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Theresa Traore Dahlberg

Ouaga Girls

Ouaga Girls is a documentary film following a group of young women from the outskirts of Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, as they meet at the feminist education centre (CFIAM) to study and become car mechanics. The film is a poetic coming-of-age story of sisterhood, life choices, and the strife of finding your own path. Theresa Traore Dahlberg (b. 1983) is a visual artist and filmmaker who formulates and mediates engaging complex narratives through sculpture, photography and film. Her films narrate stories in the expanded field of documentary including themes such as representation of the other, by questioning how individuals, events and places are perceived, interpreted and understood. Traore Dahlberg draws from her own experiences of being anchored in two political and social cultures, Sweden and Burkina Faso, and from the implication of living in a contemporary European context.



DOES YOUR HAIR GET IN THE WAY?

00:30:25 — 00:32:37



Bintou? And school?

It's fine.

Fine.

We hold on, it's not easy.

Isn't it tiring?

Well, it's not easy. It's very, very tiring.

And doesn't your hair bother you?

No.

For work, especially if you have ...

It doesn't bother me.

Seeing as it's with the vehicles, that you repair, if your hair hangs down won't it bother you?

No. No bother. If you catch it well, you'll get the job done.

Don't the men bother you?

No, they're fine. Anyway, there are also men who don't like you doing this job, they brush you off. They say you're weird, think that ...

That's not how things should be!

Some men tell you to stop, to go and dress heads, or to go and sit. Become a secretary or something like that.

TV PLAYING IN THE BACKGROUND

Why has Burkina Faso found itself in this somewhat political chaos?

People are calling for change. They want something else. Democratic rules must be respected. Never mind the price we have to pay for that. We dream of a better Burkina Faso.

SOUNDS OF A CHEERING CROWD

WOMEN ARE STRONG

00:24:11 — 00:26:11



Before, I rarely met girls in this line of work, but now I see students from the CFIAM. How come girls commit to this job?

I think they're capable of doing it.

A woman can do any any job she likes if she decides to.

If she wants to.

But it's still a bit of a physical job, it asks for strength.

We are strong!

You're strong!

MOTHERLY ADVISE

01:06:17 — 01:07:20



You have to be courageous. It's an environment, it's like a jungle.
I also went to the CFIAM.

Wow. Vehicle electrics or what?

Yes, I was in the vehicle electrics section. Because it wasn't easy for me in the beginning. I'll give you an example of when I was looking for a job after I finished school. I went to a garage, like you, I was looking for a job with all my heart. And when I arrived, the man took my application, had a look and said: "Today everything's fine, but what about tomorrow?" It was a dismissal. He dismissed me without saying a word. He dismissed my application because I'm a woman. But it didn't stop me from continuing. One day, God said that ... that this garage would be mine and that the men will work for me.

THE GRADUATION

01:16:57 — 01:19:02



Dear learners, you have chosen a career in vehicle bodywork, which is a man's job, a very difficult job. You've hung on until the end, after having met with many difficulties. Through my voice, the teaching team heartily congratulates you.

AUDIENCE APPLAUDS AND CHEERS

Final year students, your success in achieving the professional qualifications certificate completely opens the door to the job market. Work, work, work, as the world belongs to the true workers. Be audacious, courageous, imaginative and you will succeed. It is often said that whoever gives you a fish feeds you temporarily. But whoever teaches you to fish feeds you for life.

AUDIENCE APPLAUDS

The CFIAM has given you bread for life. Good luck everyone. Thank you.

AUDIENCE APPLAUDS AND CHEERS

Come on girls! Are you here?

YES!

Are you there?

YES!

I want to hear you!

WOMEN IN THE AUDIENCE CHEERS

You are all stiffly sitting here. You are brave women, women of the future, you are warriors. Because when I see you sitting there like that, there's no one like you.