



CONTACT

Sleeping Giant
Dara Kell – Co-Director / Producer
dara@dearmandela.com
ph: 079 174 2851 (South Africa)
ph: 917.749.8002 (USA)

www.dearmandela.com

AFRICA SALES

Fireworx Media
Neil Brandt – Co-Producer
neil@fireworxmedia.co.za
ph: +27 11 403 4934
www.fireworxmedia.co.za

DEAR MANDELA

A film by Dara Kell and Christopher Nizza



SHORT SYNOPSIS

Destroyed homes, threats at gunpoint and high-court action, this battle by three young people to stand up for their rights is a testimony to people power. When the South African government promises to 'eradicate the slums' and begins to evict shack dwellers far outside the city, three friends who live in Durban's vast shantytowns refuse to be moved. *Dear Mandela* follows their journey from their shacks to the highest court in the land as they invoke Nelson Mandela's example and become leaders in a growing social movement. By turns inspiring, devastating and funny, the film offers a new perspective on the role that young people can play in political change and is a fascinating portrait of South Africa coming of age.

93 minutes – South Africa / USA

WINNER, GRAND JURY PRIZE, BROOKLYN FILM FESTIVAL

WINNER, BEST DOCUMENTARY, BROOKLYN FILM FESTIVAL

WINNER, BEST SOUTH AFRICAN DOCUMENTARY, DURBAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

AFRICAN ACADEMY AWARD NOMINEE FOR BEST DOCUMENTARY

WINNER, GOLDEN BUTTERFLY AWARD, MOVIES THAT MATTER FILM FESTIVAL

LONG SYNOPSIS

When the South African government promises to ‘eradicate the slums’ and begins evicting shack dwellers from their homes, three friends who live in Durban’s vast shantytowns refuse to be moved. DEAR MANDELA follows their journey from their shacks to the highest court in the land as they invoke Nelson Mandela’s example and become leaders in an inspiring social movement.

Mazwi, an enlightened schoolboy; Zama, an AIDS orphan and Mnikelo, a mischievous shopkeeper are part of a new generation who feel betrayed by the broken promises of Mandela’s own political party, the African National Congress. Determined to stop the evictions, they met with their communities by candlelight and discovered that the new innocuous-sounding ‘Slums Act’ legalized the evictions and violated the rights enshrined in the country’s landmark Constitution. With the help of pro bono lawyers, they challenged the Slums Act all the way to the hallowed Constitutional Court.

The extraordinary achievements of the shack dwellers did not come without a price. As the beloved Mandela's portrait beams down from schoolroom chalkboards and shack walls, Mazwi, Zama and Mnikelo learn of the sacrifices that come with leadership. Shack demolitions, assassination attempts and government repression test their resolve to continue. By turns devastating, inspiring and funny, DEAR MANDELA offers a new perspective on the role that young people can play in political change and is a fascinating portrait of South Africa coming of age.

SCREENING HISTORY

DEAR MANDELA had its World Premiere at the Durban International Film Festival in South Africa, where it was awarded the 'Best South African Documentary' prize at the festival. The jury called DEAR MANDELA: 'A movie about courage, this documentary is beautifully shot, socially relevant and still manages to offer humor as it reveals a growing grassroots political literacy in South Africa's informal settlements.' DEAR MANDELA has since screened in cities around the world – in New York, London, Addis Ababa, Prague, Seoul, Vienna and more. At the same time, the film is currently touring cities and rural areas across South Africa throughout 2012. DEAR MANDELA won the Grand Jury Prize at the Brooklyn Film Festival and was awarded the top prize – The Golden Butterfly Award - at the Movies that Matter film festival in The Hague and was recently nominated for an African Academy Award. The African broadcast on Mzansi Magic on the 26th April 2012 generated so much activity on Twitter that #dearmandela became the number 2 trending topic in South Africa.

