

Film screenings at The Women's Law Centre

The Women's Law Centre, having seen how powerful film is in conveying information one doesn't find in textbooks, partnered with the Women Filmmakers of Zimbabwe (WFOZ) to screen films from previous editions of the International Images for Women (IIFF), which is sub-saharan Africa's only gender-centred film festival, at the Centre's premises in Mount Pleasant.

The Women's Law Centre is a department of the Faculty of Law at the University of Zimbabwe. Amongst other things, the Centre runs the South East African Regional Law Centre (SEARLC), a regional Master's programme for students from southern and eastern Africa that specialises in law as it affects women.

The films chosen for the collaboration all focused on women's lived realities. Dr Tsanga the Deputy Director of the centre said the film screenings were a very useful teaching methodology. One of the Films screened was, THE GREATEST SILENCE, a harrowing documentary that looks at the lives of the many tens of thousands of women and girls who have been systematically kidnapped, raped, mutilated and tortured by soldiers from both foreign militias and the Congolese army. Since this documentary, and others looking at the same issue, was made, some perpetrators of this heinous crime are being tried in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Local production by Nyerai Films, I WANT A WEDDING DRESS, which interrogates the choices women in their everyday lives especially concerning their sexuality, was also screened at The Women's Law Centre. Interesting to note during the discussions following the screening of this film, was the different perceptions the students held about the definition of what a "strong" woman is.

UNGOCHANI, a controversial documentary that investigates the different views of the church, community, gays and lesbians about homosexuality. This documentary drew mixed reactions from different viewers especially since The Women's Law Centre embraces students from all over the continent who have different traditions and beliefs. At the same time homosexuality is a taboo topic to most Zimbabweans who are extremely uncomfortable when talking about it.

As women with goals, working in different sectors, the Women's Law Centre and WFOZ confirm that working together provides more intellectual and practical opportunities than going it alone.

Dr. Amy Tsanga is a senior Lecturer in Law at the University of Zimbabwe. She is an activist with broad experience in gender, development, human rights law, activism, teaching, action research and information dissemination. She said, but the partnership with WFOZ had proven to be very effective and the students were looking forward to another series of seminars in the second term.

Porcia's Mudavanhu's film already selected for two European festivals

Only a few weeks after the latest documentary production by Women Filmmakers of Zimbabwe/Nyerai Films, Porcia Mudavanhu's film UNGOCHANI has already been selected for two important festivals in Europe. It was invited to the Bristol African Film Festival as well as one of the most influential African film festivals in Europe, Afrykamera in Poland. Every year under the guidance of energetic director Przemek Stepień, this Polish festival screens a high quality selection of African films in five of Poland's major cities: Warsaw, Gdansk, Lodz with its famous film school, Wrocław and Krakow. Afrykamera is well connected with the Polish Film Institute and boasts of a close network with many

filmmakers from in and outside the African continent. Porcia is very elated that her first film was selected to such an important event and that its professional standard has already found the recognition of African film experts on the international stage.



Afrykamera Award trophy, designed by Funkie Loader

Audience Building

For Zimbabweans, as we take steps to develop our foetal film industry, it is important to realize that film is an art form. This art form serves several purposes, including education, entertainment and image and opinion formation. Therefore while we sit and watch television or sit in the cinema seat, as well as being entertained we are also being educated about some social situation or other. And we are having our opinions moulded by the film's story. When seen in this way, it is clear film is not something to be taken lightly, even if it is often recreational. For example, how many people in Zimbabwe now use the word "Oga" at some time or other because of the Nollywood films we see?

the only women's film festival in sub-saharan Africa

Sadly, Zimbabwe produces very few films, one cause of this is the lack of educational institutions that teach film, from primary level right through to tertiary. This factor affects the Zimbabwean film industry. People want their entertainment/education/opinion-making narrative frequently and regularly. Then, because the industry is small, so that marketing budgets barely exist, people get to hear of the production by word of mouth. By the time this has happened the film is already out of the cinema because there is hardly a marketing budget, therefore people get to hear of the production by word of mouth, by the time this happens the production will be out of the cinema due to low attendance in the beginning.

Thus our film entertainment is mainly foreign. We are imbibing foreign thoughts and values, while at the same time we fail to strike a balance by exporting our own films. One solution to this is for Zimbabweans to make a pointed effort to see Zimbabwean films whenever possible. Audience building is one of the essential factors for the growth of the local film industry, as the Zimbabwe Film Industry Development Committee (ZFIDC) affirmed at a recent strategic planning session. So it is good to see the policy makers getting involved now too. Yet the number of people who attend public cinema houses seem to be few when there is a local production being screened.

Why do Zimbabweans ignore or dislike local productions? Some argue that it's the picture quality. Others mention other production standards such as story, script or sound quality. This all adds up on top of lack of adequate advertisement to leave our industry in the doldrums.

