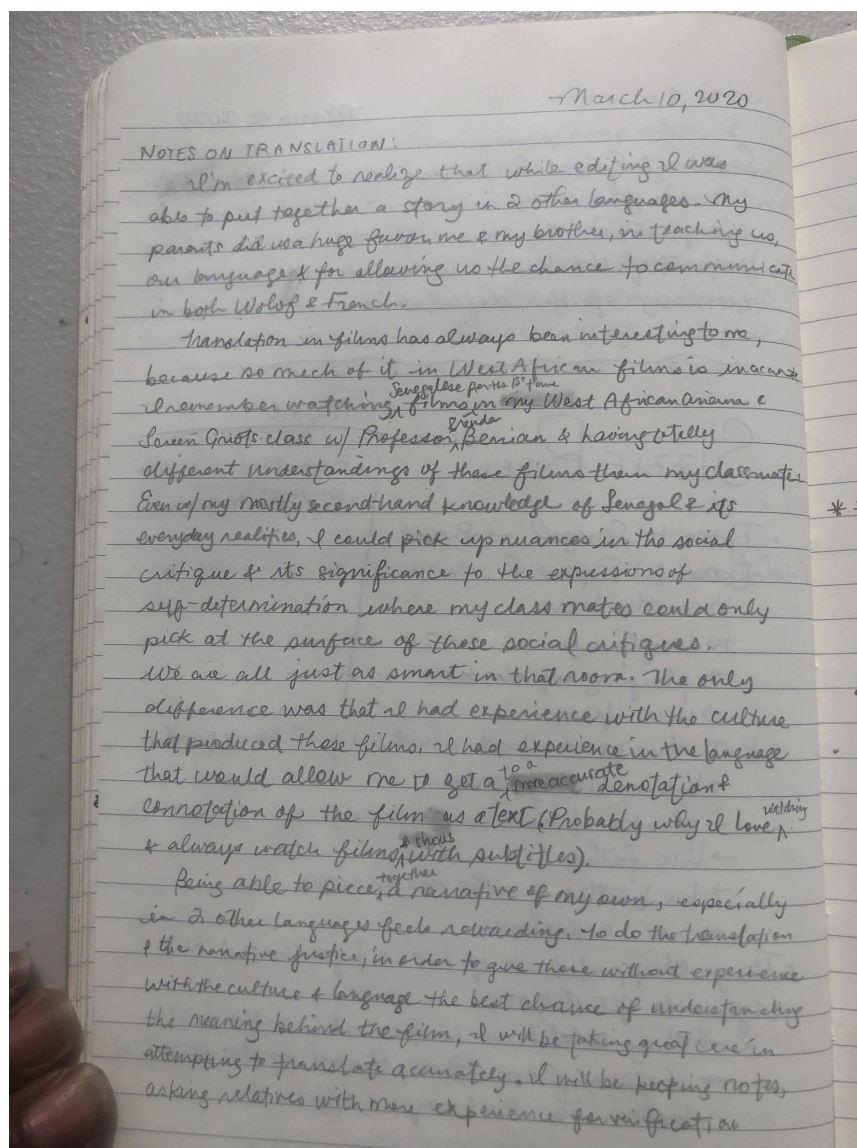
MUSIC

(YouTube)

- Intro to Senegal → B roll
- Intro to Papou
 - ↳ in the house
 - ↳ laughing
 - ↳ playing w/ the kids
 - ↳ new years

- Baaba Maal - Gili Men
- Boubacar Traore
• Dunama Yelema

- But this person had another life at some point
 - his military career
 - photos of him in the army
 - his father
 - his battles & actes des bravour
 - his experience
- They stripped him of his citizenship & he's trying to get it back.
 - They told him he lied about the battle
 - sketches from Paris, Papou under the eiffel tower, in the lawyers office etc.



Translation brings up similar questions as language did earlier: What language to choose and when? And especially with my limitations in terms of some expressions, phrases, figures of speech etc, I found I did have some difficulty translating certain parts of the dialogue. This is another place, other than in interviews, I used the help of my family members who also spent a significant time in the US. My mother and my uncle in particular, are continuous wells of knowledge for me to pull from.

March 10, 2020

By asking multiple family members, I can extrapolate a denotation of words & the connotation of phrases.

I'm also increasingly feeling good about the footage I've gotten so far. I questioned myself so much during the filming process & criticized myself. Putting it together, I'm seeing the vision a little more clearly. And I'm feeling a little more confident in my abilities & the potential of the film.

