

MAGIC LANTERN presents a documentary film by
VICTORIEN VIALAR



“A BURKINABE FAMILY”

Burkina Faso and France / 90 and 52 min / Unrated / Color
In Karaboro with English subtitles

Press site: <http://www.magic-lantern-films.com/a-burkinabe-family>
Magic Lantern | Tel: (646) 926-6760 | info@magic-lantern-films.com

Short Synopsis

Set against the backdrop of a youth-fueled uprising and political change in the West African country of Burkina Faso, filmmaker Victorien Vialar paints an intimate portrait of one sprawling Burkinabe clan, from the Karaboro ethnic group, who have high hopes for both their family unit and their nation at large. A BURKINABE FAMILY follows patriarch Tou Seydou and seven of his family members, ages 14 to 53, as they navigate life in their small rural compound. It's a world of sacrifice and struggle, but also one of dreams and lofty ambitions. Told in a meditative style punctuated with painterly vistas and silent reveries, Vialar vividly captures the rhythms of the family's daily existence and the incandescent beauty of the bucolic landscape.

Long Synopsis

In October 2014, a youth-fueled uprising in the West African country of Burkina Faso forced the country's longtime President Blaise Compaoré out of office. But it led to a tumultuous two-year period of instability, including a coup and a military junta, before free democratic elections were held in November 2015, which left the nation feeling strongly optimistic about its future.

Against that backdrop, filmmaker Victorien Vialar paints an intimate, affectionate portrait of one sprawling Burkinabe clan, from the Karaboro ethnic group, living in the village of Tengrela, who have high hopes for both their family unit and their country at large. A BURKINABE FAMILY follows patriarch Tou Seydou and seven of his family members, ages 14 to 53, as they navigate life in their small rural compound. Oldest son, Adama, spent 10 years in Mali learning the Koran and now helps his father run the farm. After long days of work, Drissa rides his bike to the nearby city of Banfora where he's taking night classes to become an electrician. Orokia, a star student, represents the family's greatest hopes. She attends a private Catholic school and imagines one day becoming a doctor.

Told in a lyrical, meditative style punctuated with painterly vistas and silent reveries, Vialar vividly captures the gentle rhythms of the family's daily existence—from farming and fishing to household chores and child rearing. He also brings to life the incandescent beauty of the bucolic landscape, whether it's vast green fields of rice peopled with the sights and sounds of harvesting workers, a fisherman quietly casting his net on a tranquil lake, or a fiery orange sun setting over the horizon.

Seydou and his family cherish the values of hard work, education, cooperation, faith in God, respect for tradition, and absorbing the knowledge of elders. It's a world of sacrifice and struggle, but also one of lofty ambitions. Seydou knows that his children's futures will depend on their schooling, yet he acknowledges some of them may have to toil, like him, cultivating the land. Solidarity, though, is key. "In life, you can't do a thing if you don't walk hand by hand with your people," Adama says. "This is true for a family, for a village, and for a country."

Selected Festivals

Doc Corner, Cannes Film Festival 2015
Luxor African Film Festival, Egypt 2015

About the Production

A BURKINABE FAMILY was shot between November, 2013 and March, 2015. The country was very unstable during this period; people did not know what would happen next.

The Burkinabe uprising was a series of demonstrations and riots in Burkina Faso during October, 2014 that quickly spread to multiple cities. They began in response to attempts at changing the country's constitution to allow President Blaise Compaoré to run again and extend his 27 years in office. Following a tumultuous day on October 30, which included the involvement of former Defence Minister Kouamé Lougué and the burning of the National Assembly and other government buildings, including the ruling Congress for Democracy and Progress party's headquarters, Compaoré dissolved the government and declared a state of emergency before eventually fleeing to Côte d'Ivoire with the support of President Alassane Ouattara and French secret services.

General Honoré Nabéré Traoré announced that a transitional government would run the country until an election could be called within 12 months. After another day of mass protests and initially refusing to resign with mounting domestic pressure, Compaoré resigned from his 27-year presidency on October 31, 2014 and General Traoré took over as the interim head of state. However, Lieutenant Colonel Yacouba Isaac Zida also staked a claim to be interim head of state citing Traoré's unpopularity. A statement by military chiefs asserted that Zida had their unanimous backing. A coalition of unnamed opposition parties rejected the military takeover. Further protests were called for November 2, but were smaller, yet there was at least one casualty amidst a police response. On November 3, the African Union gave the country a fortnight to end military rule. By mid-November, a framework was agreed upon unanimously for a transitional executive and legislative administration.

I made the choice to film the life of a family from the bush, within in a 3km area. We are living the revolution through the eyes of this family.

I especially filmed each character to show their singularity. The family is not an entity but a mosaic. The different point of views about the daily life and the country are crossed. It's also a movie about transmission, the family legacy: passing on the values, the ancestral knowledge and traditions.

I chose to always stay behind the camera and let the characters tell their own stories (through dialog and voice-over). The language of the movie is the local one (Karaboro), spoke by a few thousands of people.

Before making this movie, I immersed myself within the family since 2008. The family really took part in the creation process, shaping the movie through the years.

I presented nature as a major character within the film because it is much more important than politics in the life of the people of this family. I worked for more than a year on an original score with the group Assay, using a sensitive and soft electric guitar.