“Leaves us with questions that few have dared to ask about the new South Africa”.
- Marie Huchzermeyer, Author of *Cities with ‘Slums’*

“Mnikelo, Mazwi and Zama offer a kind of uncensored honesty that comes with youth. Enthralling...one of those films that will never leave you.”
- *Mahala Magazine*

CHARACTERS



MAZWI

High School Student, Youth leader

Mazwi's family has been threatened with eviction to the notorious 'transit camps' far from the city – what residents call 'human dumping grounds'. His mom says, "We will move over our dead bodies". Mazwi is regarded as one of the 'young lions' by the elders, but when he publicly denounces Mandela's own African National Congress, he learns that leaders must be diplomats, too. As he resists evictions on the courts and in the streets, Mazwi blossoms from a shy schoolboy into a respected and courageous leader, while learning of the sacrifices that often accompany responsibility.



ZAMA

University student, mother

The last surviving adult from a family ravaged by AIDS, Zama runs a local drop-in center for AIDS orphans because she's 'lived their pain'. She is the breadwinner for her family of six and still pursues her university studies. The notorious 'Red Ants' demolished her shack but she rebuilt it the same day and refuses to leave her home in Kennedy Road despite constant threats of eviction. When political violence sends the shantytown into a week of fear and terror, many community leaders must go into hiding. Zama decides to stay, to 'keep Kennedy Road ready' for when they return.



MNIKELO

Shopkeeper, activist

This man has a way with words. With his dog-eared South African Constitution under his arm, he goes to recently evicted communities to teach them about their rights and connect them with pro bono lawyers. By the time he's done, their tears have turned into laughter and hope. When Mnikelo and other members of the movement boycott pivotal national elections with a controversial 'No Land, No House, No Vote' campaign, they draw the ire of the ruling party. Mnikelo's motto in life is "You don't have to be old to be wise".

DIRECTORS' STATEMENTS



DARA KELL

I was born in Newcastle, Kwa-Zulu Natal in 1980 and grew up during the height of popular protest against apartheid and the era of harsh repression that followed. Witnessing the birth of a new nation in my early teens sowed the seeds of my filmmaking career. I'm part of a generation of post-apartheid filmmakers who grapple with the hopes and complexities of our emergent country. DEAR MANDELA is my first film, and it is the film that I was born to make.

In 2007, I first learned about a new social movement called *Abahlali baseMjondolo* (Residents of the Shacks). I was immediately intrigued by the potential of this deeply democratic movement to find some

way through the seemingly intractable situation of millions of people living in life-threatening conditions in rapidly growing informal settlements. In December 2007, my filmmaking partner Christopher Nizza and I visited the movement's headquarters in Durban. Meeting the young leaders who became the stars of the film, I saw that they embodied Nelson Mandela's pragmatic idealism, his courage and his humility. I witnessed the trauma caused by unlawful evictions of shack dwellers at the hands of the Red Ants, as well as the courageous resistance of evictions by communities all over Durban. DEAR MANDELA is a testament to the hope that still survives among those whose spirits could otherwise have been broken. It is an ode to those who gave their lives for a free South Africa, and a love letter to my country.

Growing up during apartheid was claustrophobic and at times terrifying. Newscasters lied to us while people were being assassinated in the townships. Making this film is an attempt to understand parts of my country that were hidden to me as a young white girl growing up in a segregated suburb. As the only child of a single mother who juggled 3 jobs to keep a roof over our heads, I grew up without privilege but was still worlds away from those who lived in informal settlements. I hope DEAR MANDELA helps bridge the manufactured divisions between black and white, suburb and informal settlement, rich and poor.

DIRECTORS' STATEMENTS

CHRISTOPHER NIZZA



I was raised in a mixed-income area of New York City where it was impossible to hide from the poverty and discrimination that marked the lives of many families in my neighborhood. As I came of age amidst guns, drugs and racism, I searched for alternative ways to deal with problems of want and injustice. I went to Hunter College, NY with the intention of studying journalism but while interning on documentaries and television productions, I began to see film as a way to communicate across many of the boundaries that keep us separated. When I learned about the situation in post-apartheid South Africa, I recognized the same stereotypes of poor people that exist in my country being disseminated by the press and then echoed by the public. These false perceptions create a feeling of otherness that I feel makes solving the daunting and vital problems

we face impossible to confront. The men and women who are building a mass movement of shack dwellers in South Africa, in the face of widespread evictions and brutality, see that everybody can participate in creating democracy - not just the elite in our society. Their story has been hidden under the common tale of South Africa entering into the so-called First World and I felt that countering this narrative was the perfect way to begin my career as a documentary filmmaker.

