



The Life of an Ambassador's Wife

In Burkina Faso, a diplomatic spouse spends her days within the boundaries of the embassy.

By Theresa Traore Dahlberg

The New York Times

OPINION | The Life of an Ambassador's Wife

Give this article



Give this article



By Theresa Traore Dahlberg

Ms. Traore Dahlberg is a filmmaker.

Jan. 24, 2023

When I was filming my first feature film, “[Ouaga Girls](#),” in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in 2015, I was introduced to the wife of the now-former French ambassador. She asked me to film her singing opera, but as I walked into the opulent gardens of the ambassador’s residence, I asked if I could follow her in her daily life instead.

As the child of a Burkinabé father and Swedish mother, I spent my childhood traveling between Burkina Faso and Sweden. During the making of this film, I had a lot of conflicting thoughts and feelings. Walking down the aisle of perfectly manicured trees at the residency, I was reminded of the stories my grandmother used to tell me about when Burkina Faso was a French colony.

The short documentary above explores the complex and overlapping power dynamics of class, women’s roles and post-colonialism by holding a magnifying glass to the life of an ambassador’s wife, both protected and isolated by the residence walls.

Op-Docs Newsletter Watch Oscar-nominated short documentaries from around the world, sent straight to your inbox. [Get it sent to your inbox.](#)

[Theresa Traore Dahlberg](#) is a [visual artist](#) and filmmaker.

The Times is committed to publishing [a diversity of letters](#) to the editor. We’d like to hear what you think about this or any of our articles. Here are some [tips](#). And here’s our email: letters@nytimes.com.

[Op-Docs](#) is a forum for short, opinionated documentaries by independent filmmakers. [Learn more](#) about Op-Docs and [how to submit](#) to the series. Follow The New York Times Opinion section on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) ([@NYTopinion](#)) and [Instagram](#).

Published 24 January, 2023:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/24/opinion/burkina-faso-the-ambassadors-wife.html>