
RIDM
SÉLECTION OFFICIELLE
OFFICIAL SELECTION
2026
OFFICIAL SELECTION
AFRIFF
2026
a film by ALUNAYA
KUBANA
living together in Rwanda
XSKY
PRODUCTIONS
Writing and director ALUNAYA
Direction of Photography HICHAM ELALJ
Sound Recordist XAVIER NSENGIYUMVA
Original Music AIZA NTIBARIKURE & C
THE REASON Film Editor ALUNAYA Sound
Design CHRISTOPHER CARGNELLO
Producer WILL PROSPER
TELEFILM CANADA
TALENTFUND
SODEC Québec
Québec
Film and Television Tax Credit
Gestion SODEC
NATYFTV
Funded by the Government of Canada
Canada
CANADA MEDIA FUND

KUBANA

Feature Film
Documentary Essay
99 min

Logline

In a poetic vision where art and memory intertwine, KUBANA combines various stories of the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda to explore how to rebuild society after the unspeakable.



TRAILER



Country of production

Canada

Filming location

Rwanda

Original languages

French, English,
Kinyarwanda, Swahili

Subtitles

French, English

Voice-over (upcoming)

Kinyarwanda

French title

KUBANA, vivre ensemble

Funding

Telefilm Canada, SODEC,
Film and Television Tax
Credit, CMF

Image process

Color

Production format

6K

Sound

5.1 surround

Projection ratio

16:9



CREW

Direction	Alunaya
Screenplay	Alunaya
Director of Photography	Hicham Elalj
Editing	Alunaya
Sound Recording	Xavier Nsengiyumva
Sound Design	C The Reason
Original Music	Aiza Ntibarikure
	& C The Reason
Sound Mixing	Joey Simas
Color Grading	Martin Gaumond
Production	Will Prosper
	XSKY Production



CASTING

Gamaliel Mbonimana - Assumpta Mugiraneza - King Ngabo - Émile Rwamasirabo - Alice Karekezi - Hervé Kimenyi - Isabelle Kabano - Émilienne Mukansoro - Joséphine Dusabimana - Clémentine Nyirarukundo - Jeannette Muhimpundu - Thomas Nsanzimana - Elias Jean Nsanzintwari

Children Deniz - Ranie - Clement - Arnold - Kevin - Rania

Dancers Manzi Abdul Hakim Mbaya - Zulfat Unujawimana - Ada Umujawimana - Winnie Ange - Eya Khalifa



Short synopsis

KUBANA, by director Alunaya, is a collection of stories from survivors, a perpetrator of genocide, researchers, women farmers and artists who were impacted by the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda, asking the question of how to rebuild a society after the unspeakable.

Based on the idea that the past inhabits and shapes the present, this film retraces the implementation of colonial and political ideologies that led to the 1994 genocide and their repercussions up to present day - even as the fall of Goma to M23 takes place in the DRC during filming.

Breaking with the usual violent images associated with these events, the director opts for a resolutely poetic vision, where art, language, memory and bodies in motion come forward as models for collective healing.





Director's Statement

KUBANA is the rewrite of another film: Resilience. In 2019, I arrived in Rwanda with six months ahead of me and theoretical research behind me. A history of Rwanda that began, and ended, in 1994. After two months, I understood that this angle wasn't quite right. It was above all external. What I was seeing wasn't people overcoming something. It was people choosing, every day, to keep living together.

It was Chrysologue Kubwimana who gave me the word. When I shared my reflections with him, he said: in Kinyarwanda, what you're describing is called kubana. Living together. That shift from an imported idea to a grounded observation became the film itself.

Of Afro-Caribbean descent, having grown up in France and then Canada, I carry a certain sensitivity to these questions. Having experienced the genocide neither closely nor from afar, I maintain an emotional distance I hope is useful: a cognitive empathy that allows me to approach the subject with care without being overwhelmed by the tragedy. What I encountered in Rwanda were men and women, young people above all, standing tall, proud, free, who want to be heard and trusted me with their confidences.

As an interdisciplinary artist, I compose my films like my paintings: colors, textures, symmetries, slowness. No voiceover, no on-screen presence. This withdrawal is a political gesture: refusing to impose an external narrative and leaving all the space to Rwandan voices.

Showing this image of Rwanda was already necessary in 2019. Today, another dimension has been added. In the Great Lakes region, the ideology of hatred that fled in 1994 never disappeared. It has traveled through generations without access to any deconstruction initiatives, and now spreads across social media, with global reach. Faced with this, and with the deepening divisions in our own societies, KUBANA is not only a film about Rwanda. It is a universal story that unfolds on the Rwandan stage.

