

Zinder: Educational Guide

Prepared by Julia Hammett-Jamart PhD

with contributions from members of the 'Zinder Brain Trust'



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This Guide, available in English and French, has been devised to assist teachers, festival directors and facilitators to present the film *Zinder* to an audience and lead discussions about the issues it raises and/or to use the film as a pedagogical support to explore themes of relevance to an existing course of study. Whilst it is aimed primarily at the high-school curriculum, certain aspects would be of interest to university undergraduates of Sociology, Geography, History, Political Science, Gender Studies, Film and Media Studies and related courses. The short video links in part 3 would likewise be suitable for stimulating discussion amongst community stakeholder groups including disaffected and/or incarcerated youth, women's groups, men's groups and recent migrants.

The film is multi-faceted, raising many topics of discussion about the nation of Niger, where it was filmed, but also triggering reflection about issues of universal relevance, such as the importance of social justice, access to education, gender parity, the roots of violence and the impacts of poor governance. There are so many angles to explore and the aim of this Guide is to assist in unpacking that complexity. We want to provide a doorway into the film, to give you the background information you need to understand it, lead debates, run classes, challenge ill-founded assumptions and possibly even initiate corrective action.

The Guide is structured in order to give you a multitude of entry points i.e you can pick and choose the elements you wish to explore, without necessarily needing to go from the beginning to the end. There are four parts, and each part has several distinct sections which permit you to dip in and out as you see fit. It is possible to simply choose one issue and, referring to the corresponding section, to deal exclusively with that in a session/class. For example, a high school Geography teacher offering a unit on colonisation may wish to explore the 'History and Politics' section in Part II, whereas a University Sociology lecturer teaching about Urbanisation may be more interested in diving in depth into 'The Phenomenon of Marginalisation' in Part III. Furthermore, in awareness of the fact that many classes or cine-debate sessions have a strict time limit that may not permit the film to be screened in its entirety as well as an in-depth debate, we have provided a series of audiovisual capsules arranged by theme and integrating relevant extracts from the film, thus facilitating debate even for those who have not yet seen the entire film, or who may have seen it some time ago and need a memory trigger.

Questions, comments or suggestions concerning the Guide can be sent to this address:

✉ JHJ.zinderimpact@gmail.com

ZINDER: EDUCATIONAL GUIDE

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE	2
PART 1: MAKING THE FILM	4
SYNOPSIS	5
DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT	6
PRODUCTION DETAILS	7
INTERVIEW WITH AICHA MACKY	9
CRITICAL RECEPTION	13
PART 2: NIGER - COUNTRY OVERVIEW	15
GEOGRAPHY	16
HISTORY AND POLITICS	18
DEMOGRAPHY	23
KEY INDICATORS	25
PART 3 : CHALLENGES FACING KARA KARA	28
INFRASTRUCTURE	30
YOUTH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE	33
THE ROOTS OF EXTREMISM	35
CIVIL RIGHTS AND THE CARCERAL SYSTEM	37
THE ROLE AND STATUS OF WOMEN	39
THE PHENOMENON OF MARGINALISATION	41
A RAY OF HOPE: ENDURING HUMANIST VALUES	43
PART 4: WAYS FORWARD	45
ZINDER IMPACT CAMPAIGN	46
IMPACT CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES	46
BECOME INVOLVED	47
CONTACT US	48

PART 1: MAKING THE FILM

The way in which a film is made – the intention of the producer/director team, the nationalities and expertise of the crew, the sources of financing and the intended audience all have an influence on the way a story is told. This is true even for documentaries, where the focus of the film, the length of shoot and capacity to obtain adequate coverage are all variable factors influencing the final film. This section provides information.... It will be of particular interest to students of film studies or those interested in making films themselves. Further and more detailed information is also provided on the film's website and the relevant link is provided here.

- [Synopsis](#)
- [Director's Intention](#)
- [Production Details](#)
- [Interview with the Director](#)
- [Critical Reception](#)

Synopsis

The wind-swept town of Zinder in the heart of the Sahel region of Niger is a place that travelers only pass through. Kara-Kara, the former lepers' quarter, is the pariahs' district of this town. Gangs referred to as the 'Palais' have sprung up in this area and are spreading their influence throughout the town. Obsessed by a culture of bodybuilding and violence, the gang members induce fear in the population.

Outside of the time spent together at their body-building camp, some of them follow a path that leads to a life of crime and prison or even to a violent premature death. Others strive to extract themselves from the rut in which they have found themselves. This is the case for Siniya, Bawo and Ramsess who the director, herself originally from Zinder, has succeeded in filming up close in order to reveal to us their survival strategies. By following these people in their daily lives - divided between the gang, their families and fending for themselves – Aicha Macky conveys a sense of their desire to break free from the cycle of violence on which their identity has thus far been constructed.



"I understood that Kara-Kara could exist anywhere and is just a reflection of our collective behaviors and the result of a divide: them versus us."

Director's Statement

In 2004, I left my native town of Zinder to pursue a university education in Niamey, over 600 miles away, which is where I now live. Over time, my relationship with my home town faded, the connection consisting principally of short stays to visit relatives who remained there. Zinder seemed distant, so I was shocked when terrible and even shameful stories reached me — gang rapes, street battles, armed robberies, all sorts of crimes and trafficking — news that appeared as a horror story to someone who had grown up in that hitherto quiet area at the crossroads of the Sahel and the caravan trade route. This was an area where different communities used to live in peace (Tuaregs, Hausas, Kanuris, Fulas, Muslims, Christians...), albeit with certain social divisions.

My awakening came in January 2015 as I read a news item in which the Minister for the Interior commented on a Boko Haram flag spotted during the riots that had broken out in Zinder. Youths belonging to the so-called 'Palais' gangs were blamed. For a decade or so, hundreds of gangs had been thriving in my hometown. Niger is a region of the world whose population subsists in extreme poverty (ranked very last in the 2020 UN Human Development Index), its resources plundered by foreign firms. Work and life prospects in the town of Zinder are poor and there is great instability, with terrorist movements at the borders of Nigeria (some 60 miles from Zinder), Chad, Mali and Algeria. It is an area that has become the final frontier to Europe, with its so-called "hotspots" stopping would-be exiles from leaving the continent. Many people end up stranded in the Sahel region, which makes the local situation even worse. Be feared and fight in order not to die has become the dictum. 'Palais' (palace) refers to where the Sultan lives - the highest civil authority in the city. By naming themselves in this manner, these youths seek to assert themselves as an authority. The gangs challenge the State and are in effect an anti-state. They constitute a time bomb waiting to explode.

How does one chronicle one's own people, oneself, one's hometown - showing how a haven of peace turns into an idle city, pointing to remedies, trying to heal the wounds and the wounded while letting those concerned speak for themselves, to experience the present time with more hope in a city searching for safety? This was a perilous mission upon which to embark as a filmmaker. It took me months to be accepted. In the end, I was - Siniya, Bawo, Ramsess, allowed me to enter their world. Each of them has one foot inside the gang and one foot out, to the extent that they each would prefer to cease illegal activities. It is this perspective which permitted us to discuss their ways of thinking. They were open to sharing their daily life and survival strategies with me. Being around them changed me in unforeseen ways. I understood that Kara-Kara could exist anywhere and is just a reflection of our collective behaviors and the result of a divide: 'them' versus 'us'.

I was born to a modest family, but on the right side of the tracks, on the other side from 'that' neighborhood with dim lights. As a child I watched them from afar. Now, as a filmmaker, sociologist and activist, discreet as a shadow, I venture around that dimmer opposite hill, across that border that keeps us apart, them and myself, and bring their story to the whole world.

Production Details

Zinder was made as a tri-partite international co-production between Niger, Germany and France, with crew participating from each of these three countries. Financing came from a range of national and international funds including the MEDIA program of the European Union and also GENERATION AFRICA as part of the STEPS program. The STEPS program supports films about Africa which are creatively controlled by Africans themselves. As part of its financing package, Zinder had presales to two broadcasters: ARTE and AL JAZEERA. It is worth thinking about how this international crew and financing structure may have influenced the manner in which the film was shot and post-produced.

Director : Aicha Macky

Producers : Clara Vuillermoz (Point du Jour-Les films du balibari) Ousmane Samassekou (Tabous production), Erik Winker (Corso Film)

DOP : Julien Bossé

Sound : Abdoulaye Adamou Malo

Editing : Karen Benainous, assisted by Coline Leaute

Original score : Dominique Peter

Sound design : Andreas Hildebrandt

Sound Mix : Matthias Lempert

Countries of production: Niger, France, Germany

Year : 2021

Duration : 82 min

Shooting format : 4K

Screening format : DCP (ratio : FLAT / sound : 5.1 / speed : 25ips / Resolution : 4K)

Language : Hausa

Production Companies : Tabous production (Niger), Point du Jour-Les films du balibari (France), Corso Film (Germany) in association with STEPS (South Africa) – GENERATION AFRICA

Broadcasters : Arte France – Al Jazeera Documentary

International Sales : Andana Films (Stephan Riguét – Grégory Bétend)

Pitching and Labs : Ouaga Films Lab, Produire au Sud (Nantes), La Fabrique des Cinémas du Monde, Durban Film Mart, Hot Docs Forum.

With the participation of : Scam – brouillon d'un rêve / Sacem / Fondation Alter-Ciné Montréal/ Europe Creative – programme de l'Union européenne / Hot Docs Blue Ice Docs Fund / Sundance Institute Documentary Film program / IDFA Bertha coproduction Fund / World Cinema Fund Africa / Fonds Jeune Création Francophone / Ateliers de l'Atlas - Festival International du film de Marrakech / Film- und Medienstiftung NRW / Région des Pays de la Loire / Région Auvergne Rhône-Alpes / Procirep-Angoa / Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée (CNC)

ZINDER

KEY CREW



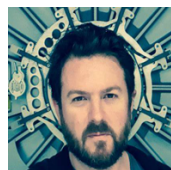
DIRECTOR: Aicha Macky Having trained as a sociologist, Aicha subsequently turned to documentaries, completing a Masters at the University Gaston Berger in Senegal and making several short films. In 2016 she made the multi award-winning documentary *The Fruitless Tree* which addresses the taboo subject of infertility in Niger. In 2021 she released her second documentary feature, *Zinder*, which examines the roots of violence and extremism in her home town, and which has likewise won prizes at Film Festivals around the world. Alongside making films, Aicha teaches youth. As part of the USAID program 'Peace through development' she guides young filmmakers to use short films to stimulate discussion about conflict in the Sahel region. In recognition of her work she has been named Knight of the Academic Palms and a Knight of the Arts of the Niger Republic and the *Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* by the French government.



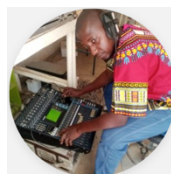
PRODUCER: Clara Vuillermoz is a producer at one of France's leading documentary production companies, *Les Films du Balibari-Point du Jour*. She has extensive experience in international co-production and her credits include award-winning titles such as *Polaris* (2022) and *This Train I Ride* (2019). Clara has twice been awarded the PROCIREP French Producer of the year prize (2014, 2019). She is a full member of the Commission of the CNC Audiovisual Innovation Fund, of the Cinema-Audiovisual Commission of the Southern Region and of the PROCIREP Commission. Clara holds a film degree from the Institute of Political Studies of Lyon as well as a DESS in Directing and Producing documentaries (2005). She has also completed professional training programs with EURODOC (2014), the US Sundance Institute (2019) and EAVE (2022).