- Christopher Nizza



CREW

DEAR MANDELA is produced, directed and edited by filmmaking team Dara Kell and Christopher Nizza. They are Sundance Institute Documentary Composers Lab fellows, IFP Documentary Lab fellows, and recipients of the 'Outstanding Filmmaker' prize representing Africa at Pangea Day. DEAR MANDELA is their first documentary.

Dara Kell | Co-director / Producer / Editor

Dara Kell is an award-winning South African documentary and television editor. Her editing work includes Academy Award-nominated 'Jesus Camp'; 'The Reckoning' (which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival) and Emmy Award winner 'Diamond at the Rock'. Her clients include National Geographic, Discovery Network, History Channel and MTV. She was a field producer for the Amnesty International documentary 'Human Rights, Human Needs' and has edited short films for Human Rights Watch and the MacArthur Foundation. Dara is also a media educator and facilitates camera and editing trainings with grassroots groups across the United States. She graduated from Rhodes University with a Bachelor of Journalism in Documentary Filmmaking and Political Science. Her thesis film 'Indlini Yam' (In My House) won the Dolphin Award for Best Documentary.

Christopher Nizza | Co-director / Producer / Editor

Christopher Nizza is a New York City born, bred and based filmmaker and editor. His Emmy Award-winning work includes documentaries and television shows ('Hollywood DC', 'Ironman Triathlon', 'Dakar Rally', 'Iditarod') as well as video game commercials and music videos. He edited and produced feature-stories and teasers at Figure Skating during last year's Winter Olympics in Vancouver, NBC's highest-rated venue at the Games. Nizza is a founding member of the University of the Poor, a project dedicated to using video and new technologies as part of a broad movement to end poverty. As part of this work he collaborated with other filmmakers and community groups to make 'Crisis, U.S.A.', 'Copy This Tape' and 'Learning as we Lead'. These short documentaries have been used in educational programs at hundreds of grassroots meetings and university classes across the United States.

Matthew Peterson | Director of Photography

is an Emmy Award-winning cinematographer and winner of Australia's top cinematography award, the Golden Tripod. His most recent assignments include the Beijing Olympics, Tour de France and the Ironman World Championships filmed in Hawaii. He has worked in some of the most rugged conditions in the world – from Alaska's Yukon to the Sahara desert. Peterson specializes in high definition Panasonic VariCam and is at the cutting edge of high-end digital cinema. From the Red Camera to 16-mm film cameras, Peterson's wealth of experience with creative rigging, car mounts and helicopter rigs make him one of the most sought-after cinematographers in the sports world. Peterson is also an accomplished still photographer. His solo photographic exhibitions snap [NYC] and snap [POSTCARDS] featured Matt's exquisite photos of exotic locations and included stunning portraits of Ringo Starr and Kelly Slater.

Neil Brandt | FIREWORX MEDIA | Co-Producer

Neil Brandt, is a UCT graduate in psychology and law, and is one of South Africa's leading creative producers. Neil has taken to market many award-winning documentary films, including Angola Saudades, A Lion's Trail, The Mother's House, History of South African Politics, Tsietsi My Hero, Courting Justice, Affectionately Known as Alex and Protection, which have won numerous best-film awards locally and internationally, including an Emmy for Artistic and Cultural Achievement, and have broadcast in over 35 territories worldwide, by, among others, BBC, Arte and The Sundance Channel. In 2010 he completed Sea Point Days, which held its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival, and subsequently competed inter alia at IDFA and Dubai IFF.

