

TRANSCRIPT

"IMAGES AND DEMOCRACY: PHOTOGRAPHY AND SHAPING CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURE"

*A conversation with Lebohang Kganye and Lekgetho Makola
Introduced by Yukiko Yamagata
Moderated by Sean Jacobs
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ANNOUNCER:

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YUKIKO YAMAGATA:

My name is Yukiko Yamagata. I'm the-- acting director of the Open Society's Documentary Photography Project. We are a program that organizes-- exhibitions like the Moving Walls exhibition that you see-- outside-- as well as we do-- individual grant making and organizational grant making. And one of our grantees is Market Photo Workshop. So we're particularly excited to have-- our three speakers here tonight.

Now, we organized this discussion-- we were particularly excited to organize this discussion-- because of the role that Market Photo Workshop-- has played-- in South Africa-- which w-- it was founded during apartheid by-- David Goldblatt and-- really has played a critical and very visionary role in our field in terms of advancing the conversation about how images and visual culture-- shape our understanding of the world and ourselves. And they've done an incredible job over the years of training-- generations of photographers-- number one, who normally-- may not have had access to-- the type of education that they offer but also-- are learning about photography and image making in a context in which

they're also-- learning to think critically about the world around them. So the work that they do is quite unique in that they not only-- are promoting an idea-- and a very unique approach to photography but also seeing-- photography and arts education as a way to create-- critical thinking and knowledge building.

And so-- this conversation is also happening-- at a time-- in-- our country as well as around the world in which images and culture are playing an increasingly important role-- both being used to-- divide our societies as well as a way to combat-- much of the-- racism and inequities that we're experiencing. So we will structure this conversation-- by starting with-- Lekgetho, who will be-- give a presentation about-- Market Photo Workshop and the work that-- they've been doing over the years.

And we're also excited to invite-- Lebohang Kganye, who is-- one of their esteemed alum and really one of the-- most exciting contemporary voices in South African contemporary art-- who has emerged from the school. And the sh-- conversation will be moderated by Sean Jacobs. So just a few words about each of our speakers. Lekgetho-- is-- in addition to being the head of Market Photo Workshop-- is an artist and filmmaker.

His primary interests are the relationship between culture, language, and the construction of images and how to generate content that is relevant in the context of Africa. From '99 to 2004 he was part of the Red Eye art movement that changed the perspective on the role of visual art museums in society. In addition to Market Photo Workshop, he's worked for a number of leading arts organizations such as the Durban Art Gallery, the Robben Island Museum and World Heritage Site.

And prior to being appointed the head of the Market Photo Workshop, he was their manager for programs and projects for a number of years. His career highlights include being commissioned to design and produce a bronze s-- sculpture for President Mandela and-- being awarded the International Ford Foundation Fellowship on Social Justice. And he received his MFA in film studies from Howard University.

Lebohang Kganye is an artist living and working in Johannesburg. She studied at the Market Workshop and also completed her degree in fine art studies at the University of Johannesburg. She's primarily a photographer, but-- her work often incorporates her interest in sculpture and performance. And she's been the recipient of the Tierney Fellowship Award. The Bamako Encounters Biennale of African of Photography has recognized her work. As well as the CAP Prize, the Contemporary African Photography Prize. As well as the Sasol New Signatures Competition, which-- will be leading to a solo show in 2018. Her work is part of several collections, including the Carnegie Museum of Art and the Walter Collection. And Sean Jacobs, our moderator-- he is associate professor of international affairs at the New School.

He's the editor and founder of Africa Is a Country. He's a native of Cape Town and holds a Ph.D. in politics from the University of London and an MA in political science from Northwestern University. He's also the author of-- Media in Post-Apartheid South Africa as well as co-editor of Mbeki's World: The Politics and Ideology of South African-- of the South African President. As well as Shifting Selves: Post-Apartheid Essays on Mass Media,

Culture, and Identity. So I will go ahead and hand it over to Lekgetho. Thank you.
(APPLAUSE)

LEKGETHO MAKOLA:

Sorry. I'm gonna need support. You guys have to come up. Yeah. I'm not alone in this. Yukiko-- gave-- a brief background of-- the space, Market Photo Workshop. And maybe just to add-- over and above-- mention that it was-- established by David Goldblatt-- and-- and-- and close friends of his. The idea was conceptualized-- probably just after the-- the 1985 state of emergency.

And those were the difficult times-- in South Africa where internally-- young people basically took up arms to-- to fight against this-- this-- horrible s-- apartheid system-- armed with-- you know, probably you have seen the images. And-- and these-- these guys had stones but also had minds and voices. During that time, that were a lot of-- of photographers coming into these-- townships and rural sp-- spaces that were occupied by the army-- to photograph the-- the-- the experiences of the-- black people mostly.