*** I think I was afraid to start editing because I was afraid I wouldn't like what I came up with. * * * * *

😊 long story short, I'm actually looking 😊 forward to editing more tomorrow.

March 15, 2020

1ST DRAFT NOTES.

(SR D1 caps 1. mft)

THE OBVIOUS

- Color Correcting
- Synch Rec. Audio
- ↳ once the script is complete & finalized.
 - the ending feels abrupt.

WATCH THROUGH

- Fix font size & spacing on subtitles.
- Boats @ Goree B-roll out of focus 00:15
- I like this shot & it feels cut off 00:32
- Figure out how to mask the cotton in his nose from nose bleeds. 00:38
- DEFINITELY synch sound & raise volume to hear him say "votre devoir militaire." 01:04
- Get better quality graphics: more videos. 01:37 - 01:41
- Fix pacing & fades of the news article section 01:44 - 01:47
- Ending feels abrupt narratively. No one responded... and what now? 02:24
- Fade from picture to interview to complete the fade from young - now 01:16 - 01:17
- Senegal Map

5 LOG LINE QUESTIONS

March 27, 2020

1. WHO IS THE MAIN CHARACTER?

- Babacar Diop A.K.A. Papou
- soldier in the French Army (General) (Indochina & Algeria)
- son of a soldier in the French Army (WWI)
- Senegalese
- Born a French citizen - St. Louis, Senegal
- Funny, loves to joke
- family man
- man of his word
- military career

2. WHAT DO THEY WANT?

- To be given his due respect
- For France to hold up their end of the bargain (i.e. citizenship)
- French citizenship
- Recognition for his military service
- Backpay for his years of missing benefits since they wrongfully took his citizenship.

3. WHAT'S IN THEIR WAY?

- The French government
- Denial by the French that a) he's still alive & b) that he fought.
- Access to a lawyer
- Time ↴
- Change of laws/administration
- skin color/race/ethnicity: Racism
- Historic proof that the French never intended to respect the terms of their agreements w/ colonial soldiers.

4. How

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March 27, 2020

4. HOW DO THEY OVERCOME IT?

- Legal battle
- Documents as proof
- correspondence w/ other French & Senegalese soldiers that can corroborate his story.

5. WHERE DOES IT TAKE

- France
- Senegal
- Indochina
- Algeria

1ST DRAFT: A Senegalese man, born as a French citizen completes his military duty in Indochina, only to be betrayed by the French and stripped of his citizenship, rights & benefits. Today he fights a legal battle to regain the citizenship he, time and time again, put his life on the line for.

2020

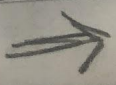
April 4th, 2020

I have a hard time trusting people who adore the French. People who are obsessed with the perceived elegance of everything Parisien & French. ^{might be} so easily fooled. It's like if you fart a really stinky fart in the bathroom. Or even did #2. Some people might be so easily fooled by the air freshener. It on the other hand will not be fooled by the air freshener. I know what you did behind that closed door.

WHY THIS WORK IS ETHICALLY NECESSARY TO COUNTER THE CONTINUATION OF CONDUCT

In light of the news report of the 2 French doctors discussing testing vaccines in Africa because it's a vulnerable population, without many means of protection. This on top of having to go through the process of completing my work. I find myself being angry throughout my process of historic investigation. One resistance after another from Africans, fighting for their dignity & humanity to be recognized, all seen as a problem in need of a solution.

This solution, through any means necessary, would allow them to continue to profit beyond just monetary gain, they would profit in labor, and raw goods as well. And by unfairly compensating, if compensating at all for labor & raw goods, increased their profit margins. Is this all worth the death & devastation for generations to come?



April 4, 2020

To answer that, they'd have to
 have even considered the question.
 With the candid way those doctors
 approached the subject & went as
 far as to cite past projects of a
 similar nature, I highly doubt they had.
 Twitter is becoming their IRB. So is
 Instagram & Snapchat & Facebook. On
 all these platforms I've seen posts
 on the outrage that they are still
 testing vaccines ^{on Africans} & using their position
 (ill-gotten through the manipulation
 of media & reality through verité
 forms of media) to manipulate
 Africans into participating in
 medical research ^{despite} all its adverse
 bodily ^{health} effects. Social media is holding
 them accountable. Or rather, we
 are holding them accountable through
 social media. We as the users of
 social media, have the ethical
 responsibility of sharing to inform
 of the ^{existing} social wrongdoings. Through
 the power of social pressure from
 films, strides have been made politically
 in terms of reform & reparation.
 The most pertinent example is the film
Indigènes by Rachid Bouchareb. It's
 a film about N. African soldiers who fought

