

Fred K. Kuwornu

303 East 43rd Street Unit 12A
New York, NY 10017 United States
Phone: 718 559 9020 Email: kudjo71@hotmail.com

Summary

Fred Kudjo Kuwornu was born and raised in Italy. He is a New York-based Italian-Ghanaian filmmaker, producer, activist, scholar and educator.

Education

1998 Master of Arts in Political Science at the University of Bologna, Italy with a focus on sociology and mass communication studies.

Film Work Experience

Producer • Director • Writer

2016 Director and producer of the documentary “Blaxploitalian 100 Years of Blackness in Italian Cinema”

This diasporic, hybrid, critical and cosmopolitan documentary uncovers the careers of entertainers seldom heard from before, namely black actors in Italian cinema starting from 1915 when the first black actor appeared in an Italian film. “Blaxploitalian” cleverly discloses the personal struggles Afro-Italian, African-American, Afro-Caribbean and African diasporic actors faced and compares these struggles with the experiences of contemporary actors who work diligently to secure significant parts which afford them the appropriate respect.

The pre-production part of the documentary involved an intense period of individual research concentrating on reading scores of academic books and watching hundreds of library film clips to build a chronology for the issues discussed in the resulting film. I undertook this work on my own and also with the help of assistants guided by me. The documentary was distributed to academic institutions where more than 200 screenings were held, amongst a network of associations involved with activism and the promotion of multiculturalism and also at dedicated cinema-industry events held in various countries around the world.

I created #diversityinmediamatter, a platform for activism to promote conversation and dialogue between contributors to identify solutions for encouraging and securing greater diversity in the media at large.

Museum Screenings

George Eastman Museum Rochester, NY
Museu de Arte do Rio, Brazil
National Film and Television Institute of Ghana
Museum of the Moving Image Astoria, NY

Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH

Film Festival Screenings

Ischia Film Festival, Italy

(Panel with actor Danny Glover and Cheryl Boone Isaacs former Academy Awards President

Festival De Cine Africano, Tarifa, Spain

Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival

New Voices in Black Cinema BAM, Brooklyn

Pan African Film Festival Los Angeles

San Francisco Black Film Festival

Sole Luna Doc Palermo-Milan-Treviso, Italy

Zanzibar International Film Festival, Tanzania

Charlotte Black Film Festival

Baltimore International Black Film Festival

Eko International Film Festival, Lagos, Nigeria

Martinique Film Festival, Martinique

Encontro De Cinema Negro Brazil

Rome Cinema Fest, Italy

Italian Film Festival Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN

2012 Director and Producer of the documentary "18 IUS SOLI –The Right To Be Italian"

This documentary examines multiculturalism in contemporary Italy and specifically looks at citizenship issues for the one million children born and raised in Italy who have yet to attain Italian citizenship because their parents are immigrants.

I conducted hundreds of interviews with young people without Italian citizenship before choosing the most suitable for use in the documentary. I also carried out extensive research to identify and compare citizenship laws in various countries around the world.

I wanted to produce this documentary to create a visual tool for use in community campaigns in Italy to generate and increase awareness amongst the population at large. I also wanted to forge a generation of activists sensitive to the issues faced by second generation immigrants in Italy and their struggle for the right to Italian citizenship. Over a period of four years the documentary has been shown by more than 800 associations. The screenings, subsequent debates and resulting petitions have been vital in garnering support for reform of Italian citizenship laws currently based on the nationality of a parent and not the fact of being born in Italy. The debate was then taken abroad where the relationship between being a young person but not being a citizen of the country where you live was all too commonplace. The case of undocumented migrants in the United States is a clear example of this.

Screenings and Exhibitions of "18 Ius Soli"

Museum Screenings

National Museum of Cinema, Turin, Italy

Human Rights Nights Film Festival, Bologna, Italy

New Voices in Black Cinema, BAM Brooklyn

2010 Director and Producer of the documentary “Inside Buffalo- They served America when America was not ready to serve them”

Reconstructing for the first time an important piece of African American history and placing it within the context of Civil Rights history, “Inside Buffalo” is an Award-winning feature film (winner of Best Documentary at Black International Cinema, Berlin) telling the story of the 92nd Buffalo Division, the exclusively African American segregated combat unit which fought with outstanding heroism in Italy during the Second World War.

