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DAYS OF GLORY

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DAYS OF GLORY (INDIGÈNES)

A film directed by
RACHID BOUCHAREB

FRENCH RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 27TH, 2006

Running time: 128mn

Synopsis

1943.

They had never stepped foot on French soil but because France was at war, Saïd, Abdelkader, Messaoud and Yassir enlisted in the French Army, along with 130,000 other “indigenous soldiers,” to liberate the “fatherland” from the Nazi enemy. These heroes that history forgot won battles in Italy, Provence and the Vosges before finding themselves alone to defend an Alsatian village against a German battalion.





African Army

AFRICAN ARMY

Originally, the African Army was the name of the expedition led by General de Bourmont that landed in Sidi Ferruch on June 14 1830 and took Algiers. The name was used thereafter to designate units that came from France or were formed locally that participated in the conquest and pacification of Algeria. Made up of indigenous personnel (also recruited in Tunisia and Morocco), foreigners or French enlisted men, they were supervised by mostly French officers and sub-officers. They wore uniforms that distinguished them from the rest of the French Army, though they were an integral part of it.

Very soon, these troops were sent to fight outside Algeria, whenever France engaged its troops in other operations: Crimea, the Italian Campaign, China, Mexico and France itself in 1870-1871. The Third Republic then used them in its colonial battles (Tonkin, Madagascar, Morocco, etc.), then, of course, in France from 1914 onward.

The African Army played an increasingly important role, with its special units: the Zouaves (named after a Kabyle tribe, the Zaouaouas), created in 1830; the African Hunters, in 1831; the Spahis in 1834; the Indigenous Skirmishers in 1841. Faidherbe, who was named Governor of Senegal in 1854, created the “Senegalese Skirmishers”.

The recruitment of Zouaves and African Hunters gradually became exclusively French, but the Spahis and Skirmishers continued to be recruited exclusively among indigenous populations with limited French leadership.

All these troops indigenous to North Africa belonged to the 19th Army Corps known as the “African Army”, whose emblem was a crescent. They were stationed in France from August 1914

1914-1918, First World War:

The mobilization of colonial troops for the First World War was unprecedented. Nearly 930,000 non-European soldiers (Hindus, Chinese, Vietnamese, Somalians, etc.) from 40 different countries were incorporated. Over 70,000 lost their lives.

Among these troops, 290,000 North African soldiers fought for France: 173,019 Algerians (the greatest number), 80,339 Tunisians and 40,398 Moroccans. The

North African troops fought on all fronts: in France, in the Dardanelles (where Senegalese Skirmishers alone made up half the troops), in the Balkans and in Palestine, where they distinguished themselves alongside the British during the taking of Nablus. At the end of the war, in November 1918, their losses totaled 28,200 dead and 7,700 missing.

Second World War:

In 1940, France was defeated and 1,400,000 French soldiers were prisoners in Germany (40,000 died in captivity). The French Army no longer existed. For nearly two years, the Colonial Empire was at the heart of the struggle for legitimacy between de Gaulle's forces and the Vichy regime. From June 18 1940, following General de Gaulle's call to continue the fight, troops initially rallied individually. In July 1940, France Libre could count on a little over 7,000 men. Then its number increased throughout 1940 following the rallying of several African, Oceanic and Asian colonies: Chad, Oubangui-Chari, Congo and Cameroon, Indian Trading Post, Oceania, New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna¹. The support of the colonial empire gave legitimacy to France Libre and allowed it to slowly make its influence felt among its allies in the conflict.

In West Africa, de Gaulle failed in his attempt in 1940 to take Dakar from forces loyal to Vichy and he decided to station the FFL in Gabon in early November 1940. The Forces of France Libre, still few in numbers, then participated in different battles alongside the Allies: in Fezzan, in Eritrea or in Libya. The Syria Operation in June 1941 marked an important turn-around after France Libre troops defeated troops loyal to Vichy. In Bir Hakeim, in May-June 1942, the First Brigade of General Koenig's France Libre Forces participated in the battle against the troops of the Axis and the Afrika Corps.

But the big turning point was the Allied landing in North Africa in November 1942, which allowed the progressive reconstruction of the French Army, particularly under the authority of General Giraud and thanks to American equipment. Following this Allied landing, carried out without the support of General de

Gaulle or the French troops, the political situation was complex in North Africa². Several protagonists attempted to impose their authority on France Libre. The political struggle between de Gaulle and Giraud lasted several months, while battles in Tunisia against the Axis raged. Finally, on June 3 1943, the Comité National Français of London and the Commandement Civil et Militaire of Algiers merged under the co-presidency of Generals de Gaulle and Giraud into the Comité Français de la Libération nationale (CFLN), based in Algiers. From then on, the French Army could rebuild before its decisive engagement in Italy.