CO-PRODUCER: Ousmane Samassékou is an associate at DS Production in Bamako, where he occupies multiple crew functions on documentaries (producer, director, cameraman and editor). In October 2018, he was awarded the producer network grant at the Ouaga Producer Lab. Ousmane has directed two feature length documentaries – *The Heirs of the Hill* (2016) and *The Last Shelter* (2021) – the latter of which was co-produced by *Les Films du Balibari* and went on to win multiple international awards. As a co-producer of *Zinder*, he participated in the Ouagafilm Lab, the Produire au Sud workshops (Festival des Trois Continents), and *La Fabrique Cinema* at the Cannes Film Festival.



CINEMATOGRAPHER: Julien Bossé: « I collaborate artistically on the visuals of documentary cinema, and these days favor working on films that have social, political and historical content – the human story from an engaged and encouraging perspective being the primary motivator of my filmic gaze. My creative intention is always to use aesthetics as a means to give carriage to the underlying ideas and never to overshadow them. In this way I hope to make 'sensitive' films (films that exhibit sensitivity and also make meaningful sense). As I am not preoccupied with formal hierarchies, I refer to myself as Cinematographer rather than the more formal Director of Photography or Chief Camera Operator. »



SOUND ENGINEER: Abdoulaye Adamou Mato is certified in Sound Recording Technique and Documentary Production Sound from the Imagine Institute in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. He is creatively active across several disciplines: cinema, contemporary dance, theatre, storytelling, radio, performing arts... His credits include *Burocrassie* at the Théâtre Récréationnelles (Cie Arene, 2008), a tragic farce written by Alfred Dogbé and directed by Edouard Lompo, assisted by Charline Grand. *Show the Three Sages* (Cie Haske Maganin Douhou), written by Idi Nouhou and directed by Achirou Wagé. He has also participated in and run numerous sound and light workshops in Niger and abroad, including the *Journées Théâtrales de Carthage* in Tunis (2009) and the *Récréationnelles Ouagadougou Festival* (2008).



EDITOR: Karen Benainous has been an editor of feature-length documentaries since 2011, with credits including *Bovines* by Emmanuel Gras, *Pauline s'arrache* by Emilie Brisavoine, *Makala* by Emmanuel Gras (Grand Prix de la Semaine de la Critique at the Cannes Film Festival in 2017), *Treasure Island* by Guillaume Brac, *Les Petites Danseuses* by Anne-Claire Dolivet and *A People* by Emmanuel Gras. She studied editing at the Institut des Arts de Diffusion and holds a Masters in Cinema (University of Paris 8).

Interview with Aicha Macky

You come from Zinder but did not grow up in Kara-Kara: What aroused your interest in this neighbourhood?

When I was a child, people talked about Kara-Kara as if it were the setting of a fable. It was a place where lepers and outcasts lived. They would come down the hill to beg, lying on the backs of donkeys or helped by their children. My parents instructed me to give them rice or millet, and I would open their bags with a stick to avoid contact. I had to avoid being contaminated, of being isolated like them. This is the attitude of all the people who live in the «healthy» part of town. At the time, it seemed normal to me, there was «them» and there was «us». Today, people talk about this district mainly because of the Palais, groups of youths accused of being violent and of acting against the State. It has been alleged that they caused the violence which erupted in 2015. Following the publication by Charlie Hebdo of the cartoons of the Prophet Mohamed and the presence in Paris of the President of the Republic of Niger, Issoufou Mahamadou, who took part in the Republican march against terrorism held in the French capital, there were demonstrations in Niger that resulted in ten deaths. Being attached to my home town, I wanted to go back to Zinder to understand where the violence came from and to meet the Palais.

What did you find out?

In Kara-Kara, poverty and illiteracy are widespread. In the 1970s, lepers were brought to Zinder from all over Niger because the town had the only hospital for skin diseases in the country. The State parked the lepers in this district where the children grew up in total neglect. Stigmatised from birth, the children lived in a state of confinement and isolation. To make their voices heard they banded together in gangs called Palais. Today there are hundreds of them.

What sets them apart?

They can be identified by their accoutrements: neck chains, Hollywood T-shirts, flags, etc. When they walk the streets, they scrape the tarmac with machetes, throwing up sparks. In 2016, the first time I went to meet them, they swathed me in a cloud of smoke from drugs. It was a test; I came home quite stoned! When I went back, they let the handles of their machetes appear over the waistbands of their trousers to scare me. But I insisted, until they understood that I hadn't come to steal their images. After seeing me over a period of two years during which I did the scouting for the film, they finally got used to my presence and took me under their wing. I suggested they tell their story in the film so it would give a true picture of their lives.

The idea was therefore to look at them from a different angle.

Yes, I left my preconceived ideas behind. I discovered solidarity in these neighbourhoods, for instance, the inhabitants help those who fall sick. However, they are beset by many evils and illiteracy is widespread. Politicians only give them a semblance of civil status when they are old enough to vote, simply to get them to vote in exchange for handouts.

I imagine that the filming conditions were not easy!

That's true. Let me tell you a story. When we were filming in the middle of the night at the Nigerian border as they were smuggling petrol, the border police stopped us and asked what a woman and a white man, my cameraman, were doing in the middle of a smuggling operation! The risk of terrorism added to their fears. After two hours of questioning, we had to wake up their commanding officer at 4am for him to decide what to do with us! I had the film permits but the fact that we were accompanying smugglers made suspects of us!

So, you were filming an illegal activity!

Indeed! It made us realise how dangerous their working conditions are, with the border patrols sometimes firing at point-blank range forcing them to make their getaway at breakneck speed! But as Ramsess says in the film, she would rather do that than go under. These young people have chosen to be active and resilient, and although smuggling is illegal it provides petrol at half price for all, even if the adulterated petrol does tend to ruin engines over time! Only NGOs and the public authorities who have petrol vouchers get their petrol from the few remaining service stations. Thanks to the contraband petrol, many other young people can trade and thus support their families.

Did you need a light crew to do the filming?

On the border, there was just the French DOP, Julien Bossé (who had already done *The Fruitless Tree* with me) and the Nigerian sound engineer Abdoulaye Adamou Mato. My African producer, the Malian Ousmane Samassekou, and the production managers who were often present, Abdoul Razak Benji during the first shoot and Abdoukader Arzika during the second shoot.

We can see that the members of the Palais are aware that they are being filmed.

Yes, we didn't steal the footage. The filming was done over a period of five years. They knew perfectly well that we were making a film and loved to show off their strong beautiful bodies, in what was clearly a game of seduction.

How much of it was staged? I'm thinking, for example, of the scene where Siniya Boy goes to see his three friends in prison.

The prison authorities had to announce our presence to the prisoners so that those who did not wish to be filmed could stay in their cells. They knew that we were coming to shoot a film, but we hadn't determined what would be in it. This allowed them to talk about the mistreatment they suffered while awaiting trial. We left the camera running to capture entire exchanges which, of course, we had to cut down in the editing. I had often accompanied Siniya to the prison to visit his little brother and bring him meals, because the prisoners only get one meal a day. Each family has to bring them extra food. And the cell we see in the film is the one where the minors who aren't dangerous are detained. The dangerous minors are detained with the adult prisoners. The prison authorities organised the shoot this way with our production manager because they didn't want us to film in the cell where Siniya's friends are normally detained: in it 208 people are packed like sardines!

Would you have liked to be able to show the real conditions of detention?

Yes, because they are inhuman. Prisoners cannot move at night without disturbing their fellow inmates. Their clothes and their few belongings are contained in small plastic bags hung on nails all over the walls. The overcrowding is frightening in our prisons, even for the prisoners awaiting trial.

During the few interviews which were filmed from the side we realise that you are the woman conducting them, and your voice can be heard at times.

It was intentional because they were confiding personal information. This enabled me to gain an understanding of what they had experienced. Some interviews were like confessions suggesting that they had turned a page: had become like older brothers ready to guide the youths in their neighbourhood.

Ramsess talks about her intersexuality, which brings a subtext into the film.

People say to me that the film oozes testosterone, however, Ramsess brings the feminine element, without forgetting the presence of the «loose women». She was born in Ramatou, but they call her by all sorts of names. Yet she is an incredible figure as a smuggler in a male environment, but she also fights to give work to the young, so they don't fall into the trap of immigration. This businesswoman is a sort of itinerant company, who provides credit in the form of petrol and a street corner and then recuperates her investment on the sales (balass in Hausa). Everything revolves around her: she supplies Siniya, who is a vendor, and receives visits from Bawo who needs petrol for his motor-bike taxi. When the petrol runs out, the town's economy dies, and delinquency prevails. Ramsess provides a balance between the two other characters in the film.

It also reinforces the very physical dimension of the film, from the body-building culture to the scars you film from up close. Is this somehow linked to the historical dimension of the leprosarium and to phenomena such as the style of dressing which is an attempt stand out and a quest for dignity?

Absolutely, and to prove they are healthy: a healthy body allowing acceptance within society. The issue of the body pervades all my films, from *Me and my Tiny Body* (the link established between being thin and AIDS), to *How to make a bed* (the seductive body) and *The Fruitless Tree* (the maternal body).

Why this recurring idea?

Maybe because I had developed a complex because I used to be very thin. As a young girl, I had taken a lot of vitamins to become rounder, to conform to the social norm and escape being called nicknames such as « exclamation mark », «white man's woman», «string bean», etc.!

The film reveals an impressive ability to survive in these young people who have been abandoned.

Yes, that's what fascinated me about them. Every day, they fight to survive, especially since emigration is closed to them because Niger has become a border of Europe. I chose to film those who retain their dignity by being resilient, roguish and inventive. They live from day to day by doing odd jobs and the informal economy.

Why is the price of petrol at the pump twice that of the petrol on the informal market?

The cans they bring back from Nigeria are filled with petrol taken from hijacked tankers which is sold cheaply in Nigeria. In fact, it's refined in Zinder from crude oil from the Agadem field (Diffa region)! It's a diabolical cycle of small frauds within larger fraudulent operations!

The smuggling activities are filmed at night with a rather intense musical accompaniment that sustains the tension. Why did you choose this intense music?

Illegal activities take place under the cover of darkness, but for me the night also has a sacred aspect, since it is the time when people make say prayers to escape from harm. The tension is intended to highlight the danger of these activities, which was difficult to document directly by showing the scars on the bodies. I was not interested in depicting sensational stabbings or bloodshed.

The metaphysical dimension you evoke is reinforced by the abstract images of the fences and by the use of a drone, as a visualisation of the relationship between the earth and the body.

Absolutely. These are symbolic dialogues. Leprosy leaves traces on the body. The skin cracks and drought afflict the land in a similar fashion. The galleries they dig in the earth leave stigmata in the same way as terrorism does.

The fact that you sign your emails «socio-réalisatrice» is that a reference to your sociological studies?

Yes, because I cannot forget my training in sociology, which for me requires being very close to human beings to be able to tell human stories, even when they refer to subjects which are taboo or dangerous. I try to mix with people to make them feel comfortable and to enable my camera to communicate with them.

"I chose to film those who retain their dignity by being resilient, roguish and inventive".



