

## Document Citation

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# TAUW

*A film by Ousmane Sembène. Produced by the National Council of Churches. 16mm, color, sound, 26 minutes. 1969. In Wolof, with English subtitles. Distributor: New Yorker Films.*

Ousmane Sembène began his career as a novelist in France, and turned to cinema in 1960 to sidestep problems of translation and to communicate more directly with his African countrymen. Since returning to Africa, Sembène has made five major films: *Borom Saret*, *Le Noir De . . .*, *Mandabi*, *Tauw*, and most recently, *Emitai*.

Sponsored by the National Council of Churches, *Tauw* was made to acquaint American church audiences with the problems facing young people in Urban Africa today. To dramatize this theme, Sembène weaves together parallel plots concerning Tauw, a twenty year old Dakar youth and Ouman, his eleven year old brother.

Tauw's frustrations range from a strenuous relationship with his traditional and bossy father, to his inability to get a job, to his discovery that his girlfriend is pregnant. The plot climaxes when the girl's parents throw her out of the house due to her condition. At this point Tauw takes control and bravely announces that the two will marry and make their own way.

Young Ouman too has troubles with his father. After a stern spanking for playing hookey, he returns to his Koranic school. This institution consists but minimally of actual Koranic recitation; Ouman spends most of his time out begging for his teacher.

Through the parallel plots Sembène makes a strong statement about the generation gap in urban Africa. More importantly perhaps, he makes it clear that the Koranic lessons and daily begging of young Ouman cannot possibly prepare him for the harsh and alienating world occupied by his older brother.

Avoiding cinematic slickness, *Tauw* is a sensitive and extremely forceful statement on the reality of Africa's urban youth. In addition, Sembène's dramatization presents a critical reflection on his own background. There can be no doubt that *Tauw* is a very important film, worthy of wide attention and praise.

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