April 4, 2020

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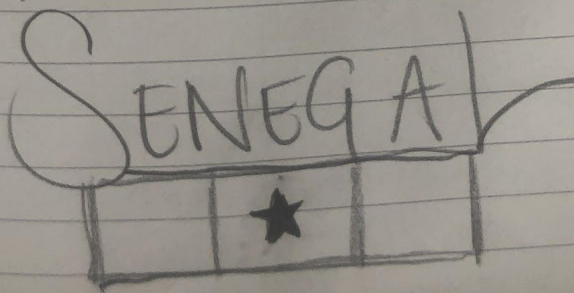
April 4, 2020

died for the French, despite their mistreatment. Their case is only dissimilar in small details & on the technicality of his citizenship. Like many who fought, he did so because he believed it was his duty, & his responsibility as a person born into his particular circumstances. Like the few who have been recognized by the French government, after the release of Indigènes, he hopes to be recognized, finally, for his military service.



WHY: THIS WORK IS ETHICALLY NECESSARY & TO COUNTER THE CONTINUATION OF & REVERSE THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF UNETHICAL CONDUCT.

HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY



Documentary Film Treatment:***The Originnaire*****Treatment, May 2020****Khadija-Awa Diop****Log Line:**

A Senegalese man, born as a French citizen completes his military duty in Indochina and Algeria, only to be betrayed by the French and illegally stripped of his citizenship, rights and benefits. Today he fights a legal battle to regain the citizenship that he, time and time again, put his life on the line for.

Overview:

This story begins in the coastal West African country of Senegal in the late 1800s. Because of the increased presence of the French living in the four major Senegalese cities of Rufisque, Goree, Dakar and St. Louis, by the year 1887, a French decree established those four cities as the Four French Communes of Senegal. This status afforded people born in those cities, known as *Originnaires*, with full citizenship rights and benefits. Since then, the French government used these *originnaires* to their advantage; They called on them to fight in the World Wars and other military engagements while mistreating them, subjugating them to the front lines as cannon fodder, and denying them the rights they were born with and fought for once the wars were over. The lines between nationality, identity, and ethnicity are purposefully blurred for the political and economic gain of colonial government systems. This results in people like my grandfather Babacar Diop, an *originnaire* and a Veteran, falling through the cracks of history.

While the story of *The Originnaire* starts in the 1800s, the documentary will follow my grandfather and his attempt to regain the citizenship that had been illegally stripped from him by the French government, just after his return from the front lines of the Algerian War. This expository documentary recounts the historical events played out during the long colonial relationship between France and Senegal, from the perspective of one man. His story is the story of many whose voices have been drowned out over time, and whose voices deserve to finally be heard so their mark on history can be recognized.

Scope of Film:

Main thesis: African Veterans of French wars were used by the French for economic, political and military gain and were unjustly treated and discarded after they served the purpose the French government needed them for.

Conflict: Babacar Diop is fighting to regain the citizenship he illegally and unjustly lost, while the French government is continuing their pattern of disrespecting their ethnically non-French subjects, and sweeping their contributions under the rug.

Key Concepts: Racism, colonialism, capitalism, identity (ethnicity, nationality), reparations.

Questions to answer: Will reparations be paid back to the men who came to the aid of the French in their time of need? How did French policies affect the lives of its citizens across the globe? How have the French historically treated its colonial subjects, and its ethnically non-French citizens.

Length and Distribution of Media:

This feature length documentary (approximately 75 - 85 minutes) will be distributed through the film festival circuit, as well as in a way that is accessible to both Senegalese people who need to be reminded of their history and to the rest of the world who needs to be introduced to the history that has been neglected. Because I have such a wide audience, I am looking into ways to distribute this film online, through streaming services, as well as through screenings across Senegal in areas with low access to films and theaters.

Outline:

Intro

- **Understand that this isn't a narrative, but a counter narrative**

Africa, Africa, Africa (a montage of people and their thoughts about Africa, and Africans). Throughout my (**Khadija-Awa Diop**) life I've encountered endless misconceptions about this part of my identity. "Does your dad hunt lions for fun?" "Do you live with wild animals in Africa?" "I would love to visit the country of Africa." "Do you speak African?" "Do you have a pet giraffe?"

