BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

A film by Mohammed Ahed Bensouda

Social drama

2nd feature film

35 mm/DCP/, color, Scope /2.35

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A FILM BY MOHAMMED AHED BENSOUDA

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The Idea

A woman is a victim of sexual harassment at her place of work.
Samira is a happily married woman. When a new office director arrives, his sexual harassment turns her life upside down. She tries everything to dissuade him.
The problem developed by this film is universal because sexual harassment is not something specifically Moroccan. The question takes on another dimension as soon as one looks at the absence of legislation related to sexual harassment. And, quite quickly, the problem becomes very serious. Knowing they cannot be punished, due to the lack of laws, someone who harasses continues to do so, passing from minor acts to those more consequential.

The film treats both aspects: the harassment itself and the victim’s unfruitful attempts to defend herself.

The development of the film is ordered by precise timing, all of which have meaning. Harassment is especially a question of time -- time particularly painful for those who are enduring it. Every time the harasser steps into the workplace become a terrible ordeal. This would explain otherwise inconceivable acts, such as abandoning one’s job or deep depressions.

As the legislation isn’t reactive, this is a veritable appeal for reparation in this domain. No hesitation should be permitted when one part of society harasses another. The part being harassed is, of course, the weaker of the two. It must be protected by a set of laws that would allow no perpetrator to escape persecution.

It is urgent that this legislation be initiated and implemented rapidly.
Behind Closed Doors

Treatment and Director’s Note

Behind Closed Doors

The events in the film "Behind Closed Doors" take place in the city of Casablanca, Morocco, flagship of modernity and the socio-economic development of the country.

The film begins with the transfer of the former director of the company to one of its subsidiaries. Another man, whose influential brother-in-law is a minister in Morocco’s government, is selected to fill the position. The film ends with the return of the former director to his old position. It is a complete circle.

The visual narrative is linked to images, fade-outs and changes of sequences, thus emphasizing a spatial-temporal presence. It is also linked to the psychological problems experienced by the antagonist, the new director. The protagonist is harassed verbally, physically and morally in the company where she works. She is forced into another set of problems with her family because of the absence of protective laws for women, who are victims of a practice becoming more and more frequent in societies leaning towards modernity and co-education.

Centered on a story about sexual harassment between a director and one of his female employees, the film will be approached from the point of view of a social film, positive and modern.

This story permits us to feel the psychological impact of sexual harassment on the job that a multitude of women experience, especially in a society beginning to move towards a democratic, liberal model. It also shows us the danger this phenomenon could foster in the life and behavior of someone.

Here, the abuse of power, in order to obtain sexual favors or for other ends, and the refusal to respect the free will of the other shows the inability to admit and accept our culture’s principles and to admit that women of today are not as those of the past who suffered without reacting. Today’s woman increasingly assert themselves as fully fledged social actors, in spite of a legal context characterized by the absence of laws protecting them against masculine domination in all its forms. Thus, the law of silence still predominates.
Note concerning the Direction

Throughout the film, the point of view privileged is that of the protagonist and her husband. This is the viewpoint of a majority of people, however, one which mixes the subjective with the objective.

Why choose this form of expression?

In the present context, one that is formulating laws to enable it to take the first steps towards the idealistic notion of democracy, the shock provoked by the confrontation of social situations leads us to the conclusion that there is a dearth, everywhere in the world, of legislation consecrated to human relations. Their absence blocks this process of opening up to change. It is the sacred which crushes the livable and human profane. It is a message to mobilize, forewarn and prevent.

The first necessity is to transmit a message that will guide the gestures and dialogues of the actors, from the beginning to the end, towards real situations that are psychologically moving, sensual and shocking. These will give the narrative the strength to express a positive vision in order to limit the damages and anticipate the dangers.

The narrative is made up of three major focal points.

The first resides in the way the new director begins the process of hassling and how he chooses his victim. Scenes of verbal harassment will be filmed, playing not only on the importance of the words and expressions used, but also on a role play based on the relationship between the physical and the moral.