- Interview by Olivier Barlet (Africultures)

Critical Reception

Festival Selections 2021-2022

Visions du Réel, Nyon (Switzerland) / CPH:DOX Change Makers (Denmark) / DOK.fest Munich (Germany) / Encounters, Cape Town (South Africa) / Durban International Film Festival (South Africa) / First Look at the Museum of the Moving Image, NY (USA) / MakeDox, Skopje (Macedonia) / Festival cinémas d'Afrique, Lausanne (Switzerland) / États généraux du documentaire, Lussas (France) / FilmInitiativ Köln (Germany) / FIFF Namur (Belgium) / Take One Action, Edinburgh and Glasgow (UK) / Festival de Douarnenez (France) / Festival International du Film de Nancy (France) / Millennium Docs Against Gravity (Poland) / IDFA Best of Fests (Netherlands) / Festival des 3 Continents, Nantes (France) / FIFAM, Amiens (France) / DocsMX (Mexico) / FESPACO (Burkina Faso) / Olhar de Cinema, Curitiba (Brazil) / Africa in Motion (AiM), Glasgow (Scotland) / Human Rights Film Festival Zurich (Switz) / African Film Festival, Cologne (Germany) / Augen Blicke Afrika, Hamburg (Germany) / Französische Filmtage, Tuebingen-Stuttgart (Germany) / Afrikamera Festival, Berlin (Germany) / Festival des cinémas d'Afrique du Pays d'Apt (France) / Festival International de Cinéma et Mémoire Commune, Nador (Morocco) / Cámara Lucida, Cuenca (Ecuador) / Duhok international film festival, Duhok (Iraq) / Anthropological film festival, Jerusalem (Israel) / Vision documentaire, Kinshasa /AFRIFF (Nigeria) / Journées Cinématographiques de Carthage, La Marsa (Tunisia) / Golden Tree Festival, Francfort-sur-le-Main (Germany) / Filmmaker film festival, Milan (Italy) / Festival Ecrans Noirs, Yaoundé (Cameroun) / AMA Awards, Lagos (Nigeria) / Kasseler Dokfest (Germany) / FIDOCs, Santiago (Chili) / Mashariki African Film festival, Kigali (Rwanda) / Saint Louis Docs, Saint-Louis (Senegal) / Move it!, Dresden (Germany) / Filmer le travail, Poitiers (France) / Tournai Ramdam Festival, Tournai (Belgique) / Black Movie, Geneva (Switzerland) / Les Rendez-vous des Cinémas d'Afrique, Saint-Martin- D'Hères (France) / Miradasdoc, Tenerife (Spain) / Toronto Black Film Festival (Canada) / Filmer le travail, Poitiers (France) / Tournai Ramdam Festival (Belgium) / Taiwan International Documentary Festival (Taiwan) / Festival Films Femmes Afrique, Dakar (Senegal) / Halifax Black Film festival (Canada) / Africa World Documentary Film Festival, San Diego (USA) / La semaine du cinéma, Niamey (West Africa) /to be cont'd...

Awards (non exhaustive)

- ❖ Adiaha Women's Documentary Award, Encounters South African International Film Festival
- ❖ Jury Special Mention, Festival International du Film de Nancy (France)
- ❖ Audience Award Best Documentary, Afrika Film Festival Köln, (Germany)
- ❖ A Different Tomorrow Award, RIFF Reykjavik International Film Festival (Island)
- ❖ Best Filmmaker of West Africa, FESPACO (Burkina Faso)
- ❖ Female Ambassador for Peace, FESPACO (Burkina Faso)
- ❖ Jury Special Mention, FESPACO (Burkina Faso)
- ❖ Golden Tree Award, Francfort-sur-le-Main, (Germany)
- ❖ Prix documentaire sur grand écran, FIFAM, Amiens, (France)
- ❖ Special Mention, FIDOCs, Santiago, (Chili)
- ❖ Critics award, Black Movie, Geneva (Switzerland)
- ❖ Best feature film, Festival Films Femmes Afriques, Dakar, (Africa)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/LINKS

- Film Website: <http://www.zinderfilm.com/>
- Press Kit: <https://en.calameo.com/books/00654528679fcf9d4c88c/>
- Trailer: <https://youtu.be/P2uvlKIrgpY/>
- Video interview of Director by the AFD: https://youtu.be/0Pdt2_IDK9c/
- Review: Liberation: https://www.liberation.fr/international/afrique/zinder-daicha-macky-la-premiere-fois-je-pensais-quon-ne-reviendrait-pas-en-vie-20220610_UM5EJ3JGI5GCXJYSIC4LZHGMBE/

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The film's director, Aïcha Macky, is a Nigerien woman who has herself lived in Zinder. How might this have influenced the manner in which the narrative unfolds? Give examples to support your arguments, thinking in particular of the ways in which the subject of gangs and violence are typically treated by Western media.
2. Read the reviews of the film cited in 'Additional Resources' above and discuss the extent to which you agree/disagree with the critique of the film.
3. Cinematographer, Julien Bossé, has stated that his artistic approach is to employ the aesthetic dimensions of the visual medium in support of the key messages of the film and not to overshadow them. Give examples of the way in which the cinematography on this film supports its key messages.

ACTIVITY

Conduct an interview with someone in your group that you do not know well entitled 'The thing I am most afraid of'. Think carefully about the questions you will ask, what techniques you will use to put the interviewee at ease and also about the size and angle of the shot you might use. If you have a phone, record the interview and then share and discuss your results as a group: what difficulties did you encounter? Why did you choose a particular angle, décor, shot size? What effect did this produce? Return to the film Zinder. Consider the sequence where Aïcha interviews Siniya at night and discuss her choices and the results of that encounter.

PART 2: NIGER - COUNTRY OVERVIEW

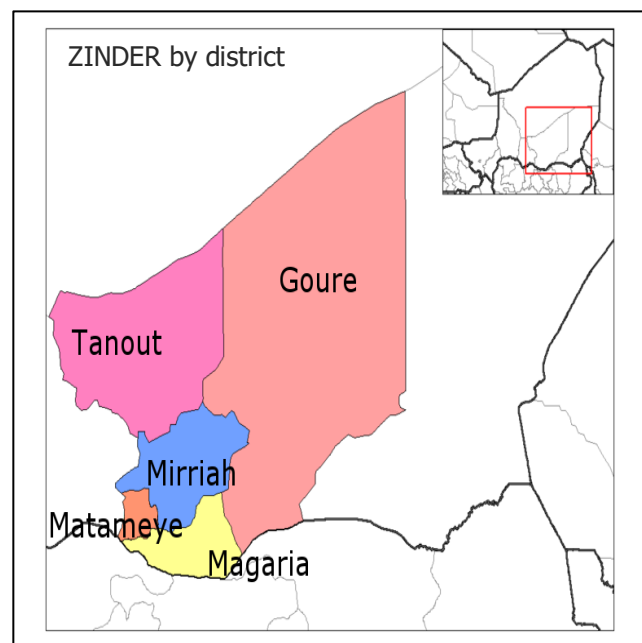
The geo-political, economic and social realities of Niger contrast starkly with those of Western countries. These parameters have a determining influence of the lives of all Nigeriens, so it is important to take account of these factors as a means to better understanding the decisions and motivations of the individuals in the documentary. This section provides an overview of the country to enable students to immediately grasp the broader context in which the people of Kara-Kara live and how it compares with their own situation, including:

- **Geography**: where Niger is situated in relation to other countries, where Zinder is situated with respect to the Nigerien capital and its resources, and Kara-Kara's historical position as a marginal district of Zinder.
- **History**: To understand the way in which Niger currently functions, it is important to be aware of its political history – the organization of the region prior to colonization, the manner in which things were re-organised during French occupation and the current governance model, including the legacy of colonial rule.
- **Demography**: the ethnicity, religion, languages, age and education of the Nigerien population.
- **Key Indicators**: figures about the geographic, demographic and economic situation of the country which serve as indicators that can be compared with other countries.

Geography

Niger is a vast country in West Africa, situated between Algeria and Libya (to the north), Chad (to the east), Nigeria and Benin (to the south), and Burkina Faso and Mali (to the west). The capital city is Niamey. It is the sixth largest African nation, with a surface area of 1 267 000 km². The Sahel and Sahara cover 80% of this territory, with just a small band of more fertile terrain at the south of the country. Global warming has seen the desert expanding at the rate of 200,000 hectares per year. Access to water is thus a major issue for the vast majority of the population, and the government is preoccupied with reforestation initiatives. The economy is centred around subsistence agriculture (40% of the GDP), which makes it highly susceptible to the impacts of global warming, as well as some exportation of raw materials including uranium ore and oil.

Zinder is the second largest city in Niger, situated at a distance of 861km to the east of the capital Niamey and just 125km from the Niger/Nigeria border. Its geographical position at the crossroads of the main east-west route through Niger and the north-south route from Agadez to Kano has made it an established trade point between North and Sub-Saharan Africa. Prior to colonization, Zinder was an important Islamic centre for the Sultanates of Damagaram and Bornu – a place where people of learning gathered – and it was initially designated capital of Niger by the French colonizing forces for a brief time between 1922-1926. Zinder's close proximity to Nigeria is repeatedly cited by those in the documentary as a source of concern. This perception is echoed by members of the Zinder Brain Trust (Part 3) who point out that Boko Haram forces are already present in the Diffa region, which is much closer to Zinder than the capital (Diffa is just 468km from Zinder). Zinder has significant infrastructure including a thermo-electric power station, a University, and an airport. The city is divided into five main districts (below right). Within the second district, Mirriah, is a town that is extremely poor: Kara Kara.



Kara-Kara was historically the quarter for outcasts. In the 1950s those with leprosy were sent there, ostensibly to be cured so that they could then be reintegrated into their home towns. In practice this did not occur. Those who were sent there remained and were subsequently joined by others who had also been rejected by society - the blind, the poor the handicapped. This population has since been overlooked by the authorities in the development of infrastructure. Access to basics such as running water, electricity, education, health-care have not been provided to this community. This has created a vicious circle, where those who were already outcast have become further marginalized due to illiteracy, poor hygiene and poor health. In the absence of access to education, training or employment opportunities, residents of Kara-Kara have developed their own survival strategies, certain of which contravene laws. This has resulted in high levels of incarceration and further entrenched the community's isolation by giving it a reputation for crime.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/LINKS

- Aicha Macky video 'Call to Action': <https://youtu.be/CAFnjnULBxc>
- World Bank country overview: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/niger>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In the video 'Call to Action' (above). Aicha Macky recalls growing up in Zinder and fearing to socialize with the inhabitants of Kara-Kara. Discuss marginalized communities in your own area and think about the 'technology of marginalization' and the ways you might overcome this at a personal level.
2. What would your own life be like if you had been born in Kara-Kara? What activities do you enjoy today that would not be possible for you? What concrete actions could you take to 'close the gap' between your life as a Kara-Kara resident and the lifestyle you currently enjoy?
3. Several individuals in the film refer to Nigeria as a source of problems for the inhabitants of Zinder. Why might this be (consider similarities and differences between the two countries and also the geographical situation of Kara-Kara – its distance from the capital of Niamey and from infrastructure – roads, schools, water, electricity, hospitals - and its relative proximity to Nigeria)?

ACTIVITIES

- A. Download or draw a map of your own region. Using government statistics, identify those areas where the rates of employment, education and income are lowest.
- B. Create an info-graphic (can be a poster, or a blog, web-page or video) to highlight initiatives exist in these areas to counter the potential for marginalization. Where such initiatives are not in place, write to your local member of parliament arguing why such resources are necessary.

History and Politics

The country that is today known as Niger is relatively young. Prior to colonization, this part of the world had different borders, languages and customs and a very different political organisation. In order to understand the contemporary context, it is important to be aware of this history and of the legacy of colonization.

