

Beyond Hatred

(Au delà de la haine)

A documentary film by Olivier Meyrou

85 minutes, Color, 35mm 1.66 :1 (Super 16mm production format), 2005, France



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BEYOND HATRED

SYNOPSIS

In this deeply moving, award-winning French documentary, a family reflects on the murder of their 29-year-old son and try to move beyond hatred and revenge.

September 13th, 2002. Three skinheads lie in wait in a park in Reims, France. They have been roaming the park with the sole intent to "do an Arab," but instead they come across a gay man, François Chenu. Refusing to be intimidated François defends himself and calls them cowards, in turn they beat him unconscious and throw his body into a nearby pond where he drowns. The gang is known to the police and is quickly caught. Although the details of the crime are presented, the real focus of the film is its aftermath and the family's efforts to find a way of coping with the loss of their beloved son and brother. In the lead up to and during the trial, we learn more about the accuseds' own backgrounds of prejudice and neglect, and observe the Chenu family's remarkable dignity as they try to comprehend the circumstances that lead to their inconsolable loss.

ABOUT THE DOCUMENTARY

Oliver Meyrou arrives in Reims before the trials. He gets to know the attorneys for both parties and especially François' family. His tact and sensitivity lead them to accept him. Again and again, he seeks dialogue. After a few months he brings his camera to explore the Chenus' life, suffering and changing view of things. Meyrou is not a journalist but a filmmaker. He did not want to make a documentary about homophobia, but a universal film about tolerance and intolerance. The results persist in memory. The people portrayed in the film speak with great dignity: François' parents, his brothers and sisters, the family's attorney who, with a cigarette between his lips, is more authentic than a character in a movie – they all forget the camera and speak without the least tendency to pathos but with natural authority. François' sister speaks of her fear on the evening when her brother disappeared and how she was sure that he was the victim when she read about the murder in the newspaper the next day. She also tells how she had to search for words to convey to her parents the news of their son's death. This shattering scene lasted for 8 minutes but seems shorter. Meyrou gives the impression that he enters the minds of the people he films. While the mother works in the kitchen, the viewer hears her say that she is afraid of the trial, of physical proximity to her son's tormenters, she is afraid she may lose her rage and find them "human". Olivier Meyrou takes the time to speak with those taking part in the trial. In the course of the proceedings, the family changes. The grief is gradually replaced by a desire to understand the murderers, who come from socially and culturally underprivileged families and have been exploited by right-wing radical groups. The film accompanies the family's effort to forgive them. Seldom has such a humanistic film been seen about such a complex theme: Hatred and the need for justice and forgiveness.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY AND FILMOGRAPHY

Olivier Meyrou was born in Anthony, France on February 9, 1966. He studied literature and communication science before attending the film school Femis in Paris and later the Tisch School of Arts in New York. Since then he has made documentary films and worked as an assistant to operas.

1996: My Own Little Gay America

1998: Zelda

2004: Bye Bye Apartheid

2005: Beyond Hatred

2007: Celebration (a documentary with Yves St Laurent)

BEYOND HATRED

une coproduction Miss Luna Films & Hold Up Films
Avec la participation de France 5 et de France 2,
Avec le soutien du CNC et de la Procirep
Image Jean-Marc Bouzou
Montage Cathie Dambel
Son Yolande Decarsin / Sébastien Savine / Gildas Mercier
Musique Originale François-Eudes Chanfrault
Producteurs Délégués
Katharina Marx –Christophe Girard

La bio réalisateur:

Après des études à la FEMIS, Olivier Meyrou réalise des documentaires et collabore à la mise en scène d'opéras.

CELEBRATION (75'/2002)

Ce film raconte les deux dernières années professionnelles du couturier Yves Saint Laurent.
Ce film est interdit de diffusion.

BYE BYE APARTHEID (52'/2004)

Grand Prix SCAM 2005 (catégorie Jeune Talent)

AU DELA DE LA HAINE (87'/2005)

Olivier Meyrou travaille à présent sur deux nouveaux projets :

LA TENTATION DE L'OMBRE (LM fiction/Hold Up Films).

L'histoire vraie d'un flic de l'antigang au milieu des années 70. Le film est adapté du roman de Eric Yung (Cherche Midi Editeur)

TRAPEZE (LM documentaire/Hold Up Films)

Un film sur les ARTS SAUTS, une institution mondiale dans l'art du trapèze volant.

Au delà de la haine/ Beyond Hatred

Durée : 86'

Support: super 16 / 35 mm

Réalisation : Olivier Meyrou

Compositeur: François Eudes Chanfrault

Chef opérateur: Jean Marc Bouzou

Chef opérateur son: Sébastien Savine, Yolande Decarsin

Production exécutive: Bénédicte Couvreur

Production : Hold Up Films / Miss Luna Films, avec la participation de France 5, de France 2 et du CNC

Distributeur salles: à déterminer

Année : 2005



Beyond Hatred

Au-dela de la haine

(Docu -- France)

A Hold Up Films, Miss Luna Films production, with the support of France 5, France 2 and CNC. (International sales: Films Distribution, Paris.) Produced by Christophe Girard, Katherina Marx. Directed by Olivier Meyrou.

With: Jean-Paul Chenu, Marie-Cecile Chenu.

By [LESLIE FELPERIN](#)

Verite docu "Beyond Hatred" movingly accompanies the family of Francois Chenu, a gay man murdered by three skinheads in 2002, down the road to forgiveness. French docmaker Olivier Meyrou ("Bye Bye Apartheid") unearths charged drama by watching interplay among Chenu's parents and siblings, the family of the accused and the attorneys involved. Bookings from docu, gay and human-rights fests should follow the pic's Berlin screening, with boutique theatrical distribution distinctly possible in Gaul and beyond.