The second pivotal point takes place in the heart of the narrative, at the moment when the director moves from the stage of verbal harassment to physical harassment. The camera, as does the narrative, will be placed in the center of these events and will accompany them with a variety of esthetic images. The acts and movements of each scene will be revisited by a cinematographic language, formulating in images the message wanted by the narrative. The key scene will be filmed taking in consideration the respect of the limits of public decency on one side and universal censure on the other.

The third focal point comes in at the last third of the narrative when the protagonist takes a decision, decides to talk to her husband and goes to seek legal counsel.
The camera will take the lead, and the sound effects will build up the density of the unexpected, giving birth to a paroxysm, and opening the way to the demand: No to sexual harassment against women. No to all forms of violence against them.

With the aim of looking for a style that would allow me to make a film that would be positive, modern and would reflect a modern-day Morocco, as well as making a film that would provoke reflection, my goal is to produce a film that will be militant for the rights of Moroccan women.

This means filming in settings which represent contemporary Morocco with characters coming from everyday life, giving them a modern aspect to transmit my messages with mildness and realism. The locations and characters will be selected in relation to the state of the scenes, through the presence of the image, aspects of modern life present in Casablanca and Morocco.

The actors will be chosen according to their passion for the subject of the film. Beauty, spontaneity, liberty, cultural level and photogenic qualities will be considerations.

The pictorial influence will be present. The protagonist will be positioned and enhanced in a 19th century neo-classical prospective, as is seen in the work of Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres’s “Madame d’Haussonville”.

She will also be filmed in a realistic way reminiscent of Edouard Manet’s “Chemin de Fer”.

The camera movements, particularly the angles, will be used effectively to produce the desired vision and to pace the narrative line with a fluid story rich in events.

Finally, in today’s context, it is not possible to make a film without taking into account the box-office. That presupposes triggering the phenomenon of the spectator’s curiosity.
Director’s Note concerning the Narrative

Why make a film about sexual harassment?

The writing of this script is the fruit of extensive study and research about harassment, particularly of a sexual nature, that women experience in their place of work.

I have also seen several films, of different styles and from different cultures, on the subject. It was this that pushed me to conclude that harassment is a universal phenomenon.

As well, it is a behavior difficult to observe and define, a characteristic that makes it very complicated to subsequently prove. Quite often, harassment takes place between a man in a position of power in a hierarchy and the woman who is under his orders.

It is quite often a question of the abuse of power, on the part of certain men, who suffer from personality disorders.

Even if there is a fine line between harassment and seduction, one can safely say that this behavior becomes serious when it reaches the stage of menace, violence or vengeance.

As for the law governing harassment, it remains unclear, differing from one country to another, as the majority of countries have no specific legislation concerning the issue.

Morocco is not the exception to the rule. Civic, particularly feminist, associations do not lose any opportunity to call for the necessary legislation. Their actions taken in this sense have already reached the general secretariat of the government.

The film raises this type of question in order that the judicial codes of this country keep in step with the advances attained by the civil society, as well as by Moroccan women.

This legislation will be welcomed in order to reinforce our progress towards modernity and human rights.
Samira is an attractive, young Moroccan woman. She is happily married to a banker. Their lives are turned upside down with the appointment of a new director in the company where Samira works.

The new director begins to harass her.

Samira tries to discourage him by reminding him she is married and a mother. But he ignores her protests and is intent on getting from her what he wants.

After Samira categorically refuses, the harassment metamorphoses into vengeance. Her life becomes a living hell.

After several attempts to resolve the problem through administrative steps in the hierarchy of the company, she turns towards a women’s association. It is their mission to defend the rights of women and to force the authorities to establish legislation against sexual harassment.

This is where she finds herself at a dead end, because it is very difficult to obtain material proof to support her accusations before the law. The company decides to dismiss her because of the “harm” she has caused her employer.

However, before losing her job, which has cost her years of study and dedicated work, she decides to proceed in another direction and puts into action an ingenious plan to obtain the proof she needs.

