

MYTH OF A COLORBLIND FRANCE

A film by Alan Govenar

86 minutes, color, 2020



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Short Synopsis

Myth of a Colorblind France explores the extraordinary and sometimes difficult lives of Blacks in Paris from the 19th century to the present.

For more than a century, African American artists, authors, musicians and others have traveled to Paris to liberate themselves from the racism of the United States. What made these African Americans choose France? Why were the French fascinated by African Americans? And to what extent was and is France truly colorblind?

Alan Govenar's new documentary investigates these questions and examines the ways that racism has plagued not only Blacks fleeing the United States, but Africans and people of color in France today. The film explores the lives and careers of renowned African Americans who emigrated to Paris, and features interviews with leading experts on the subject, as well as Black Parisians.

Long Synopsis

Myth of a Colorblind France explores the extraordinary and sometimes difficult lives of Blacks in Paris from the 19th century to the present.

For more than a century, African American artists, authors, musicians and others have traveled to Paris to liberate themselves from the racism of the United States. What made these African Americans choose France? Why were the French fascinated by African Americans? And to what extent was and is France truly colorblind?

Alan Govenar's new documentary investigates these questions and examines the ways that racism has plagued not only Blacks fleeing the United States, but Africans and people of color in France today. The film explores the lives and careers of renowned African Americans who emigrated to Paris, including Josephine Baker, James Baldwin, Richard Wright, Beauford Delaney, Augusta Savage, Barbara Chase-Riboud, and Lois Mailou Jones, and includes rare home movie

footage of Henry Ossawa Tanner in Paris. *Myth of a Colorblind France* features interviews with Michel Fabre (author of a landmark biography on Richard Wright), psychoanalyst and jazz aficionado Francis Hofstein, poet James Emanuel, historian Tyler Stovall, filmmaker Thomas Allen Harris, graffiti artist Quik, hip hop producer Ben the Glorious Bastard, African drummer Karim Toure, and many more.

Filmmaker Biographies

Alan Govenar – Director, Co-Writer

Alan Govenar is a writer, photographer, and filmmaker. He is president of Documentary Arts, a non-profit organization he founded in 1985 to present new perspectives on historical issues and diverse cultures. Govenar has a B.A. with distinction in American Folklore from Ohio State University, an M.A. in Folklore and Anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin, and a Ph.D. in Arts and Humanities from the University of Texas at Dallas. He is a Guggenheim Fellow and the author of thirty books, including *Texas Blues: The Rise of a Contemporary Sound*, *Stompin' at the Savoy: The Story of Norma Miller*, *Extraordinary Ordinary People*, *Everyday Music*, *Untold Glory*, *Stoney Knows How: Life as a Sideshow Tattoo Artist*, *Deep Ellum: The Other Side of Dallas*, *Portraits of Community*, *The Early Years of Rhythm and Blues: The Photography of Benny Joseph*, and *The Blues Come to Texas: Paul Oliver and Mack McCormick's Unfinished Book*. His book *Osceola: Memories of a Sharecropper's Daughter* won First Place in the New York Book Festival (Children's Non-Fiction), a Boston Globe-Hornbook Honor; and an Orbis Pictus Honor from the National Council of Teachers of English.

Govenar's film, *Stoney Knows How*, based on his book by the same title about Old School tattoo artist Leonard St. Clair, was shown at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, and was selected as an Outstanding Film of the Year by the London Film Festival. Govenar has also produced and directed numerous films in association with NOVA, La Sept/ARTE, and PBS for broadcast and educational distribution. His documentaries

The Beat Hotel, Master Qi and the Monkey King, You Don't Need Feet to Dance, Extraordinary Ordinary People, and Tattoo Uprising are distributed by First Run Features.

Govenar is also a playwright, whose musicals include *Blind Lemon Blues* and *Lonesome Blues* (with Akin Babatunde) and *Texas in Paris*. His musicals have been performed at the York Theatre (New York), Forum Meyrin (Geneva), Maison des Cultures du Monde (Paris), Zuiderpershuis (Antwerp), Leidse Schouwburg (Leiden), Regentes (Den Haag), and Oude Luxor (Rotterdam).