And there was-- I mean, by then there were very few. A handful of photographers that came from the townships who could photograph the townships like your Peter Magubane-- your Alf Kumalos. But generally it was difficult for-- black people to really photograph themselves within those spaces because-- they would be accused of being spies for-- for the-- for the system.

So the practice itself was oppressed-- or censored by-- by the communities themselves. But people like David Goldblatt saw a need to-- to create a platform-- mainly because many black people were not allowed to-- or couldn't have ac-- get access to-- to-- institutions of higher learning to learn-- to train in photography, or film, or-- or any related highly technical-- career-- studies. So (UNINTEL) felt that it was important to-- to establish this platform.

Between 1987 and '88 they went out trying to find funding, but it was difficult because the purpose of establishing the space was going against the system of apartheid. But eventually they were able to-- to establish a space. And-- it-- it started in a very small-- old post office with about five-- students to now where we-- we run four programs and-- and p-- and-- and train about 120-- students-- a year. So this is basically now a vision.

The vision of the Market Photo Workshop is to be a leading and relevant resource for photography learning practice in South Africa and throughout the continent with-- with obviously s-- an-- international presence. And-- we have-- we have I think made-- quite-- a huge leap in terms of training-- in photography. We-- we don't want-- like using the term "training" because training seems to be always one way where you have a teacher who trains-- like you will train a dog.

But we more of wanting to see-- classroom as a learning space where people from different

experiences meet in one safe space and they are able to share the experiences-- in a safe manner where-- what is encouraged is critical thinking, critical engagement, and in turn-- production of new knowledge-- that is relevant and had-- have-- has a sense of urgency to the immediate-- environment-- where we exist. Especially in the South African context.

The Market Photo Workshop-- has four areas that it-- prides itself in. Outside of it being a school of-- of-- for photography, we are a resource center for photographers. We have amazing facilities that are open to photographers who are in our network-- to continually practice their trade. Some come through our programs to retrain and-- get-- get new skills to basically respond to the shifts in the industry. And-- especially development of technology but also the industries are getting tighter and tighter. Especially in the urban inner city.

And we-- we want to use these facilities to extend to spaces outside of the urban area so that we-- we assist in-- in creating new-- industries-- in townships and rural. And we also have a gallery space. We have a very, very-- prominent-- photography curatorial program that-- is quite unique I think in the whole of South Africa.

We are the only-- space that has two galleries that are dedicated to photography in South Africa. And-- and I think that itself it's-- it's-- it's quite significant because the g-- the gallery space become-- a space of interaction between the public and-- and photographers. We also have public projects-- because we feel that-- photography has a role to play in changing perceptions. Also in-- in-- in the context of South Africa-- a country that's going through its own kind of me-- metamorphosis-- change.

I think later we'll talk about-- if apartheid is dead or not. And now, it's-- I'll begin reflecting on how our work is-- is-- is kind of (UNINTEL) in that space but also contributing to changing-- mindset. So our public projects deal both with professions but also with communities. And just before the video starts-- so I t-- I told my students that I'm coming to New York, and they quickly put something together because they wanted to be part of this. (MUSIC STARTS)

(BREAK IN TAPE)

LEKGETHO MAKOLA:

So the next slide speaks to us being the school of photography. We're just gonna take you through some of the programs that we-- we run. Just keep it running. We-- we have two short courses-- that have been there for a while since the nin-- mid-1990s. And-- the foundation course is a two-month-- photography course that introduces anybody who doesn't have-- anybody who wants to study photography or wants to learn about the-- the-- the-- practice-- can enter.

So the-- the criteria of-- of admission is quite relaxed. And they spend two months-- really understanding the gadgets but also what the camera can do for you. And then-- once you c-- complete that, you can move to the next level, which is the intermediate course, which runs

for three-- for three months.

And-- this now introduces you to the language of-- of photography-- visual vocabulary, but also starting to learn about-- visual culture and how images were-- basically in our context were used in a very negative way. If-- if you-- if you are aware of the ethnographic-- practices of the 1900s-- the anthropological practices also-- the past 100 years or so which basically--

Misrepresented the experience of-- of the continent but also of the global South-- countries.

So we introduce them-- for them to understand where this-- this space comes from. And-- all these courses run-- throughout the year. So we run five of the foundation course and three of the imm-- im-- intermediate courses. And-- the-- the idea is to allow-- for a person to enter the-- the foundation course-- because we deal with people that come from com-- financial-- come from compromised spaces. And they can go back, and work, and-- and-- and-- generate some income to come for the next-- level of training.