Ted Reichman | COMPOSER

Ted is an accordionist, keyboard player, and composer, focusing on connections between improvisation and various forms of folk, popular music, and jazz. He works as a film composer and record producer, in addition to performing worldwide in John Hollenbeck's Claudia Quintet, and other jazz and rock bands. After moving to New York, Reichman became involved in many musical genres: jazz, with Ben Perowsky and Chris Speed, improvisation, with Marc Ribot, Anthony Coleman, and Eugene Chadbourne, Jewish music, with David Krakauer and Roberto Rodriguez, alternative country, with Sue Garner and Laura Cantrell, and rock and roll, with Elysian Fields, Paul Simon, Sam Phillips, and Shivaree. Reichman's work as a composer includes the critically acclaimed albums Emigré, and My Ears are Bent. His work in film music includes original scores for the feature films Rick, The Memory Thief, and several documentaries, including States of UnBelonging and Ahead of Time. Songs by Reichman are also featured in the animated film Year Of The Fish. Reichman was a 2010 Fellow at the Sundance Institute Documentary Composers Lab.

REVIEWS

CITY PRESS:

"Unexpectedly gripping, eye-opening...humanizes the nameless protesters we see on the news hurling bricks at the police through a haze of teargas....What is most striking about Dear Mandela is its ability to capture life in Kennedy Road without prettifying it or horrifying it – without the tinged wide-angle or the shaky camera. We move through schools, initiation ceremonies, shack fires, evictions, onto taxis, into courtrooms, to illegal electrical wirings, through Gulag-like transit camps of tin shacks and – jarringly – to swanky casinos where government housing bosses sip champagne and congratulate themselves. Dear Mandela doesn't purport to bring you both sides of the story with scientific accuracy. Instead it purports to show that the "dangerous" masses are people with emotions and dilemmas, lives and dreams like you and me. Perhaps most important of all, it shows what happens when youths take their destiny into their hands the way the ANC youths of old did. It is a call to action as much as it is an indictment of a government that has lost its way." –
- *Charl Blignaut, City Press*

HACKNEY CITIZEN:

This inspiring documentary gives us a view from within the shantytown settlements –set up for the black population during apartheid – focusing on Durban shantytown youths, who in their indignation for the lack of government support found their political voice, forming the Abahlali baseMjondolo. Mnikelo, who is the spokesman of the Abahlali shack-dwellers movement, regularly responds to calls from other residents in the slums. He has read up on the constitution to be aware of what is and isn't acceptable behaviour from the government officials and police, forcing them to be accountable. We get anecdotes as well as a clear vision of their struggle and one member describes shack life with no electricity and sharing water with the animals, while at the same time assisting with food distribution and looking after orphans. There are also alarming statistics, like one schoolboy saying that in some areas there is just one tap to be shared between 7000 people and no proper roads for ambulances, so people die every day due to poor living standards and negligence of the government to address these problems. The ANC helped end apartheid and have been in power ever since, but many feel the party are awash with unfulfilled promises in relation to numbers of houses to be built for the poor. One disillusioned youth is shown inserting a sheet into a ballot box containing the words, "No land, no house, no vote". Anger is further fuelled by the Slums Act of 2008, a legislation giving landowners the power to evict those who have built shacks within the shantytowns, labelled "informal settlements". The movement argues that the constitution says, "No legislation can allow arbitrary evictions". They have extensively researched and studied the Slums Act, sentence by sentence, to fight it "on the streets and in court." The government does get a say too in *Dear Mandela* and one speaker reiterates that the settlements are "transitional". However, some families have been on housing waiting lists since 1994, so clearly not enough has been done and transit camps have made residents feel like prisoners. The Abahlali group has taken the unified frustration of the poor and translated it into an intelligent, honourable attack on the government, armed with informed arguments rather than simply fervent noise and force.
– *Rowland Marsh, Hackney Citizen*

Hlonipha Makoena, Author of Magemu Fuze: The Making of a Kholwa Intellectual:

“Dear Mandela is a colour-saturated and vivid story of young people organising themselves into a protest movement against forced evictions, relocations and their impoverished conditions. In the year that the African National Congress celebrates its 100th anniversary, the name of Nelson Mandela will be invoked many times to affirm and reaffirm the righteousness and timeliness of South Africa’s liberation from an oppressive apartheid system. *Dear Mandela* is a different kind of invocation – it does not seek to merely remind the audience of the end of apartheid and the sacrifices that were made to bring that about. It is a reminder that the end of apartheid was also the beginning of promises: starting with Mandela’s “never again” and culminating in the “better life for all” message of recent elections, South Africa’s poor have been promised a place in the new South Africa and it is time to deliver. *Dear Mandela* is the best kind of expression of what these promises mean to a young generation, who were probably too young to vote in the first election of 1994, but are old enough to know how to read the Constitution and the rights enshrined in it. *Dear Mandela* is their cri de coeur and manifesto. For anyone wanting to understand how the voiceless and powerless make their demands known, *Dear Mandela* is a must.”