During the summer of 1943, 233,000 “North Africans” were mobilized or volunteered to reinforce French fighting troops. They joined the 363,000 North African soldiers already under military authority (European and “indigenous” troops), 60,000 men from the AOF, 12,000 FFL, 20,000 escapees from prison camps in France and 10,000 women volunteers. In summer 1943, this army was made up of just under 700,000 people, either fighters or auxiliaries. Alongside the Anglo-American Allies, this was the army that participated in the liberation of France after the hard battles of Tunisia, Sicily, Italy, Corsica and the Allied landing in Provence in summer 1944.

At this time, the Corps Expéditionnaire français (CEF) included the Army A Detachment (or CEF from Italy), made up of the DIA (Division d’Infanterie algérienne), the 2nd DIM (Division d’Infanterie marocaine), the 4th DMM (Division marocaine de montagne), as well as the Moroccan Goums (the Tabors); the Army B Detachment was made up of the 1st DB and the 5th DB (Divisions blindées – Armored Divisions), and in Corsica, the 9th DIC (Division d’Infanterie coloniale – Colonial Infantry Division). It is noteworthy that Europeans from North Africa (14% of whom were mobilized during the conflict) provided the majority of officers and non-European populations (From North Africa or sub-Saharan Africa) the majority of fighting troops until the landing in Provence.

These two detachments placed under the orders of General De Lattre de Tassigny merged in July 1944 to become Army B (which joined the FFI, although the FFI were already present within the 1st DFL, ex-Motorized Infantry Division), then in September 1944, the 1st French Army.

In history books and in collective memory, the Liberation of France and Europe is seen as only due to the Normandy Landing in June 1944, the action of Resistance members and the Soviet offensive on the Eastern Front. This is to forget the offensive from the South and from Italy³, after the victory in Tunisia and the withdrawal of Axis troops, which allowed the opening of a second front before the landing in the West, in Normandy. Yet these tough battles drew in the

German Army and mobilized a large number of its troops in the South, facilitating the progression of Soviet troops in the East in 1944 and Anglo-American troops on the Western Front from June 1944.

During the campaign in Tunisia, losses were very high, according to figures given by the S.H.A.T. (Service historique de l’armée de terre – Army Historical Department) that declared 9,237 deaths, including 3,620 North African Muslims, and 34,714 wounded, including 18,531 North African Muslims, to which must be added the losses of the 2nd DB.

By adding civilian victims in France, we reach a total of 535,967 French deaths during the conflict (this figure includes deportees, resistance members, soldiers, bombing casualties, etc.) French engagement during the liberation of Italy and more particularly during the deadly combats around Monte Cassino, contributed to the withdrawal of German troops at the cost of heavy losses. Joined by the FFI and the FFL, the First French Army, with the landing in Provence (August 15 1944) then liberated Toulon, Marseilles, Lyons, Dijon, Belfort, etc. This took place far from the press limelight, which was focused on the Anglo-American progression in Normandy and the very political liberation of Paris and Strasbourg by French soldiers of Leclerc’s 2nd Armored Division.

The Battle of Toulon.

This was the first battle the French Army fought for the liberation of France. Men and women from five continents came together under the French flag. Those known as “indigenous” fought alongside the French from the colonies and escapees from occupied France. Nearly half the soldiers were African: North African and Black soldiers were the majority of the infantry and were the most exposed in battle.

August 15 1944, nearly 120,000 Goumiers, Skirmishers and Spahis, from 22 African countries, integrated the French Empire and landed on the Provence coast. Many of them had already distinguished themselves during the tough battles of the Italian Campaign (particularly around Monte Cassino). Placed under the command of General de Lattre de Tassigny, head of the African Army, now called the 1st French Army, they fought for the liberation of France, then in Germany, until victory in May 1945.

When we speak of immigration, we often forget that the fathers of many immigrants were once welcomed as liberators.





May 8 1945: the Sétif massacre

On May 8 1945, while the whole of France was celebrating the capitulation of Nazi Germany, on the other side of the Mediterranean, thousands of Algerians (who participated in the victory) gathered in the streets of Sétif, to place a wreath at the foot of the city's war monument and demonstrate for Algerian independence. An Algerian flag was raised by a 20 year-old man, who was instantly shot because he refused to take it down, as was the mayor of the city who tried to intervene. In the shooting that followed, the crowd dispersed and attacked Europeans. There were 27 deaths on the French side. The news spread quickly through the province, where the local population, mostly farmers, rose in revolt. It was the start of a general uprising in dozens of Constantine villages as well as Blida and Berrouaghia in Algiers and Sidi-Bel-Abbès in Oranais.

The Army intervened in Sétif, then in the rest of the department, in Guelma and Kherrata. The Navy bombed the Kherrata coast and gorges, and seaside locations such as The Achas, The Cliffs, and Mansouria. The insurgents took refuge in the mountains where they were bombarded by 18 Army bombers.

