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BAMBA

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Abstract

Documentary: BAMBA

By Yirmeyah Beckles & Julia Marshall

Produced at UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism

In Africa albinos—who lack pigment in their skin, eyes, and hair—are being targeted for their limbs. There's a belief system which holds that owning an albino body part or piece of hair will bring wealth and good luck. BAMBA, a documentary about an albino named Bamba who formed The National Association of Senegalese Albinos (ANAS), follows him on a journey after albinos in Senegal were victims of ritual sacrifices for the first time in the country's history. Albinos' place in society—largely unemployed, with limited access to healthcare—worsened during Senegal's 2012 presidential election, when it was reported that candidates sought albinos' body parts.

Bamba is fiercely committed to strengthening the next generation of albinos, getting the community access to healthcare, and helping people learn about the real cause of albinism. But he struggles to balance the commitments to his organization with family life. His wife is pregnant with a boy, neither knows if the child will be albino or black. The center isn't helping him earn a living. He travels to Senegal's capital, Dakar, daily for work as a computer programmer before returning to the demands of the center and its members. This documentary exposes the large scale of issues albinos face: attacks on women, discrimination in the school system, health treatment and government unrest. The film shows deeply ingrained prejudices albinos face in all aspects of life—including safety, employment, and public transportation—by interviewing albinos who depend on the center's help and sense of place. Through Bamba's work the film captures an aspect of the human condition that's been largely ignored by mass media and mass audiences.