As our contribution to Zimbabwe's audience building process, Wild Track wants to find out exactly what it is you want to see in a Zimbabwean film to get you queuing up at the cinema or glued to your chair in front of ZTV. You can also tell us what you do not like about our own local productions. Write to us at

info@nyeraifilms.com or wfoz@mango.zw. Or connect to our facebook site. Wild Track will pass the information to other filmmakers.

The other thing Women Filmmakers of Zimbabwe are doing towards audience building is taking films into the schools so that school pupils start to appreciate different kinds of films.

WFOZ member at AFDA Film school



Chipo Zhou (centre) during one of the WFOZ/Nyera shoots

Remarks from Chipo Zhou

I hope I find you and all the WFOZ ladies well. As you may be aware, I am currently pursuing my film studies at AFDA Cape Town. It is a challenging but interesting experience and I find the workshops that I attended with WFOZ put me a step ahead and make the course easier to follow and am grateful that I had the opportunity.

I spoke to the librarian here and mentioned my affiliation to WFOZ and it turns out, one of the recommended films for students to watch is KARE KARE ZVAKO and they are looking into purchasing it for our library. He wanted to find out what the procedure is to obtain it and I have given him your email address so he can get further information.

Some of my classmates have also shown interest in attending the festival and would like to know as soon as the information is available, the dates for this year and if there is anything they maybe able to participate in. I was elected into the Student Council and will hopefully get more people interested and maybe even showcase some of their films there.

I hope to hear from you soon. Greetings to the WFOZ ladies.

Chipo

Open letter to the MYNSSC, MICT, NBC, One Africa

Filmmaking as a interpretation of historical events : The return of the Namibian skulls to Namibia in 2011 **AFRICAVENIR**

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This is an analysis of cinema and its role in

the only women's film festival in sub-saharan Africa



Sara Baartman screening AfriAvenir 2009 Gurirab, Katjavivi

development and African identity, an identity which is as much historically determined as determined by current events. Submitted by one of WFOZ's many international partners, Africa Avenir, Africa Avenir is coordinated in Namibia by Hans-Christian Mahnke, Ph.D Political Science. Mahnke is deeply engaged in the means, the results and the practical social meanings of pictures and stories represented on our screens. Mahnke is concerned about how the films and television we consume with so much delight affect and shape our thinking, our behaviour and our perceptions. So this is a must reading for any Zimbabwean, or any other African who wants to be a filmmaker, or is one, and is battling with questions about the meaning of her or his films. Indeed, films can mean money, in Hollywood or Bollywood, or Nollywood. But they have another deeper meaning, as Mahnke reveals, that shapes how we understand who we are. Mahnke writes about this defining function of film with knowledge, eloquence and passion. This is the first part of Mahnke's with respect to what film really means. Is film merely a sequence of entertaining pictures that add up to something like a story? Or is film something more meaningful? The next two parts of Mahnke's article will appear in the next two editions of WILD TRACK. Zimbabweans can definitely hear the echoes of this train of thought with respect to the Zimbabwe

Birds.

Open letter to the MYNSSC, MICT, NBC, One Africa

Filmmaking as a interpretation of historical events : The return of the Namibian skulls to Namibia in 2011 (part 1)

History is always an exercise in looking back through glasses clouded with the dirt of our present moment.

Despite differences, both historians and filmmakers approach the materials of the past with one major similarity. Both possess attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs – entire value systems – that colour everything they express and underlie the interpretations by which they organize and give meaning to the traces of the past. These processes of interpretation have to be taken into account when looking back on written history and film documents.

Historians and filmmakers interpret their subject. Thus we as readers and audiences have to abandon the notion of presented data and films as a document or mirror of empirical reality. There is no such thing as objectivity. One's perspective and value system determines the product.

Acknowledging this means, to also accept the fact, that film products by Europeans and Africans must look different, considering they different backgrounds, cultures, value systems, e.g. In 1990, Theo-Ben Gurirab, then President of the 54

session of the United Nation General Assembly, urgently appealed to the UN member states in New York: "The horrors of slavery and destruction wrought upon Africa and its peoples cannot be forgotten. Now is the time for reconciliation and healing. Such an act of mutual affirmation will never be truly complete unless Africa's sacred relics, icons, art works and other priceless cultural objects are returned lock, stock and barrel to their rightful owners. Today these stolen African treasures adorn public museums, libraries, art galleries and private homes in foreign lands. They must come home to assuage the pain and anger in the hearts of the succeeding generations of Africans." Twenty years later his calls were heard.

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filmmakers of zimbabwe](https://www.facebook.com/womenfilmmakersofzimbabwe)**

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**By the way, a *wild track* is an additional sound
recorded for a particular scene without the
image.**