In college I came across one clue that would lead me to the answer to this question: The Laval Decree. **Amadou Fofana** explains that the Laval Decree was a law that was made by the French in order to

control the images that came out about Africa. Not only were Africans not allowed to make films in Africa until right before the African wave of Independence, but even the Europeans making documentary films in Africa could only discuss pre-approved topics in their films. All the pre-approved topics were topics and viewpoints that would benefit the French colonial empire and its interests.

The best example of the impact of this law is in the instance of **Rene Vautier's** film *Afrique 50*. Rene Vautier, in his early 20s, was commissioned by the French "Teaching League" to make a pro-colonial film that it would disseminate amongst its students. When Vautier arrived in West Africa what he saw did not match the information he had been given for years, and was tasked to reproduce. What he saw instead was the devastation the colonial empire left West Africans in its wake. Despite most of his film being destroyed by the French, he managed to salvage a few reels and make the first anti-colonial film. For this historical contribution he was jailed for a year and his film was banned until 1996. By the intensity of their reaction, the French showed just how important it was for them to control what images of Africa, and what images of their involvement with Africans populated the media. Fofana expresses how hypocritical it is for the French to recognize the importance of this film, in the late 90s, for the same reason why it was important in the early 50s.

This allowed me to see that people perceived Africa and Africans the way they do in part because we've only been spoon-fed false images meant to serve the interests of a certain group of people. A solution to this problem is the use of counternarratives. Fofana describes a counter narrative as a way to give a platform to the people whose stories have been swept under the rug by history. This is the aim of my film: to give voice to the voiceless and bring light to histories forcibly hidden in the dark for far too long.

I'm making this documentary to tell the story of my grandfather who possesses one of the voices that the French have attempted to silence. In December of 2019, I boarded a plane with my brother and my mother to Senegal to start this journey. What began as a way to get to know my grandfather, a man who I had only seen twice in my life and knew only from short conversations thanks to calling cards and WhatsApp, became a journey to understanding myself, my fellow countrymen, and our current realities.

Black screen

"Until the lion has a historian, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter."

Black screen

"The Originnaire"

Act I



- **Who is Babacar Diop?**

We meet a man, with a grey beard, a black and grey patterned beanie and an infectious laugh. He jokes around with his family and plays with his grandchildren. When he needs a rest from all the old friends and family who stop by periodically throughout the day to visit, he sits on his second floor balcony. Everyday he diligently watches over the streets in his sight, in the quartier of Medina in Senegal's capital city: Dakar.

The house my grandfather lives in is at the corner. Two stores are beneath his house; In one a tailor and his two apprentices pedal their machines amidst lines of hanging fabrics and coils of string. In the other a woman folds and hangs the many articles of baby clothes she sells. The rest of the house climbs three more stories, including the rooftop terrace. This is where he lives with his family: a wife, 4 daughters, two of whom have families of their own living under the same roof.

He's established a life here in Dakar. His friends are here, and so are many of his relatives. His local mosque, where he prays when his legs feel strong enough to carry him across the street, is where he also founded a community organization called Jokko Japalente. This organization aims to pool together funds to assist those who may not have enough money for food or prescriptions. He knows the people who frequent his block, from the tailors to the musicians to the food vendors on the corner, and is a pillar of his community.



- **The Four Communes**

Although Babacar Diop now calls Dakar home, he was born and raised in the previous capital city: St. Louis. This city is located in the region of the same name in northern Senegal and is one of the Four French Communes of Senegal. All of the people born in the regions of St. Louis, Rufisque, Dakar, and Goree between 1872 and 1960, my grandfather explains, were given full citizenship with all its rights and benefits. At the time the Four Communes were established, the French had increased their presence throughout Senegal in an attempt to fortify their economic and political position as the colonial power. Many of the French officials stationed in Senegal to carry out their colonial duties, resided in those four cities. They hoped their children born in Senegal would get the same benefits that they were born with.

What was meant to benefit only the French, had a large impact on the Senegalese people in those four cities. The children of French officials, played alongside Senegalese children, all as French citizens. This mirage of equality allowed some Senegalese people to progress through French ranks, like their white peers. One such man was named **Blaise Diagne**.

