



Presents

# TOUBAB

*"How far will two friends go to stop one of them from being deported?"*



A **Schiwago Film** Production

In collaboration with **Camino Filmverleih**



# TOUBAB

## Directed by

Florian Dietrich

## Starring

Farba Dieng  
Julius Nitschkoff  
Seyneb Saleh  
Michael Maertens  
Valerie Koch  
Paul Wollin  
Burak Yiğit  
Nina Gummich  
Uwe Preuss  
Ibrahima Sanogo  
Thelma Buabeng  
Mehmet Ateşçi  
Gerdy Zint  
Julia Gräfner  
Kwam.E  
Tamer Arslan  
Christopher Vantis

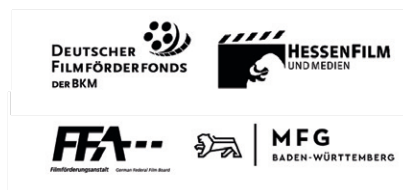
## Screenplay by

Florian Dietrich & Arne Dechow

## Produced by

Marcos Kantis, Martin Lehwald (Schiwago Film)  
Louise von Johnston

## Supported by



# TOUBAB

## CAST

### Babtou

Farba Dieng

### Cengo

Paul Wollin

### Attorney Schröder

Thelma Buabeng

### Paco

Tamer Arslan

### Dennis

Julius Nitschkoff

### Semih

Burak Yiğit

### Habib

Mehmet Ateşçi

### Matsch

Christopher Vantis

### Yara

Seyneb Saleh

### Manu

Nina Gummich

### Simon

Gerdy Zint

### Horst Ruppert

Michael Maertens

### Siggi

Uwe Preuss

### Janine

Julia Gräfner

### Astrid Zeug

Valerie Koch

### Mamdu

Ibrahima Sanogo

### Sahadi

Kwam.E

## CREW

### Director

Florian Dietrich

### Script

Florian Dietrich &  
Arne Dechow

### Camera

Max Preiss

### Composer

Jacob Vetter

### Editing

Jörg Volkmar,  
Florian Dietrich,  
Heike Parplies &  
Robert Kummer

### Production design

Theresia Anna Ficus

### Costume design

Svenja Gassen

### Make-up

Nicolay Lissner

### Casting

Nina Haun

### Music

Jacob Vetter

### Set Design

Theresia Anna Ficus

### Sound

Julian Cropp

### Compositing

Adrian Baumeister

### Production manager

Frank Zahl

### Executive producer

Charles E. Breitzkreuz

### Producer

Louise von Johnston

### Producers

Marcos Kantis,  
Martin Lehwald  
(Schiwago Film)

### Editorial team

Jörg Schneider (ZDF)  
Olaf Grunert (ZDF/ARTE)  
Barbara Häbe (ARTE)

### Special Effects/ VFX

Peter Ruschel

# TOUBAB

## TECHNICAL DETAILS

<b>Running Time</b>	97 minutes
<b>Format</b>	DCP
<b>Screen Ratio</b>	Cinemascope
<b>Frames / second</b>	25
<b>Sound Format</b>	Dolby 5.1
<b>Original Version</b>	German, French
<b>Shooting Dates</b>	03.07. – 06.08.2018
<b>Shooting Location</b>	Darmstadt, Frankfurt, Germany

## LOGLINE

To prevent an impending deportation at the last minute, two suburban gangsters are prepared to do anything.

## SYNOPSIS

After his release from prison, Babtou is really looking forward to a new beginning: enjoying the freedom with his buddy Dennis, embracing the world – and having nothing to do with the authorities anymore. But incredibly, things go so wrong at his impromptu welcome party that Babtou finds himself in handcuffs again that same evening. With dramatic consequences: due to repeated delinquency, he is set to be deported to his “home country” of Senegal. But Babtou knows Senegal only from his father’s stories. He was born in Germany, his home is Frankfurt.

In order to prevent the impending deportation at the last minute, Babtou and Dennis are prepared to do anything...