And thereafter-- one qualifies to go to the-- two long courses that we host. One is the advanced program in photography, which is m-- more-- more authorship-- fine art based gallery practice type of-- of-- of program. The other is a photojournalism and documentary photography program that has been-- basically our-- most famous-- producers of-- of photographers-- as far back as the early 1990s. You might know of Jodi Bieber, who end up winning the World Press.

She went through a similar program. And-- all these programs basically-- we offer them at about 40% of the real cost of-- of running the course. And-- and the rest we generate through-- support such as from the-- Open Society. And we give bursaries to students to be able to-- sustain themselves through-- throughout the c-- the program.

And then the second layer-- of training-- which came much later in the existence of the Photo Workshop, is the public-- participatory program. And-- and-- here we-- we talk about-- learning and teaching outside of the classroom but also a space where we introduce our photographers to the-- the industry practice. We-- we have five areas that we focus on. Mentorships-- which are-- basically designed for students that complete-- either the three-month course or the-- the-- yearlong course.

And they can apply. And we have a criteria of-- of-- of selection and awarding a recipient. And-- for the past few years, we've had-- two major mentorships that have produced-- amazing photographers. One has been the Tierney-- Family Foundation support. Tierney Fellowship. The other being the Gisele Wulfsohn Mentorship. And-- my colleague here went through the Tierney. And I think she will speak to it-- maybe as we get there.

The mentorships for us are quite special. And-- and I think the most amazing thing about it is that anybody who is a photographer in South Africa and has achieved highly-- is always willing to volunteer time to support-- and-- and-- and contribute to the program. So she was able to get two most amazing artists in South Africa-- one of them being Mary Sibande,

whose work is now at the-- African-Am-- American Museum in Washington, D.C.

And-- this the type of-- of-- of-- platforms that we attract-- real talent that's willing to share. And I think for us it's been one of the most amazing ways of really-- growing profession-- professionals in the context of South Africa. We have workshops. Workshops are basically geared towards us partnering with-- community-based-- based organizations or-- research institutions that in-- in-- basically intend to use photography as a vehicle for research.

For example, we work with one of our local universities, Wits University-- the African Center for Migration Studies-- unit. And they were researching migration patterns of-- of sex workers between Zimbabwe-- and-- and Johannesburg. And-- they wanted-- requested to use photography as an integral part of research. And I think for us it was an exc-- exciting opportunity 'cause-- because for the first time we can really do a study in terms of how can photography be a tool for research instead of being-- illustrator of research material.

And I think that program for me it was a highlight. And-- the-- the participants themselves-- were empowered-- 12 months later after learning the trade but also learning how it can be partly therapeutic but also empowering in terms of your voice-- being able to communicate your pride. And obviously we have an amazing exhibitions program-- from very-- emerging-- photographers-- or students but also traveling-- photographers that are-- sometimes come through-- our city.

And they become a source-- a resource for-- for-- for our own curriculum and-- and-- and training. Learning and teaching. And we host seminars. Of late, we worked with-- the Black Mark-- Collective. It's a very important-- I would say intellectually radical-- collective in South Africa-- made up of really important young South African thinkers.

And they also wanted to incorporate photography in understanding-- the environment that they-- they engage with and discourses that they engage with. And then lastly, the community projects. Market Photo Workshop has done quite a lot of work-- in the region. And-- it global-- its global presence is quite significant. But the sad reality is that we have neglected-- our remote-- communities like your rural and countryside.

And that's where, I mean, with the current state of education in South Africa in certain-- spaces. Because, as we know, South Africa is one of the most unequal societies in the world. You have the countryside and rural still-- very caught up in the-- in the old ways. And infrastructure is not really adequate-- for-- for-- for growth and learning. So we wanted-- we began with a few projects-- during the course of last year in integrating-- photography-- learning and teaching into different centers-- programs that we use photography also as-- as-- as a learning-- vehicle.

And-- yeah, this is my team. And-- about 70 of-- percent of them have gone through the program. So basically-- they will learn, and then go out in the industry-- industry, and come back. And we find it-- we find that being one of the main reasons why the Photo Workshop maintains its existence and growth. Because these individuals understand the spirit and-- and-- and the soul of-- of the space.

So we have 18 staff members. And we have two major units. One is programs and projects as well our public participatory-- programs are designed and implemented and also the courses. And then obviously we have the administration that takes care of-- of-- of-- the running of the space, ensuring that the space remain-- useable. And I think that-- that was the last slide. Thank you. (APPLAUSE) I guess I will take questions later. Yeah. I'll hand over to Lebohang Kganye.