Pre-colonial period:

The country we now call Niger was an important site of trans-Saharan trade for many centuries. From as early as 5th century BC, Tuaregs from the north would transport goods on camels through the region and there was a high level of intermixing between sub-Saharan African and north-African populations. The Arab invasion of North Africa in the 7th century increased migration to the south and also saw the spread of Islam as a religion. Numerous empires and kingdoms co-existed in the Sahel region during the pre-colonial period (not always peacefully), including the Mail Empire (1200-1400s); Songhai Empire (1000s-1591); Sultanate of Air (1400s – 1906); Kanem-Bornu Empire (700s-1700s); Hausa states and various smaller kingdoms (1400s-1800s). The demographics of Niger today reflect this cultural diversity (see 'demography'). Between 1730-1740, a breakaway group of the Kanem Empire founded by the Sultanate of Damagaram congregated around the town of Zinder, which thus became a thriving religious, cultural, intellectual and political centre. Communities at the time were organized according to a social hierarchy that was largely determined by birthright: certain groups of the population being considered nobles and others, by birth, being considered subservient and ascribed to the role of servant or slave. Historian Camille Lefebvre has detailed the manner in which this social inequity created an environment of social unrest that was subsequently exploited by the French military.

French colonization/occupation:

In the late 19th Century, a number of European nations embarked upon aggressive Empire-building campaigns which entailed invading and occupying distant foreign territories. Justification for these military attacks was framed in explicitly racist terms: the natural expansion of the supposedly superior Occidental civilization. In reality, this was a thinly disguised argument for a land and resources grab. The 'Scramble for Africa' as it has since been termed, consisted of the systematic annexation, division and colonization of most of Africa by seven Western European countries. To appease rivalry and avoid military tensions between themselves, these countries convened an international 'diplomatic' gathering – The Berlin Conference of 1884 – at which they negotiated how Africa would be partitioned and divided between them. French-British diplomatic records indicate that through this process, Zinder and Agadez were theoretically attributed to the 'zone of French influence'. From today's historical standpoint, it is alarming that a process of hostile invasion was legitimized by ostensibly 'diplomatic' process. The effects of the Berlin Conference were dramatic: Whilst in 1870, 10 percent of Africa was under European control, by 1914 this had increased to 90% of Africa.

The French army invaded the Sahara and Sahel regions in 1890. The invasion was explained to the French population as the necessary ousting of a repressive regime – an honourable cause in the name of freedom. Historical texts refer to the French military as being 'liberating forces' who 'conquered' tyrannical tribal chiefs. This version of history has since been revisited and revised by contemporary historians including Camille Lefebvre (CNRS) whose book *Des pays au crépuscule* details the manner in which France, motivated by vested interests, forcefully deposed existing governments. She underlines that the process was one of occupation rather than liberation: 'It was after all a hostile foreign army – as it happened French – which forcibly took control of the territory and of existing nation-states in order to impose its own laws' (p12).

Occupation of the area between Lake Chad and the Niger River began in 1898. Thence ensued many years of military campaigns and colonial wars (1898-1916) culminating in the 'colonisation' of both Zinder and also Agadez in the Sahara (today also part of Niger). Although the arsenal of French military was far more powerful than that available to Sahelians and Saharans at the time, it is also true that the French military were far outnumbered by the population of Zinder (80 French officers and 600 soldiers compared to 15,000-20,000 inhabitants). It has accordingly been suggested that colonization was facilitated by the fact that occupying forces were able to exploit social inequities in the existing Sahal and Saharien societal structures. Lefebvre suggests that it was the concordance of three factors which created the conditions of possibility for French colonization of Niger:

- a) Technical superiority of the French arsenal;
- b) Strategic use by occupying forces of 'legitimizing' discourse which persuaded the population that their own culture and languages were valued and would be perpetuated under colonial rule (80% of French soldiers were of African origin and shared cultural, linguistic and religious practices of the population)
- c) The collaboration of low-ranked individuals within the existing Sahal/Saharian political structures who were actively seeking to transcend the traditional social hierarchies and assisted the French in an effort to position themselves more favourably within a new regime.

Colonisation entailed the reorganizing of four distinct areas of the pre-colonial era into a single nation with artificially imposed borders. Despite continued resistance and fighting for two decades, Niger was declared a French colony on 13 October 1922. Notwithstanding the borders of Niger continued to undergo 'territorial adjustment' right up until the 1930s. Colonisation entailed the imposition of European ways of life upon the African population: French governance, language, education systems and cultural morés replaced local traditions, which were by default a threat to the colonial enterprise.

France's preoccupation with colonial power was somewhat subdued by the eruption of WWII, during which France itself was invaded and occupied by Nazi Germany. Following the war, General Charles de Gaulle declared that the French colonial empire would be replaced with a less formal 'French Union'. The French Union lasted from 1946-1958 and provided colonial populations with a hybrid form of French citizenship which also recognized their right to participate in the politics of their own territory. During this period the Nigerien Progressive Party was formed. In 1956 there was a further loosening of French control with the passing of the Overseas Reform Act and then, following the establishment of the Fifth French Republic, Niger became an 'autonomous state' within the French Community. Soon after, the Nigerien government decided to leave the French Community.

Post-Colonisation

The Republic of Niger was declared independent on 3 August 1960. Over the ensuing years, the Nigerien leadership found itself at the nexus of a number of competing forces which undermined political stability:

1. National borders had been arbitrarily imposed by European colonisers and did not correlate to earlier boundaries in the region that had been negotiated (and fought for) by local populations over preceding decades, thereby creating:
 - a) little sense of national identity/cohesion
 - b) regional tensions both within the country (eg the Diffa region had more established trade and transport links with Chad and Nigeria than it did with areas within Niger) and also outside the country (violence occurring in neighbouring countries destabilising the region).
2. The new nation was populated by a multitude of ethnicities with distinct languages and cultural practices (in this respect Islam was a federating force)
3. The new nation had little public infrastructure and no established governance institutions/systems to ensure political accountability
4. Large swathes of the population were living in poverty

There was another significant factor that undermined the autonomy of this nascent democracy: the ongoing political involvement of the former colonial power. Although France had agreed to Nigerien independence, it retained a strong hand in establishing the new leadership. Those leaders thus remained highly susceptible to French influence (with an implied threat of being deposed should they not comply with the expectations of the French government). This external pressure was particularly apparent with respect to Niger's natural resources, with various Nigerien Presidents facing political interference after attempting to renegotiate the proportion of benefits returning to Niger from the exploitation of uranium. This was notably the case of Presidents Diouri and Tandja, both of whom were deposed by military coup after seeking to renegotiate the price of uranium.

In view of these multifarious challenges, it is unsurprising that Niger has experienced a high degree of political volatility since independence. Since independence there have been ten regimes, including three military-led coups d'état and six different Constitutions. Only in recent years has the situation stabilised, with the last two Presidents having each been democratically elected for two terms (10 years). The World Bank has pointed out that political instability has contributed significantly to poverty in the country by 'weakening governance, discouraging private investments, and preventing the long-term horizon needed for proper planning, implementing and following-up of successful economic reforms' (refer additional resources).

Indeed, despite having recorded an impressive level of economic growth for the past several years, Niger continues to rank at the bottom of the UNHDI (refer 'Key Indicators'). As other commentators have noted, this is also directly linked to Niger's continuing high rate of population growth. Following his election in 2021, Nigerien President Mohamed Bazoum made explicit commitments to youth and education, in particular the schooling of girls as part of a concerted strategy to contain population growth. The effects are yet to be seen.

HEAD OF STATE	YEARS	KEY POINTS
HAMANI DIORI	1960-1974	Appointed not elected (single party in Niger) Permitted French uranium mining Built national identity Unified country geographically (eg road link to Diffa) Began establishing infrastructure, public services Sought revaluation of benefits to Niger from uranium Deposed by military coup
SEYNI KOUNTCHE	1974-1987	Military dictatorship Committed to building nation state Commitment to addressing population's poverty Negotiated better deal with French over uranium Pro-active international diplomacy Repressive secret police Died in office
ALI SAIBOU	1987-1993	Established single legal political party Single candidate, thus 'elected' National Conference of 1991 dismantles one party rule
MAHAMANE OUSMANE	1993-1996	First democratically elected leader Attained leadership through strategic party coalition Majority of population preferred opposition (44%) Coalition ideologically mismatched, country ungovernable Deposed by military coup
IBRAHIM BARE MAÏNASSARA	1996-1999	Assassinated
DAOUDA MALAM WANKE	1999	Held power for less than one year (Apr-Dec 1999)
MAMADOU TANDJA	1999-2010	Link to rurality Held Ministers accountable Refused multinationals Began petrol production Sought to extend his term by modifying constitution Deposed by military coup
SALA DJIBOU	2010-2011	
MAHAMADOU ISSOUFOU	2011-2021	Few recorded achievements Country rich but wealth not shared Accusations of abuse of power
MOHAMED BAZOUM	2021-	Incumbent Democratically elected

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/LINKS

- Book : 'Des pays au crépuscule : Le moment de l'occupation coloniale (Sahara-Sahel) by Camille Lefebvre (Fayard, 2021).
- Article: 'Zinder : a historical context' by Prof Seyni Moumouni
- Interview: '60 Ans d'indépendance' in *Politique* : <https://www.nigerdiaspora.com/index.php/32-politique-niger/12046-60-ans-d-independance-neuf-9-presidents-de-la-republique-quels-heritages-regard-croise-de-deux-historiens-et-politologues>
- Video: 'The Phenomenon of Marginalisation': https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yxm2P_fe9ho
- Podcast: 'Sahel et Sahara: une entreprise française' avec Camille Lefebvre du CNRS (France Culture) : <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/podcasts/concordance-des-temps/sahel-et-sahara-une-entreprise-francaise-0-7388960>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between 'colonisation' and 'invasion'? What are some of the presuppositions that underpin this distinction?
2. Look up the meaning of 'terra nullius' and debate the validity of this concept.
3. Military intervention by one nation beyond its own national borders is necessarily contentious. Under what circumstances, if ever, do you think such action would be justified? Give historical examples.
4. Can you think of other contexts in which Western nations have led military campaigns against other nations on the grounds of overthrowing tyranny and 'liberating' the population? Discuss.

ACTIVITY

War of Words: It is widely recognised that history is not a stable set of objective facts but rather is determined by who does the telling - the words chosen to describe various actions can give them a positive or a negative connotation and influence the reader's perception of past events. Historian Camille Lefebvre underlines the fact that French historical accounts of the colonisation of Niger employ terms such as 'conquest' of the region, as opposed to 'invasion' or 'occupation' and that arguments such as 'liberation from tyranny' were used rather than 'declaration of war'. In her book she goes further, encouraging the student of history to interrogate their own choice of words at a more basic level (to replace the term 'tribe' with 'society' and the term 'dialect' with 'language' for example) and thereby to decentre the colonial gaze. Find two contrasting accounts of this period of Sahelian history on the public record. Identify and compare the adjectives employed to describe historical acts and use these to analyse and explain how discourse impacts the collective memory of historical events (Refer to pp 14-15 of Lefebvre 2021).

Demography

At the time of independence in 1960, the population of Niger was roughly 4 million. By 2000 it had multiplied to 24 million, an exponential growth which can be attributed to the high fecundity rate (refer 'Key Statistics'). The ethnic and linguistic diversity of the population reflects the many distinct cultures that were living side by side in this region prior to colonization - before European nations imposed a 'national' border around the geographical area now known as Niger. As a consequence, Niger currently has over ten formally recognised national languages. Federating factors within the society include the Hausa language – spoken by a greater proportion of the population that the 'official language' of French - and the Muslim religion, practiced by 99% of the population.

Ethnicities :

- Hausa (54.1%) who live in the Centre and East of the country;
- Zarma and Songhay (21.1 %) who reside in the West;
- Tuareg (9.9 %);
- Fulani (9.2 %) spread throughout the territory with a concentration in the region of Tillabéri;
- Kanuri (4.6 %) and Budumas in the far East of the country;
- Tubu (0.4 %);
- Arab (0.4 %), mainly in the North of the country and in the capital;
- Gurma (0.3 %) in the South-West;

Languages : Since colonization, the official language is French. This means it is the language of the Administration and that the country is a member of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie. However, in practice it is really only spoken as a second language by those few who have received a formal Western education. The two most widely spoken languages are actually Hausa and Zarma-Songhay and the ten formally recognized national languages of the population are (in alphabetical order): Arabic, Buduma, Fulfulde, Gourmanchéma, Hausa Kanuri, Zarma, Songhay, Tamasheq, Tassawaq and Tebu.