The crackdown grew for six weeks and the “Arab witch-hunt” (term used by the extremist colonial settlers of the time) raged. It was not only carried out by the military. Other “militia” operations by extremist settlers, armed by the military and encouraged by local authorities, were often bloodier and more atrocious. These events were among the bloodiest of the history of colonial France.

According to the historian, Charles Robert Ageron, the first riots of May 8, 9 and 10 killed 102 Europeans, with 110 wounded and 135 homes reduced to ashes. These figures are nothing in comparison with the scale of the ensuing colonial repression. The number of Algerian victims is still being debated. In July 1945, Interior Minister Tixier pronounced a speech before the National Assembly referring to the death of 1,500 people. The Algerian newspaper, Le Populaire, in its edition of June 28 1945, spoke of 6,000 to 8,000 deaths. The Algerian government claims there were 45,000 victims. For researchers Rachid Messli and Abbas Aroua, from the Center of Historical Research and Documentation on Algeria, “most historians agree that 45,000 is an exaggerated figure. It would be more realistic to think that the total is between 8,000 and 10,000 deaths.” This is the figure recognized by France today.

WE ARE AFRICANS

We are Africans
Who come from far away
We come from the colonies
To save the Fatherland
We left everything behind
Families, shacks, homes
And in our hearts
Is an invincible ardor
For we want to carry high and proud
The beautiful flag of all of France
And if anyone laid a hand on it
We'd be there to die at his feet
Beat the drums, for our love
For the country, for the Fatherland
Dying far from home
We are Africans

I
We were in the depths of Africa
Jealous guardians of our colors
When under a magnificent sun
Rang out the vanquishing cry
Forward march! Forward march!

II
To save our empire
We fight all vultures
Hunger and death make us smile
When we fight for our loves
Forward march! Forward march

III
Of all the French horizons
Gathered on African soil
We have come for liberation
And will bring it tomorrow
Forward march! Forward march!

IV
And when the war is over
We will return to our shacks
Heart joyous and soul proud
Of liberating the country
By shouting, singing: Forward march!

"May future generations fighting for the survival of France never forget what they owe to "Africans from far away."

Journal of the 22nd battalion of North African foot soldiers.

SENEGALESE SKIRMISHERS

You, Senegalese Skirmishers, my black brothers
with hot hand under ice and death
Who could celebrate you if not your brother in
arms, your brother in blood?
I will not leave it to Ministers or Generals
I will not allow – no! – despising praise to bury
you furtively
You are not poor with empty pockets and no honor
But I will tear all the Banania smiles from all
the walls in France.”

Léopold Sédar SENGHOR. First verses of “Hosties
Noires” (1948), extract from “Poème Liminaire”.
Paris, Seuil. 1990



THE LAST SENEGALESE SKIRMISHER

For the 80th anniversary of victory in 1918, Jacques CHIRAC decided to award the Legion of Honor to all the First World War soldiers still alive. The French Ambassador in Senegal was asked to present the award to Abdoulaye N'DIAYE, the last Senegalese skirmisher, then aged 104. He died on November 10 1998 as he was choosing his boubou for the ceremony the next day. Wounded for the first time in August 1914 in Belgium, he participated in the Dardanelles expedition in 1915, then in the battle of the Somme in 1916 where he was wounded again (a bullet in the head, four months in hospital). He ended the war in Verdun in 1918. On his return to Senegal, he was told to work in the fields as if nothing had happened. He only heard in 1949, from Senegalese Skirmishers from the Second World War, that he was entitled to a veteran's pension and an invalid pension. The monthly total of these two pensions- frozen by the French government at Senegalese Independence in 1961 - was 340.21 French francs (51.86 euro) at the time of his death.

French authorities also provided him with a discount card for the French Railways. In his village in Senegal with no electricity and only four water supply points for a population of 1,500, this veteran of what Africans called “The French War”, possessed only a tiny cabin made of straw and corrugated iron, a hurricane lamp and a transistor radio. His modest pension allowed him to improve the living standard of his family of around 30 people. His grandson declared to the newspaper Le Monde that he dreamed of Paris but was not sure he could get a French visa.

PIEDS NOIRS

Europeans from North Africa are known as «Pied-Noir» (literally “black foot”). The French conquerors wore black shoes or boots, which explained the term back as early as 1830. Grape pressing also colored feet a dark color. There is also the possible confusion between the Arab locutions “black man”, a reference to the habit, common in the 19th century, and “black foot” which is very similar phonetically.