Marie Huchzermeyer, Author, Cities with ‘Slums’: From Informal Settlement Eradication to a Right To The City In Africa:

“Filmmakers Dara Kell and Christopher Nizza sensitively capture how everyday life in an informal settlement intersects with the threat of eradication. *Dear Mandela* touches us with the doubts, fears, reflection and courage of members of the Abahlali shack dwellers movement in Durban in their resolve to defend a new democracy against its custodians’ resort to apartheid era legislation against informal settlements. In the depth of the backlash that the Kennedy Road community endured, this documentary leaves us with questions that few have dared to ask about the new South Africa”.

Sihle Mthembu, film critic, Mahala Magazine:

Directed by Dara Kell and Christopher Nizza, *Dear Mandela* is a master class in ambitious documentary making. The film follows Mnikelo, Mazwi and Zama as they try and oppose the government imposed eviction plan. *Dear Mandela* has a series of well planned sequences and between the social statistics we learn about the lives of the three characters. They offer a kind of uncensored honesty that comes with youth. As the trio take their case to the highest court in the country they rely on the kindness of their community and lawyers who are willing to take up their case pro-bono. Kell and Nizza have in this film successfully merged a blend of each of the individual characters without compromising the social background in which the film finds its roots. The film uses largely handheld camera work and the resulting footage makes the viewer feel as if they are a fourth character in the film. With portraits of Mandela as backdrop, the film expresses the social upheaval and disillusionment that is now becoming commonplace amongst South Africans. The film climaxes as the case is heard at the Constitutional Court in what can best be described as a David vs Goliath encounter. The result is enthralling and is delivered in an unexpected way. *Dear Mandela*, if you live in the most divided society in the world, is one of those films that will never leave you.

NATAL WITNESS:

A SHACK is still a home — and one community's courageous fight for the right to continue living in their makeshift dwellings is captured in the moving documentary *Dear Mandela*. - *Estelle Sinkings, Natal Witness*

CINE-VUE: **4 OUT OF 5 STARS**

The recent DocHouse UK premiere of Dara Kell and Christopher Nizza's *Dear Mandela* (2011) heralded a surprisingly strong and impacting documentary that depicts the current climate of the first South African post-apartheid generation, who have found themselves suffering at the hands of the African National Congress. Known as the Abahlali, many of these these Shanty town inhabitants have started to rally together and stand up to South Africa's first democratically elected government. Mandela is often quoted as having said, "A good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination" This is a very fitting observation for the focal protagonists in *Dear Mandela*, three young but wise-beyond-their-years South African slums inhabitants who help lead the demonstrations against Mandela's ANC. The youngest of the three, Mazwi, is just sixteen and yet he possesses the insight of an older man. He observes that there is no democracy for the poor, and that apartheid is very much still prevalent, but the boundaries have shifted from white and black to rich and poor. Along with Mnikelo, 21, and young mother Zama, they help steer the audience into and around their world, where we see the slanted, minimal shacks that they call home and that they are desperately trying to protect.

The subject matter is very sensitively handled by filmmakers Dara Kell and Christopher Nizza, who choose their subjects wisely and don't sentimentalise the situation. With *Dear Mandela*, they have managed to capture the essence of community among the people, incorporate occasional humour and highlight the shared energy and determination that comes with youth, to stand up and make a difference.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What inspired the film and how did you come across the subject matter?