His artist books and photographs are in collections in the United States and abroad, including The Museum of Modern Art (New York), Victoria and Albert Museum (London), Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris), Museum of Fine Arts (Boston), National Portrait Gallery (Washington, DC), and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

Jason Johnson-Spinos – Editor, Co-Writer

Jason Johnson-Spinos is a theatre and film artist and educator. He has worked as an editor at Documentary Arts since 2011. He edited the feature films *You Don't Need Feet to Dance, Serving Second Chances, Extraordinary Ordinary People* (also co-writer), and *Tattoo Uprising*. He was an additional editor on *The Beat Hotel*, and edited the short films *Bridging Utopia, The Silent Witness Speaks, World's Fair Waffle, and One Man Band: Al Howard*, in addition to working on numerous other Documentary Arts projects. With The Documentary Group in NYC, he assistant edited the documentaries *Angle of Attack* and *Dreamland*. He is also the co-founder and marketing director of Outcry Theatre, where he teaches both theatre and filmmaking.

Didier Dahan – Cinematographer

Didier Dahan is a French cinematographer who has worked with Documentary Arts on numerous projects. He was the cinematographer for the feature films *Tattoo Uprising, Extraordinary Ordinary People, Serving Second Chances, You Don't Need Feet to Dance, The Beat Hotel, and Master Qi and the Monkey King*, for the short films *Bridging Utopia, The Silent Witness Speaks, World's Fair Waffle, and The Poetry of Exactitude*, and for video segments for The Franco-Ame-

rican Museum at the Chateau de Blérancourt. Dahan is a graduate of l'ESEC, Ecole Supérieure d'Etudes Cinématographiques à Paris. For over 30 years, he was a Journalistes Reporter Caméraman and Grand Reporter Caméraman on documentaries, news magazines and news reports. In addition, he taught at the CFPJ School of Journalism in Paris, France.

Robert Tullier – Cinematographer

As Director/DP, Robert Tullier has shot on oil platforms in the Arabian Gulf, documented missionaries in Samoa and directed major Fortune 500 executives along with prominent individuals in the arts and business community. His work has aired both nationally and internationally. A graduate of Southern Methodist University with a BFA in Broadcast Film Arts, he has won numerous national awards. Work with Documentary Arts includes *Tattoo Uprising*, *Extraordinary Ordinary People*, *Serving Second Chances*, *The Beat Hotel*, *Voyage of Doom*, *Dreams of Conquest*, *The Devil's Swing*, *Jaber*, *Sacred Steel*, and *The Hard Ride*

Full Credits

***Myth of a Colorblind France* End Credits**

Directed by

Alan Govenar

Produced by

Documentary Arts

Written by

Alan Govenar

Jason Johnson-Spinos

Cinematography

Didier Dahan

Robert Tullier

Edited by

Jason Johnson-Spinos

Additional Camera

Alex Gallitano

Alan Govenar

Armaan Virani

Location Sound

Alan Govenar

Assistant Editor

Alan Hatchett

Production Assistant

Kaleta Doolin

Post-Production Assistant

Anthony Hill

Translations

Frank Kane

Pierre Bois

Ben The Glorious Bastard

Supported in Part by

Florence Gould Foundation

Featuring

Akin Babatundé

Monique Y. Wells

Tyler Stovall

Michel Fabre

Thomas Allen Harris

Jake Lamar

James Emanuel

Chansse Evans

Joseph Langley

Barbara Chase-Riboud

Dan Morgenstern

George Wein

Marie-France Plassard

Francis Hofstein

Paul Oliver

Chaz Guest

Michael Rosenfeld

William T. Williams

Gregory Masurovsky

Geneviève Fabre

Ben the Glorious Bastard

Karim Touré

Photographs

Barbara Chase-Riboud • Marc Riboud

Rene Burri • Andrea Frisco • The Philadelphia Inquirer • Rodrigo Lobos • Joshua Nefsky • Matthew Newton • Man Ray • Susan Wood

Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, LLC, New York, NY

Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University

Michel Fabre • Alan Govenar

Martha Cooper • Lin Felton aka QUIK

Thomas Allen Harris • Peter Sumner Walton Bellamy

Library of Congress • Carl Van Vechten

Alvin Langdon Coburn • Ricard Canals • Allan Warren • Moshe Milner • Harris & Ewing

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Réunion des Musées Nationaux • Bibliothèque Nationale de France

University of Minnesota • Yale University

National Archives • New York Public Library • State Library of North Carolina

Henry Ossawa Tanner Archival Footage

University of Pennsylvania Archives

Heaven, Earth & Hell

A Film by Thomas Allen Harris

Sound Effects

freesound.org • Rick Reineke • Ludwig Müller

Music

“Cello Sonata in G Minor, Op. 65: II. Scherzo”

“Cello Sonata in G Minor, Op. 65: III. Largo”

Composed by Frédéric Chopin

Performed by Yeonjin Kim and Christopher Harding

“Ma mère l'Oye: IV. Les entretiens de la Belle et de la Bête”

Composed by Maurice Ravel

Performed by Luis Sarro

“Étude, L. 136: XI. Pour les arpèges composés (composite arpeggios)”

Composed by Claude Debussy

Performed by Kimiko Douglass-Ishizaka

“Étude Op. 10, No. 1 in C major: Waterfall”

Composed by Frédéric Chopin

Performed by Edward Neeman

“Variations for Flute and Piano in E major ('Non piu Mesta'), B. 9”

Composed by Frédéric Chopin

Performed by Christina Hughes and Diana Hughes

“Fog”

“Immersive”

“When You Leave”

Sergey Cheremisinov

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“Nothing (Bonus Track)”

“Salve”

“September”

“Smoldering”

Kai Engel

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“Dakota”

“The Days Go Slow”

“Electric Silence”

“Glass Structures”

“The Last Days”

“Lost Time”

“The Other Side of Darkness”

“Palms”

“Played by Ear”

“Sickening”

“Soft Despair”

Unheard Music Concepts

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“Sonatine: I. Modéré”

Composed by Maurice Ravel

Performed by Markus Staab

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“Waltz in A minor, B. 150”

Composed by Frédéric Chopin

Performed by Aya Higuchi

“Taxi”

Ilias Kementzides

“Meeting the Surrealists”

Daniel Cicourel Hanley

“Blue Moon”

Shy Guy & Ben Bradley

“Pour Ceux”

Mafia K’1 Fry

Hostile Records

“Créature ratée”

Casey

Ladilafé Productions

“Drum Cadence A”

United States Navy Band

“After You’ve Gone”

U.S. Coast Guard Band

“Ballin’ the Jack”

Chris Smith and James Reese Europe

“Castle House Rag”

“Too Much Mustard”

Europe’s Society Orchestra

“Montmartre Rag”

Mitchell's Jazz Kings

"Kansas City Man Blues"

"Petite Fleur"

"Wild Cat Blues"

Sydney Bechet

"I Wanna Be Loved by You"

Broadway Nitelites

"Faster Does It"

"I Knew a Guy"

Kevin MacLeod

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"Melodie Victoria"

Kevin MacLeod

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"Aire"

"La tortuga"

"Nocturno"

"Sugar blues"

Orquesta Arrecife

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"Romantic"

Bensound

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“City Hunter”

Ben The Glorious Bastard

“Police”

Suprême NTM

Epic

Special Thanks

Kaleta Doolin

Jean-Marc Fabre

Pierre Fabre

Geneviève Fabre

Sergio Tosi

Jean Migrenne

Alex Govenar

Mathilde Schneider

Anne Dopffer

Freddy Dressen

Villa Luxembourg

Musée Franco-Américain de Blérancourt

Michael Rosenfeld

Mathew Newton

Quentin Bajac

Yvonne Rouquet

Regina Weinreich

Miles Morgan

Thomas Allen Harris

Katy Roberts

J.M. Duffin

Raymond Pace Alexander

Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander

Nicholas Traube

Trica Keaton

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