Summary
Director’s Curriculum Vitae

Surname: BENSOUDA

First name: Mohammed

Middle name: Ahed


Education: History and French literature at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Fes, Morocco, from 1989 to 1991.

Filmmaking Studies at the University PARIS 1 - Pantheon - SORBONNE.

B.A. In Art History and Archaeology from the University PARIS 1 - Pantheon - SORBONNE.

Professional training course on cinematographic techniques at the Association Creation Med Film.

Holder of professional cards: Direction and Production, delivered by the CCM (Moroccan Cinematographic Center) in 1993.

Professional training course in direction at CINETEL, Paris, France.

Diploma of scriptwriting from the Institution of Specialized Education in Cinema and Television (CINECOURS), Quebec, Canada.

Managing Director of Atlas Casting, the first actor’s agency in Morocco, from 1997 to 2002.

Member of the Dramatic Authors and Composers Society (SACD) Paris, France.

Member of the Guild of African Producers and Directors.

Member of the Commission of Scenario Reading of the CINEMA fund of the Intergovernmental Agency of French-speaking Countries, Paris, France from 2008 to 2010.

Member of the Moroccan Union of Cinema and Television technicians.

Producer and Sole Administrator of the Production Company Les Films 7 SARL.

From 1985 to 2003, a professional career in cinema and television as Actor, Assistant Director, Location Manager, Casting Director, Scriptwriter, Director and Producer.

Languages: Classical Arabic, French, English and Italian.
**Director:**

- 2009 *Story of a Mchaouchi Wrestler*, feature film, 35mm
- 2008 *The Return*, short film, 35mm
- 2006 *The Shadow of the Wolf*, feature-length television film
- 2005 *The Eyes of the Heart*, short film, 35mm
- 2005 *The Baptism Gift*, short film, 35mm
- 2005 *Suffering*, short film, 35mm
- 2004 *The Display Window*, short film, 35mm
- 2004 *R’DA*, short film, 35mm
- 2003 *The Jar*, short film, 35mm
- 2001 *The Raped Silence*, short film, 35mm
- 1993 *The Price of Heedlessness*, feature-length TV film

* 1st Feature Film: “Story of a Mchaouchi Wrestler”

  * Prize for Best Director *

  At the Rotterdam Film Festival CINEMAR 2010, The Netherlands

  * Jury Prize - Young Public *

  At the 16th International Alternative Film Festival 2010, Rabat, Morocco

  * Special Jury Mention *

  At the 6th Muscat International Film Festival 2010, Oman

« **Official Selections** »

* The 33rd Cairo International Film Festival 2010, Cairo, Egypt. Arab Film Competition

* The 40th International Film Festival of India 2010, Goa, India. Cinema of the World Section

* The 17th Annual African Diaspora Film Festival 2010, New York, USA

* The 6th Muscat International Film Festival 2010, Muscat, Oman
*The 6\textsuperscript{th} CINEMAR Film Festival Of ROTTERDAM 2010, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

*The 7\textsuperscript{th} International Pan-African Film Festival of Cannes 2010, Cannes, France

*The 6\textsuperscript{th} International Festival of Muslim Cinema "Golden Minbar" 2010, Kazan, Russia

*The 32\textsuperscript{nd} International Sportfilm Festival, Rassengna Cinematographica Internazionale 2010, Palermo, Italy

*21st edition of the Arabic Film Festival of Fameck 2010, Fameck, France

*European Film Festival of Tunis 2010, Tunis, Tunisia

*The 11\textsuperscript{th} Moroccan National Film Festival 2010, Tangier, Morocco

*International Alternative Film Festival of RABAT 2010, Rabat, Morocco. Arabic Film Competition

*The 7\textsuperscript{th} Edition of Trans-Saharan Film Festival of Zagora 2010, Zagora, Morocco

*International Cinema Film Festival of Dakhla 2010, Dakhla, Morocco

* Short film: R’DA

\#{ \textit{Bronze Award at FESPACO}} \#

*Pan-African Festival of Ouagadougou 2007, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

* Short film: « The Raped Silence »

