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La Noire de . . . Black Girl explores the lingering racism that shapes the relationship between Africans and Europeans, even after decolonization. A young Senegalese woman named Diouna, is taken from Dakar to Antibes by her French employers. Ostensibly, Diouna is to work as a governess—a position she regards as a means of self-advancement. But once in France, she is treated as a maid—only the “black girl” who is abused by the Madame (Anne-Marie Jelinck) and so lives in captivity. Her disillusionment is articulated in an anguished interior monologue, “I’m only a slave.’ Dehumanized and alone, Diouna is driven to suicide. Yet it is more an act of resistance than despair. As film scholar Clyde Taylor points out, she is sending her spirit back home to rejoin her family and *omphalos*, or spiritual center. Director/writer Sembene based the story on a newspaper clipping about an African maid’s suicide. **La Noire de . . .** is considered Africa’s first dramatic feature, for which Sembene was awarded the 1966 Jean Vigo Prix as Best Director. -- Renee Tajima

JOURNEY-ACROSS 3 CONTINENTS FILM & LECTURE SERIES

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