

# Creative child of the ANC family



In her childhood **Lesedi Moche** lived and breathed the ANC. Her work as a film maker reflects this upbringing but she has recently made an interesting break. She spoke to **Makhosazana Xaba**.

## **What attracted you to film?**

The main thing that attracted me to film is I was always fascinated with the stories that I heard growing up, about South Africa and about different parts of Africa. So it was either writing or going into the visual medium. I knew that I wanted to work in an industry that tells stories and gets to understand different people. The visual medium I figured could reach more people. And writing was never something that was ruled out, it was just, "Okay, I'll start like this and then I'll see."

## **Your focus is documentaries, why that genre?**

What attracted me to documentaries was I'm not a fan of narrative. I'm not a fan of fiction, stuff that is not real, I don't like it. Documentaries like I sit, I am talking to Khosi, I get to figure out how Khosi thinks, what makes her tick, what brought her to where she is. And the process also

helps me grow. So documentary was just dealing with people and talking about their lives and trying to understand what they do.

People who have done amazing things that you don't know about and I believe that whether the stories are seen or not, it's important that in 20 years time, if someone wants to know they can access it visually, they can access it in print. Just for the sake of posterity. Just to have the stories out there and on the African continent. Because we tell stories orally a lot of stuff gets lost and we don't have video documentation.

## **You worked as a production manager for the documentary, *Behind the Rainbow* that made it to mainstream cinemas. That I imagine was not an easy project.**

We were quite a small team of people. It was like being in the centre or trying to understand my

family story and watch them as they fall apart. It was very difficult. And I had to be in the middle trying to get interviews for Jihan El-Tahri (the film director) or trying to understand what's happening.

## **When you say your family you mean the African National Congress?**

I grew up as a child of the ANC, and I remember being a part of a group called Pioneers (Masupatsela) in Lusaka. And every Saturday we'd get there, we had to learn the Freedom Charter inside-out. We just had to know what was happening in South Africa and what it means to be a child of the ANC and what our parents were doing. And even when we moved to Canada, for June 16 we had to do plays for Black History Month. We knew about Steve Biko, we knew about Anton Lembede.

So I took it for granted that the ANC would always be there to

lead and to protect and that they embodied everything that the Freedom Charter embodied. I believed all of that and I thought, when Jihan asked me to work on it, "It'll be fine. I'll talk to this person, talk to that person." I had no idea it was going to be as difficult as it was. Before Polokwane nobody wanted to speak. It was all: "We'll do this after Polokwane", which I understood because there was a split within the ANC. And then Polokwane came and I remember being in tears the second day at Polokwane.

#### **What were the tears about?**

I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I couldn't believe that you had comrades yelling at people on stage and that was the first time that I saw the two centres of power visually. That the ANC had created an elitist space and then you had the people who had the voting power, or people who are in branches who are part of the so-called masses.

And part of the tears was the realisation that I live in privilege in this country, that I took for granted. I go from place to place without having to go through a township, without having to drive past a township, without being part of any branch. In fact the word I can use: I was ashamed.

#### **I was disappointed when I watched the movie to see so few women speaking. I expected Jihan, a woman, to do it differently.**

There were a number women that we wanted to interview. Women that were high up, that we'd been running around for interviews with, and they just didn't come through. One of them, we even managed to get two interviews with her, she refused to sign the

release form without watching the film and we don't tell stories like that. Nobody's allowed to see what it is we're doing before it's out there. Because there's so many different cuts in the film. It starts out as an eight-hour version, then it goes down to six and just gets cut down like that. So she refused to sign the release form so she couldn't be in the film. All the other women, I tried with so many.

#### **What's your sense of how the film has been received?**

A lot of people enjoyed it because they never had a context to the relationship that Zuma and Mbeki had before. So it was like Zuma just comes from a vacuum and Mbeki is seen as... If you ask people, he's the intellectual, he's this, he's that. Zuma's the guy who can talk to the people but he's not educated. So a lot of people appreciated that it gave them more insight into the liberation movement.

#### **You worked in production for another political and internationally acclaimed documentary, *A South African Love Story: Walter and Albertina Sisulu*. But have you directed?**

I co-directed with Xoliswa Sithole three short documentaries about South African female revolutionaries: Esther Barseel, Nomkitha Mashinini and one on Sophie de Bruyn. They were part of a project called 'Flowers of the Revolution'.

#### **So how do you swing from political documentaries to television late night entertainment? I enjoyed *Late Night with Kgomo*. I like the format and I have been fascinated by the range of**

#### **people who have participated. And the band.**

That band was just the bomb, McCoy, Paul! When Kgomo asked me if I'd be interested in producing her talk show and it was late night, I was like, "I'm not sure. I've never really worked in entertainment." So I was a bit uneasy and then one day I was like, "Why not go into entertainment?" It's talk and Kgomo's such a wonderful character. She's irreverent and we'd be able to push the envelope so it wasn't going to be a daytime kind of thing. And I must admit I wasn't sure how it was going to work. But it was something new, something exciting, there's going to be a live band. It was one of the first late-night talk shows hosted by a woman.

#### **Five years from now, where do you see yourself?**

Five years from now I'd like to tell indigenous stories but from an anthropological point of view, so visual anthropology. So hopefully I'd have started on my path telling the Aboriginal, the Khoi-San story, the nomadic culture stories.

#### **And in ten years?**

In ten years I'll be deep, deep in there. I know it's not easy. In five years, I'd have started living in those communities for months at a time, and in ten years I'll have started documenting. I'll have built the trust to have started documenting those stories visually. LB

*Makhosazana Xaba is an SALB board member and has published two books of poetry. She does regular interviews with South African creative women for the Labour Bulletin.*