\#{ \textit{Prize for Best First Film}} \#

*At the 7\textsuperscript{th} Moroccan National Film Festival 2003, Oujda, Morocco

\#{ \textit{Special Jury Mention}} \#

*At FESPACO, *$At Pan-African Festival of Ouagadougou 2003, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
**Producer, LES FILMS 7:**

- 2013 *Behind Closed Doors*
- 2009 *Story of a Mchaouchi Wrestler*, feature film, 35mm
- 2004 *The Jar*, short film, 35mm
- 2003 *The Raped Silence*, short film, 35mm
- 1993 *The Price of Heedlessness*, feature film in video

**Scriptwriter:**

- The Price of Heedlessness (*feature film*) directed
- The Eyes of the Heart (*short film*) directed
- Suffering (*short film*) directed
- Story of an Imaginary Ghost (*short film*) written
- R’da (*short film*) directed
- Snake Hunter (*documentary*) written
- The Raped Silence (*short film*) directed
- The Jar (*short film*) directed
- Expulsed from the Paris/Casablanca Flight (*feature film*)
- Short Night (*cinema program*) in progress
- The Christmas Present (*feature film*) in writing
- Not Far From Tangier (*short film*) in writing
- In a Lifetime (*short film*) in writing
- The Return of Joseph (*television series in 30 episodes*)
- Essalafia Eljihadia in Morocco (*documentary*) written
- Fellassa “Gold Prospectors in Fes’s Old City River” (*documentary*) in writing
- Odors of Andalusia (*musical comedy*) in writing
- Safha (*comedy, feature film*) in writing
- Paris – Agadir (*feature film*) written
- The Return (*short film*) written
- My Own Christmas (*feature film*) in writing
- Round Trip *(feature film)* in writing
- Story of a Mchaouchi Wrestler *(feature film)* written
- Secrets of a Thousand and One Women *(feature film)* written

**Assistant director:**
* Cinema feature films
- 2001 And now...Ladies and Gentlemen by Claude Lelouch *(Les films 13) FRANCE*
- 2001 The Hermit of Amsterdam by Rudolf Van Den Berg *(Cadenza Film) NEDERLAND*
- 2000 Mark, John and Luke by Jacob Deboer *(Visual International INC) CANADA*
- 2000 Malena by Giuseppe Tornatore *(Pacific Pictures)*
- 1997 Le Jardin d’Eden by Alexandro D’Alatri *(Corsare pro/Canal+) ITALY /FRANCE*
- 1996 Voyage dans le passé by Ahmed Boulane *(M.A. Prod) MOROCCO*
- 1995 L’ombre des Pharaons by Souhail Ben Barka *(Dawliz Prod)MOROCCO*
- 1994 Marie de Nazareth by Jean Delannoy *(Azur film)France*

* International television feature films
- 2002 Apocalypse by Raphaël Mertes *(DelRoy LTD) USA/ITALY*
- 2000 Paul of Tarsus by Roger Young *(Delroy LTD) USA/ITALY*
- 1999 Judas and Thomas by Raphaël Mertes *(Andromeda Prod) USA/ITALY*
- 1999 Mary of Magdalene by Raphaël Mertes
  (Andromeda Prod) USA/ITALY
- 1999 Joseph by Raphaël Mertes
  (Andromeda Prod) USA/ITALY
- 1999 Wives and Daughters
  (BBC) ENGLAND
- 1999 Jesus by Roger Young
  (Five Mille Rivers Film) USA/ITALY
- 1998 Esther by Raphaël Mertes
  (Aster Prod) USA/ITALY
- 1998 Jeremiah by Harry Winer
  (Aster Prod) USA/ITALY
- 1997 Solomon by Roger Young
  (Aster Prod) USA/ITALY
- 1997 David by Robert Markowitz
  (Aster Prod) USA/ITALY
- 1996 Samson and Delilah by Nicolas Roeg
  (Aster Prod) USA/ITALY
- 1994 Moses by Roger Young
  (Aster Prod) USA/ITALY