# TOUBAB

## CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

### BABTOU

Babtou (25) was born and raised in Frankfurt am Main. His friends are his family. His block is his home. From the very beginning, he didn't care that the German state sees things differently and has never given him citizenship. He only knows Senegal from his father's stories. And from the cover of his passport.

Babtou is charming, gutsy, and brave. Blessed with a healthy self-confidence, he doesn't like when something gets in his way. In order to achieve his goals, he has always been prepared to take unconventional paths.

He has been friends with Dennis since his childhood, a friendship that has been emotionally beneficial, but in practice often toxic.



### DENNIS

Dennis (27) would certainly not have been a car mechanic today, but would probably have failed just like his alcoholic mother if he had not met Babtou at some point.

Because of his broken family, Dennis has always been the outsider. But when one day Dennis's craziness joins together with Babtou's strength, hardly anyone comes too close to them anymore.

Dennis is impulsive, passionate, loyal, and knows that life also means pain. He can take a lot, especially for his friendship with Babtou. And if necessary, also dish it out.

### YARA

Yara (26) grew up in the same neighborhood as Babtou and Dennis, only under completely opposite circumstances. As the daughter of communist Iranians in exile, she was practically born with a distrust of politics and power.

What is most sacred to her is her queer circle of friends and her freedom to live beyond the "norm." No one had better impose any limits on her, or else she is ready to plough through any wall, no matter how thick.

# TOUBAB

Yara is direct, strong, and won't tolerate bullshit.

## DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY - FLORIAN DIETRICH

Florian Dietrich was born in Wiesbaden in 1986. After graduating from high school, he worked as an assistant director at the Wiesbaden State Theater and studied media dramaturgy in Mainz from 2005 to 2007 as well as directing at the German Film and Television Academy (dffb) in Berlin and Tel Aviv University from 2007. **TOUBAB** is Dietrich's graduation film at the dffb and also his feature film debut.

### FILMOGRAPHY (Selection)

**TOUBAB** - 2021, feature film

**Berliner Kurzfilmszene** - 2014, short film

17th Brussels International Short Film Festival 2014, Milano International Film Festival 2014 and others

**Breaking Through** - 2012, short film

Best Short Film at 24th Filmfest Dresden 2013, Next Generation Short Tiger at 66th Cannes International Film Festival 2013, 29th International Short Film Festival Berlin 2013 (interfilm), 16th Brussels Short Film Festival and others

**GhettoLoveGrief** - 2011, short film

27th International Short Film Festival Berlin 2011 (interfilm), 42nd Molodist Kyiv Film Festival 2012, 14th Tel Aviv International Student Film Festival 2012 and others

## PRODUCER'S BIOGRAPHY - MARCOS KANTIS

Marcos Kantis has worked as a producer since 1995 and since 2007 as partner, production manager, and producer at Schiwago Film GmbH. His most successful productions include Jan-Ole Gerster's "**A Coffee in Berlin**" (2012) and "**Lara**" (2019). Wolfgang Fischer's internationally award-winning feature film "**STYX**" produced by Kantis was an outstanding success in 2020 with four German Film Awards from five nominations. In addition, he has already produced several television films for ARD, ZDF, and WDR, including the film "**Krieg**", which received a prize at the Venice Film Festival and won the Television Film Award of the German Academy of Performing Arts at the Baden-Baden TV Film Festival.

# TOUBAB

## MAIN CAST BIOGRAPHY - FARBA DIENG

*"TOUBAB is a film about true friendship, love, acceptance ... Babtou is someone who has a big heart and knows exactly what friendship means. He is very loyal and honest ... just not particularly in relation to the legal system."*

Farba Dieng was born in Lille in 1993 and grew up both in France and near Frankfurt am Main. Babtou in **TOUBAB** is his first major cinema role. Dieng has played other roles in the Netflix series "**Skylines**", in Boris Kunz's miniseries "**Breaking Even**", in "**Cortex**", Moritz Bleibtreu's directorial debut, and in Katja von Garnier's dance film "**Fly**".