THE “FREEZING” OF WAR PENSIONS FOR INDIGINOUS VETERANS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

In the early 1960's, decolonization of Africa was completed. France then decided – in line with article 71 of the Law of Finances passed on December 26 1959 – to freeze the retirement and invalid pensions paid to ex-servicemen from its ex-colonial Empire at their 1959 level. This has resulted in great inequality and feelings of bitterness among ex-servicemen from North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, whose pensions are up to ten times less than those of French ex-servicemen. In 1996, a Senegalese ex-Staff Sergeant, Amadou DIOP, who served in the French Army from 1937 to 1959 and was dismissed when Senegal gained independence, sued the French State. He had only received a third of the pension he would have got if he had been French and he demanded compensation. In 2001, the Council of State ruled in his favor posthumously, judging that the difference in treatment was in violation of Article 14 of the European Convention of

Human Rights. This verdict obliged the French government to revise the freeze law of 1959, which concerned around 80,000 ex-servicemen of the French ex-colonial Empire. These veterans could then expect a reevaluation of their pensions with back-payment. The total was estimated at 1.85 billion euros. In 2003, the government of Jean-Pierre RAFFARIN began a partial “de-freezing” of pensions, which would henceforth be indexed not on French pensions but on the cost of living in the different countries where the ex-servicemen lived. On August 13 2004, the day before the commemoration of the Provence Landing, a statement issued by the French Ministry of Veterans announced that a sum of 120 million euros had been written into the 2004 budget to increase the pensions of ex-servicemen from ex-French colonies from 20 to 100%. This was the first increase since the “freezing” law of 1959. On August 15 2004, Jacques Chirac paid homage to colonial troops by inviting several African Heads of State to the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of Allied landings in Provence. Around 20 African veterans were made Knights of the Legion of Honor. Despite this homage, the question of “frozen” pensions is still not resolved.



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September 2 1940: Rallying of Tahiti.
September 9 1940: Rallying of the Indian Trading Post.
September 9 1940: Rallying of New Caledonia.
- ² November 28 1942: Forced rallying of the French Coast of Somalis to French forces.
November 30 1942: Rallying of Reunion Island to French forces.
- ³ May 11-18 1944: Breakthrough of French forces commanded by Marshal Alphonse Juin, in Garigliano.

A meeting with Rachid Bouchareb

Good timing

There comes a time when things have come together and matured. For me, that moment came when I finished LITTLE SENEGAL.

I've always been caught up in the history of immigration. It's my family's past. One of my uncles fought in the Indochina war. We lived through the Algerian war and I even have a great grandfather who fought in World War One. I've always been at the intersection of the colonization, decolonization, immigration and all these men who made French History.

Olivier Lorelle, my co-screenwriter and I did over a year of research. We started off going through the army documentation department. I even found Defense Ministry documents in the names of Naceri and Debbouze, who were the ancestors of the ones we all know today. We also worked in libraries but above all, we met with people who had lived through the period. We wanted to hear what they had to say. We went to Bordeaux, Marseilles and Nantes as well as Senegal, Morocco and Algeria. We fed off their experiences and feelings. This was when I realized the film could not be the story of one man. It had to encompass the African continent.

Then we had to digest all the facts collected. I wanted to make a film, not a documentary. A docu-fiction would have been a trap too. Cinema has to consider the viewer. There has to be a dimension that goes beyond historical context to dive into the human heart, to reach out to what moves us all, beyond our differences.

For me, cinema vehicles encounters and emotions. Above all, it makes you feel, even if it also teaches you something. It was the only way I could carry the story and connect with the viewer. I did not want to be didactic. There's no point. We developed the screenplay over two and a half years. It took us 25 versions to get beyond history and concentrate on the human content, on the small, everyday details that reproduce life better than any message.

During the research phase, I found an article from five years ago about a village in Alsace that had just built a war monument to the hundreds of skirmishers who died protecting the inhabitants. They had held their ground to the end, suffering enormous casualties. This event catalyzed my desire to tell the story of a mixed group that unites in the face of hardship. I was also determined to only use authentic elements. I wrote about the mission of these men that found themselves in a lost village and sacrificed their lives in the name of the Fatherland.





The actors and characters

From the outset, I talked to the actors about it because I couldn't imagine the film being anything other than collective. I chose my actors for their sensibility. I knew some of them personally already but I appreciated them all professionally. I went to see them and told them about my project. They were all interested. I told them we'd meet again when I had a screenplay! They were the first people to be enthusiastic about it. The project went beyond making a film. There was an extra dimension.

To create the characters, I was more than anything inspired by the veterans I met. Yassir, the Goumier, came out of these encounters – I met Yassir in a hostel in Nantes. Saïd, the goat keeper also exists. Other characters are several personalities combined. Abdelkader is also inspired by characters such as Ben Bella, who fought in World War Two, was disillusioned and became a nationalist. I also met three people who met women in France, moved to France and made their lives there.

At first, the screenplay lasted three and a half hours and started in Africa. We had to cut back to the countries of North Africa. I did not write a specific character for each actor. I wanted to feel free when I was writing. Jamel could have played Abdelkader. I didn't want constraints. The roles were interchangeable.

