

DOK-WERK filmcooperative presents

# WHEN THE MOUNTAIN MEETS ITS SHADOW

A Documentary by  
ALEXANDER KLEIDER and DANIELA MICHEL  
in Cooperation with ROMIN KHAN

## Cape Town, South Africa

**In hardly any other city of the world can poverty and wealth be found as close together. At its centre, Table Mountain rises majestically, casting its shadow onto the poor from the early afternoon onwards.**

This creative documentary tells the moving stories of Ashraf, Zoliswa and Arnold, who, each in their own way, fight for survival in the informal settlements around Cape Town.

While Ashraf and his friend Mne roam through the townships at night in order to fight against the privatisation of water, electricity and land, Zoliswa and Arnold put their trust in their ability to work. Zoliswa is looking for a new position as a cleaner and Arnold trains as an armed guard to work in the booming security industry. When the city council wants to clear an entire informal settlement in preparation for the World Cup in 2010, Ashraf and his friend Mne are confronted with their own, undigested experiences from the apartheid years ...

With powerful images and impressive personal stories the film offers a sensitive portrait of a society in transition from apartheid to postmodern capitalism.



# WHEN THE MOUNTAIN MEETS ITS SHADOW

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A Documentary by  
Alexander Kleider and Daniela Michel  
in Cooperation with Romin Khan  
Germany 2009 | 93 min.  
HD | Colour

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## PROTAGONISTS

Ashraf Cassiem and Mncedisi Twalo  
Zoliswa, Inga and Sinenjongo Maqabuka  
Siphelele Arnold Maqakalana

## WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY

Alexander Kleider and Daniela Michel

## CAMERA

Alexander Kleider

## SOUND

Romin Khan

## EDITORS

Alexander Kleider and Daniela Michel

## COMPOSER

Eckes Malz

## PRODUCTION MANAGER

Daniela Michel

## RESEARCHER

Romin Khan

## TITLE DESIGN

Alexander Brehm

## EXECUTIVE IN CHARGE OF PRODUCTION

Antje Leinberger

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Solidaritätsfonds Hans-Böckler-Stiftung  
Filmstiftung Nordrhein-Westfalen



[www.WHEN-THE-MOUNTAIN-MEETS-ITS-SHADOW.com](http://www.WHEN-THE-MOUNTAIN-MEETS-ITS-SHADOW.com)

# PROTAGONISTS



**Ashraf,** Mne and their friends roam the streets of Cape Town's Townships every night. Armed with monkey wrenches and screw drivers, they reopen disconnected water supplies and recruit others for the collective fight against the privatisation of water, electricity and land. When the situation escalates, with the city council wanting to clear an entire informal settlement in preparation for the World Cup, Ashraf and Mne are confronted with their own, undigested experiences from the apartheid years.



**Arnold,** who is 18 years younger, puts full trust in his ability to work his way out of poverty. Night after night he patrols unarmed along the high walls of a gated community inhabited by rich South Africans. At the beginning he is convinced that he will make it, but then he starts to realize that his meagre wages will never allow him to leave his corrugated iron hut. Exhausted, he comes to a decision...

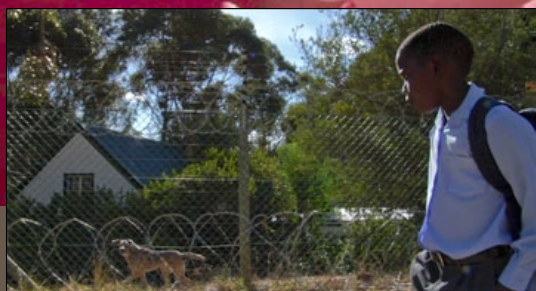


# PROTAGONISTS



**Narrated** in the pace of the new South Africa, the viewer realises with astonishment that even the most adverse circumstances cannot extinguish humanity, humour and the lust for life. With powerful images and impressive personal stories the film offers a sensitive portrait of a society in transition from apartheid to postmodern capitalism.

