

# FILM REVIEW

**Munyeza Eddy, director. *Uncertain Future/Lendemains incertains*. 2018. 71 min.** French, with English subtitles. VraiVrai Films, Traces du Sud, Néon Rouge Production, Grands Lacs TV Films & TVR in coproduction with RTBF Unité documentaire. \$4.95.

The title of this film, *Uncertain Future* (directed by Munyaneza Eddy), refers to the political crisis in Burundi. Since the failure of the coup d'état on May 13, 2015, against the former president Pierre Nkurunziza who wanted to run for an illegal third term, the regime has continuously harassed every potential political opponent, leading to exiles, tortures, disappearances, and murders. The shooting of the film began in 2015, and the documentary was released in 2018. Today, even though Evariste Ndayishimiye replaced Pierre Nkurunziza in 2020 as the head of the country, the daily life of the inhabitants of this small East African country has not changed. Human rights violations are still perpetrated every day by the CNDD-FDD regime. As stated by the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi in 2021: "[...] there has been little meaningful change in terms of human rights. [...]. Serious human rights violations have continued to be committed by State officials and members of the Imbonerakure, the militia close to the presidential party CNDD-FDD at the instigation or with the acquiescence of the authorities."

The paths of two people embody the uncertain future of Burundi in the film: the trajectory of the filmmaker, as a Burundian filmmaker, father, and husband, and the life and death of the traditional drummer Antime Baranshakaje, whose art, called "Ingoma," was selected by the Unesco World Heritage Committee in 2014. The life stories of both these men highlight the ongoing violence and question the hope for peace in Burundi.

The documentary takes us through the journey of Eddy Munyaneza, the filmmaker, who lives in Burundi with his wife and his two children, having grown up in the middle of the multiple crises faced by his country. Since 2015, filming has been his act of bearing witness, but this professional activity has put him and his family in danger. Aware of the risks, his wife fled to neighboring Rwanda with their children, like many Burundians. Remaining in Burundi, Eddy Munyaneza continues to record the images and sounds of peaceful protests, which are violently repressed by the police and the Imbonerakure. He documents the mixed feelings of anger, sadness, fear,

incomprehension, and loneliness as they are expressed by most of his compatriots. Fearing for his life, he eventually settles for a while in Senegal. From there, with the help of fellow journalist colleagues who try to continue to inform the population despite the silence imposed by the regime, he stays informed. Every day he learns that more Burundians, sometimes friends or colleagues, have disappeared or have been killed, among them the cameraman Christophe Nkezabahizi and his family. The filmmaker eventually returns to Burundi, where he finds that the situation has worsened. From that moment, cameras from foreign as well as local journalists are systematically seized by the regime unless they have been granted official authorization. There are new implicit limits that cannot be breached without putting one's life at risk.

Antime Baranshakaje is the second important character who is the focus of the film. As a traditional drummer, he was an icon for most Burundians, who considered him an ambassador for the nation. Born in 1936, he died during the shooting of the film, on April 9, 2017. The film shows how he and Eddy Munyaneza talk about Burundi and the sacred drums that symbolize unity and peace. The death of this traditional character symbolizes the death of the country, where people are forced to choose one camp, which is allegedly "ethnic," but which is in reality defined in political terms by the government. Eddy Munyaneza and Antime Baranshakaje both tell the story of a country where unity and peace had been constructed in the wake of the civil war but which has now been facing a tragic crisis for more than seven years. Finally, they both express their concern about the uncertainty of Burundi's future, a concern which remains topical yet today.

Academics and discerning viewers may regret the scarcity of historical landmarks and explanations regarding, for example, the importance of sacred drums in Burundi; the civil wars that began in 1993; the Arusha peace agreement and the role played by Nelson Mandela in the negotiations in 2000; the illegal third term wanted by Pierre Nkurunziza in April 2015; the failed coup d'état; and the destruction of private media that followed; as well as the existence of the Imbonerakure militia linked to the presidential political party CNDD-FDD. But the film certainly succeeds in offering a raw overview of the Burundian reality. It constitutes a precious testimony from inside and an important piece looking to the future, as tentative as it might be. By filming the daily life of his country at his own risk, Eddy Munyaneza offers direct evidence of what is happening in Burundi. Even if the diplomatic perspectives are not encouraging, the viewer might hope that knowledge is the first step before action.

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