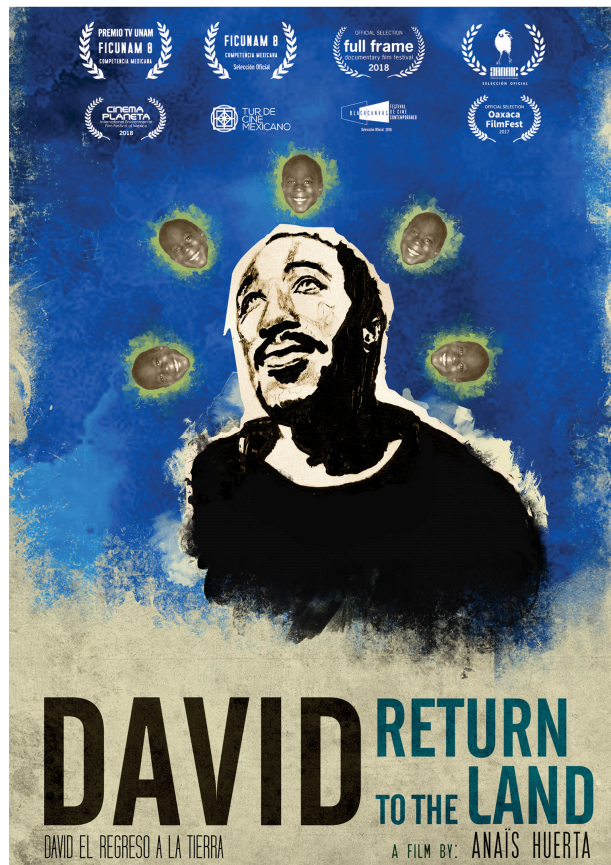




## DAVID: RETURN TO THE LAND (DAVID. EL REGRESO A LA TIERRA)



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## **David: The Return to Land**

**“I’m black, born Haitian, French and Jewish by adoption. I feel all those things, but people only see me as a black person, so it’s hard for me to find my place.”**

At 34, David has reached the pinnacle of academic achievement. He has passed his doctoral examination and is about to become a Doctor of Law. However, David still has a calling. He has yet to find his place in the world. David was born Haitian and then adopted by a French Jewish family. We follow his dreams and fears, as he searches for an uncertain answer in a world that marginalizes differences. David is an alien in his own homeland. A stranger among his fellow Haitians; David is on a quest to find his identity.

### **About France**

France is located in northwestern Europe. It is one of Europe’s largest countries, and plays an important part in world affairs. It also has one of the largest economies in the world. France has a population of more than 67 million people. Paris is its capital, and largest, city. The population of the city of Paris is over 2 million. The entire metropolitan area is much larger though, with a population of more than 10 million people.

France has an ethnically diverse population; however, a 1978 French law prohibits the government from measuring or storing data on race or religion. This means that there are no official statistics on race in France. The country is believed to have a significant black population though. Some researchers have estimated that it is around 3 percent.<sup>i ii iii</sup> France also has a significant population of Jewish people. Many Jews moved there following World War II, during which Jewish people were displaced throughout Europe. The World Jewish Congress estimates that France currently has approximately half a million Jewish people, making it the third largest Jewish community in the world.<sup>iv</sup>

### **About Haiti**

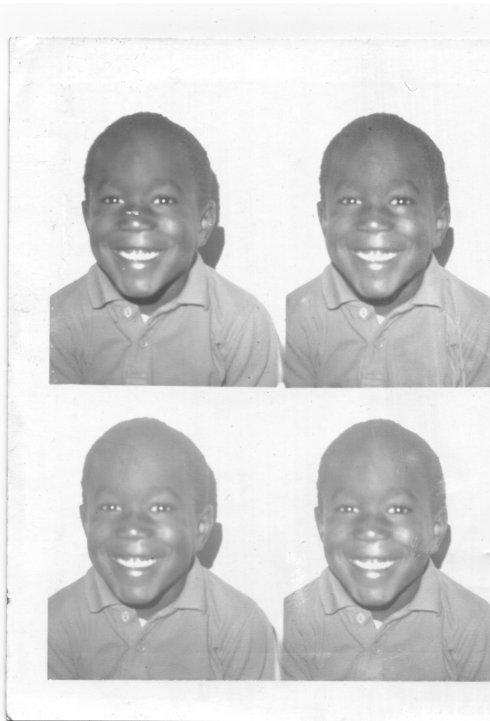
Haiti is a country in the Caribbean Sea. It includes the western one-third of the island of Hispaniola, and a number of smaller islands. [The remainder of Hispaniola is the Dominican Republic.] Most of Haiti has a humid and warm tropical climate. Haiti’s capital is Port-au-Prince. The population of Haiti is close to 11 million people. Most of these people are descended from African slaves. It is estimated that 95 percent of the population in Haiti is black.<sup>v</sup> The country has two official languages; French and Creole. Haitian Creole is a language that developed through interactions between French colonists and African slaves.