*Television documentaries
  - 2004 Archimedes’s Theory
    (Dune Films for the BBC) ENGLAND

* Commercials
  - 2004 Méditel (Médijahez)
    (Preview Production) MOROCCO
  - 2002 Faith Paper Handkerchiefs
    (Corail Film) MOROCCO
- 1999 LOTO
  *(Dune Films) MOROCCO*
- 1994 IBM
  *(MPS Prod) MOROCCO*

**Moroccan Casting:**

* Casting Agent (Atlas Casting)
- 2000 Spy Game by Tony Scott
  *(Zaltman Film) ENGLAND/USA*
- 2000 Four Feathers by Shekhar Kapur
  *(Paramount and Miramax Pictures) USA*
- 2000 Astérix et Obélix, service de Cléopâtre by Alain Chabat
  MPS (France)
- 2000 L’Algérie des chimères by François Luciani
  MPS (France)
- 2000 Leila La Pure by Gabriel Axel
  *(Angel/Arena Prod) France*
- 1999 Détenu au Yémen
  *(ZDF) DEUTSCHLAND*
- 1999 L’Est de la boussole by Jordi Tonere
  *(Prisma Prod) ESPAGNE*
- 1999 Gladiator by Ridley Scott
  *(DUNE FILM) USA*
- 1999 Las Bas by Alexandre Arcadie
  *(Sahara Prod) FRANCE*
- 1999 Rules of Engagement by William Friedkin
  DUNE FILM (Paramount Pictures) USA
- 1999 Jesus by Serge Moati
  *(Sahara Prod) FRANCE*
*Moroccan Casting Director*

- 2004 Meditel advertisement for Preview (Morocco)
- 2002 Coeur de Femme by Franco Bennini (Italy)
- 2001 Apocalypse by Raphaël Mertes (Italy)
- 2001 And Now...Ladies and Gentlemen by Claude Lelouch (France)
- 2001 The Hermit of Amsterdam by Rudolf Van Den Berg (Netherlands)
- 2000 Visual Bible by Jacob Debour (Canada)
- 2000 Paul of Tarsus by Roger Young (USA/Italy)
- 2000 Judas and Thomas by Raphaël Mertes (Italy)
- 2000 Malena by Giuseppe Tornatore (Italy)
- 1999 L’est de la boussole by Jordi Tonore (Spain)
- 1999 Mary of Magdalone by Raphaël Mertes (Italy)
- 1999 Jesus in the Shadow of the Lord by Roger Young (USA/Italy)
- 1998 Esther by Harry Winer (USA/Italy)
- 1997 Le Jardin de l’Éden by Alexandro d’Alatre (Italy)
**Actor:**
- 2001 Role “Taxi Driver” And now... by Claude Lelouch
- 2000 Role “Miracle man” Paul of... by Roger Young
- 1999 Role “Friend of Jesus” Jesus in the... by Roger Young
- 1998 Role “The prophet” Jeremiah by Harry Winer
- 1997 Role “The villager” Solomon by Roger Young
- 1996 Role “Friend of David” David by Robert Markowitz
- 1996 “The philosopher” Voyage dans le passé by Ahmed Boulane
- 1995 “The archeologist” O. Des pharaons by Souhail Ben Barka
- 1994 “Soldier of Tetrarch” Mary de Nazareth by Jean Delannoy
- 1993 Role “Gangster” Sakina by Nouridine Dougna
- 1991 Role “The doctor” Souhail Ben Barka
- 1989 “The lover” Un étranger au quartier by Mohamed Attifi
- 1985 “Fes” inter-city race (TV show) for Moroccan TV

From 1990 to 1998, **Theater Actor:** The Amateur Troup of the National Theatre under the direction of Mohamed Kaghat

**Location Manager:**
- 1999 “LOTO” Dune Films **MOROCCO**
- 1992 “The prayer of the absent” by Hamid Bennani **MOROCCO**
- 1991 “The night of the crime” by Nabil Lahlou **MOROCCO**
- 1987 “Passion” by Martin Scorsese **TRAINER IN PRODUCTION**
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