



GOOR - JIGEEN

MAN - WOMAN



DIRECTED BY
ALBERTO AMORETTI

WRITTEN AND CREATED BY **ALBERTO AMORETTI** AND **GIOVANNI HÄNNINEN**
 EDITING **ALBERTO AMORETTI** DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY **GIOVANNI HÄNNINEN** ASSISTANT **DARIO SCALCO** COLOR GRADING
GIOVANNI HÄNNINEN ASSISTANT ON POST-PRODUCTION **GIANLUCA MUNARI** ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK BY **GIACOMO BIAGI**
 FEATURING MUSIC BY **JAMES WILLIAM BLADES** SOUND EDITING **ALESSANDRA MORELLI** SOUND MIX **MATTEO DI SIMONE**

goor-jigeen /go:r jige:n/ – adj. wolof [literally «male female »]

1. *noun* by generalization gay and akin an insult. 2. *adj.* Effeminate.

Synopsis

In wolof 'Goor-jigeen' means literally 'Man-woman', by generalisation gay and akin to an insult. In Senegal, being homosexual is punishable by law up to five years of imprisonment. In the last years a homophobic wave hit the country, with public rallies asking to heighten the punishment.

In this tough environment, some associations fight for the recognition of the human rights of the LGBT community. Activists based in Dakar risk their lives to help young men to survive the stigma of being homosexual. Some of these young men spent time in prison because of their sexual orientation. Others had no other choice than flee the country, hoping for a better future in Europe.

Goor - Jigeen, Man - Woman was screened at:



directed by **ALBERTO AMORETTI**

written by **ALBERTO AMORETTI**
and **GIOVANNI HÄNNINEN**

editing **ALBERTO AMORETTI**

director of photography **GIOVANNI HÄNNINEN**
assistant **DARIO SCALCO**

color grading **GIOVANNI HÄNNINEN**
assistant on post-production **GIANLUCA MUNARI**

original soundtrack by **GIACOMO BIAGI**
featuring music by **JAMES WILLIAM BLADES**

sound editing **ALESSANDRA MORELLI**
sound mix **MATTEO DI SIMONE**

Technical Specifications: 30', color, stereo/5.1, 16:9

Languages: English, Wolof, French, Italian

Subtitles: English, Italian, French, Spanish



In an homophobic country, young Senegalese men fight for their right to love.



Historical Context

Goor-Jigen is a documentary about the struggle of the LGBT+ community in today's Senegal.

Senegal is a country on the west coast of the African continent. A former French colony, de facto still deeply connected with France both economically and culturally.

After independence in 1960, Senegal drew up its own civil code which also included an article that punished acts against nature, inspired by a French law.

For decades, this law has only been applied on rare occasions. Homosexuals called goor-jigeen in the Wolof language were not segregated, but included in society. Things have changed since the 1990s in conjunction with the spread of the HIV virus. To talk about prevention against AIDS, it was necessary to define sexual relations between males, the MSM: Men Sexing with Men, and to emphasize what was still considered an unnatural intercourse.

Imams have begun to preach against the gay community and to foment the stigma linked to the disease, blaming on homosexuality the spreading of the virus.

In a 98% Muslim country, it is understandable how these ferocious sermons have fostered the birth of a profound homophobic sentiment. The situation continued to worsen year after year with increasingly violent episodes.

The apex of the homophobic wave was reached in 2021, when rallies, organized by politicians and religious leaders, called for the approval of a new law against homosexuality, chanting homophobic slogans and burning rainbow flags.

The newly proposed law wanted to punish, not only the "acts against nature", but homosexuality itself. Pedophilia, necrophilia and zoophilia were also included in the draft of the same article, basically equating them with homosexuality. Parliament rejected the bill, but a part of the political world promised to propose it again soon.

This homophobic wave has exacerbated the migratory trend of the LGBT+ community. Many, even those who wished to stay in Senegal, have decided to leave. The less fortunate left by land reaching first Mauritania and then Morocco. Here, at the UNHCR headquarters in Rabat, requests are received from homosexual boys fleeing Senegal, but also from many other African countries where they are persecuted.

The problem is the timespan. On average it takes over thirty months to get the approval. In the last years, due to Covid-19, the waiting period has been further lengthened. During these years, the young migrants have to find a way to survive in Morocco, an incredibly racist country towards Africans coming from south of the Sahara. For many, the only solution is prostitution.