**Zoliswa**, a 36 year old single mother, is desperately looking for a new job. She bears the awkward situations at the employment office just as much as the harshness of daily life in the informal settlement. All she wants is a financial base for the future of her children. But these, even at such a young age, are already involved in their own struggle — against crime and drugs.



# INTERVIEW WITH THE FILMMAKERS

by Susanne Götze

## How did you come across the story?

A. KLEIDER: Romin Khan, a friend of ours, studied in Cape Town for a year. We were fascinated by what he told us. With South Africa we associate first of all the harrowing images from the apartheid years. Then you think of the struggle for liberation, the solidarity at that time, and Nelson Mandela. But what happens in South Africa today? We were curious to find out. Since Romin Khan was planning to write a book about the country, he decided to get involved in the production. His numerous contacts were a great help when we chose our protagonists.

D. MICHEL: South Africa is one of the countries with the highest discrepancy between rich and poor. Some of the gated communities where the millionaires live in their villas are right next to the informal settlements. This visual proximity intrigued us. South Africa is like a microcosm which reflects a global issue.

## Why are you not featuring white South Africans?

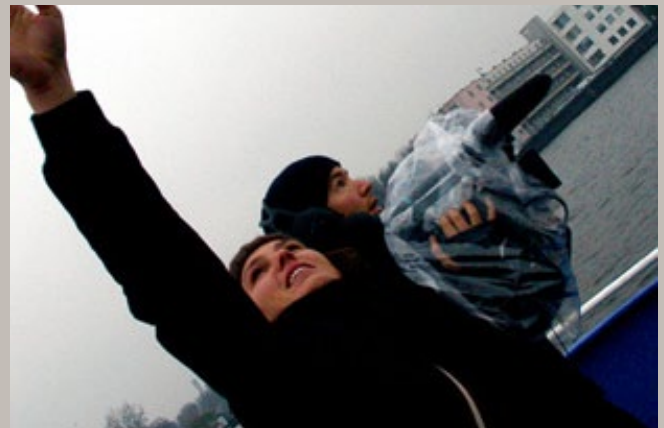
D. MICHEL: If one takes a closer look at many German reports about Cape Town one gets the impression, that only a minority of the population is black when in fact, the opposite is true. If at all you get some stereotype images from the townships.

A. KLEIDER: The image of the African continent here in Germany is almost exclusively influenced by what is shown in the media, it's often called the 'continent of misery' with wars, child soldiers, famines and AIDS. People seem to be helpless and in need of „help“ from outside. When you visit the townships however, you soon notice how politically aware people are and how well the neighbourhood networks function. We wanted to make a film from this perspective.

## Your film stays extremely close to the protagonists. What was it like to spend so much time in the townships as a white person?

D. MICHEL: I had difficulties in the beginning because I had not been confronted with my skin colour to that extent before. In a sense it has a history attached to it. You stand out in a township, especially because whites so rarely go there. But we did not hear one bad word – in fact we were welcomed warmly wherever we went.

## There is much talk of the high crime rate in South Africa. Your film is almost exclusively set in the townships. Was it difficult to shoot there?



A. KLEIDER: The crime rate is indeed a big problem in Cape Town. But considering the overwhelming injustice everywhere, I am surprised that there has not been any civil unrest. For a European, the daily rituals involving security are shocking. For a start, you constantly look around in order to develop a sense for dangerous places and situations. And filming in certain districts was risky, considering that we carried some costly equipment. But the only criminal act I witnessed during our stay was committed by myself: because the landlord of our apartment had calculated incorrectly, he padlocked our door on our second last night because he thought that we had not paid enough. Since this happened at one o'clock in the morning and we were worried about the material we had already filmed, we had no alternative but to saw open the padlock. The really astonishing thing was that not a single neighbour was woken up by the noise and called the police.

## How big was your crew?

A. KLEIDER: When we are working on a production like this, we prefer to work with a very small team. This means three people. Any more and it would have been impossible to maintain the spirit.