Since Jamel was going to sink or swim with us and carry the film as an actor, I asked him to be one of the co-producers. And the adventure began. We met with film financiers one by one, then we went and saw the French National Assembly, the Senate, the regions – even some where we didn't film. We also met with ministries in Algeria and Morocco. It was a long process and everyone had to work at it but I never had any doubts. The film would be made. The necessity of telling the story was so obvious that there was no alternative! Sometimes the energy of a project gets away from you and carries you along. That what the film was like for me! This certainty moved things forward. The subject was so important that I felt a moral obligation to see it through.

An intimate saga: on location

For me, the film was unusual in that it combined vast scenes requiring real logistics and more intimate moments between the actors. Both were closely tied, and even in the biggest battle scenes, my aim was to stay as close to the characters as possible.

Before shooting, we storyboarded the 900 shots of the screenplay over a four-month period. Shooting lasted 18 weeks and took place in Ouarzazate, Agadir for the boat scenes, the south of France - in Beaucaire and Tarascon - for the Liberation scenes, then in the Vosges and around the Alsace-Lorraine border. The snowy mountain scenes, supposed to be in the Vosges, were shot in Morocco!

We also had many battle scenes that covered several hectares with explosions everywhere, as well as special effects simulating planes in the sky and fleets of navy vessels. I wanted the film to have an epic dimension, for us to feel the numbers, the passing seasons, the movements across countries and the changes in the men. I had to be there on all fronts! Even the set of a village in the Vosges required five months work for fifty people who transformed a hamlet in ruins, reconstructing a group of houses and adding a church and café. It all had to serve as a historical setting.

My first shock was during the costume fittings. Seeing Jamel, Samy, Roschdy and Sami dressed as their characters suddenly gave me a sense of the film's reality. A soldier's jacket, a cap or a djellaba suddenly gave the characters an element of truth. They had taken the places of their ancestors! From the outset, we felt that none of them was playing a hero. They were a group of men.

The second shock was on the first day of shooting. For organizational reasons, we had to start with the scene where the soldiers are lined up in front of the camp in Sicily and Jamel is hit with the butt of a rifle. We were immediately at the heart of the matter. Since I hadn't made a film in three years, I would have preferred getting back into it by filming trucks go by, but that's how it turned out and it was fine that way!

Each day was difficult. I was panic-stricken but I couldn't let it show. In front of 500 extras and 220 technicians, you can't look like you're unsure of yourself! I faced up to my doubts when I was alone in my room at night. I reassured myself by working.

With the actors, we worked hard beforehand. While we were shooting, almost every night, we had a meeting about the screenplay. It became a ritual. We talked about the scenes, the script, the story... It was a human adventure we undertook together.

It was the first time I'd worked with Jamel. He's very conscientious. This dramatic role was very important to him and he was worried about doing a good job. He worked hard. From time to time, he joked around to ease the tension and maybe also to reassure himself. I was moved by what he put out, by his sincerity and his fragility. We soon forget that it's Jamel Debbouze acting and only see Saïd. It takes talent to provoke that small miracle.

I've known Roschdy for a long time. He has inner strength. He does everything with apparent ease but it's based on a lot of hard work. He hits the right note. He always tries to understand and never pretends. His sense of observation and his ability to integrate parameters are impressive.

Unlike many of his fellow-actors, Sami Bouajila is very focused and leaves nothing to chance. He works on his character until he masters it completely. He became Abdelkader. He had his energy, integrity and reflexes. He was very implicated on a human level and was very attached to the group.

There's something fascinating about Samy Naceri. He doesn't talk much. He almost never asks questions. He listens and suddenly, when the camera comes on, he comes to life and gets it right the first take. He is an instinctive and powerful actor. During the scene when he takes his dead brother in his arms, he bowled us over. The whole crew was speechless.

Generally speaking, we did not do many takes, no more than three or four. Everyone was spot on. Sometimes I had to rein them in so we didn't go off the rails. Even though they could bring minor additions to their characters, I was against improvisation. I often had to refuse suggestions. I didn't like having to do it but I had to stay faithful to the screenplay. Once, two or three of them wrote a dialogue. I was really happy they did it together. They came to see me and I said to them, "Okay, let's do it but you can only have one take. We'll see if we keep it when we edit..." For pacing reasons, I didn't keep it, but I was delighted to see them working together like brothers!



The emotion of a story in the name of the men who lived it

When I make a film, I am always a viewer. If I don't feel emotion during the scene, the viewer won't feel it either. I'm a thermometer! I forget my trade and the technical aspect so I can feel. If I'm not moved, we start over! If it doesn't work, it is not necessarily the actor's fault. It can be a problem with the script. If so, it's up to me to suggest something else.