Religion : Niger is officially a secular country and the Constitution guarantees separation of state and religion and protects religious freedom. Notwithstanding, the vast majority of the population identifies as Muslim (99.3%), with the other main religions being Christianity and Animism.

The vast majority of the Nigerien population is very young: 70% of the population aged under 25 years; 50% aged under 14 years. These youth of today will determine Niger's destiny tomorrow. Of significant concern then, is the fact that just 35% of those aged 15 years and over are literate.

With such an inclement outlook, many young people have lost hope. A recent study by UNICEF/USAID which solicited the views of youth about their dreams for the future found that by and large the youth of Niger have lost hope and 'have no dreams'. The privileged few may attend University with the aspiration of securing one of the highly prized positions in the government bureaucracy and/or with the intention of emigrating. Those without access to education - residents of communities such as Kara-Kara for example - are left to their own devices to survive by whatever means possible.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/LINKS

- UNESCO educational statistics: <http://uis.unesco.org/fr/country/ne>
- World Atlas – Niger: <https://www.worldatlas.com/search?q=niger>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Niger is a multicultural nation, constituted of many different ethnic groups. What is the ethnic make-up of your own country?
2. Discuss the concept of 'national identity'. To what extent do you think it is important for a population to share language and cultural practices? Can national unity be reconciled with cultural diversity?
3. What of those from cultures other than the dominant culture? Discuss the pros and cons of assimilation/integration versus 'multiculturalism'.
4. Like France, Niger is ostensibly a secular state with politics and religion separated. In practice, religion can be seen to impact politics and society in many subtle ways in both countries. Discuss some of the ways in which the dominant religion in both France and Niger impacts the population. You may wish to complete this section in conjunction with the video on Female Education in Part 3.

ACTIVITIES

Interview those in your group about their 'hopes and dreams' for the future: whether they plan to study or to work; where and what? Ask them about how they plan to achieve these goals, what steps they will take and what assistance they will need.

Key Indicators

Niger is a vast country with a surface area of 1 267 000km². Just 20% of that surface is arable land, with the rest being desert. Global warming has seen desertification increase at the rate of 200,000 hectares/year, an alarming statistic for an economy that is reliant on subsistence agriculture.

Over the 40 years from 1960 to 2000 the population of Niger grew from 4 million to 24 million (the fastest rate of growth in the world). This continues to increase exponentially, with the current population being 25,131,000. The vast majority of young women (75%) are married prior to 18 years of age and the fecundity rate of 7.2 children per women. These two factors indicate that Nigerien population growth is likely to continue.

Shrinking areas of arable land combined with the continuing increase in population has contributed to a situation where, despite impressive economic growth (annual average of 5.8% of Niger's GDP), 41% of the Nigerien population lives in extreme poverty. Indeed Niger ranks very last on the UN Human Development Index.

The Human Development Index (HDI), is a metric compiled by the United Nations and used to quantify a country's "average achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living."

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX (HDI)

Human Development Index value is determined by combining a country's scores in a wide-ranging assortment of indicators including life expectancy, literacy rate, rural populations' access to electricity, GDP per capita, exports and imports, homicide rate, multidimensional poverty index, income inequality, internet availability, and many more. These indicators are compiled into a single number between 0 and 1.0, with 1.0 being the highest possible human development. HDI is divided into four tiers: very high human development (0.8-1.0), high human development (0.7-0.79), medium human development (0.55-.70), and low human development (below 0.55).

In an attempt to address the alarming levels of poverty, the government in 2022 established a Ministry for Population. In an official communiqué, the government identifies youth as a key priority. Specifically, President Bazouma is targeting the education of girls as a way of reducing the fecundity rate.

INDICATORS**Niger**

Country Surface Area	1,267,000 km ²
Population (UN 2021)	25 131 000
Population Growth Rate (UN 2021)	3.8% per annum (fastest in world)
Population by Gender (UN 2021)	Approximately 50/50 (101.2 males per 100 females)
Population by Age (UNESCO 2020)	70% aged 25 years or younger 50% aged 14years or younger
Life Expectancy at Birth (UN 2021)	Females: 63 years Males: 60.7 years
Female marriage age (UNICEF 2019)	75% before 18 years (highest in world) 25% before 15 years
Fecundity (UNICEF 2019)	7.2 children/woman
Literacy (UNESCO 2020)	35% (15 years and over)
Secondary Education Enrolment (UN 2021)	25% of the eligible population (20.7 females/27.7 males)
GDP annual growth rate (UN 2021)	5.8%
GDP per capita (World Bank 2019)	\$488
Human Development Index (UNDP 2019)	189/189 (very last)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/LINKS

- UNHDR
- UNICEF
- UNESCO
- UN Statistics Service: unstats.un.org
- World Bank
- Govt Communiqué re girls.../ Ministry for population communication (Niger)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Niger actually has a relatively high rate of economic growth compared to other countries. How does one explain the high level of poverty? What does this suggest about 'economic growth' as an indicator?
2. How do these statistics compare with the indicators for your own country?
3. How do you explain the difference? How might this impact the life of individuals?
4. Despite dire poverty, population growth is high. How can this be explained? What factors might contribute to the extremely high rates of population growth?

ACTIVITIES

Population growth has been cited as one of the key factors contributing to poverty in Niger. In an attempt to address this, the Nigerien government has announced an initiative designed to encourage young girls to remain in school (to reduce early marriage and thereby reduce the fecundity rate). Read the Government Communiqué on this issue and then create a communications campaign that would address all relevant stakeholders and convince them of the need for young women to complete secondary school.

PART 3 : CHALLENGES FACING KARA KARA

One of the unique aspects of this film is that it brings a human face to those who are ordinarily marginalized, outcast, considered undesirable or dangerous: gang members, prisoners and prostitutes are given an opportunity to tell their story. In listening to their accounts, it immediately becomes apparent that their involvement in criminal activities is closely linked to the absence of opportunity. Lack of access to education, employment, key infrastructure and denial even of the basic right to be a registered citizen all point to social injustices which leave those affected with few options for survival. In this section we explore these issues in greater depth through a series of interviews with members of the 'Zinder Brain Trust'. The Brain Trust is a circle of experts from Niger who have been assembled specifically to help us reflect upon issues raised by the film. Each one of the themes treated in this section of the Guide has an accompanying audiovisual capsule which intercuts an interview with relevant extracts from the film. Each audiovisual capsule is 10minutes long and can be screened as a stand-alone learning tool to animate a debate on that theme. The idea is that within a one hour class or group session, one or two themes can be treated, even if the whole film has not been seen by everyone. These are the first seven and we will add to these progressively, as new material becomes available.

- [Infrastructure \(Moumouni\)](#)
- [Youth and Social Justice \(Jhonel\)](#)
- [Roots of Violence and Extremism \(Ari\)](#)
- [Civil Rights and Incarceration \(Yahaya\)](#)
- [Role and Status of Women \(Nourrath\)](#)
- [The Phenomenon of Marginalisation \(Tidjani\)](#)
- [A Ray of Hope \(Moumouni\)](#)



Mahaman TIDJANI ALOU est titulaire d'un doctorat en science politique et d'une Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches de l'Université Montesquieu Bordeaux IV en France. Il est agrégé des Facultés de Droit et de Sciences Politiques à l'Université Abdou Moumouni de Niamey où il a assuré les fonctions de Doyen de la Faculté des Sciences Économiques et Juridiques (2010-2017). Il est chercheur au Laboratoire d'Études et de Recherches sur les Dynamiques Sociales et le Développement Local (LASDEL) de Niamey. Il a enseigné dans plusieurs universités européennes et participe à des programmes de recherche internationaux. Ses publications touchent aux questions de relations internationales, à la dynamique de l'État, aux politiques publiques, la construction de la société civile et à la gouvernance démocratique.



Seyni MOUMOUNI est directeur de Recherche en Civilisation et Histoire des Idées Islamiques. Chercheur à l'Institut de Recherches en Sciences Humaines (I.R.S.H) de l'Université Abdou Moumouni (Niamey – Niger); Directeur de l'Institut de Recherches en Sciences Humaines (2014–2021). Directeur du Laboratoire de Recherche: Langue et Civilisation arabo-musulmanes (LICA). Membre correspondant de la Sous-commission « Éducation et Recherche » de l'UNESCO ; membre affilié de l'Union Académique Internationale (U.A.I) ; Il est auteur de plusieurs publications sur les manuscrits anciens subsahariens, l'Islam et la radicalisation à l'extrémisme violent.



Enseignant-chercheur à l'Université Abdou Moumouni de Niamey, **Issoufou YAHAYA** est aussi consultant indépendant et analyste politique. Diplômé de l'Académie Internationale de Police de l'ILEA (Roswell Nouveau-Mexique, Etats-Unis), de l'Institut des Hautes Etudes de la Défense Nationale (Paris, France) et de l'Ecole de Maintien de la Paix – Alioune Blondin BEYE (Bamako MALI). Il enseigne entre autres, les modules ci-après : Géopolitique des crises, Géopolitique et Relations internationales, Prévention, gestion, sortie des conflits et consolidation de la paix, Histoire militaire. Plus de 50 conférences et Communications et une trentaine de publications scientifiques.



Nourratou Oumarou Hega (Nourrath la Deboslam) a intégré dès son jeune âge le milieu culturel nigérien via la danse et le cinéma. Passionnée par l'art, elle se laisse séduire par les écrits et décide de s'aventurer dans le Slam en 2015 pour porter haut les voix et les maux des femmes nigériennes et africaines. Au premier rang du Slam féminin au Niger, Nourrath fait partie de ces jeunes filles qui ont su se frayer un chemin dans un milieu fortement peuplé par des hommes. Son objectif : encourager les jeunes filles à s'intéresser à la littérature, et au slam. Elle est aussi fer de lance de la défense des causes de toutes les femmes, qui sont victimes de discrimination ou de violence. Membre du collectif des jeunes slameurs nigériens *Plume du Sahel* et le collectif SO'Niger.



Passionné par les mots depuis son jeune âge, **Hamani Kassoum Himou (Jhonel)** commence à déclamer des textes à l'adolescence, prenant exemple sur les griots et conteurs nigériens. A travers les mots, il s'exprime, dit ce qui es-tu, transforme frustrations en créations, sans savoir que ce mode d'expression s'appelait du slam et, chemin faisant cet exutoire se transforme en passion. Enchaînait les concerts compilations et collaborations au Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Togo, New-York, Canada, Burkina, il fut approché par le DJ canadien Ghislain Poirier, à la clé, un titre : Ignadjossi Feat. Jhonel sur la compilation « No More Blood », sur le label Ninja Tune. Il est directeur du Festival FISH Goni.



Tila Boulama Mamadou Ari Koutalé est consultant en sécurité avec un focus sur les questions de processus de Démobilisation, Désarmement et de Réintégration (DDR). Diplômé en Relations Internationales option Etudes de Sécurité, Résolution des Conflits et Politiques de Paix, et aussi, en criminalité transnationales et des Droits de l'Homme.