D. MICHEL: Since Alex operates the camera and Romin or I record the sound, we were extremely flexible, and this allows us to get really close to a situation. But the most important aspect is the work with the protagonists. We try to build up a relationship with them and often the result is a friendship for life. In the case of *WHEN THE MOUNTAIN MEETS ITS SHADOW*, it was very important to us to show the protagonists a rough-cut during the second filming phase. This way they got an idea of what kind of film we wanted to make. Without trust on both sides this kind of film is impossible to make.



**Your film does not use any narration and almost no interviews, but the interest of the viewer is maintained throughout. How do you develop a narrative structure?**

A. KLEIDER: We look for charismatic protagonists who are about to face a conflict. In order to achieve this, long conversations are necessary. For creative documentaries, the research is extremely important, but broadcasters and funding bodies consistently underestimate this aspect.

D. MICHEL: It is also important that the protagonist really wants to make the film. You cannot make a film against the will of the protagonists.

**In your film, Ashraf, one of the protagonists, commits several unlawful acts. The camera observes this.**

**Could this mean legal problems for him?**

D. MICHEL: Firstly, it is a matter of interpretation if it really should be considered a crime if someone unblocks a water main for people who are unable to pay. Water is a basic right, isn't it? By law this is illegal and we discussed this with Ashraf and Mne. But both insisted that their faces should not be made unrecognisable. They felt that an anonymisation would criminalise them. According to them, it was not their act which was criminal but that of the water company.

**How long did the work on the film take?**

D. MICHEL: Between the first treatment and post-production about two and a half years.

**What were the biggest problems?**

A. KLEIDER: Well, as with any film, the first and foremost difficulty was raising the finance. Since we produced the film without the support of a broadcaster, our budget was always hitting the limit. Actually we wonder how we managed to complete the film at all. But the big advantage of this was that we had total artistic freedom. We were able to make the film exactly as we wanted to.

**What was the greatest challenge?**

D. MICHEL: Probably the narrative concept. To make a feature-length documentary without a narrator is always a challenge. The story has to be told through images. Often the time frame is tight and the scene cannot be covered as you would like to. In this context, the relationship with the protagonist is important, because tension or timidity are the biggest obstacles if a scene is to be shot successfully.

**What kind of reactions are you hoping to get from the spectators?**

A. KLEIDER: Preferably we would like to raise the awareness of global injustice and racism. During apartheid, there was a big solidarity movement without which it would have been even more difficult to bring the regime down. Many people in South Africa are hoping for a new solidarity movement. Activists like Ashraf, who is risking his life for a fairer society, need support.

This is not only about money - moral support by email or an information campaign in Europe could be just as helpful to the local activists. Global injustice concerns us all, after all the wealth of Europe is based on the cruelties of colonialism, and also today the poverty in Africa is directly related to the wealth of the industrial nations.

D. MICHEL: One could think that in South Africa everything is okay today. No more apartheid means equal opportunities for all. The fact is, though, that the great masses are steadily getting poorer, equal opportunities do not exist. But the really positive thing is that there are people who are doing something about it - right now - at this moment. Hope is one of the messages of our film. If we could pass this on to the audience, we would be very happy.

# SOUTH AFRICA TODAY

*written by Romin Khan*

The student uprising in Soweto, the liberation of Nelson Mandela and the queues of voters during the first free elections in 1994 - the recent history of South Africa has produced many striking images which have left a lasting impression. This also includes the political goals of the liberation struggle which motivated millions of people in and out of the country. Freedom, social security, work and a reasonable standard of living for everyone, regardless of the colour of their skin! The hope for a better life after the end of apartheid was linked inextricably with these demands from the Freedom Charter, the most important document of the liberation struggle. And the end came far more quickly than many observers had expected. As a consequence of the liberation of Nelson Mandela in 1990, the ban of the African National Congress (ANC) was lifted. The liberation movement personified the ideas of the Freedom Charter and enjoyed the confidence of the large majority of black South Africans, but also of many whites. After the drawn-out negotiations with the white regime at the beginning of the Nineties, the first free elections took place. They culminated in an overwhelming victory for the former liberation movement. It seemed as if the country was headed towards a promising future. The South African miracle, the proclaimed rainbow nation, shimmered in the brightest colours.