While Haiti is an independent nation today, for many years before its independence, it was a French colony. The island of Hispaniola was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1492 and the Spanish established settlements there, forcing the local population to mine gold. In 1697, Spain gave control of the western third of the island (which later became Haiti) to France. Like Spain, France exploited Haiti’s natural resources for profit, importing thousands of African slaves for labor. The colony became very prosperous through sugar and other exports, but the slaves were severely mistreated. Many died from malnutrition, disease, and injury.

The brutal abuse of the slaves led to revolution, and Haiti finally gained its independence in 1804. It was the first country in Latin America to do so, and became the world's first black republic. While it managed to break free from slavery and French rule, throughout its history Haiti has faced numerous political, social, and economic problems, and many people there live in severe poverty. According to the CIA World Factbook, Haiti is the Western Hemisphere's poorest country. One of its most recent crises was a large earthquake in 2010, which caused widespread destruction and killed hundreds of thousands of people. Today the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reports, "Haiti continues to face multiple ongoing crises, including cholera outbreaks, food insecurity and malnutrition."<sup>vi</sup>

### **Orphans in Haiti**

Compared to many other countries, Haiti has a large number of children living in orphanages. In recent years, there has been controversy related to these orphanages. One issue that has attracted both national and international attention is the fact that many of the children in Haiti's orphanages are not actually orphans. Instead, in Haiti, some children end up in orphanages not because their parents die, but because the parents are so poor that they are unable to care for their children. With nowhere else to turn, desperate parents often take their children to orphanages, hoping that the children will receive better care in these institutions.<sup>vii</sup>



However, while hopes of better living conditions drives many parents to put their children in orphanages, another controversy related to Haiti's orphanages is the quality of care that children actually receive. Many of the orphanages are privately run and not monitored by the government, and there is evidence that some of them abuse and neglect the children in their care. UNICEF finds, "Most of the children at these facilities are not orphans—many have been placed there by parents who hope they will receive educations and better care. But, too often, this is not the case. In fact, children living in these places—crowded into dormitories and often without proper sanitation—are more vulnerable to outbreaks of diseases like cholera and are at risk of exploitation, including forced labour and sexual abuse."<sup>viii</sup> In recent years, the Haitian government has made efforts to improve this situation, for example by trying to develop a foster care system for children in need.<sup>ix</sup>

### **International Adoption**

Haiti is one of many countries that allows its children to be adopted by individuals and families in other countries. While it can be complicated and expensive, international adoption is relatively common. In a report by the European Parliamentary Research Service, researchers report that France, the United States, Spain, and Italy receive the highest numbers of children through international adoptions. In that same report, Haiti is ranked in the top ten countries of origin for international adoptions.<sup>x</sup>

The number of Haitian children being adopted internationally has fluctuated over the years, but overall, France has been one of the primary destinations for the children who are adopted from Haiti. One researcher examines adoptions prior to the 2001 earthquake and reports an average of between 700 and 1,400 a year. He finds that many of these children went to France, a total of about 3,800 between 2003 and 2009.<sup>xi</sup> In recent years though, Haitian adoptions to France and elsewhere have declined as a result of the Haitian government's attempt to develop a foster care program.



## Glossary

- **Anemia:** Anemia is a medical condition where the body does not have enough red blood cells to carry sufficient oxygen to the tissues throughout the body. Fatigue is a common symptom of anemia.
- **Creole language:** Haitian Creole is one of the official languages of Haiti. It developed through interactions between African slaves and French Colonists.
- **Nantes:** Nantes is a city in western France.
- **Normandy:** Normandy is a region in northern France.
- **Oradea:** Oradea is a city located in northwestern Romania.
- **Paris-Nanterre University:** A university located in Nanterre, just west of Paris, France.
- **Schizophrenia:** a mental disorder that can affect how people think and feel. Schizophrenia can cause hallucinations and delusions.
- **Stroke:** A stroke is when the blood flow to the brain is blocked by a blood clot. It can cause permanent brain damage and disability. While strokes are more common in adults, they can occur in children too.
- **Umbilical Hernia:** An umbilical hernia happens when part of the intestine pushes through the umbilical opening in the wall of the abdomen.
- **Voodoo:** A religion that many people believe originated in Haiti. One of the central ideas in voodoo is the belief in spirits
- **Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial:** Located in Israel, the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial is a memorial to the victims of the Holocaust.

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