Infrastructure



WATCH THE AUDIOVISUAL CAPSULE: <https://youtu.be/OsjAi0MzOY/>

The vast majority of Nigeriens (89% of the population) live in a rural context, without access to urban infrastructure, meaning that certain 'essential' commodities – running water, electricity, telecommunications and public services – are simply not accessible to many citizens. Roads are few and unreliable and it is not uncommon for people to travel in carts drawn by livestock. 'Local' schools may be at a vast distance from places of residence, and medical treatment may not be readily available. As a consequence, three out of every 5 Nigeriens live in poverty and 41% are deemed to live in 'extreme poverty', notably those in rural areas. In a recent report, 'Pathways to Sustainable Growth in Niger' the World Bank has cited 'low human capital (health and education)' as one of the key reasons for the high levels of poverty in Niger (p20).

Access to health and education are an infrastructure and urban planning issue. Whilst primary schools exist within walking distance of most communities, colleges are organized at a regional level, at a significant distance from most small villages. In a country where roads are so poorly maintained that short distances take an inordinate amount of time, it is not practicable for students to make the journey to and from college daily. Unsurprisingly then, the literacy rate for Niger overall is just 31.5%. In other words, almost 70% of the Nigerien population has not been taught to read and write. It can be assumed that this figure is even higher in Kara-Kara. Such a high level of illiteracy obviously has implications for the smooth functioning of a democracy. As Professor Moumouni points out in this video, an uneducated population can neither govern effectively nor be governed. The transformation of this dire outlook requires investment and urban planning over the long-term in order that infrastructure is adapted to the needs of the predominantly rural population.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/LINKS

- UNDP Report re Access to Water and Sanitation: <https://hdr.undp.org/content/closing-equity-gap-water-and-sanitation-data-can-help-us-ensure-no-one-left-behind>
- UNICEF Report 'Building Resilience': <https://www.unicef.org/niger/reports/building-community-resilience-niger>
- World Bank 'Pathways to Sustainable Growth in Niger': <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099045304062243916/pdf/P17478901e97cb006082090ad76fafb500d.pdf>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Urbanisation:

1. Professor Moumouni underlines the lack of infrastructure in rural communities as being a key problem for Niger. To what specifically is he referring? What types of infrastructure would benefit the residents of Kara-Kara?
2. What is 'adapted infrastructure'? Provide examples that would permit inhabitants of rural zones to live in harmony with nature and also carry out their work.
3. In other parts of the world, the opposite problem exists – where over-development and 'over-urbanisation' has created a new series of problems – both environmental and societal. What are some of these problems?
4. How might the pitfalls of over-urbanisation be avoided in the urban planning of Zinder (so that one does not simply recreate the ghettos of big cities)?

Democracy:

5. Professor Moumouni makes the link between education/literacy and a functioning democracy. What evidence can we see of this in the film?
6. Can you think of examples in your own society where ignorance and/or the inability to critically assess information may interfere with the proper functioning of democracy?
7. Professor Moumouni makes reference to the 'purchase of consciences'. What does he mean? In what way might this threaten democracy? How might this represent an obstacle to the modernization of Niger?

EXTENDED RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Essay questions: Each of the following questions could be undertaken either as an oral presentation to the group/class, or as a written essay question.

- A. Professor Moumouni refers to Niger as 'a society in transition'. What does he mean? Explain using examples from the film and the interview, with specific reference to how Niger is negotiating the tension between rurality and modernity. What are the indicators of this momentum? Is it working? Why? Why not? What measures need to be taken to improve this transition and improve outcomes for the population?
- B. What does the term 'decentralisation' mean? To what degree would decentralisation help the transition to a modern urban society? What are some of the obstacles to such a transition, mentioned by Professor Moumouni. which may undermine this strategy?
- C. Professor Moumouni speaks of a country in transition between rurality and modernity. What are the characteristics of these two types of society? What are some advantages and disadvantages of urbanisation?
- D. The World Bank has cited 'low human capital (health and education)' as one of the key reasons for the high levels of poverty in Niger (p20). Why would there be such a close correlation between education/health and poverty?

Activity:

- E. 'A Day in the Life of...' Using data available online, identify the location of the high schools in Zinder on the map. Imagine you are a 13 year old living in Kara-Kara and have no access transport. Calculate your daily route to and from school.
- F. Create a short video destined for Nigerien youth which explains in a simple and clear manner: a) the political system in Niger, b) why it is important to vote and c) the factors that are worth taking into consideration when deciding how to cast one's vote. Send this to us for uploading to social media and/or use the hashtags #zinderfilm #wallofhope

Youth and Social Justice



WATCH THE AUDIOVISUAL CAPSULE: <https://youtu.be/4TmEqwExIrw/>

In this film, Aicha has chosen to focus on youth, in part because it was young delinquents who were active in the riots that were the catalyst for the making of the film. Her choice also makes sense from a broader perspective because the majority of the Nigerien population (70%) is aged under 25 years and, by default, the future of the country depends upon them.

The youth of Niger face huge challenges but the situation is particularly extreme in Kara-Kara, a community that has been stigmatized and ostracized. This is evident in the scene where Aicha, who grew up in Zinder, can be heard asking Siniya – a member of the Hitler gang – to explain why, given that they both grew up in Zinder, their lives were so different; what he thinks made the difference between the two of them. He responds, without a moment's hesitation, 'education'. This interaction underlines the issue of social exclusion which is at the heart of the problems in Kara Kara. Aicha had grown up in a different district of Zinder and had access to education, whereas he, coming from the exclusion zone - the former leper colony, now reputed for crime - did not. As a consequence, he now faces further exclusion from the opportunities that education and training would provide.

The recently elected President of Niger has made youth a priority on his political agenda. This commitment to youth may be altruistic but it is also pragmatic. If urgent action is not taken to address the needs of youth today, the population will face even greater challenges tomorrow. Furthermore, if those who are disenfranchised – the youth on the margins – are not provided with opportunity, the security situation is likely to deteriorate. Members of the Brain Trust have referred to this situation as a time-bomb waiting to explode. In this video slam-poet, Jhonet, discusses the social justice and equity challenges facing the youth of Kara-Kara.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/LINKS

- Jhonel's slam 'Kara-Kara': <https://vimeo.com/701314053>
- Minister's announcement re commitment to youth
- Le Debat Africain - l'insécurité au Niger vue par la jeunesse (RFI): <https://youtu.be/VefTuqB61h4>
- UNICEF: Hopes and Fears: <https://www.unicef.org/niger/reports/hopes-and-fears>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jhonel makes the point that whilst the situation of the youth in Kara-Kara has similarities with youth elsewhere in the world there are also significant differences which further exacerbate their situation. Discuss some of these similarities and differences.
2. An example of injustice cited above is unequal access to education. There are further references to this unequal opportunity in the film e.g. when Siniya says that residents of Kara Kara must falsify their address in order to receive medical care, or when Salissou Cikara, in a speech to his fellow prisoners says: "This prison was built for us, for our brother and our cousins" and at another point: 'They round us up because we are from Kara-Kara'. What other examples of social injustice exist within the film. Discuss examples of discrimination and inequity in your own community.

EXTENDED RESEARCH PROJECTS

- A. In August 2021, a forum bringing together youth, government, community organisations, the private sector and a range of NGO's was organized in Niamey. The focus was on 'Independence of young people, employment opportunities, funding and partnerships' and the aim was to come up with new initiatives and collaborations to address the multiple challenges confronting the youth of this country. Watch the youth forum video and list all the concrete suggestions proposed by the panel. Debate the relative merits of each of these as a group.
- B. Watch Jhonel's slam 'Kara-Kara' (link above) then write a slam poem of your own about a marginalized district or population close to your own home. Perform and/or record yourself. Send your recording to us for uploading to our social media accounts. Use the hashtag #zinderfilm

The Roots of Extremism



WATCH AUDIOVISUAL CAPSULE: [https://youtu.be/ HTZYTmq31s/](https://youtu.be/HTZYTmq31s/)

In the Director's Statement, Aicha Macky mentions that the appearance of a Boko Haram flag at the 2015 Zinder riots was one of the factors that alarmed her and motivated her to make the film. Although the town of Zinder has not been occupied by Boko Haram forces, there is a real concern that it could become a recruitment ground – particularly districts such as Kara-Kara where youth without hope and without legal livelihoods might be susceptible to the proposition of food, shelter and a sense of purpose. This is indeed what has occurred in the neighbouring region of Diffa, just 470kms to the east of Zinder on the Nigerian border, so the threat is real.

This possibility is evoked in certain scenes in the film, such as when an expert is interviewed on the local radio station following the seizure of illegal carburant, or when the barber who is shaving Siniya explains the unfairness with which residents of Kara-Kara are treated by the police force – innocent people being rounded up like cattle for crimes they didn't commit – and concludes with the dire words : 'Je prie dieu pour qu'il fasse venir Boko Haram ici' ('I pray that God will bring Boko Haram here'). On the other hand, there are contrasting scenes which would seem to suggest that the local community, including gang members are only too aware of the horrendous crimes of Boko Haram and do not want them close. For instance, when Siniya and gang members watch a lynching and stoning by Boko Haram on their phones, they expressing disgust and dismay rather than admiration.

Understanding the roots of violence, whether it be gangs or radical groups was Aicha's purpose. What emerged was that the violence does not have its roots in religion (as is so often portrayed in Western media) but rather in socio-economic factors - lack of access to education, lack of training for any skilled jobs, the absence of employment opportunities, the absence of seed funding to support independent initiatives.

These are the issues raised by Brain Trust member Ari Koutalé in this short video. Having worked within a UNICEF centre for Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reinsertion in the Diffa region, he notes that radicalization of youths has little to do with ideology and far more to do with poverty and the total absence of opportunity.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/LINKS

- Le Debat Africain - l'insécurité au Niger vue par la jeunesse (RFI): <https://youtu.be/VefTuqB61h4>
- Agency reports on security – UNICEF