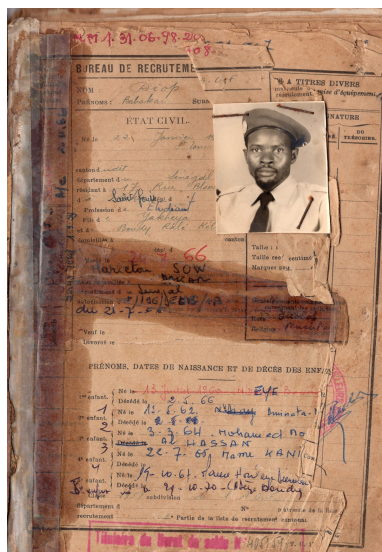
Blaise Diagne goes down in history as the first African man to hold a position on the French Board of Deputies, or to hold any position for that matter, in the French government. His importance to Senegalese and French people does not end there. His influence led to the October 19, 1915 *Blaise Diagne Laws*, that stated *originaires* were obligated by duty to their citizenship claims to serve in the French army. This was the beginning of the stories of many soldiers leaving Senegal to fight for the French starting with WWI in 1914 and ending with the Algerian War in 1962, including the story of my grandfather and my great grandfather.



- Like his father before him

In 1886, my great grandfather, **Yakhya Diop** was born in Podor, in the Region of St. Louis as a French citizen. Yakhya Diop fought for the French, as a French citizen in World War I. Not only was he a soldier but he was a soldier that was awarded an "Acte de Bravoure". Babacar Diop reads the act de bravoure of his father. It depicts how on July 18, 1918 Yakhya Diop led his men into a battle. He was the only one of his men to survive an intense bombardment from the enemy for hours and single handedly held them off long enough to wait for reinforcements and ensure a French victory. This is the man who raised my grandfather: a man of honor and a man of duty.

Act II



- The beginning of a

On October 14th, 1951, at the age of 20, Babacar Diop returned home to St. Louis from Kaolack. He was told that the French were recruiting for their new war in Indochina, and as an originaire had returned home to join the army, as was mandatory for all French citizens. The young Diop returned home, not knowing that in following this path he would be forsaking his dream of becoming a doctor. Upon arrival, he was impatient to know what the future held for him. After waiting a few days without receiving a letter of instruction, he took it upon himself to send a letter to the Gendarmerie in Rufisque to find out when he needed to report. A few days later he received a letter back informing him that he should report on October 29th, 1951 at noon to the garrison's office. On that day Diop was accompanied to the garrison's office by his younger brother Idrissa. They arrived by 11:30 am, and by 12, he was put on the back of a truck, and sent off to begin his military career.

From St. Louis, they boarded a boat to Bordeaux, and from Bordeaux went to Carcassonne. When he arrived in Carcassonne, his first task as a soldier was a two-part evaluation. He first took a shooting test. That day would be the first time he ever shot a gun. Until then the only gun he had ever even seen was his father's. Despite never having shot a gun, he got the highest score of his other fellow soldiers on the range, and the commanding officer called him a natural. Next he took a test to determine his position in the army. He passed the test, again, with such a high score that he began his military career as Corporal Babacar Diop.

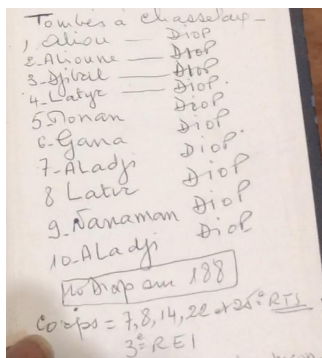
By the time Babacar Diop enlisted in 1951, the Indochina War had been ongoing for 5 years. This war was known by the Vietnamese as the Anti-French Resistance War. The French were fighting to maintain their hold on the Vietnamese as a part of their colonial empire. On the other hand the Vietnamese armies led by Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Diap were looking for independence and liberation from the French, the same fight that Senegal would engage in less than 10 years later.

- **His story is part of a larger pattern**

Between the start of the war in 1946, and Diop joining 1951 over 14,000 colonial troops, composed of Tirailleurs (french colonial troops) and Originaires, were stationed somewhere in French Indochina. By the end of the war 3 years later, that number of African soldiers would increase to over 19,000. These numbers pale in comparison to the 140,000 West African colonial soldiers who fought in WWI and the over 1 million who fought in WWII.