I conducted extensive research by reading the personal accounts of Afro-American veterans and comparing these with the information contained in the official reports of the US 5th Army written at the time. I secured access to the US National Archives and Records Administration and uncovered further documentary sources including letters, photographs, archive film footage, newsreels and documents relating to the Civil Rights Movement.

My research also included tracking down a number of Second World War veterans and studying their written accounts before interviewing them.

The documentary has been screened in numerous public libraries and colleges as well as government and military institutions.

Screenings and Exhibitions of “Inside Buffalo”

Museum Screenings

Library of Congress

The Museum of Fine Arts of Houston

The National Constitution Center of Philadelphia

Museum of the African Diaspora of San Francisco

The Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum

California African American Museum

The Presidio of San Francisco

The Museum of the Moving Image

The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History

Reginald F Lewis Museum

African American Museum in Philadelphia

Oklahoma Historic Center

Du Sable Museum of Chicago

Film Festival Screenings

Sidewalk Film Festival

Black Harvest Film Festival Chicago

Mid Atlantic Black Film Festival

Atlanta Black Docufest

Black Berlin International Cinema Festival

African Diaspora Film Festival New York

Other Film Industry Experience

2020 Voice Over for the Italian Version of the Netflix Educational Show “Bookmarks –Celebrating Black Voices” for the episode entitled “Karamo Brown reads I am perfectly designed”

2007 Set production assistant on Spike Lee’s film “Miracle at St. Anna”

Teaching Experience

2020 Middlebury College: Italian Summer School

2020 Monthly Teaching course: “Black Italian Cinema and Digital Performance” at Colorado College

Black Italian Cinema and Digital Performance is an introduction to issues of culture, race, identity, and citizenship in contemporary Italy drawing from documentaries, films and the new arena of social media. An entire generation of Black Italians, specifically artists, entrepreneurs and bloggers (especially millennials) has been affirming itself in Italian culture and society thus progressively gaining more visibility from the 1990s. This has helped to shine a spotlight on the Global Black Diaspora. During the course students produced short documentaries about people of African descent living on their campus.

2019 Monthly Teaching course: “Community/Media/Activism: Building Resilience through” at the University of Minnesota

This course challenged students to think beyond the borders of a specific field of study and the classroom by engaging with local communities to learn through community service. After examining the relationship between media and social change using case studies from Italy, students - under my - collaborated with the Scott County Community Development Agency on a documentary video promoting one of their flagship projects.

2018 Monthly Teaching course: “Diversity in Italia Cinema” at Italian Studies Department of University of Toronto (Canada)

2017 Monthly Teaching “Diversity Digital Filmmaking” at Italian Studies Department of JMU University, VA

2017 Weekly workshop: “Shooting Italian Documentary” as part of the “Italian Realism Documentary Film Making” summer program held at Villa Le Balze - Georgetown University, Florence, Italy

2016 Workshop: “Diversity Digital Filmmaking” at the University of Bologna in association with the Human Rights Nights Film Festival (Bologna, Italy)

2016 Weekly course: “Blackness in Italy” at The Italian School of Middlebury College in Mills College Oakland, California. This is a graduate program in Italian.