LEBOHANG KGANYE:

Thank you. So I also come from the Market Photo Workshop. And-- I went through the Tierney Fellowship program. I started there in 2009 at the Market Photo Workshop and completed my studies in twenty-- 2011. So I went through the-- the foundation course, the intermediate course, and finally the advanced photography course. And I think being there-- I mean, I didn't really imagine that I would go in the photography-- field.

So I went there thinking that I'd eventually go into journalism. So photojournalism. But when I was there, I actually discovered that I had more of an interest in sculpture and performance. SO that's-- I think that that becomes evident in the work that I will be showing you today. And when I finished, I then received the Tierney Fellowship program that Lekgetho mentioned, which takes you through a year's mentorship with a mentor of your choice.

And I -- and I met with Mary Sibande and requested that she become my mentor. And I was very happy when that happened. But also I made a decision not to work with a photography mentor because I-- I felt like I'd learned so much with the people that I'd-- I'd had access to at the Market Photo Workshop and I needed someone that came from a very different perspective.

And also at that point I was aware that I was considering studying fine arts going forward. So that kind of made sense. And this is the project that-- that that ended up-- coming together, which is called Ke Lefa Laka, which means-- it's my inheritance. And the project happened-- so I received the fellowship in 2012. And s-- and it ended in 2013. So in 2010 I'd lost my mother. And this project became a way for me to kind of-- it became quite therapeutic.

It became-- a way in which I could deal with the mourning and deal with what I felt I had not allowed myself to deal with when it happened. So I then found a lot of photos in the house which were of my mother. Found a lot of family photo albums. And I realized that a lot of the clothes that she was wearing-- in the photos were clothes that were still in her wardrobe. And these are photos from when she was in her 20's, her 30's, going onwards.

And-- and then I decided that I would-- reenact and try and find the exact locations where she had been photographed. And, oh, my younger sister's here. So she became the person who-- who photographed me-- when I restated these-- these scenes. So this is-- this is the work-- that I'll be showing first-- 'cause it's a two-part project. And so it's-- so it's basically

photos of her juxtaposed with-- with photos of me-- mostly in the exact same location. But with other locations I simply could not find them.

And with the locations that I could find, what I find were interesting would be how the places had changed but also how they'd remained the same. And in the photos when they-- when I merged them, there are traces of the changes but also traces of how the spaces also remained the same over the years. And I think the project for me was-- was important because it felt-- it connected different generations of women in my family.

Because a lot of the-- which goes on to the next project. A lot of the locations, and a lot of the society, and a lot of the family history I would get from my grandmother. So I did-- a lot of interviews with her, a lot of conversations with her. And that allowed us to connect with my grandmother because she'd also lost a daughter and as much as I'd lost a mother.

And it allowed for my sister as well to-- for the-- for the different generations to basically be part of this process where a dialogue is able to happen-- and a shared grief, a letting go hopefully of grief is able to happen. But it also speaks to this idea of what-- what an archive is. Because I found myself questioning it being also more than just photographs but that the clothes also become an archive of their own. You know, and the fact that they've l-- they've actually lasted all of this time and have been able to be passed on, which also goes back to the title, which is Ke Lefa Laka, which means it's my inheritance.

And it's about this idea of something that passes on from generation to generation. But I also think it speaks to this idea because most of these photographs were taken-- her photographs were taken by-- street photographers in the area. And most of them are obviously-- it's film. It's analog photography. And my photos are s-- digital photography. You know?

And then this process of merging those two-- those two worlds but also trying to create-- a space in which a conversation between mother and daughter is able to continue and is able to-- to happen in a very different-- different time. But also, it's about this idea of who actually is the ghost. Because it's-- and as much as she appears to be the ghost, but I'm also ghost in terms of when her photos were actually taken because I don't belong in that time.

And the work that-- that followed-- over the next few months-- I mean, it was a two-part project. So both of these projects go together. So I traveled around South Africa with the funding that I received from the Tierney Fellowship and tried to-- tried to locate the rest of my family. But also the idea was that-- behind it was that we had about three or four spelling variations of our surname.

So it became a matter of me trying to actually find what the actual surname was, and how it had changed over the years, and how as they were moving-- during the apartheid era through these different locations how it was documented incorrectly because of the sp-- the place that they were in, it was most likely to be spelled a certain way. But it also speaks to-- this idea of language-- who-- this idea of documentation and who documents you.