In Chasselay, a city in the region of Rhone in France, we see the Tata of Chasselay; this cemetery holds the graves of almost 200 Tirailleurs Senegalais. Giant African masks decorate tall, red ochre walls that enclose a lot filled with dirt from Senegal that had been

brought by plane to mix into the French soil. It was here that between June 19th, and 20th in 1940 Senegalese colonial troops alongside French troops laid their lives on the line to prevent German troops from overtaking the French city of Lyon. Babacar Diop visited this site years ago. Upon finding the name Diop on one of the tombstones, he walked up and down all the rows, and wrote the names of all 10 men



whose last name was Diop. These 10 out of the 188 shared the same last name as he did. He thought to himself that these men have families like he does, families who might not ever know what became of them. He believes their families might not even know that these ten men are buried in Chasselay. So many Senegalese people, and many more West Africans died on foreign soil; the majority of them forgotten forever.

Even those whose bodies were laid to rest in their home countries, are forgotten. On the night of November 30th into the morning of December 1st, 1944, approximately 300 Senegalese soldiers who returned from the frontlines of WWII who protested mistreatment, lack of proper living conditions, and the revocation of promised pensions, were lined up and shot. Of those 300, France today only recognizes 35. The Veteran Museum (Musee des anciens combattants) is not on the exact site of the Thiaroye massacre, but is located nearby. It holds way more than 35 tombstones, for those who were executed during the Thiaroye massacre by the country they fought for.



It's only by the grace of God that Diop survived this long, despite the hazards of the wars he fought in and the hazards of fighting for the French. Even though the wars are over, Babacar Diop is still fighting. He is fighting for similar things as those men who died in the Thiaroye Massacre: his owed back pay, and to be treated with dignity by the French for his military service.

- **The final battle**

Despite the history of French mistreatment of its tirailleurs and other colonial troops, Babacar Diop says that he is the only person he knows in this specific situation. The French mistreated them all, but he doesn't know anyone who has gone through the legal battle he has been going through to get back his citizenship. He doesn't know anyone else who is an *originaire* and a veteran, who has been called a liar and a cheat by the country he fought for.

When he first made the appeal for his citizenship, they responded by telling him that he was mistaken because Babakar Diop was dead. They had mistaken him for another man by a similar name. The only difference was my grandfather's use of c, and the other man's use of k in the name Babac/kar. Babakar Diop had passed away a few years before, and denied him citizenship on that basis. Fortunately for my grandfather, he got married after the date Babakar Diop was said to have died. He questions "If I was dead, how could I have gotten married?" After sending the proper documents to prove his identity, and that he was alive, they accepted that he was indeed Babacar Diop and not Babakar Diop. Still, they did not give him his citizenship.

He tried to at least get medical benefits since they denied his citizenship request, as he suffered from injuries during the war that caused recurring issues in his health. Diop thanks God, that he was never severely injured during the war, except for in one instance. While in Cambodia during the Indochina War. He was responsible for the night patrol one evening when a fellow Cambodian soldier jealous of his good relationship with the French officers hit him over the head during a shift change. He was hospitalized for several days at a hospital in Saigon, before returning to where he was stationed in Cambodia. He believed this injury plus the PTSD, its nightmares and other effects, all warranted at least veteran medical insurance. He fought for it, and they reluctantly agreed.

The victory in finally getting his medical benefits made him more confident in his ability to stake his claim for what he deserved. He decided to draft a statement that was sent to the Prime Minister Edouard Phillipe. In this statement he described his combat history citing a specific battle in Phnom Penh. When they responded they told him he lied, because there wasn't a battle on the day in question. He sent out letters to his fellow soldiers who fought with him that day, and out of all the letters he sent out he only got one back. It was from **Colonel Roger Chaudron**, the man whose life he saved on the day of



that battle. Colonel Chaudron wrote a letter to the French government on his behalf. He not only vouched for Diop's participation in the battle that day but also explained how Diop saved his life by instructing him to take cover, and killing an enemy soldier before the enemy could fire a shot that would have undoubtedly killed Chaudron. Whether it was because Colonel Chaudron was white, or because the French could no longer find anything to use to deny that Diop was a soldier, they finally agreed that he deserved his citizenship for fighting in the Indochina and Algerian war.

Act III

- **A breakthrough**

The French have finally decided to give him his citizenship. Does this mean France is growing a conscience, or that France can no longer deny its past transgressions. Other films like *Indigenes (Days of Glory)* have moved current French officials like Jacques Chirac to look into its past with its Colonial War Veterans and make reparations. But the reparations are minimal and not wide spread. Because they have been made on a case by case basis, it seems to be only to save face, in order to not be faulted for or bring further attention to its historic mistreatment of its colonial subjects.