Special Honors, Awards, and Grants

2016 Grant worth \$5000 from the Open Society Foundation for production of the “Blaxploitalian” documentary

2013 Letter from President Barack Obama

2011 Grant worth \$15,000 from Cineteca of Bologna for production of the “18 IUS SOLI” documentary

2011 Certificate of Congressional Recognition from the Eighteenth District of Texas signed by Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee

2009 Winner Black International Cinema Berlin

2009 Letter from President William Jefferson Clinton

Academic Guest Speaker Conferences

2018 Afro/Black Paris – Future/Past- Dartmouth College: symposium to launch the African and African American Studies Program

2017 Encontro de Cinema Negro- Rio De Janeiro, Brazil

2017 Association of Professional Italianist in South Africa (API) Annual Conference in Johannesburg, South Africa

2017 American Association for Italian Studies and the Canadian Society for Italian Studies Annual Conference at Ohio State University, USA

2017 Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies 1st International Conference at American University of Rome, Italy

2016 African Literature Association (ALA) Annual Conference in Atlanta, USA

2016 Intersections 2016: Crossing Italian Borders in Music, Art, Literature, Theater and Cinema in Florence, Italy

2015 Black Portraiture[s] II: Imaging the Black Body and Re-staging Histories as part of the 2015 New York University Conference in Florence

2014 Black Europe Summer School in Amsterdam, Netherlands

Academic Presentations

2017

Member of the “Foreign Screen Bodies Blackness in Italy” panel at the Society for Cinema Media Studies (SCMS) Conference in Chicago, USA

Other

Advisory Board for the Journal of American Association of Italian Studies

Lectures • Speaking Engagements • Educational Public Screenings

I have given lectures and participated in question and answer sessions on the following subjects during screenings of my documentaries:

“Black Italy and the Legacy of Italian Colonialism”

“National Identity, Ethnicity and Multiculturalism in Contemporary Italy”

“Diversity and Media”

“Documentary for social change”

<p>2020 University of Guelph (online event) Hamilton College (online event) Arizona State University (online event) Fairfield University (online event) Towson University (online event) William & Mary College (online event) University of Virginia (online event) University of Pittsburgh (online event) Simon Fraser University (online event) Rochester Institute (online event) Portland State University (online event) Stony Brook (online event) University Boulder Colorado (online event) Wake Forrest Duke University University of North Carolina</p> <p>2019 Messiah College University of Georgia Emory University Kennesaw University CUNY New York Columbia University University of Arkansas Marist College</p> <p>2018 Dartmouth College Bowdoin College Southern Connecticut Bronx Community College Penn State University Temple University Bowie University American University DC</p>	<p>2017 University of California Riverside San Diego State University University of Las Vegas Arizona State University University of Oklahoma Tufts University Drew University CUNY York College Purdue University Goucher University Loyola Baltimore University Southern Illinois University Will & Mary College James Madison University Towson University Rhode Island College University of Scranton UVA Amsterdam University of Wisconsin George Mason University Boston University</p> <p>2016 University of Texas Austin Columbia College University of Chicago Stanford University University of California Berkeley University of Minnesota Middlebury College Fairfield University</p>	<p>2016 Florida State University University of Florida Scripps College Chapman University Loyola Marymount University</p> <p>2015 Yale University University of Chicago De Paul University University of Illinois in Chicago University of North Texas Mg Gills University Concordia University Oxford Migration Studies University of Reading University of Oxford Michigan State University Miami University Oberlin College Queens College Hunter College Truman State University Georgetown University University of Maryland University of Reading (UK)</p> <p>2014 Nazareth College University of Rochester University of Santa Cruz Indiana University Syracuse University</p>
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<p>Goucher University Loyola Baltimore San Francisco State University Santa Clara University Berkeley University Southern Methodist University University of Central Florida Westchester University Richmond University</p> <p>2017</p> <p>University of San Paolo (Brazil) University of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) University of Bahia (Brazil) BYU University Utah University Princeton University Colorado College Brown University New York University Ohio State University University of Toronto York University Case University Rochester University Texas A & M University Florida Atlantic University University of California Santa Barbara University of California Los Angeles University of California</p>	<p>Emory University Arcadia University University of the Arts London Siena College Hamilton College Franklin & Marshall College University of Pennsylvania University of the Arts of Philadelphia Dickinson College Gettysburg College University of St. Thomas Binghamton University Hofstra University Wellesley College Wesleyan University Brandeis University Bucknell University Smith College Manhattan College Marist College</p>	<p>New York University Suffolk University San Louis Obispo Berkeley University</p>
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