Alunaya

Director's Biography

Alunaya is a multidimensional artist. Her cinematographic work belongs to the documentary essay genre, where the intimate dialogue with collective history. She explores memory, identity, the traces and impacts of colonial history, and acts of reappropriation.

Her feature film KUBANA, filmed in Rwanda, reflects on the conditions of living together. She also directed Des racines nées, which opened the RIDM in 2022 as part of the Regard sur Montréal residency, and NIO FAR, “together” in Wolof, filmed in Senegal.



© Benjamin Mugabo

Filmography

KUBANA, 99 min, Documentary, 2026
BIRTHED UPROOTS, 8 min, Documentary, 2022
NIO FAR, 84 min, Documentary, 2018
PERSONNE, 38 min, Documentary, 2015
ART IS THE MESSAGE x CLAUDIO, 19 min, Documentary, 2015



Screening



2026, november RIDM | Montreal International Documentary Festival, CANADA | Official selection, PANORAMA section

2026, november AFRIFF | African International Film Festival, NIGERIA | Official selection

2026, july KCJ | Kigali Cine Junction, RWANDA | Invitation

KIGALI CINE JUNCTION

Special avant-première

Following an official invitation from the festival, KUBANA was presented as an exclusive special preview on July 24, 2026, in the presence of the director. The film begins its public life where it was made: before a Rwandan audience, including those who entrusted the filmmaker with their stories.

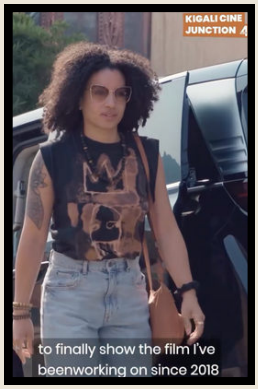
THE EVENT:

- Founded in 2023 by Imitana Productions, the company of filmmakers Philbert Aimé Mbabazi Sharangabo and Samuel Ishimwe, both awarded at the Berlinale (Silver Bear) and at Oberhausen (Grand Prize, qualifying for the Oscars).
- Mission: to revive cinema culture in Rwanda through screenings in public spaces and to restore Kwa Mayaka, the oldest cinema in Kigali.
- An event supported by Rwandan institutions: the 2025 and 2026 editions were inaugurated by Minister of State Sandrine Umuntoni.
- International media coverage, including France 24 and The New Times.









PRESS

- RWANDA TV, La Grande Édition | starting at 9min 22sec.
- IMIGANI Special Talks : How can one reconcile an artistic approach with a documentary one?
- 104.1 PLAY POWER FM | live broadcast.
- Kigali Cine Junction | full interview coming soon.



jolitropisme I saw this magnificent documentaire a few days ago and it took me a little while to find the words to express my thoughts.
Directed by @alunaya.co, whom I met in Rwanda in 2019, and whose artistic world and sensitivity have always deeply moved me.
She made a film about living together and reconciliation in Rwanda, exploring just how complex, painful and intimate these questions are.
She could have told the story of the Gacaca, collected testimonies from survivors. Instead, she chose something more nuanced: identity, belonging, resilience, listening to survivors, but also to a former genocidaire and his son.
And she brings in art, with dancers and painters who tell us what words cannot say.
This film moved me deeply. Through the testimonies, but also through the intelligence with which Jessica approaches the story, without excessive pathos and with such nuance. It feels like being in an intimate conversation with each of those who carry this history, in their own way, a part of this story.
And then there is the idea of living with it.
Living with History and with the stories.
Living with the wounds, those who have suffered, those who have caused suffering.
And continuing, despite everything, to build and live together.
This is one of the hardest things to understand for someone looking at Rwanda from the outside. And sometimes even for those who live here.
KUBANA is an absolute must-see, and Jessica will soon be presenting it in Montréal.
It is one of the most beautiful documentaries I have ever been given to see on this subject. I still get chills, and I am immensely grateful.
Because there are things we carry in silence, simply because we don't know where to begin. Too much shame, too much fear of saying the wrong thing, of reopening a wound. So we put off the conversation, even with our own children...
This film could be a starting point, a different way of approaching what we don't always dare to discuss directly. A support to share, to watch together.
Jessica, thank you for having approached this story with such delicacy. Thank you for making these stories eternal, in your own way.

See the reactions on social media

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