I grew up during apartheid and was a child of the ‘Rainbow Nation’ - I was 14 when Mandela became President in 1994. Things changed fast and a lot of wonderful things were happening, but I was really disturbed when I learned that although many houses had been built, the number of people living in shacks had actually doubled since 1994. As a white girl, I hadn’t spent time in the shantytowns, and it was a world I really wanted to understand. Then my filmmaking partner Christopher Nizza (co-director) and I read an article in 2007 that was the trigger for the film. (‘The Struggle is a School’ by Richard Pithouse)

The article was beautifully written, and described the birth of a new social movement led by people living in shacks in Durban. I was immediately struck by the philosophy of the shack dwellers. They weren’t only talking about what is wrong with South Africa, but they were also articulating a profound vision of what the world could be, how we could build a society based on respect, where everyone counts. It sounds utopian but they are very practical about it. They call it ‘living politics’. It’s about treating people with respect, providing the things – water, electricity, toilets – that everyone needs to live a decent life. It’s about the government consulting with people, rather than evicting them and leaving them homeless.

We visited the movement in 2007 and they were just starting to resist evictions, which were happening all over Durban (and the rest of the country). The evictions, in almost every case were illegal and violated the constitution. We witnessed a young girl whose shack had been destroyed by municipal workers just an hour before. We also began to note that young people were rising into leading roles within the movement. Many of them were too young to remember the glorious day when Nelson Mandela walked free in 1990. They were passionate and compelling – not a ‘lost generation’ at all. We couldn’t walk away – we knew we had to make the film.

2. Why did you call the film ‘Dear Mandela’?

On our first shoot, Mazwi, who was 16 and in high school at the time, told us that he wished Mandela could come and see how they were living (in shacks). If he could just see how they were living, surely he would do something about it. There was such an innocence to this statement. We did hear stories from many others in Mazwi’s generation about writing letters to Madiba, pleading for him to visit their homes so he could see that the ‘better life for all’ was not happening for them or most people they knew.

Mandela is fading from public view. What he fought for is far from being realized, and many people feel betrayed by broken promises. When we were filming, Mandela’s image cropped up often. Some people who lived in shacks had pasted tattered photos of him up on their wall. We also saw Mandela’s photo in classrooms and businesses, and we started filming these images. Mandela, in a way, was watching down on us, and on the people we were filming. Would he be happy? Proud? Disappointed? It was an interesting, and sometimes haunting way to explore the legacy of Mandela and those who were the

architects of our fledgling democracy. We couldn't interview Mandela, but his spirit was there. There is no actual letter to Mandela in the film, but it's a reminder that they didn't just fight for the right to vote, but for a much broader and more radical vision of a just society.

3. What has happened to Zama, Mazwi and Mnikelo since the film was finished?

Zama has found work and has thankfully been able to return to her university studies. However, Kennedy Road has had many shack fires since the film was finished, and Zama's shack burned down last year. All the kids' school uniforms were destroyed and the kids weren't allowed to go to school without uniforms. We were able to help her replace the school uniforms, but it was a devastating blow for her and the hundreds of others who lost everything in the fires. We hope to use the film to call for urgent provision of electricity to the shacks so that people won't have to use candles and paraffin stoves.

Mazwi is still at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, studying politics, and he continues to be very active in the movement. We have very high hopes for him!

Mnikelo is still living in a shack in Foreman Road, and is still at the forefront of the movement, currently focused on the Right to Know campaign, a coalition of social movements and NGOs working to support freedom of the press in South Africa. Mnikelo was recently awarded the top prize, the Golden Butterfly Award, for his courageous activism, at the Movies That Matter festival in The Hague.

2. How is the Abahlali movement doing? Were they able to recover from the attacks?

In the aftermath of the attacks on AbM members at Kennedy Road in 2009, the prosecution of 12 AbM members, alleged to have been involved in the violent attacks, began. The trial was dubbed the "Kennedy 12 trial", and from the start it was clear that it was politically motivated, with the accused being denied bail for months and very little evidence being presented by the police. Numerous requests by AbM for an independent investigation into the attacks were ignored. At the trial, one of the witnesses admitted that the police had told the witnesses what to say, and that the police admitted that the attacks had been arranged by the ANC.