Something really powerful happened during the filming that I hadn't expected. I realized it first with the Moroccan soldiers who were extras in the part we shot in Ouarzazate. Every morning, they were incredibly enthusiastic. They did more than just obey directing orders. They really put their hearts into it. They said to me, "Rachid, we're with you!" or, "We've worked on other films but with you, we know why we're running." And their commitment shows in the film. Sometimes I was reluctant to get them to redo a scene, getting them to carry a load and run in sandals over rocks that made their ankles bleed. But they volunteered. Because the film talks about their ancestors, their relation with France and a period that profoundly marked their history. Even with them, we were at the heart of the matter. Some came with the photo of their father who had fought in World War Two. One of them, who had fought in the village, showed me his photos and the letters he wrote to the government that were never answered.

This human factor also struck us when we came back to France. Everywhere we went, people came to see us, whatever their origins. Sometimes they came from 50 kilometers away. They waited, to show us their photos, to tell us about skirmishers they'd met and the people who liberated them. We also saw a lot of second or third generations who told us about their parents. Sometimes they waited for hours because we were busy with the film. The film was given an incredible reception! We were asked to participate in debates with the French,

North Africans and Africans who talked about the subject, the film and what their parents had been through. We understood that it was high time we told this story, to give an image to what had been kept quiet for so long. Despite everything I had felt myself, I was surprised by this amazing enthusiasm.

All these testimonies taught me something that struck me even more. It was the same thing I heard from the survivors: the love and attachment to France that, incredibly, remains stronger than any other sentiment.

The story of these men and their relation to France does not start in the 1960's. Well before that, they came, they liberated France, they were heroes. They were not only "street sweepers!" They were heroes who were loved and welcomed with open arms! It often remains the best moment of their lives. That's why the attitude that followed and continues today seems so strange to them. They see it as a love story gone sour, a betrayal. It shocks them that their children and grandchildren have such a hard time. The change happened in the 1960's. And yet despite the degradation of their image, the rejection, their ex-servicemen pensions that have not been paid, they have no hatred, no spirit of revenge. If they had to do it again, they would.

I didn't try to change history. If they had been full of violence or bitterness, I would have put it into the film. But it's not the case. Liberating a country that is theirs, the Fatherland, being welcomed the way they were by French villages, being applauded along the road... It has left its mark on their memories, their history and all the injustice they've experienced since then has not erased that. I've wanted to make this film for a long time so young people know about it and others remember. I'm convinced it will be well received. The timing is right. It is a brick so can keep building together.





Rachid Bouchareb filmography

- 2005 **INDIGÈNES**
Official Selection Cannes Film Festival, 2006
- 2001 **LITTLE SENEGAL**
Official Selection Berlin Film Festival
First Prize, Milan
Special Jury Prize and OCIC Prize, Troia
Jury Special Mention, Florence
Bayard d'Or Best Actor, Namur
Bayard d'Or Best Artistic Contribution, Namur
ACCT Prize, Namur
Best Film and Best Actor for Sotigui Kouyate, Mittlemeer Film Festival
Fipresci Jury Prize, Valladolid
Jury Special Mention, Beirut
Youth Prize, Tuebingen
- 1994 **POUSSIÈRES DE VIE (Dust of Life)**
Official Competition, Montreal
Selection, Telluride (USA)
Best Film, Fort Lauderdale (USA)
Nomination, Best Foreign Film, Golden Globe, 1995
Youth in Film , Honoree Award In Youth
Selection, San Francisco, 1995
Nomination, Best Foreign Film, Oscars, 1996
- 1991 **CHEB**
CICAE Prize, Berlin
French Cinema Perspectives Prize, Cannes
Procirep Prize, Cannes
Youth Prize, Cannes
Audience Prize, Cannes
Bronze Leopard, Locarno
Bayards d'or, including best actress, Namur
Best soundtrack, Gent
Official Algerian entry for Oscars, 1992
- 1985 **BATON ROUGE**
Best Film, Amiens
Audience Prize, Rego



Jamel Debbouze filmography

- 2006 INDIGÈNES by Rachid Bouchareb
- 2005 ANGEL A by Luc Besson
- 2004 SHE HATE ME by Spike Lee
- 2000 ASTÉRIX ET OBÉLIX, MISSION CLÉOPATRE
(Asterix and Obelix, Mission Cleopatra) by Alain Chabat
LE FABULEUX DESTIN D'AMÉLIE POULAIN (Amélie) by Jean-Pierre Jeunet
Nomination, César Award, best actor in a second role, 2002
DINOSAUR (cartoon - «Zini» voice)
- 1998 LE CIEL, LES OISEAUX ET... TA MÈRE !
(Boys on the Beach) by Djamel Bensalah
ZONZON by Laurent Bouhnik