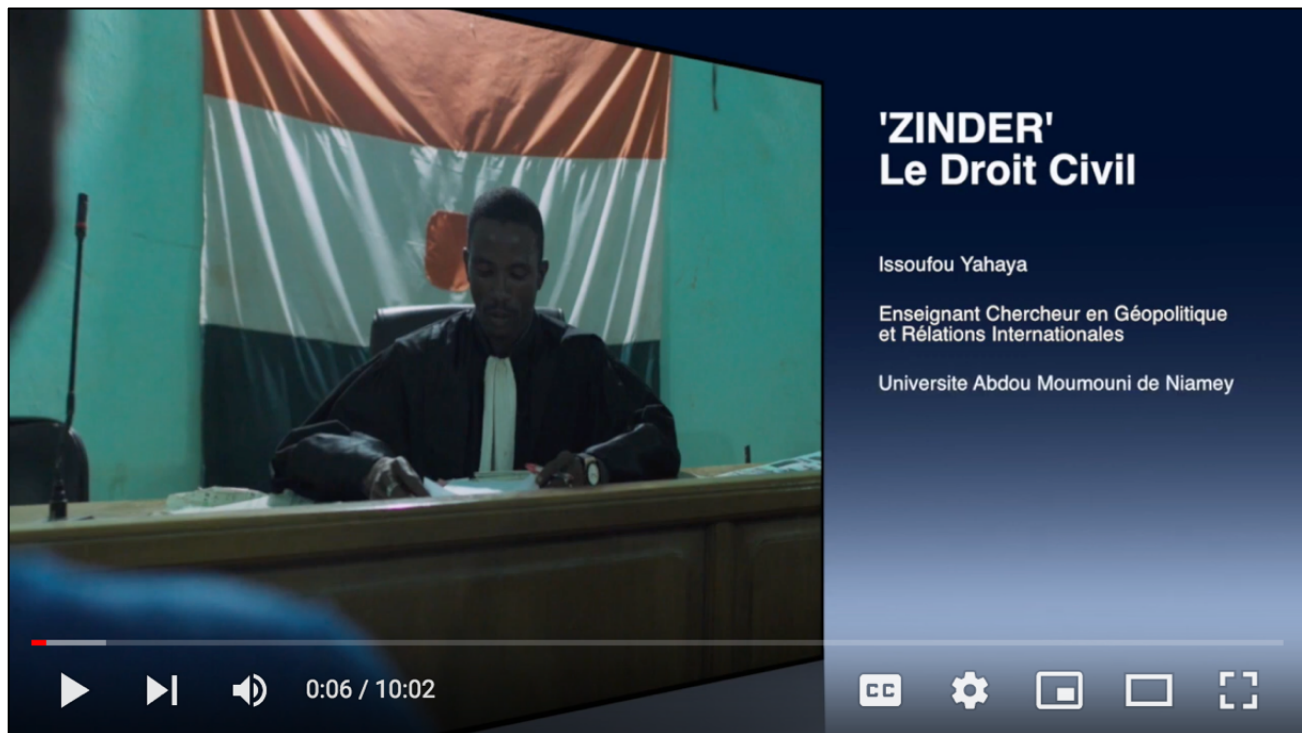
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. At several moments in the film, Siniya suggests that the existence of his gang keeps other malevolent forces at bay, thereby implying that the disbanding of the Hitler gang may result in the appearance of other potentially more dangerous forces. What are your thoughts? Discuss, drawing upon historical examples from elsewhere in the world where the removal of one regime has led to the rise of new and more dangerous groups.
2. In August 2021, a youth forum was held in Niamey at which the issue of youth susceptibility to extremist groups was discussed. Watch the recording above. Certain panelists suggest that it is because young people are starving that they join Boko Haram. The more senior panelists question whether the need for food would really be enough to justify joining a group that murders people. What are your thoughts on this? To what extent do you think that lack of opportunity and the need to survive can be justifiably linked to violence (whether joining fundamentalist group or more generalized violence like robbery or rape as described by Bawoo)?

ACTIVITIES

- A. In the film, the Kara-Kara gang calls itself 'Hitler' on the basis of the misconception that Hitler was a hero in the West. Using your telephone and archival images online, make a short video explaining who Hitler was and his actual role in history. Send it to us for uploading and sharing. #zinderfilm
- B. Siniya and other ex-members of the 'Palais' wish to establish a security company as a way out of crime. He mentions the need for uniforms to do this properly. What other elements will they need to establish their company? Alternatively, if you have a project or enterprise of your own that you are burning to create, undertake the same process of defining the steps that would be necessary to make this project a reality.

Civil Rights and the Carceral System



WATCH THE AUDIOVISUAL CAPSULE: <https://youtu.be/MKLhN-wrk0s>

The inhabitants of Kara-Kara do not have access to a number of basic public services that should rightfully be available to the whole Nigerien population. They do not have local schools, hospitals nor, as Siniya points out, do they have a Register of Births. The symbolic significance of this cannot be overstated: the 'citizens' of Kara-Kara do not have a civic status.

Where basic education is inaccessible, vocational training non-existent and legitimate employment opportunities few, the options for survival are limited. In the film we see that the population of Kara-Kara is literally struggling to subsist. Siniya needs money to pay the medical bills associated with his wife's pregnancy, but does not have a 'job'. And Ramsess, as the eldest child, needs to provide food for her family on a daily basis. Simply ensuring there is enough food to eat is difficult and this is particularly pressing when there are so many mouths to feed (Nigerien women having on average 7.2 children and there being no 'welfare payments').

In this context, 'illicit' activities – smuggling and selling carburant, prostitution - have become a means of survival. It is not a matter of whether the law will be broken, but how this can be done in the least harmful way. Recall the discussion between the young men in the Fada, where one reflects that he may return to robbery as it is better than smuggling carburant. Ramsess, who engages in the latter, explicitly states that she does not want to be smuggling petrol, that she worries about the risks of physical harm and of incarceration, but that s/he continues to do so simply in order to be able to provide for her family.

Unsurprisingly then, vast numbers of the population of Kara-Kara are incarcerated. Indeed, for Kara-Kara residents, prison would seem to be the only public service that is functioning and it is being used as the first port of call, even for minor transgressions. Yet, if the testimonies of Salissou Cikara, Papa Solo and Americain are to be believed, even this system is not working. These young men claim they are being accused of crimes they did not commit, held without trial for lengthy periods, and subject to physical torture. The film thus highlights a vicious cycle – from the initial absence of civil rights, to the desperate response of a disenfranchised population, to the incarceration of that population and finally the disregard of civil and legal rights in the prison context. In this short video, these issues are discussed by Professor Issoufou Yahaya of the University Abdou Moumouni in Niamey whose work as a consultant has been focused on reconciling stakeholders from the justice system (courts), the carceral system (prisons) and the community.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/LINKS

- Links: Capsule Prof Moumouni, Capsule Ari, Capsule Jhonel
- Professor Yahaya links

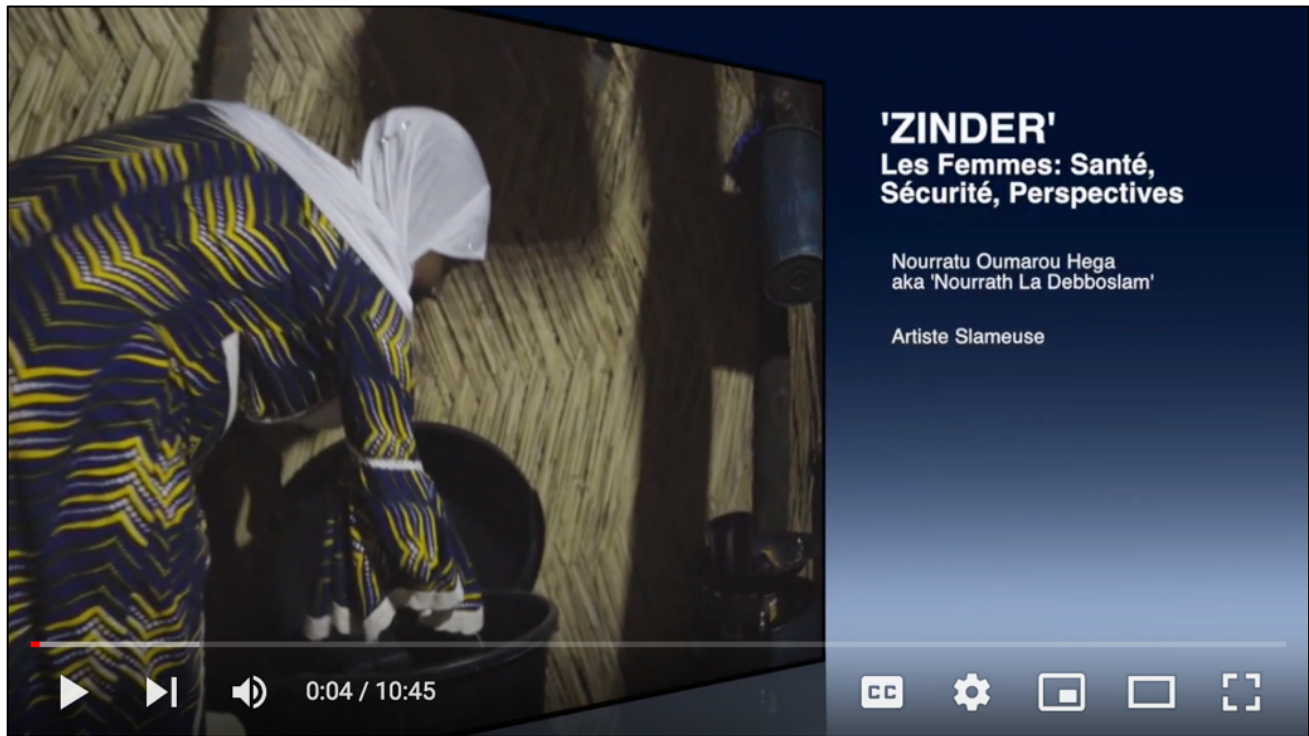
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you think individuals who are incarcerated should have the same rights as the rest of civil society? Why/Why not? Argue your point by using examples from the film.
2. Professor Yahaya evokes the 'presumption of innocence' (innocent until proven guilty) and underlines the fact that the simple fact of being detained as a suspect to an illegal activity should not strip an individual of their rights. Do you believe the presumption of innocence is important? Why/why not?
3. Professor Yahaya makes an important distinction between 'the issue of human rights' and the 'issue of the respect for human rights laws', emphasizing that the latter is the matter of greatest concern in the film. What does this imply? Discuss corruption and the grey zone between legal regulation and its implementation – the significant role played by individuals in interpreting/implementing the law.
4. There appears to be no rehabilitation program in the prison shown in the film. What are your thoughts on this? Is prison a place for punishment or for rehabilitation? (see also activity below)

ACTIVITY

Class debate: Divide into two teams to debate the topic 'The primary function of prison is to punish'. One team will debate for and the other against this argument. Take time to prepare your arguments and consider issues such as protection of the population, rehabilitation/re-education, social justice, civil rights, legal representation, governance and public expenditure.

The Role and Status of Women



WATCH THE AUDIOVISUAL CAPSULE: https://youtu.be/OWpI_pV90XA/

Although this film focusses principally upon male gang members, we are also introduced to a number of female residents of Kara-Kara – Siniya’s pregnant companion, the ‘free women’ of Tudan James, the teenage girl from Nigeria who was forced into prostitution, and the intersex petrol smuggler Ramsess. There are also a number of women who are less visible but nevertheless present – Ramsess’ mother and sisters, the anonymous women carrying baskets on their heads in the opening street scenes, the victims of rape evoked by Bawoo (but not seen) and, somewhat by contrast, the apparently wealthy woman travelling in the back of Bawoo’s taxi. The secondary but indelible presence of these women immediately raises questions about the role and rights of women in Nigerien society.

Certain key statistics paint an alarming picture. According to UNICEF, 76% of girls are married by their families before the age of 18 years old, of which 28% are younger than 15 years old. The fecundity rate is 7.2 children per woman. These two factors mean that the vast majority of young Nigerien women are married and have several children in their care before even attaining adulthood, thereby cutting short their formal education. Furthermore, because it is anticipated that women will not be joining the workforce but will be at home raising children while their husbands cater for the household’s financial needs, many families elect not to send girls to school at all, perceiving it as a waste of time. In fact, according to UNESCO, just 20.7% of Nigerien girls receive a secondary education. International institutions have formally recognized that child marriage and gender inequality are ‘hindering the country’s development’ (UNICEF ‘Building Resilience in Niger’).

In an attempt to address the obstacles to female education, the Nigerien government recently announced an initiative to establish boarding schools at the expense of the State. The initiative has met with a mixed response from the population, some of whom applaud the opportunity being offered to their children and others who resent this incursion on traditional family structures and established cultural morés.

One woman who has been outspoken on the issue of female education is the slam-poet Nourrath la Deboslam. In this interview, which addresses the status of women in Niger, she asserts that such young girls need to be protected from early marriage and encouraged to complete their education.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/LINKS

- Deboslam video: <https://vimeo.com/701314885>
- 'Building Resilience': <https://www.unicef.org/niger/reports/building-community-resilience-niger>
- France 24 about the Education of Nigerien Girls <https://www.france24.com/fr/afrique/20220511-niger-l-%C3%A9ducation-des-filles-un-chantier-prioritaire-de-longue-haleine>
- Africa Press: initiatives of President Bazoum: <https://www.africa-press.net/niger/toutes-les-actualites/education-nationale-les-grands-travaux-du-president-mohamed-bazoum>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you believe that women should be offered the same educational opportunities as men? Why/why not?
2. What is a 'free woman'? Why are the women in this film labelled in this manner?
3. Prostitution is an illegal act in Niger. To what extent do you think the female prostitutes in this film have elected to become sex workers by choice or by necessity? Give evidence for your answer.
4. In the film we hear the distressed testimony of a prostitute who claims the police did not bother to investigate the murder of one of their co-workers, even though they regularly investigate incidents involving male drug traffickers or other crimes. How can this be explained?