On 18 July 2011, the "Kennedy 12" were acquitted of all charges in the Durban Regional Court. Magistrate Sharon Marks dismissed all of the charges against the activists after she labelled the state's witnesses "belligerent", "unreliable" and "dishonest". She found that while there was no doubt that violence had taken place at Kennedy Road, there was no evidence that the AbM activists had been responsible. She expressed concern that police identity parade witnesses had been coached to point out members of a dance group closely associated with AbM – rather than anyone who had been seen perpetrating any of the violence. According to Jackie Dugard, executive director of SERI – who represented the "Kennedy 12" and provided legal counsel in the criminal trial - "it has been clear for some time that the Kennedy Road accused were charged not because they had done anything wrong, but because they were associated with AbM. Today's verdict is a complete vindication of AbM."

S'bu Zikode still has not been able to return to Kennedy Road. Him and his family have endured a very hard time. This is a huge sacrifice – he is a courageous community leader and it is a tragedy that he has to jump from place to place, without a proper home. Hundreds of people have still not been able to return to Kennedy Road because they don't feel safe. The police don't seem to care. There still has not been any justice for the killings at Kennedy Road in September 2009. Abahlali continues to call for an Independent Commission of Inquiry to find out what really happened that night, but the government has not responded to the calls.

3. Has the film been shown in South Africa? What has the response been?

The film has been shown extensively in South Africa, at festivals, universities, in community halls and in the slums. Lots of people are using it - including the lawyers who you saw in the film. It's also been shown on television across Africa - the satellite broadcaster M-net has bought the rights for the next year and a half, and are showing it often. The response from ordinary people has been amazing. During the first broadcast, it was the #2 trending topic on Twitter. We've had great press coverage in the newspapers and on the biggest morning talk show. People say that the film has opened their eyes to what is happening right around the corner from them, they quote lines from the film, and say that Mazwi, Zama and Mnikelo are their heroes. The film seems to especially resonate with young people, which is what we had always hoped for.

4. Has the government responded to the film? Has Mandela seen it?

We haven't had any official response from the government. We'd delivered a DVD to the Mayor of Durban, and word on the street is that he's watched it. Amnesty International in South Africa is working with us to organize community screenings over the next few years, and we hope to identify sympathetic people from the Department of Housing who might be willing to host screenings. Mandela has firmly asked that no-one request interviews from him, and we respect that (which is why we didn't approach him to be in the film). We have invited the Nelson Mandela Foundation to screenings of the film but so far they haven't been able to attend - we'd love to work with them, so we're holding thumbs that they will be open to the message of the film.

5. What was the biggest challenge in making the film?

The biggest challenge was earning the trust of the community we wanted to film with. When we first met members of Abahlali baseMjondolo (Zulu for 'people of the shacks') at their headquarters in the Kennedy Road informal settlement in Durban, they grilled us for hours about who we were, what we wanted to do, why we wanted to do it. There were illiterate gogos, and lively teenagers. The meeting was conducted in Zulu, with English translations. Then they sent us away, and we went back to our hotel room. In our absence, they voted on whether or not to grant us access. A few hours later, we got an SMS that said we could come back – with our cameras! We were very relieved and excited to be entrusted with their story. I love that the process was so democratic – it wasn't up to one leader, but it was a decision that was made collectively.

We proceeded with filming very slowly, and tried to understand what daily life in the settlements was like, and what the movement was trying to achieve. Halfway through production, at a meeting we were filming late at night, the settlement was attacked by a mysterious armed mob and we had to run for our lives. The next few days were terrifying – the leader of the movement, S'bu Zikode, was receiving death threats, and the shacks of all the movement's leaders were demolished. Thousands of people were fleeing the settlement with only what they could carry. We had the only car around, and we helped people escape. We felt a responsibility to bear witness to what was happening. Going through a near-death experience with them really cemented our relationship, and it's gone beyond a typical filmmaker / subject relationship. I know we'll be involved in each others' lives for a long time to come.

Another huge challenge was raising the funding for the film. We had zero budget, but luckily we had editing and camera skills so we could do a lot of the work ourselves. Plus our super-talented friends Matthew Peterson, a professional Director of Photography, and Tina Brown, a Producer agreed to work for free. 'Will work for Nando's' was our motto! Ultimately, the film just had to get made. Many, many people including Neil Brandt, our fantastic co-producer, helped us along the way and although it took a lot longer than planned, it eventually got done.