Samy Naceri filmography

- 2006 INDIGÈNES by Rachid Bouchareb
- 2004 BAB EL OUED by Merzak Allouache
- 2001 LA MENTALE (The Code) by Manuel Boursinhac
- NID DE GUÊPES (The Nest) by Florent Emilio Siri
- PHILOSOPHALE by Farid Fedjer
- LA REPENTIE (The Repentant) by Laetitia Masson
- TAXI 3 by Gérard Krawczyk
- 2000 BLUFF by Philippe Haïm
- FÉROCE (Ferocious) by Gilles de Maistre
- LÀ-BAS...MON PAYS (Return to Algiers) by Alexandre Arcady
- LE PETIT POUCKET (Tom Thumb) by Olivier Dahan
- 1999 TAXI 2 by Gérard Krawczyk
- UN PUR MOMENT DE ROCK'N ROLL by Manuel Boursinhac
- UNE POUR TOUTES (One 4 All) by Claude Lelouch
- 1998 CANTIQUE DE LA RACAÏLLE (Melody for a Hussler) by Vincent Ravalec
- TAXI by Gérard Pirès



Roschdy Zem filmography

- 2006 MAUVAISE FOI by Roschdy Zem
- 2005 LA CALIFORNIE by Jacques Fieschi
INDIGÈNES by Rachid Bouchareb
- 2004 LE PETIT LIEUTENANT by Xavier Beauvois
CAMPING À LA FERME by Jean-Pierre Sinapi
36, QUAI DES ORFÈVRES by Olivier Marchal
VA, VIS ET DEVIENS (Go, See and Become) by Radu Mihaileanu
- 2003 TENJA by Hassan Legzouli
ORDO by Laurence Ferreira-Barbosa
- 2002 FILLES UNIQUES (Sole Sisters) by Pierre Jolivet
CHOUCHOU by Merzak Allouache
MONSIEUR N. by Antoine de Caunes
- 2001 BLANCHE by Bernie Bonvoisin
LE RAID by Djamel Bensalah
MA FEMME EST UNE ACTRICE (My Wife is an Actress) by Yvan Attal
- 2000 BETTY FISHER ET AUTRES HISTOIRES
(Betty Fisher and Other Stories) by Claude Miller
SANSA by Siegfried
CHANGE MOI MA VIE (Change My Life) by Liria Begeja
LITTLE SENEGAL by Rachid Bouchareb
- 1999 L'ORIGINE DU MONDE by Jérôme Enrico
SAUVE-MOI (Save Me) by Christian Vincent
LA PARENTHÈSE ENCHANTÉE (An Enchanted Interlude) by Michel Spinoza
MA PETITE ENTREPRISE (My Little Business) de Pierre Jolivet





- 1998 STAND BY by Roch Stephanik
- VIVRE AU PARADIS (Living in Paradise) by Bourlem Guerdjou
- 1997 LOUISE (TAKE 2) by Siegfried
- Selection Un Certain Regard Cannes Film Festival, 1998
- ALICE ET MARTIN (Alice and Martin) by André Téchiné
- À VENDRE (For Sale) by Laetitia Masson
- Selection Un Certain Regard Cannes Film Festival, 1998
- CEUX QUI M'AIMENT PRENDRONT LE TRAIN
- (Those who Love Me Can Take the Train) by Patrice Chéreau
- Official Selection Cannes Film Festival, 1998
- VIVE LA RÉPUBLIQUE (Long Live the Republic) by Éric Rochant
- 1996 DE L'AUTRE CÔTÉ DE LA MER (The Other Shore) by Dominique Cabrera
- LA DIVINE POURSUITE (The Gods Must be Daring) by Michel Deville
- FRED by Pierre Jolivet
- LE PLUS BEAU MÉTIER DU MONDE
- (The Best Job in the World) by Gérard Lauzier
- 1995 CLUBBED TO DEATH by Yolande Zaubermann
- LE COEUR FANTÔME (The Phantom Heart) by Philippe Garrel
- EN AVOIR (OU PAS) (To Have (or not)) by Laetitia Masson
- MÉMOIRES D'UN JEUNE CON by Patrick Aurignac
- 1994 N'OUBLIE PAS QUE TU VAS MOURIR
- (Don 't Forget You're Going to Die) by Xavier Beauvois
- Jury prize Cannes Film Festival, 1995
- 1991 J'EMBRASSE PAS (I Don't Kiss) by André Téchiné