ACTIVITIES

- A. Interview one of the older women in your family e.g. a grandmother or great aunt. Did she finish high school? Why/why not? What regrets does she have and what guidance would she give? On the basis of her response, write a letter from a female elder to the younger generation.
- B. Listen to Nourrath slam-poem (link above) then write your own slam poem addressed to a girl between 15-18years of age, explaining why you think it would be valuable to prioritise education over pregnancy. Complete this by creating a list of resources about reproduction/family planning.

The Phenomenon of Marginalisation



WATCH THE AUDIOVISUAL CAPSULE: https://youtu.be/Yxm2P_fe9ho/

The phenomenon of marginalization is core to this film. In the 1950s, Kara-Kara became a place to park the unwanted – lepers, poor, handicapped – all those who political leaders considered should be kept at a distance from the main population either because of health concerns and/or simply because the visibility of their poverty was challenging and unsightly. This resulted in the creation of a space that was not only physically at the margin of Zinder but also ideologically outside of the realm of mainstream governance. That is to say, by excluding a part of the population from the privileges associated with the mainstream (access to education, infrastructure and opportunities), political leaders inadvertently created a district which also no longer felt any compunction or incentive to 'play by the rules' of that society. This created the conditions ripe for delinquency.

In this interview, Professor Tidjani Alou notes that this phenomenon of marginalization is not unique to Zinder. He points out that, although the geographical and political context is different, the behavior of those who have been marginalized in Kara-Kara is not unlike the patterns observed and described by the British sociologist, Hoggarth, in the suburbs of England. He thus invites us to consider the case of Zinder, not as an exceptional situation unique to Niger, but rather as just one instance of a phenomenon that can be observed in every major city around the world. Kara-Kara, he observes, is constituted of a community of people who no doubt suffers from marginalisation but who nevertheless continue to lead what can be termed 'an ordinary life'. That is, in many respects they are engaged in the same everyday activities as anyone else – sharing meals, looking after families, having medical check-ups, paying bills, exercising, driving taxis. These are all signs of a shared humanity and of commonality rather than separateness and difference.

He notes that certain behaviours of Kara-Kara residents, including their involvement in illicit activities, may be considered an 'auto-adaptation' to untenable conditions, in the same sense as the 'adaptations' described by Hogarth in his studies of British suburbs. He observes that the absence of assistance by the government to address this marginality – through education, training and employment opportunities – could very well lead to the inhabitants of Kara-Kara feeling compelled to take more extreme measures. In this respect, he says, the film serves as a fertile corpus for the study of the roots of violence, which points to the need for further and more in-depth studies to be undertaken in the field.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/LINKS

- Publications Professor Tidjani
- Hoggart
- Jhonel 'Youth and Social Justice': <https://youtu.be/4TmEqwExIrw/>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In the film there are multiple examples of events and conversations that manifest instances of marginalization. Identify two and explain how these constitute instances of marginalization.
2. Siniya cites concrete examples about the ways in which Kara-Kara residents are routinely excluded. Name three. Are there people in your own community who are excluded in this manner?
3. Discuss times when you yourself feel/have felt marginalized. What steps could you take towards the centre and towards inclusion?
4. Professor Tidjani notes that marginalization is a phenomenon common to most cities in the world. Discuss the similarities and differences between marginalization in a large European city and the marginalization we see in the film. Refer to the capsule on youth and social justice (Jhonel).

ACTIVITY

- A. Volunteer at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter near your own place of residence. Before you start, write down your assumptions about the people you are likely to meet/help. After the experience, revisit this list of assumption and note any preconceptions that have since changed.
- B. Using internet, locate the homeless facilities within a 30km radius of your place of residence. What could you do to be more inclusive of this population?
- C. For those who themselves are the objects of marginalisation: make a list of 5 resources of facilities available to you to assist inclusion. Create a slide and share with the group or post on social media.

A Ray of Hope: Enduring Humanist Values



WATCH THE AUDIOVISUAL CAPSULE: <https://youtu.be/H69CmyluBZ4>

The obstacles and challenges facing the youth of Niger are so great and so many – extreme poverty, illiteracy, over-population, unemployment, lack of access to infrastructure, absence of civic status and associated rights – that it can be difficult to see where hope lies. Indeed a recent report by UNICEF which asked Nigerien youth to identify their dreams, concluded that by and large young people in Niger have given up on their dreams. Many have simply ceased to believe that their aspirations could become a reality. This is a cause for great concern, because it is this very sector - youth – who actually constitute the majority of the current population (70% of the current Nigerien population is aged less than 25 years and 50% under 14 years). If the youth of today have no hope then what will become of Niger's future?

Hope is necessary. Hope is the driver of change and the primary source of human motivation to confront and overcome challenges. In the absence of hope, it is difficult to muster the courage to try to overcome hardship. In the film, despite all odds to the contrary, we do see hope. The youth of Kara-Kara, who have every reason to be hardened and without hope, display solidarity, goodwill, generosity and fraternity towards each other.

Aicha has spoken of having her own assumptions overturned upon entering into the community of Kara-Kara. Beneath the outer surface of violence and despair, she found the existence of enduring humanity and the qualities necessary to take the community forward. Likewise, in this video, Professor Moumouni of the University of Abdou Moumouni in Niamey, enumerates the enduring humanist values that indicate that all is not lost.

EXAMPLES OF ENDURING VALUES IN 'ZINDER'

- **Resilience:** the ceaseless energy of Siniya, who urges the members of the gang to train and who, in an attempt to create a future that does not end in violence and prison, has a plan to establish a security firm. Likewise, Salissou Cicara's speech to his fellow prisoners finishes on a hopeful note: urging them to break the cycle and to join Siniya in creating a security firm. Given the lack of access to education, jobs, funding and infrastructure, given the sense of being predestined for prison, it shows an enormous amount of resilience to envision a brighter future from within prison walls.
- **Resourcefulness:** In the body-building yard of the Hitler gang, where young men have used all of the available equipment to hone and build their bodies, the need for a greater challenge, heavier weights and better equipment are needed. Not to be deterred, the young men lift a motorcycle.
- **Fraternity/Camaraderie:** sharing of videos, teasing, smiling
- **Solidarity/Teamwork:** willingness to help each other, co-operation not competition, Ramsess with her family, the prisoners who give their bracelets to participate in the creation of the security company (and they seek to recruit young prisoners to join their legitimate activity), Siniya who seeks to support the mother of his child – to pay for her consultations (humanity, solidarity)
- **A sense of civic duty:** Bawoo towards his kids, and also his work with prostitutes trying to help them leave this activity now that he has found his own way.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/LINKS

- RFI Debat
- UNICEF report on hope
- UNICEF 'Building Resilience in Niger'

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Provide other examples from the film where these values are on display. What other positive values do you see on display in the film, where? How might these be used as the basis for change and what additional assistance, if any, may be necessary?

ACTIVITY

In a recent youth forum this sense of lethargy and lack of initiative was evoked and those on the panel suggested that there was a need for role models. Watch the link above, identify three potential Nigerien role models and prepare an expose on one and/or a social media post. Send it to us or tag #zinderfilm

PART 4: WAYS FORWARD

The problems we see in the film – the lack of hope and opportunity sowing the seeds of illegal activity and violence – cannot be considered as merely the plight of the inhabitants of a remote Nigerien village. The struggle of the youth of Kara Kara has relevance to us outside of Niger for several reasons:

1. As Prof Moumouni has pointed out, many of the behaviours and characteristics of the community of Kara Kara are common to those of marginalized communities around the world. In a sense we should view this case as just one example of how lack of opportunity and marginalization can sew the seeds of crime and violence AND in that sense, see that we have the capacity to stem the violence by addressing those root causes.
2. As Aicha and several members of the Brain Trust pointed out, should the youth find themselves, through economic need, to be increasingly susceptible to recruitment by Boko Haram, then the violence that ensues will no doubt be felt around the world.
3. Emigration: a youth that can not find a place in their own country will of course seek to flee. To be more specific: if there is not means of making a living and feeding one's family except by joining the forces of Boko Haram and if one does not want to do that, then the only option is to die or to seek to flee. So in a sense the attempt to emigrate can be read as a sign that hope is still alive. In a private interview, Prof Yahaya expressed this sad irony: at one time Nigeriens had to be put in chains to force them to leave their country and now they will need to be put in chains in order to be kept in the country.

So the plight of Niger concerns us all. This fact has been recognized by the international community, who have put in place assistance and transformation programs through agencies including:

« Rise of radicalization and violence is becoming an ever more pressing threat to global stability and peace. Violent extremism requires global solutions ». – UNDP 2022

PUBLIC AGENCIES/NGOs SUPPORTING CHANGE (non-exhaustive)

- UNDP
- UNICEF
- AFD
- MSF
- ONU WOMEN
- NOE
- UE

Zinder Impact Campaign

When Aicha Macky was making the documentary *Zinder*, her intention went far beyond the aspiration that people would see and appreciate the film. Her aim has always been to draw attention to the social, political and legal injustices that are contributing to a situation that has become untenable, both for the protagonists of the film and the society in which they live.

Through years of sustained neglect, the district of Kara Kara in the Nigerien city Zinder has become vulnerable to radicalisation. In a context of dire poverty, illiteracy, widespread unemployment, institutional injustice and deep social divisions, the options for the inhabitants of Kara Kara are limited.

Our hope, in building an impact campaign is to draw awareness to those issues and then to stimulate and lead a series of initiatives that will address the root causes of these problems and bring about better outcomes for Zinder and communities facing similar challenges all around the world.

Accordingly, the impact campaign consists of two aspects:

- Campaign in Niger
- Campaign beyond Niger

Both campaigns are linked by a shared set of objectives

Impact Campaign Objectives

These areas of action are common to most impact campaigns and derived from STEPS and DOCSOCIETY

1. Raise Awareness – change mind-sets and increase understanding through curated screenings amongst population concerned and also those who are witnesses
2. Change Behaviours – Find ways to create opportunities to break cycles and patterns
3. Build Communities
4. Transform institutions and structures
5. Improve material conditions

A resilient person is someone who has the ability to keep moving forward despite adversity. Instead of seeing obstacles, you see opportunities, the possibility of doing things differently. – Dr Félicité Tchibindat, UNICEF Rep in Niger

Become Involved



APPEL À L'ACTION par Aïcha Macky, réalisatrice du documentaire 'Zinder'.

AICHA MACKY'S CALL TO ACTION: <https://youtu.be/CAFnjulBxc>

- Organise a screening
- Organise a debate
- Organise a fund-raising
- Contribute your research
- Make a video
- Donate
- Spread the Word

CONTACT US

www.zinderfilm.com

FILM SALES/SCREENINGS



STEPHAN RIGUET, GRÉGORY BÉTEND, LEA VALENTIN

Distributor

contact@andanafilms.com

FILM PRODUCERS



CLARA VUILLERMOZ

Producer (France)

clara.vuillermoz@balibari.com



AICHA MACKY

Producer/Director (Niger)

mackyaicha@gmail.com

IMPACT CAMPAIGN



JULIA HAMMETT-JAMART

Impact Producer

JHJ.zinderimpact@gmail.com