### FILMOGRAPHY (Selection)

**TOUBAB** - 2021 Feature film (Schiwagofilm), directed by Florian Dietrich

**Breaking Even** - 2019 Miniseries (NEUESUPER), directed by Boris Kunz

**Fly** - 2019 Feature film (Westside), directed by Katja von Garnier

**Cortex** - 2019 Feature film (Port au Prince), directed by Moritz Bleibtreu

**Skylines** - 2019 Netflix series (Koplizen Film), directed by Max Elenwein, Soleen Yusef



## MAIN CAST BIOGRAPHY - JULIUS NITSCHKOFF

*"The special thing about our film **TOUBAB** is that it manages to address so many significant issues while remaining entertaining at the same time. It doesn't try to force itself to be funny or sad, but instead manages to balance drama and comedy with its absurd situational humor."*

# TOUBAB

Julius Nitschkoff was born in Berlin in 1995. He has been in front of the camera for more than twelve years and has impressed in over 60 productions in a wide variety of roles. He made his major film debut at the 2015 Berlinale with the film adaptation “**As We Were Dreaming**” (director: Andreas Dresen), in which he played the young aspiring boxer Rico.

## FILMOGRAPHY (Selection)

**TOUBAB** – 2021 Feature film (Schiwagofilm), directed by Florian Dietrich

**Tatort Saarbrücken** – Der Herr des Waldes – 2020 Series (ARD), directed by Christian Theede

**In Berlin wächst kein Orangenbaum** – 2019 Feature film (Südsternfilm), directed by Kida Khodr Ramadan

**Into the Beat** – 2019 feature film (Lieblingsfilm), directed by Stefan Westerwelle

**Perfume** – 2018 Series (Netflix, Constantin), directed by Philipp Kadelbach

**Beat** – 2018 Series (Amazon, Hellinger/Doll Filmproduktion), directed by Marco Kreuzpaintner

**As We Were Dreaming** – 2013 feature film (Rommel Film), directed by Andreas Dresen

Farba Dieng and Julius Nitschkoff were nominated for the First Steps Award (Götz George Young Talent Award) for their acting performance in **TOUBAB** 2020, and won the Bavarian Film Award in the Young Actors category in 2021.

## MAIN CAST BIOGRAPHY - SEYNEB SALEH

*"Yara is a young, queer, very self-confident German-Iranian who has a very strong sense of justice and is a very unflinching and unshakable fighter."*

Seyneb Saleh was born in 1987 to German-Iraqi parents in Aalen. She grew up in Germany and Morocco and studied acting at the University of the Arts in Berlin. Saleh has been part of the German-speaking theater, film, and television landscape since 2009. In 2012 she became a full-time ensemble member at the Schauspielhaus Graz, from 2015 to 2018 at the Volkstheater Vienna. Saleh attracted wider attention in 2018 with her leading role in the Netflix film “**Mute**” (director: Duncan Jones) and the Netflix series “**Dogs of Berlin**” (director: Christian Alvart). In 2017 she was nominated for the Dorothea Neff Prize for the best young actor.

## FILMOGRAPHY (Selection)

# TOUBAB

**TOUBAB** - 2021 Feature film (Schiwagofilm), directed by Florian Dietrich

**Jenseits der Spree** - 2021 Series (ZDF), directed by Marcus Ulbricht, Neelesha Barthel

**Over Christmas** - 2020 Series (Netflix), directed by Tobi Baumann

**Deutschland 86** - 2018 Series (UFA Fiction, Amazon Prime), directed by Arne Feldhusen, Florian Cossen

**Dogs of Berlin** - 2018 Series (Netflix), directed by Christian Alvart

**Mute** - 2016 Feature film (Netflix), directed by Duncan Jones

**Offroad** - 2012 Feature film (Claussen+Wöbke+Putz), directed by Elmar Fischer

**The Red Room** - 2010 Feature film (Degeto Film), directed by Rudolf Thome

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE – FLORIAN DIETRICH

The idea for **TOUBAB** came about while I was working on theater projects with co-author Arne Dechow in a juvenile detention center in Wiesbaden. Some of the young prisoners we were permitted to meet were under acute risk of deportation. Even though they were born in Germany. Until then, I had not been aware that this was even possible: to deport people who have spent their entire lives in Germany from the day they were born. To countries they may know from their summer vacation, but which they also may never have set foot in because they are simply not safe. And this while they and their families have been systematically pushed to the fringes of society and criminalized repeatedly over the course of their lives by being denied secure resident status.