Through conversations observed between Francois' parents, schoolteacher Jean-Paul and hospital caregiver Marie-Cecile Chenu, the family's chain-smoking femme lawyer and others, the main facts of the case gradually emerge. The attackers (never seen in the docu) went to Leo Legrance Park in Rheims, France, looking for an Arab to beat up. When they didn't find one, they turned on Francois who, when asked, admitted he was gay. They beat him unconscious, and thinking he was already dead, tried to hide his body by throwing it in a pond where he drowned.

Point of the film is not to explore the homophobic attack itself, but its aftermath. Core arc concerns Chenu family's feelings as they evolve from anger and despair toward an almost saintly recognition of how the killers' own deprived backgrounds led them to this horrible act. The father of one of the killers, an alcoholic who tried to destroy evidence, and another attacker's aunt, are also interviewed and treated with the same even-handed sympathy by the filmmakers.

Viewers expecting daytime-TV style histrionics from such emotive material will be struck by the quiet, contained dignity of Chenu's family, none of whom ever raises his or her voice.

Film requires auds not just to look but to listen, and deploys sound in an imaginative and exemplary way. For instance, in one bravura sequence, Francois' sister Aurelie's offscreen voice is heard calmly recounting how she suspected that an unidentified corpse reported in the news might be her brother. She relates how she then viewed his body at the morgue, while a long static shot of the park where the murder took place unspools, backed by Francois Eudes Chanfrault's sparse, sorrowful, string-based score.

Helmer Meyrou and his crew are invisible in classic verite style, and refuse to spell things out via explanatory subtitles or narration. Auds must infer from the dialogue who is who, what's going on during the trial, and what some of the French legal jargon means. The austerity of Meyrou's approach may curb the pic's potential for North American sales, but impress crix and fest programmers with astringent tastes.

Camera (color, 16-mm-to-35mm), Jean Marc Bouzou; editor, Cathie Dambel; music, Francois-Eudes Chanfrault; sound, Sebastien Savine, Yolande Decarsin, Gildas Mercier. Reviewed at Berlin Film Festival (Forum), Feb. 14, 2006. Running time: 90 MIN.



Channel 4 Film

Beyond Hatred (Au-Delà De La Haine)

our rating: 5.0



86 minutes, France (2005),

In Olivier Meyrou's feature-length documentary, justice is restored as two parents transcend their anger and hatred towards the young men who murdered their son

On 13 September 2002, a self-assured gay man out walking alone in a park in Rheims, France, was set upon, severely beaten and then drowned by three skinheads who had targeted him after failing to find an Arab to "do".

This random hate crime is the springboard for Olivier Meyrou's **Beyond Hatred**, but the documentary never shows any images of either the victim, François Chenu, or the three perpetrators, Michael Regnier, Fabien Lavenus or Franck Billette. Meyrou's film is less concerned with the brutal act itself, than with the process, both judicial and psychological, whereby hatred is overcome and humanity restored.

Beyond Hatred documents the period before, during and after the murder trial, some two years after the crime was committed. Meyrou had originally intended, by following the prosecution and defense teams, to explore the mechanics of homophobia - but then the Chenu family agreed to let themselves be filmed, and a much broader story took shape. The father Jean-Paul, the mother Marie-Cécile and sister Aurélie discuss their shocked reactions to the news of François' death, and their ongoing grief and suffering, while Marie-Cécile describes with disarming candour her mixed feelings about abandoning the hatred that has been sustaining her ever since.

Although during the trial the three accused show little sign of remorse for what they admit they have done, in the end, in an act of extraordinary courage, principle and dignity, François' parents decide to reach out to their son's killers, offering understanding, support, and something like forgiveness.



REVIEW BY RICH CLINE **Beyond Hatred**



★★★★★ **Au delà de la Haine** With a strongly emotional punch, this simple documentary addresses issues of reconciliation, forgiveness and revenge from a deeply personal perspective.

The film begins two years after Jean-Paul and Marie-Cecile Chenu lost their son François, beaten to death by three skinheads for being gay. Over the course of the film, director Meyrou follows the Chenus as they and their other children talk about the horrible event, talk with lawyers and journalists, and prepare to have wounds reopened during the trial. They want to move beyond the hatred and violence they feel toward the murderers. They want to understand why it happened, and take positive action. "I'd like to have retained my anger forever, but I can't," Marie-Cecile says.

As the trial progresses, it emerges that the attackers were normal young guys (one was a minor), fuelled on alcohol and by their racist, nationalistic group dynamic. They went out that night to "kill an Arab", but decided that a gay man would do. "They think they have the right to kill an Arab or homosexual," says one lawyer.

The film is extremely straightforward. Meyrou's camera is unobtrusive and observational, catching private conversations and intimate moments. There's a lot of talking--constant double-line subtitles (by the end we feel like we've read a book!). The images, though, are minimal: faces of survivors, hallways outside the courtroom, the place where the attack happened, a candlelight vigil on a bridge nearby. The film's main flaw is that there's no sense of François here; we never know anything about him besides that he was open about who he was and he bravely refused to accept this injustice. That he stood his ground, one against three, and called them cowards was inconceivable to his attackers.

Even though it's profoundly low-key, the film is riveting. Watching this resilient family struggle to find a constructive path is deeply inspirational, especially when faced with the ignorant conjecture of journalists and others. The film's opening line is Jean-Paul saying, "It's a failing of the society I live in"; they're calling for more tolerance and better education. And in the film's coda, six months later, the Chenus deliver a message to their son's convicted killers that's astonishingly compassionate and moving.