- **What does this mean for the future?**

He's in France to finally accept his citizenship. But he's not sure if he will accept it, because he is not sure that what they are offering him is retroactive. If he gets his citizenship it most likely will begin at that future date, negating the fact that he has been a citizen since birth. What does this decision mean for veterans like him? What does this decision mean in terms of France's position on its colonial Veterans? Will France do something about it and if so will it be enough? He hopes for full restitution of his birthright citizenship. We will see if that's what they offer, and if he accepts what they eventually offer him.

Production Elements:

Vibrant, high contrast, high color contrast, rich colors, optimistic, uplifting, intimate, social, cultural, political, historical, infographics (maps), archival footage, interviews.

Characters and Storyline:

- **Babacar Diop** - The main subject of the documentary. He was born and raised in Senegal, but born as a French citizen due to the establishment of the Four French Communes of Senegal in the early 1870s. He fought as a French citizen in two wars, but has since been denied his citizenship due to reasons unbeknownst to him. Currently he is caught up in a legal battle with the French to not only regain his citizenship, but to have it specifically reinstated as if he had never lost it. Will he succeed, or will the country he fought for succeed in continuing a pattern of behavior that has actively erased people like Babacar Diop from historical memory?
- **The French Government** - This entity will be considered the antagonistic character of the documentary. At the beginning of its arc, it will already be an established entity, aiming to use the bodies of African servicemen for political and economic gain through any manipulation necessary. This is a repeated pattern, shown through the treatment of Tirailleurs at the Camp de Thiaroye long before the enlistment of Babacar Diop. By the end of the documentary it will be an entity that has thrived on this manipulation, and continues said manipulation through the erasure of its Veterans, in order to maintain erasure of its prior manipulations. Will this entity, as a character, change its ways, or will it continue its pattern of behavior?
- **Rene Vautier** - Documentary filmmaker, and director (realisateur) of *Afrique 50*. He was originally commissioned by the French government to make a documentary about the benefits of colonialism. When he reached West Africa he realized that there were no benefits for the African people, only benefits for the French. The French continuously tried to thwart his attempt to make a documentary about the reality he saw there by confiscating his reels and through harassment by French officials. When he finally made *Afrique 50*, he was jailed for a year and his film was banned for 40 years.
- **Khadija-Awa Diop (me)** - The documentary filmmaker, and granddaughter of the documentary's main subject. As I learn more about my grandfather, I am learning more about the history of my country and its relationship with France. I am consequently discovering the real life effects of French policy on individuals long forgotten by the French.

- **Yakhya Diop** - The father of Babacar Diop, the example by which Babacar Diop followed, into his military career.
- **Blaise Diagne** - The first Senegalese, and first African man to have a seat in French government. His influence led to the Blaise Diagne Laws in 1915 that called for all Originaires to take up arms to defend the French as French citizens.
- **Babakar Diop** - The man Babacar Diop was mistaken for.
- **Colonel Roger Chaudron** - The man whose life Babacar Diop saved, and who returned the favor decades later by writing a letter to the French government on his behalf, convincing the French government of Diop's claims of being a veteran (*need to interview*)
- **Experts**
 - **Already Interviewed**
 - **Sarah Zimmerman** - professor of African Studies at the University of Washington. PhD Dissertation on the stories of Originaires Veterans
 - **Amadou Fofana** - professor of French and Francophone Studies at Willamette University in Washington. Specialties include the topic of the Laval Decree and African cinema/filmmakers
 - **Interview Pending**
 - **Maelenn-Kegni Toure** - Independent historian and author of several articles concerning Senegalese tirailleurs.

Qualifications

I am African, and specifically Senegalese. This gives me the perspective to tell this story as a counter narrative. I understand and speak both French and Wolof; therefore, I am able to conduct my interviews and research in all three languages. This is also my grandfather's story, and so I am someone he trusts to do his story justice. This qualifies me as someone he trusts to tell his story. I think an important distinction to be made here is that through telling his story I am crafting a counter narrative. By bringing to light his perspective, I can counter the dominant narrative.

I studied film and have been shooting and editing videos for many people from individuals to the University of Pittsburgh's Global Studies department for over five years.

Publication and Dissemination

For the final project, my objectives are to have a Sizzle Reel, a documentary film treatment and a published written portion, that includes a journal of my process. The project will continue beyond this project and will inshaAllah become a feature length documentary film. The sizzle reel and the treatment are usually first steps in securing funding and making a documentary. The contents of this project will be the jumping off point for that; It will also be a way to make sure I am ethically, and thoughtfully putting the documentary together in a way that aligns with the social and cultural impetus of African cinema as a means of counter narrative.