And-- and this-- this became the-- the project that resulted. So I went on this journey of

trying to find them in these different locations through the help of my grandmother, who told me all of these stories about the different places that my family had moved over the years. And-- and the-- the direction that I eventually took was around-- so I did all of these voice interviews-- with the different family members that I met over the 12 months.

And the stories that became really prevalent were about my grandfather because he was the first person to move to the city. And-- and I grew up in that house, but he passed away before I was born. And these stories were basically about them coming to the city through him and-- leaving-- leaving the farm, which most of them had lived-- lived on-- as apartheid was ending, and it went on to new owners, and then moving to these different locations.

So this project basically bec-- became about my grandfather and me-- me taking on his role-- dressing as him. Because I'd only known him as the s-- the man in the suit because all of the photographs that we had of him-- in the family albums he was always in a suit in them. So it-- it obviously had a lot to do with performance. Mainly like the photographs of my mother. Because there's no way that they would dress like that on a day-to-day.

But it also speaks to this idea of photography, and the access to it, and why people feel they need-- well, less so now. But that performance element to it because of the lack of access to it. And I know that even when I was growing up with the street photographers that would come you would-- you would-- set a date for them to come and you would dress a certain way when they would come that day. So I think it also speaks to that.

But this-- so the first image basically is about them coming from the-- the-- then-called Orange Free State, now it's called the Free State, to come to the Transworld (?), to come to Johannesburg. And so basically it's-- and how I imagined it, so it's about this idea of memory-- also having a lot of elements of fantasy. Because in as much as a lot of them told me these stories, but it-- it also had a lot to do with how I imagined them and how over time how even their memory was-- was foggy and how-- and how you narrate.

Especially with oral-- oral histories. And how you narrate today is different than how you narrate a story tomorrow. So-- so it basically speaks to the story of the Pied Piper, the children's story of the Pied Piper, where-- where this man plays a flute and he lures the rats out of the city and into anoth-- into I think a river so that they can get rid of the rats in the city. So this-- the title of this work is The Pied Piper because my uncle-- my grandfather-- was followed to the city by the rest of my family.

And-- all of these photos are photos that I've taken-- in the photo-- in our family photo album-- of my family members. And the landscape behind is-- photos I t-- I photographed in the city right now of the different buildings. Yeah. This is a story about my grandfather getting mugged one day coming from work or from lunch-- and how he fell into a pit-- and they took his wallet. So a lot of it-- and as much as it's about history, but a lot of it is-- I think it speaks to how we also choose to remember someone and how it also doesn't have to be a sad story, you know?

And I think that that really is the approach that I-- that I took with the-- this whole process.

Sorry. It's-- and it's my grandmother, who's still alive, who-- who had asked to-- to s-- if we could stage this scene, which is basically about the alarm clock-- and how he was-- my-- my grandfather had to be awake at 4:00 a.m. but somehow he'd always set the time for 3:00 a.m.

And he'd say that they sabotaged him-- and wake everyone up. And this one's basically about him being really drunk one day coming from a tavern-- and him being brought home on a wheelbarrow. And I think what really was great with this process is it really allowed for-- for me to have a conversation with-- with the family and for-- for us to come together and for them to-- I mean, there was a lot of-- a lot of photographs taken obviously.

But for us to-- to have also a conversation about photography. Because when I was studying, there was never really an understanding of what I was doing. So this process allowed for an engagement about photography to happen. These are all my grandparents' children. And it's about a dinner-- at-- at-- at the dinner table. Every Friday my grandfather-- they'd only-- he'd only get meat on Fridays because that's when he'd go-- he'd go drinking. So he had to have his meat on Friday.

And how, you know, he would have most of the meat (LAUGHTER) basically. And that's the last one. And-- and that's the photograph of-- of my grandfather. So the work-- so the work of about a year or two later. It took a different-- different direction. I got commissioned by the British Council to produce an animation-- in relation to these cardboard cutouts that I created-- which I swore never to do again because it would take, like, a month to try and do one set-- of cutting and sticking together these cardboard cutouts that I'd gotten from recycled place.

Like, pick and pays and w-- Wal-- what you call here? Walmart I think. And try and put them together, and make them stand, and-- you know? So-- but then I think that this-- this commission was great in terms of me reimagining my practice because I had no intention of going through that process again. But-- but it was great. I think-- thinking back now-- I appreciate that-- that I was given this opportunity. (MUSIC)

(BREAK IN TAPE)

SEAN JACOBS:

I think you can hear me. So-- we had a little discussion beforehand where-- I suggested it might be useful before we talk specifically about photography in South Africa-- if-- Lekgetho and Lebohang can make-- you know, give some insight-- into particularly the political and cultural scene in South Africa-- and to just give us a general sense of the political mood.