## South Africa after 14 years of democracy

More than a decade after the official abolition of apartheid, a large part of the black population find that their hopes for a fundamental improvement of their situation have not been fulfilled. More than 300 years of colonialism and apartheid have produced social rifts and inequalities which for a long time to come will determine the daily lives and the destiny of the population of the Cape. Not even the politics of the ruling ANC party have been able to change this. The reason for this is that already during the presidency of Nelson Mandela the party distanced itself from the original idea of a deft economic redistribution, adopting an increasingly neo-liberal stance over the last few years. Cut-backs, privatisation and the opening of the internal market to foreign investors were the pillars of the new path. The incorporation into the global market has made the unemployment rate climb to 40 percent, due to structural flaws in the South African economy. This disastrous situation

has been worsened over the last few years by the social policies of the government. In accordance with neo-liberal principles, social spending were linked to economic growth. Consequently, the provision of fundamental social services such as water, electricity and housing was either privatised, or made subject to the logic of market forces by the government. Since the end of the 1990s, the consequences of the cut-backs and privatisations can be felt all over the country. The number of households whose water and electricity supplies were cut due to unpaid bills has risen sharply, and many families have been evicted after falling behind with their rent.

## Resistance

These social conditions, dominated by an apartheid which appears to have lost its racist element while continuing as a social and economic framework, are not acceptable to Ashraf and Mne. As the perspective

of a better life dwindled, they became increasingly dissatisfied with a government which they used to support. They have dedicated themselves to a struggle whose goal is to fulfill the demands of the Freedom Charter as outlined above. The Anti-Eviction-Campaign (AEC) which was set up by them, belongs to a network of social movements which have started springing up since the beginning of the decade. These movements consist of people who have been marginalised, not only economically, but also geographically, due to their concentration in townships - a legacy of the apartheid years - as well as informal settlements. Grass roots organisations are taking charge of the problems posed by daily life, such as the access to water and electricity, unemployment and food shortages. Many of the leading activists used to be active in the ANC or actively support it. Over the last few years, they have left the former liberation movement or have been excluded from the party due to their criticism of the privatisation process.

## Cape Town



Over the last few years, the metropolis at the Cape of Good Hope has developed into a magnet for sun-starved holiday makers and the international media industry. What remains mostly unseen is the fact that the racist concept of city planning has imprinted itself on the urban geography of Cape Town in a way unparalleled in any other South African city. The white districts and the city centre are situated in close proximity to the Table Mountain. In terms of daily life, the Table Mountain thus functions as a point of reference for the social conditions in the city. Every inhabitant of Cape Town, regardless of skin colour, knows that social status can be gauged to a certain extent by the distance of his or her house to the Table Mountain. And far away from the mountain, overcast by its shadow from the early afternoon onwards, the so-called Cape Flats are situated. On this sandy plain, which borders onto the massif of the Table Mountain, the informal settlements and townships of the city can be found. It is estimated that 3.5 million people live here, approximately seven times as many as in the

city centre or alongside the Table Mountain and the coastal strip, which we normally connect with the city. There, in the townships, the protagonists of the film live, fighting on a daily basis for an improvement of their living conditions.

## Housing shortage

An issue especially close to the heart of the AEC is the situation in the city with regard to housing. In Cape Town alone, according to official figures, there is a shortfall of approximately 260,000 and 400.000 houses as well as rented flats.

If construction work continued at the present speed and assuming that population figures will stagnate, 65 years would be needed to create sufficient accommodation. The neo-liberal stance of the government, which links social spending to economic growth, has effectively turned the inhabitants of corrugated iron huts into slaves of the economic indicators. Furthermore, the few public housing projects of the city which have been completed to date have failed to contribute significantly to a growth in trust, as far



as the poor population is concerned. Especially the conflict around the Joe Slovo settlement, which is situated alongside the N2 motorway, has grown over the last few years into a massive social conflict, in which both Ashraf and Mne play a key part. Joe Slovo is an informal settlement of shacks (barracks/corrugated iron huts) near the city centre which is to be pulled down to make room for a social housing project. It is one of the few informal settlements which is visible to visitors who are on their way from the city to the airport. It is precisely this fact which has given rise to the suspicion that the main motivation behind the plans of the city officials is the wish to hide the unattractive shacks from the eyes of visitors.