It's a movie about hope, about youth, about love, trying to look in the direction of the future with a bright vision for Burkina Faso. I've focused on the aesthetics of the picture and on the ambient sounds very specific of this area, trying to pay a tribute to the sensorial beauty of this place called Tengrela.

—Victorien Vialar

Director's Statement

The Guardian said the events could be, "a promising break with the trend set by various African rulers finding elasticity in constitutional limits, including Chad, Gabon, Guinea, Namibia, Togo and Uganda." The Christian Science Monitor cited unnamed people terming this an African Spring and that it could serve as a warning to leaders like Rwanda's Paul Kagame who are trying to abolish term limits. Parallels were also drawn with the Arab Spring. Al Jazeera asked if there would be repercussions across West Africa and whether this was an uprising or a coup, though there were no Burkinabe on their panel.

Risk management firm Red24's Ryan Cummings said, "we saw this was a regime that was crumbling," citing Compaoré's loss of support within the military and his own party. He added, "Compaoré as much as he was vilified by the local population he was a key ally of the west... without him there's no guarantee the status quo will persist. The country itself is quite key for regional stability... There's going to be a void and that could catalyze a lot of extremist groups and this could see other countries being destabilised."

On September 16, 2015 the Burkinabe coup d'état was launched in Burkina Faso, when members of the Regiment of Presidential Security (RSP)—a controversial autonomous military unit, formed under President Blaise Compaoré—detained the country's government. Among those detained were the transitional President Michel Kafando, Prime Minister Yacouba Isaac Zida (who was also the former deputy commander of the RSP), and numerous members of the cabinet. New general elections were planned for October 11, 2015.

The RSP was successful in seizing control of Ouagadougou and proclaimed the establishment of a new junta, headed by General Gilbert Diendéré, to oversee the transition to new elections. The coup leaders denounced the transitional government's electoral law, which barred supporters of Compaoré from participating in the elections, and promised to allow all prospective candidates to run. However, the junta failed to consolidate its authority across the country by legitimacy, and faced protests as well as intense pressure from regional leaders, and eventually from the regular army, to restore the transitional government. Ultimately, after the regular army entered Ouagadougou to confront the RSP, Kafando was restored as President on September 23, 2015.

Eleven people died, and more than 250 were injured during the coup. In the first cabinet meeting afterwards, held on September 25, the Minister of Security was dismissed and the position of head of the president's military council was abolished. A commission was created to identify those involved in the coup and given thirty days to report. Prosecutions are expected to be made.

The same day, the Regiment of Presidential Security was disbanded by government decree, as recommended shortly before the coup. The next day the assets of Diendéré and others associated with the coup were frozen by the state prosecutor.

General elections were held in Burkina Faso on November 29, 2015. The elections were the first national elections in the country since the 2014 Burkinabe uprising and the departure of President Blaise Compaoré, who had ruled Burkina Faso for 27 years. The party of former President Compaoré, the Congress for Democracy and Progress, was banned from running a presidential candidate but was still able to participate in the parliamentary election.

The presidential election was won by Roch Marc Christian Kaboré.

About the Filmmaker

Victorien Vialar has a degree in socio-anthropology, cinematography, and editing. He previously produced *LIVING IN TENGRELA* (2012) selected for the Short Film Corner, Cannes Film Festival, as well as the film *KARABORO LEGACY* (2013).

Vialar produced *A BURKINABE FAMILY* because he feels it depicts the revolution through the eyes of this family. It's a movie about transmission, family legacy, ensuring a generational value system, and respect for the ancestral knowledge and traditions.

The language in this documentary is a local dialect—Karaboro—spoken by only a few thousand people in Burkina Faso.

Film Credits

Title:	A BURKINABE FAMILY
Written and directed by:	Victorien Vialar
Release year/production year:	2015
Production year:	2013—2015
Image:	Color, HD
Aspect ratio:	16:9
Running time:	52 and 90 minutes
Language:	Karaboro with English subtitles
Production countries:	Burkina Faso and France
Co-producers:	Kegnigohi Prod and V&V Productions
1st Assistant & Art Direction:	Virginie Scarbel
2nd Assistant:	Drissa Tou
Advisor:	Abdoulaye Tou
Translation:	Drissa Tou and Siaka Tou
Production on location:	Seydou Tou, Drissa Tou, Abdoulaye Tou
Editing:	Marvin Berger
Original Score:	ASSAY
Cinematographer:	Victorien Vialar
Sound:	Grégoire Marty
Producers:	Abdoulaye Tou, Brice Vialar

With the voices of Seydou Kledié Nadé, Djita Naba, Adama, Siaka, Drissa “Tonton,” Lassina Mogomaké “Le Vieux,” and Orokia Gnihigalihina.

Cast: Ajara Nou, Fatou Birmane Nou, Kadidja, Awa Cousinié, Minata Mama, Djeneba, Minata Keyangtele, Aramata, Abdou-Razak, Issouf Tély, Madina Codeni, Salimata (Madame), Djeneba Napiogué, Abdoul-Karim, Bintou, Assiéta, Sogona Balogo, Kardjatou Kadi, Karim (Titi), Awa Bitaba, Adou Too, Mohamed, Yacouba, Awa, Noura, Grace Grasso, Djeneba Djamoss, Assetou (Mademoiselle), Abibata Mama, Seydou Koutaga, Djakalidja, Sagnon Zoumana, Tou Issa, Koné Adama, Yanou Awa, Aziz.

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