Because I don't know if you've been-- 'cause if you follow South Africa, the general sort of sense about how people think about South Africa is they describe it in this set of broad terms like Rainbow Nation, political crisis. Now, you have Ramaphosa, who's going to be the next savior. But I-- but I-- I think what I'm try-- what I'm sort of after is, like, how people talk

about politics.

How-- how do people kind of experience these changes within South Africa? The-- the changes I said from the f-- the politics of the first decade or so-- to the more recent open challenge of-- of racist symbols, debate over representation, debate over curriculum, demand for free education.

And I think even more-- more immediately if you think about-- last week or so when the-- the-- the passing of-- Winnie Madikizela-Mandela where you had this clear divide between an older generation that wanted to demand a certain kind of debate about Winnie Mandela and younger people who wanted to, like, appropriate her legacy for something else, which-- which they used to make a critique of, like, the-- the end of apartheid and of democracy. So-- so I wanted-- I mean, I said a lot already, but I would be interested if you-- (LAUGHTER) you don't have to say what I said. I'm sort of, like, saying what I f-- what I've been feeling. But it would be-- I-- I'm curious to know, like, how you are experiencing-- you live in South Africa.

LEBOHANG KGANYE:

Yes.

SEAN JACOBS:

And you produce work in South Africa. You know, and I have-- I have some other questions later. But just on the political mood, like, how do you feel-- where is South Africa now?

LEKGETHO MAKOLA:

Where is South Africa now? I think we just need to understand-- where South Africa comes from-- first of all. You know-- I think the release of Mandela-- Nelson Mandela happened. And-- there was a negotiated-- settlement-- which was not transparent at all. And-- we had elections. And-- and there was-- one person, one vote. And then-- the black people-- had political power. And then, you know, we had all these terminologies that we used like Rainbow Nation. You know-- society does forgive and that's coming to-- together.

And now it's evident that those for-- for some of us were fallacies. Because the process was not transparent firstly, but it was not honest to the realities. You had black people basically forgiving-- apartheid. But there was nobody coming in asking for forgiveness, for example. That's why you still have-- entrenched racism across the country. And this is the reality. As much as there was this political power-- apartheid was entrenched in systems-- in economic systems.

And the fact that, I mean, I-- I was-- what, 13 when the state of emergency of 1985 happened. And I-- I remember very well because as teenagers from the age of 13 you need

to know that you are part of the soldiery. You know, you-- you have to go into the street and-- and be part of the masses. And this was during my-- when-- when Winnie Mandela's very-- kind of pivotal time.

So many people, education was the last thing on their minds. Not forgetting that the type of education that we're talking about was called Bantu Education. Designed-- you know, apartheid system was-- the apartheid system was well thought through, you know? That guy Verwoerd thought of it. And we know that he lived in Germany-- the Nazi Germany, and was very close with the Nazis. And when he came to South Africa, he designed how we're gonna, you know, c-- suppress these-- sub-humans.

'Cause that's-- these are the terms that-- that-- they used. So those-- f-- for decades-- not forgetting that the-- the-- the British colonial era, which was similar. Because I think at times we only remember apartheid and we forget where apartheid-- apartheid was born out of the British colonial-- which had its own-- suppressive system in place already. So children of now-- grow up basically in families of parents who are not-- didn't have, you know, critical education.

And how then we responded to this transition time was just accept and because we had hope all these years that we finally-- the-- the horizon looks amazing. But in real fact, we are more I think worse than before. Because we are realizing that, you know, the-- the dream that we had was not really catering for-- for the majority of South Africans. And I think this is evident in-- in the unemployment rate. Our level of poverty has risen up to about 49%. Unemployment rate with the young people is around 60 to 70%.

Those who left school-- especially education from township and-- township is predominantly where black people live. Just outside the-- the communities on the margins are just-- just outside the city centers. And also rural. The type of education that have gone through is-- is really, really not equipping them to really deal with the critical nature of this global world.

So we're stuck in that where instead of our government-- new government through Mandela investing in education-- that was-- was left, you know, to-- to the people themselves. So we're now dealing with a real apartheid which is entrenched in the system, in the structures of South Africa. So we-- we-- we are-- we are not in-- in a good space. But-- as an artist, also in the space that I-- I exist within-- we see young people starting to take-- upon themselves to really re-look at their pride, where they come from, but where they need to-- to-- to be.

We know that 1976 happened. And 1976 basically changed-- the-- the fabric of the political-- the practice of politics. Militancy (UNINTEL). There was total-- move towards a revolution. And I think that's what got us to 1989-- 1990, the release of Mandela. And-- something amazing happened three years ago. There was a movement called Fees Must Fall.