We spoke to many of the young people about their powerlessness, their desperate struggles against racism. We saw how uprooted many of them were when they were actually deported to the places that the German state attributes as their "homeland." With **TOUBAB** we urgently wanted to offer something that counters this brutality of the German right of residence laws.

At the same time, I wanted to make a film that didn't focus on and reproduce the pain of people who experience discrimination on a daily basis. I wanted it to celebrate them for their courage, their strength, and also their creativity in dealing with the authorities. For me, this also clearly means that the film casts a (self-)critical look at the ongoing violence emanating from German mainstream society. And a narrative style that also invites the people who are its subject to become part of the audience. As a result, it has deliberately not become a "quiet" film, but one that makes use of the codes, the power, and sometimes the flaws of its protagonists. This was always an absolutely decisive point for me and I believe this makes **TOUBAB** particularly relevant and important. Far too rarely have I seen films in Germany that attack burning social issues in a way that does not exclude a large part of our society as an audience.

# TOUBAB

Right from the start, this was the balancing act that I was committed to as a director. That **TOUBAB** will be a film that is not elitist and still has a clear political message: a colorful, strong, upright “middle finger,” so to speak.

## PRODUCER’S NOTE - MARCOS KANTIS, SCHIWAGO FILM GMBH

Intelligent comedies are not only a lot of fun for us at Schiwago Film, they also seem to be one of the few viable ways to reach a larger audience in the cinema at the moment. If the film is cleverly structured and has a decent pace, while carrying a socially relevant message into the world under the cloak of humor, then such material is in the right place with us. Good examples from Schiwago Film are such successful films as “**Muxmäuschenstill**”, “**A Coffee in Berlin**” ... and now **TOUBAB**.

Florian Dietrich impresses with his first feature-length film and not only demonstrates his great talent as a director, but also his joy in entertaining his audience with intelligent material. He succeeds brilliantly with a magnified portrayal of his characters in a thoroughly real environment with real conflicts.

At first it seems very light and entertaining, but it is precisely this context of entertainment that offers the opportunity to evoke social problems mindfully and with a wide reach.

For this purpose Dietrich makes use of classic comedy approaches that play with unbelievable life situations, touching the viewer through the unexpected. We follow his two friends in their fight for their home, we root for them when they find themselves on the precipice of German deportation policy, and we are happy with them each time they pull one over on the authorities.

The two actors Farba Dieng and Julius Nitschkoff are truly a discovery for German film and convince with their fresh and confident performance. The friendship between the two in the film is transported beyond the screen to the viewer, so it is not surprising that they have also become “buddies” in real life. They were rightly honored for their performance with the Bavarian Film Award for Best Young Actors. In other roles, actors such as Seyneb Saleh, Michael Maertens, Valerie Koch, Uwe Preuss, Nina Gummich, Thelma Buabeng, and many others also impress.

**TOUBAB** is great fun with loud, harsh, and very gentle moments. The cinematography by Max Preiss and the exceptional soundtrack by Jacob Vetter support the protagonists, and so we can say that **TOUBAB** definitely has the potential to become a cult film in 2021.

***TOUBAB: a tribute to human dignity, friendship, and love.***

# TOUBAB



## INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR FLORIAN DIETRICH

### How did the idea for TOUBAB come about?

Together with co-author Arne Dechow, I have often been involved in theater and art projects in the Wiesbaden correctional facility. The idea for **TOUBAB** arose from meetings with the young prisoners with whom we worked on the projects. Many of them attracted the attention of the authorities at fifteen or sixteen and ended up in juvenile prison. Some had deportation proceedings on their hands, despite the fact that they were born in Germany. Some participants were actually deported to the countries their passports were from after they were arrested. They had spent sixteen years of their lives in Germany as Germans – with repeated suspensions of deportation. And then they were deported – to Angola or Turkey ... countries that they may have known from their summer vacation, where they had visited their family, but which they didn't see as home. This incredible injustice was the first impetus for us to tackle this issue.