Audience

The in group (misrepresented people in need of a counter narrative to correct widely distributed misinformed media.) To help them understand what has been hidden from them.

The out group (people who have consumed media that misrepresents the in group.) To let them know what the truth is, not just what they've been taught.

The creators of the media (how do we hold you accountable? How do we rectify the ripple effects of this misrepresentation.) My hope is that positive change will be made. My example

Indigenes: The French president gave certain people their citizenship (why only some? Why not all?) Hopefully this will continue to make them aware of the issue and take action to rectify it.

Distribution as a counter narrative protocol:

Because the aims of counter narratives, we want to reach disadvantaged and underrepresented groups, who will benefit from seeing this information. And so distribution must be thought of as a protocol of counternarratives. Both the ingroup and the outgroup must have access. How do we distribute to achieve that goal? Specifically in Senegal, there are only a handful of cinemas in the whole country. This was one of the topics of conversation between professor Amadou Fofana and I during my interview with him. He has been working towards creating a structure for a mobile cinema that can give people in the more remote areas of the country. I want to expand on this idea, and use the concept of a mobile cinema to screen *The Originnaire* across the country. This takes care of the issue of giving access to the ingroup. The outgroup has more access to streaming services and so that will be my goal for dissemination to them.

Research Component

My research objective is to understand how documentaries can be used by political parties to shape narratives and to begin to explore how counternarratives can be used to restore veracity to the narrative, through giving a voice to underrepresented perspectives. By understanding the narrative that exists, and how it has progressed over time, we can understand what we need to do to restore veracity through adding perspectives that have been neglected.

Chapter 5:

Conclusion

For so long disinformation about marginalized groups has circulated through the media as information. It has affected the way we view the world and the people who inhabit it. I realized how deep this organized crime went after coming across the documentary *Afrique 50*, and finding out how Rene Vautier was punished for illuminating the realities of colonialism. Because the disinformation is being controlled by state actors it creates a power hierarchy with its marginalized group that is difficult to dismantle. Upon further research I came up with three main inquiries for my own research:

- 1) Why and in what ways did the French, as political players, distort the truthfulness in the media using documentary films to change global narratives in their favor?

The French government purposefully created disinformation in many forms, including the documentary form, to maintain control of a narrative that would allow them to benefit economically from its colonies. They did so using legislation like the Lavale Decree that gave them the right to censor European filmmakers and forbid African filmmakers from exhibiting narratives making media that would disrupt the dominant narrative. The French state also put considerable effort into producing disinformation through media that reinforced the dominant narrative they created.

- 2) How does the fabricated media produced affect people and society as a whole?

The effect has been in the comprehension of the disinformation. We even see this behavior in our current administration in how the Trump presidency was ill gotten with assistance from Russian disinformation campaigns. When we don't know we're being fed small bits of inaccurate

information, it affects the way we interact with our world everyday. For decades governments, like the French government, miseducated the masses in a way they can totally benefit from. Where some people might not have supported the French colonial effort given the accurate information, they were led to believe it was beneficial for all parties involved. This is a particularly detrimental effect because it erases the voices and stories of oppressed groups. This erasure is a violent form of silencing because it continues to perpetuate harmful stereotypes and generalizations that affect everything from policy to the economy, to everyday life.

3) Can we use counter narratives to include marginalized perspectives in the global narrative?

Yes! These groups are still trying to counter the effects of global miseducation. Using Critical Race Theory as a methodology centered around rectifying social injustices, they are able to challenge dominant narratives using counter narratives.

The purpose of this profession project is to inform practice, so the three research inquiries were a jumping off point for informing my own practice. As a case study, I have been working on a documentary about my grandfather Babacar Diop. As a war veteran who fought for the French, he has been the direct target of disinformation campaigns and systemic silencing by the state. He is the perfect subject for a counternarrative. Because the filmmaking process is long, for the duration of this professional project, I tackled the creation of a treatment and a sizzle reel.

Continuation of this project

This project is the beginning of a larger project. The sizzle reel and the treatment will be a way for me to continue filming, directing and producing *The Originaire*.

I also intend in the future to hold three screenings for the documentary. One at WVU, one in Jersey City, and one in Dakar. In order to test Stuart Hall's Encode/Decode theory, I plan to conduct a survey before the film and after, to ascertain how people's level of understanding changed after viewing the documentary. The completed documentary will be a part of my future dissertation.

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