Again, students, young people saying, "Enough is enough." You know? And I think there has been-- some kind of shift in terms of how those in power-- start engaging with the real-- societal conditions. But also people are much smarter than before. You know? I think the

death of Winnie Mandela also-- we saw a m-- another-- kind of trajectory-- in people wanting change now. And issues of land, issues of-- of economic-- what's the term?

FEMALE VOICE:

Transformation.

LEKGETHO MAKOLA:

Economic transformation are becoming a day-to-day-- reality. And I think-- without that-- taken care of, without the-- the-- the people of South Africa really understanding the magnitude and the dire need for r-- to compromise-- but also go back to-- to sort out the wrongs of-- of the early '90s-- we won't get anywhere.

LEBOHANG KGANYE:

I think for me-- in thinking about the last few years and thinking about actually the new parties that came to rise-- one that comes to mind is the EFF, which is the Economic Freedom Fighters, which actually they were the-- they were part of the youth league of the ANC. The ANC being the African National Congress, being the party that-- that governs the country right now. And they were kicked out for being too-- too radical. And then they started their own party.

This is-- people in their 20's and 30's. They started this party in which for me became quite an interesting time in terms of how the youth's starting to engage with politics. Because they disrupted everything. They understood exactly how the ANC worked. They understood how the politics of the country worked. They understood how to-- they understood what-- also what people wanted. They understood what young people were complaining about because they themselves were young.

And they did not feel like they needed to-- to push this ANC narrative of-- the struggle heroes, the struggle icons-- or the struggle stalwarts. So that became quite an interesting shift in s-- in terms of South African politics. And the reason that I'm mentioning this is because, I mean, for me the first time that I actually started-- when I started watching the parliament, it was when EFF actually came to rise.

And a lot of artwork started coming about about-- South African politics. And them understanding the constitution, them understanding the parliamentary rules and all of that, they beca-- they began questioning all of those things because they-- they understood what the flows were with those. And that allowed for different conversations to start happening in universities amongst young people. And that's why I feel like they were quite instrumental even with-- with something like Fees Must Fall. That's my viewpoint.

So with Fees Must Fall, it-- it happened-- but also the history behind it is that when the ANC

came into power, they promised many things. They promised education for all. Because obviously black people had been kept out of the-- the education system or had not gotten the-- the same level of education as white people. So they promised that to-- to everyone in South Africa. That free education for all. And then there was the announcement of the fees increase-- which is actually how this-- Fees Must Fall started. So all the universities-- started-- striking. What's another term for it? They all started marching.

MALE VOICE:

An uprising.

LEBOHANG KGANYE:

An uprising. Sorry. There-- there was an uprising amongst all the different universities in the country-- all fighting for free education. Refusing to attend classes-- to-- to register even-- so that-- that started happening amongst young people. And I feel like that's generally the time that we are in right now as South Africa.

Which, I mean, there's obviously the reality that young people will be going into power at some point. And these conversations are great. And this political climate is great in terms of how that-- that-- these conversations will possibly redefine the politics of the country in the future. And that's why for me I think mentioning this-- this young-- political party is important.

Because I think that they gave rise to a lot of those conversations amongst young people. And, I mean, I was in university at the time. I was studying fine arts. And a lot of those conversations started happening. We were part of the-- the-- the marches. We were part of-- I mean, we were creating artwork about it. A lot of the-- our essays and the theses that came out were in relation to what was happening in the country. So, okay, also in terms of this conversation around the passing of Winnie Mandela-- I think a lot of things came to light. I recently read-- Khwezi-- which is a book around the rape of-- of-- of the s-- of-- of--

SEAN JACOBS:

Fezekile Komalo (SIC).

LEBOHANG KGANYE:

Fezekile--

SEAN JACOBS:

Is it f--

LEBOHANG KGANYE:

Kuzwayo.

SEAN JACOBS:

Kuzwayo, yeah.

LEBOHANG KGANYE:

Fezekile Kuzwayo. And this I think for me in terms of what the book revealed in terms of the woman that had-- had actually joined the struggle. Because in as much as we celebrate-- these political heroes, but we are actually celebrating men political icons. But actually there were many women that actually were part of-- part of that. They went into exile. They went into exile with them.

They also had-- were carrying arms, fighting against the system. And this book for me is quite-- was quite important and quite-- enlightening in thinking about actually how these struggle heroes actually had-- mistreated a lot of the women that were in exile with them. And they had to take a vow to not speak about-- about these-- injustices that had happened-- happened to them and by a lot of prominent people that we celebrate, you know?