Director's Statement

Giovanni Hänninen, co-author of the film, and I learned about the LGBT situation in Senegal while we were in the country to shoot another project entitled *Senegal/Sicily*: a series of documentaries about migration between Senegal and Sicily, one of the entry points into Europe during the recent migratory waves.

In the research we conducted in the conception of the project we understood how much migration was an important issue also for the LGBT+ community in the country.

LGBT+ community members are the only migrants from Senegal entitled to international protection as they are persecuted in their own country of birth. All other migrants generally have no right to refugee status because Senegal is a peaceful, democratic country - by continent standards - with a relatively stable economy thanks to its connections with France.

Homosexual migrants, on the other hand, can apply for refugee status and obtain a visa for a country considered safe. In the case of those coming from Senegal, it is usually Canada as a French-speaking country.

While we were in Senegal for the interviews of the series on migration, we decided to also collect testimonies from the few associations that are committed to defending the rights of the LGBT+ community and to carry out this parallel project that we have titled *Goor-Jigeen* (Man-Woman), as homosexuals are called in the Wolof language.

In Dakar, we met several gays and lesbians who live in the hope of having their civil rights recognized. Many of them, however, for fear of the consequences did not want to speak in front of the camera. Others, on the other hand, have decided to expose themselves, despite the risks.

I was very impressed by the strength and tenacity of the Dakar activists, their desire not to leave Senegal, to stay in order to improve the living conditions of future generations. Their commitment to creating a network of protection for young people rejected by their families, without work, sometimes returning from a period in prison just because they are gay, is commendable.

The project then continued in Marrakech, where we met two other gay men who instead decided they could no longer live in Senegal and left in the hope of reaching a country where they could live in peace. Morocco is a sort of limbo in which they can apply for international protection, but the bureaucratic process is long, full of rules, forms, interviews, tests... so much that many decide to give up and try the path of illegal immigration, by sea, to Spain and its exclaves.

In our project, we also wanted to interview some Senegalese boys who now live in Europe, after having obtained the international protection, but none of the guys we met agreed to tell their story. At first glance it seems a paradox that those who are finally safe, do not want to expose themselves, while those who still live in Dakar decided to talk with us about their condition regardless of the risks.

On second thought it is a sign of how important it is for them to obtain the freedom to love. And once reached they do not want to jeopardize it in any way.

Understanding this need to safeguard a security achieved through so much pain, I decided that two African boys embracing and holding hands in an European city were the best image to represent the rights these young people are fighting for.

Alberto Amoretti

Director, Writer

Alberto Amoretti is a screenwriter, author and director. He graduated at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Milan in 2010, and he started his career writing TV movies and series for RAI and Mediaset. 2016 marks his directing debut with the documentary *ATOPOS, generi teatrali*. In 2017 he is guest of Thread, the artist residence of The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation, for which he develops, in collaboration with Giovanni Hänninen: the video installation *Anni's Loom* (2017) presented at the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, the short movie *A Touching Sight* (2019), and the documentary series *Senegal/Sicily*, shown in numerous events and international venues, among which are Dak'Art 2018 - Biennale of African art, Maysles Documentary Center of New York, Musée Yves Saint Laurent of Marrakech, Fondazione Sozzani in Milan. In 2020 and 2021 he worked on video direction of concerts for important Italian symphonic institutions, among which are the Fondazione Toscanini and Filarmonica della Scala.

Giovanni Hänninen

Director of photography, Writer

Giovanni Hänninen earned a PhD in aerospace engineering and teaches Photography for architecture at Politecnico di Milano. Since 2009 he photographs for Filarmonica della Scala. In 2012 he develops - invited by Gabriele Basilico - with Alberto Amoretti the project *cittàinattesa*. The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation invites him to photograph their their artist residence in Senegal and his images are selected for the exhibition *Thread* (2017) by David Zwirner, New York. In 2018 he presents the project *People of Tamba* in different cities. In 2019 he develops a photographic campaign for the Pilotta Museum in Parma and takes part in the exhibition *Nei Palchi della Scala* at Museo Teatrale alla Scala. His project *The Missing Piece* (2020) won the Photobrussels Festival. In 2021 he takes part in the Italian Pavillion of the XVII Biennale di Architettura with his series of photographs commissioned by Arte Sella for the project *Dopo/After*.

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