Sami Bouajila filmography

- 2006 INDIGÈNES by Rachid Bouchareb
LES TÉMOINS by André Téchiné
- 2004 ZAINA, CAVALIÈRE DE L'ATLAS by Bourlem Guerdjou
- 2003 AVANT L'OUBLI by Augustin Burger
- 2002 LA COMPAGNIE DES HOMMES (Playing "in the Company of Men") by Arnaud Desplechin
PAS SI GRAVE (No Big Deal) by Bernard Rapp
- 2001 NID DE GUÊPES (The Nest) by Florent Emilio Siri
EMBRASSEZ QUI VOUS VOUDREZ (Summer Things) by Michel Blanc
VIVRE ME TUE (Life Kills Me) by Jean-Pierre Sinapi
- 2000 LA FAUTE À VOLTAIRE (Blame it on Voltaire) by Abdel Kechiche
CHANGE MOI MA VIE (Change My Life) by Liria Begeja
LA RÉPÉTITION (Replay) by Catherine Corsini
- 1999 INSÉPARABLES by Michel Couvelard
DRÔLE DE FÉLIX (Funny Felix) by Olivier Ducastel and Jacques Martineau
FAITES COMME SI JE N'ÉTAIS PAS LÀ (Pretend I'm not Here) by Olivier Jahan
- 1998 COUVRE FEU (Curfew) by Edward Zwick
NOS VIES HEUREUSES (Our Happy Lives) by Jacques Maillot
Official selection Cannes Film Festival, 1999
- 1996 LE DÉMÉNAGEMENT by Olivier Doran
ARTEMISIA by Agnès Merlet
- 1995 ANNA OZ by Éric Rochant
- 1994 BYE BYE by Karim Dridi
- 1993 LES SILENCES DU PALAIS (The Silences of the Palace) by Moufida Tlatli
- 1992 LES HISTOIRES D'AMOUR FINISSENT MAL EN GÉNÉRAL
(Love Affairs Usually End Badly) by Anne Fontaine
L'HEURE DU COCHON by Leslie Megahey
- 1991 LA THUNE (Money) by Philippe Galland



Bernard Blancan filmography

- 2005 INDIGÈNES by Rachid Bouchareb
- 2004 CACHE - CACHE by Yves Caumon
LA RAVISSEUSE by Antoine Santana
QUARTIER VIP by Laurent Firode
LA MAISON DE NINA by Richard Dumbo
- 2003 COMME UNE IMAGE (Look at me) by Agnès Jaoui
JE SUIS UN ASSASSIN (The Hook) by Thomas Vincent
INGUELEZI by François Dupeyron
- 2002 RENCONTRE AVEC LE DRAGON (The Red Knight) by Hélène Angel
- 2001 LE PHARMACIEN DE GARDE (The Pharmacist) by Jean Veber
LE CHIGNON D'OLGA (Olga's Chignon) by Jérôme Bonnel
UN MOMENT DE BONHEUR by Antoine Santana
- 2000 AMOUR D'ENFANCE (Boyhood Loves) by Yves Caumon
FAIS-MOI DES VACANCES (We Need a Vacation) by Didier Bivel
- 1999 KENNEDY ET MOI (Kennedy and I) by Sam Karmann
- 1998 UN DÉRANGEMENT CONSIDÉRABLE (A Major Inconvenience) by Bernard Stora
PEAU D'HOMME CŒUR DE BÊTE (Skin of Man, Heart of Beast) by Hélène Angel
- 1994 LE CRI DE TARZAN by Thomas Bardinet

Cast

Jamel Debbouze	Saïd
Samy Naceri	Yassir
Roschdy Zem	Messaoud
Sami Bouajila	Abdelkader
Bernard Blancan	Martinez
Mathieu Simonet	Leroux
Benoît Giros	Captain Durieux
Mélanie Laurent	Girl from Vosges village
Antoine Chappey	The Colonel
Assaad Bouab	Larbi



Crew

Director	Rachid Bouchareb
Screenwriter	Olivier Morelle
Associate producer	Jean Bréhat
Co-producer	Jamel Debbouze
Associate producer	Thomas Langmann
Executive producer	Muriel Merlin
Production manager	Antoine Beau
Post production manager	Cédric Ettouati
Casting	Nora Habib
First assistant director	Mathieu Schiffman
Continuity assistant	Virginie Barbay
Sound engineers	Olivier Hespel Olivier Walczak Franck Rubio Thomas Gauder
Costume designer	Michèle Richer
Visual effects	L'Est
Special effects	Les Versaillais
Art director	Dominique Douret
Editor	Yannick Kergoat
Cinematographer	Patrick Blossier, A.F.C.
Original soundtrack	Armand Amar Khaled
Screenplay and dialogues	Olivier Lorelle Rachid Bouchareb
Set photographer	Roger Arpajou

A French Moroccan Algerian Belgian co-production

Producer	Tessalit Productions
Co-producer	Kissfilms
In co-production with	France 3 Cinéma and France 2 Cinéma Studiocanal Taza Productions (Morocco) Tassili (Algeria) Versus Production and Scope Invest (Belgium)

In association with	La Petite Reine
with the support of	The Kingdom of Morocco
with the exceptionnal support of	The region Ile-de-France
with the support of	The region Franche-Comté The region Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur The region Alsace Conseil Général des Vosges The region Aquitaine Tax shelter of the Federal Government of Belgium Royal Air Maroc The International League for Human Rights The Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations The F.A.S.I.L.D

Digital technologies and special effects produced with the support of the CNC	
with the participation of	Canal+ Cinécinémas The CNC (National Centre of Cinematography) Cofinova 1 and Cofinova 2

Distributor (France)	StudioCanal (Mars Distribution)
International sales	Films distribution
Video	TF1 Vidéo
Sales (France)	Tessalit Productions