### How did you assemble the cast?

We started with the search for Babtou. In a very long casting we met more than 200 actors. At some point it occurred to me that I knew Farba from back in my home region of Rhine-Main. I asked him if he would like to come to the casting. When he came and played the casting scene, everything was suddenly clear to me. That was the most important step for the film. Then we did group castings for the character of Dennis. Julius convinced us with his naturalness and his presence. The two were immediately like a unit, like a team.

### How did you end up choosing Frankfurt and the Rhine-Main region as film locations?

I come from the Rhine-Main region, from Wiesbaden, and have known Frankfurt since I was a child. Since the **TOUBAB** story arose from the prison projects in Wiesbaden, it always felt

# TOUBAB

logical to me to set the film there as well. In addition, you can witness really strong contrasts in Frankfurt. There is a lot of money and capital there, but there are also huge social divides. This struggle is also very real for the protagonists of **TOUBAB**.

The cameraperson Max Preiss and I did our first location tour very early on and came across Kranichstein in Darmstadt, which then became the main shooting location. Kranichstein is something like a microcosm and functions visually as a parable. This is exactly what we were looking for. It is a self-contained satellite where a great deal is possible. It's very beautiful there, but of course the brutality of the architecture is also clearly noticeable. For us it was the ideal main filming location.

**The protagonists in the film TOUBAB experience various forms of discrimination. How do you position yourself on this?**

As a white director and cis man, I am not affected by structural discrimination and do not share many of the experiences of the characters in **TOUBAB**. And so it is all the more important to me to listen radically. And to continue trying to deconstruct my own film and viewing habits. I take up existing images, clichés, and fantasies with the intention of dealing with them and telling about nuances and sharp divergences. I see this approach as a great challenge, and certainly also as a daring action. Because cinema and films are very powerful places. For centuries, hurtful narratives have been perpetuated in front of a large audience, but transformative counter-narratives of resistance have also been presented. For me, all of this is a very important part of the work process, and also a personal journey and development that I have been permitted to undertake with this film and for which I am very grateful.

**Who is the target audience for TOUBAB?**

I wanted to make a film that deals with its very serious issues in a way that invites young people, who are also the protagonists, to be part of the audience. Filming a social drama about deportation is perfectly legitimate, but that wasn't the path I wanted to take. I love art-house films, but I find that classism is truly a problem especially in art-house cinema: who do I invite as the audience? Who do I communicate with as a writer or director and who do I exclude? And so **TOUBAB** has become an entertaining comedy about very brave characters who take up the fight with a racist state and a racist society. I hope that as many different people as possible will be able to find access to this film.

**How much does the pandemic affect the dissemination of the film?**

The pandemic situation and the closure of all cultural institutions has been terrible. Also for me personally, since I had just finished a film that I had worked on for years and that I made for a cinema audience. I am longing for the moment so much when I can sit in front of a screen with 200, 300, 500 people and see how **TOUBAB** really comes to life. This is a very, very great longing of mine and I hope that it will happen soon.

# TOUBAB

## INTERNATINAL SALES – BETA CINEMA

BETA CINEMA, a subsidiary of Jan Mojto's European media group Beta Film, is a world sales and co-financing company for quality feature films that combine great stories, commercial viability and artistic integrity. Beta Cinema's footprint ranges from Oscar® winners to worldwide B.O. and streaming hits, such as **"The Lives of Others"**, **"Il Divo"**, **"Downfall"** and two time Oscar®-nominee **"Never Look Away"**, to Netflix hit **"Calibre"** and multiple award-winning B.O. successes like **"Woman At War"** and **"System Crasher"**.

Current highlights include Berlin 2021 Competition entries **"I'm Your Man"** by Maria Schrader (winner Silver Bear) and **"Next Door"** by Daniel Brühl, Venice entry **"Nowhere Special"** and the psychological thriller **"Kindred"** starring Fiona Shaw and Jack Lowden.

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