# DOK-WERK FILMCOOPERATIVE

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DOK-WERK was founded in 2004 by Daniela Michel and Alexander Kleider with the aim to produce captivating documentaries about challenging issues. Instead of the fake objectivity created by a narration, we want strong images and stories to speak for themselves.



## **ALEXANDER KLEIDER**

Writer · Director · Cameraman

Born 1975 in Böblingen. Communication Studies at the Free University of Berlin. Since 2001 he has made feature-length documentaries as well as magazine items for theatrical release, television (ZDF, ARTE) and radio. Since 2004 he is a lecturer for documentary filmmaking.

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## **DANIELA MICHEL**

Writer · Director · Producer

Born 1975 in Stuttgart. Degree in Arts, Film Studies and International Relations from the London Guildhall University in the UK. Since 2001 she has made feature-length documentaries as well as magazine items for theatrical release, television (ZDF, ARTE) and radio. Since 2004 she is a lecturer for documentary filmmaking.

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## **ROMIN KHAN**

Writer and freelance Journalist

Born 1975 in Onitsha in Nigeria. Degree in Political Science, History and Sociology from the Humboldt University in Berlin, and the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in Cape Town.

He contributes regularly to publications such as ver.di-publik, jungle World and telepolis, writing about the political and social development of South Africa. For the summer of 2009, the publisher Assoziation A (Berlin) has scheduled the publication of the anthology „Südafrika nach dem Ende der Apartheid - Die Grenzen der Befreiung“ (‘South Africa After the End of Apartheid — the Limits of Liberation’) which Khan has edited together with Jens Erik Ambacher.



**ECKES MALZ**

Composer · Musician

Born in 1962. Professional studies in flute, piano, violin, percussion and composition. After completing an apprenticeship as a piano maker, he performed in live music events with Donald Tillman, Six was Nine, Lyx-die Auvray, Freddy Wonder and others, as well as composing soundtracks for theatre and film (Tatort, Häupter meiner Lieben, Aimee & Jaguar, Emil & die Detektive, Sumo Bruno, etc.). Since 2002 he has had his own music project:  
[www.eccomoreno.com](http://www.eccomoreno.com)  
[www.eckesmalz.de](http://www.eckesmalz.de)



**TEBA SHUMBA**

Musician

The Original Social worker who is also known by various names such as The Shepherd, Mr. Shumba and Teba 20.5.2.1 Digitally is a Ragga muffin artist born and bred in Gugulethu (a township in Cape Town). He started recording in 1996 with a Kwaito Band called Skeem. In 1997 the band was awarded the FNB Sama Award for Best Township Pop. 2004 he released his debut Soul Afro Reggae Dancehall album called "20-5-2-1 Manifesto". He used his skills to rise above the poverty he was exposed to daily and works with community and youth projects. The objective of this project is to revive the revolutionary spirit that had ceased to flame after the 1994 election to emphasize the importance to continue the struggle towards achieving humanity. [www.myspace.com/tebashumba](http://www.myspace.com/tebashumba)

**Gatyeni**

Performed by Teba  
Lyrics by T.Shumba, Music by G.Williams  
Published by 20-5-2-1 Publishing  
Courtesy 20-5-2-1 Productions / High Voltage Entertainment

**Blackness Anthem**

Performed by Teba feat Crosby and Red Lion  
Lyrics by A. Schoeman, C. Bolani, T. Shumba. Music by A.Denholm, HQF Beadon  
Publishing by African Dope Publishing  
Courtesy African Dope Records · [www.africandope.co.za](http://www.africandope.co.za)

**Sokka (Diski)**

Performed by Teba  
Lyrics by T.Shumba, Music by G.Williams  
Published by 20-5-2-1 Publishing  
Courtesy 20-5-2-1 Productions / High Voltage Entertainment

Music by Teba  
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