So I think that generally what's happening right now and a lot of the books that are coming out of South Africa are really important in terms of revealing a lot of things about what we term the Rainbow Nation, and what it's actually based on, and the people that we celebrate-- but also patriarchal the country is. Well, it's-- it's a global thing. But in-- in the South African context how patriarchal the country is and the politics of the country-- country are.

But also in thinking about how even with women that did try and come out, how they were silenced. So-- so in-- in speaking about someone like Winnie Mandela, I mean, it also speaks to that. It speaks to someone who actually was quite instrumental in getting-- Mandela to get freed-- but who-- there's an article that I was reading-- where-- where the-- the people behind the plotting of how to discredit her had actually come out with the truth.

And but also how that was overlooked. I mean, she was discredited by them saying she had had affairs while Mandela was in prison. About she'd-- been instrumental in terms of getting a boy killed who was said to be a spy-- in her camp. But all of those things were actually overlooked even though those truths around them came out. And also in terms of her funeral-- which was-- which was played on tel-- on TV last week and how all of these different-- different people spoke-- but also EFF spoke, which is the party that I'm mentioning.

And how it was a totally-- I mean, they had a relationship with her. And they were saying that in terms of how ANC treated her, as someone who was so instrumental in terms of

getting people to continue with-- the uprisings while Mandela was in prison, getting people to actually not forget him while he was in prison. Because he was in prison for a really long time.

For someone like that to kind of be written out of the-- political history and to have her name tarnished like that but how the people that knew the truth also kept quiet. Both the men and the women, you know? So it's also about the women also being-- perpetuating the patriarchy in the-- in the political situation in South Africa, too.

SEAN JACOBS:

So the related question and to bring it to photography, which is so-- a lot of-- (LAUGHTER) a lot of this kind of-- this kind of talk in South Africa is under the sorta broad rubric of this thing called decolonization, right? To decolonize things. You know, decolonizing education. Decoloniz-- like, patriarchy, as you said. The ANC and patriarchy.

How has this sort of, like, filtered into debates about photography, about not just, like, race, access to, you know, jobs, exhibitions, galleries, women as photographers? Like, how has-- how has this debate about decolonization kind of filtered into-- into de-- into debates about South African photography, about the state if you want of South African photography, of practicing photography in South Africa? I'm coming with the tough questions first. (LAUGHTER) We're gonna get there. Don't worry.

LEKGETHO MAKOLA:

The practicing of-- of photography-- in the contemporary context-- like I said, I mean, s-- South Africa is quite-- not necessarily unique, but it's a very special-- country in that you had people that had no time or space to really interrogate themselves, get to understand the identities-- get to grow their languages and celebrate them. But that didn't happen.

And once we-- we-- we've gotten into this new space where now we were meant to kind of move on and start-- kind of celebrating this-- this-- this-- union-- we started seeing photographers instead go in the other route of really trying to find who they are. We-- we-- we have people like Zanele Maholi, who was quite-- important I think in our-- in our-- our photographic landscape in-- since the year 2000 where she confronted very taboo type of-- of-- of conversations-- through-- through-- photography. So photography in itself became-- a tool to really-- interrogate our current state as humans in South Africa but also how to-- understand where-- where images come from.

'Cause-- the is sort of archive in-- in South Africa is also a painful one where there is this generalized-- general kind of feel that there is no black photography archive or history in South Africa of which-- I mean, we just s-- saw it-- through l-- l-- Lebohang's presentation, that in family albums there is collection of-- of images that-- are-- are practically about resistance, you know, against-- a suppressive system.

Because those images show human beings eating meat every Friday-- getting-- married, loving each other, getting dressed up, celebrating their humanity in-- in this very difficult time. And we currently-- I mean, through our spaces trying to kind of-- reflect that. It's important that we excavate those-- those-- those memories-- in images so that we basically understand our current state-- for us to move forward.

So the-- images are becoming a bridge. They are playing a huge role. Because, like I said in terms of the presentation, they were used for a particular purpose. Now, individuals have the right-- the power back within themselves to really define who-- who they should be going forward through these-- images.

LEBOHANG KGANYE:

I think photography was always quite a useful tool in terms of the politics of South Africa. And thinking back to people like Alf Kumalo-- people that had documented-- the uprisings-- and thinking back to the last few years with the xenophobic attacks and everything that had been happening in the country. And how-- you know, and I think also in thinking about the-- a space like the Market Photo Workshop, which had quite a large focus on teaching photo-- photojournalism and how a lot of the photographers also in terms of where the Market Photo Workshop was located.

It was in the city. Everything was happening. And a lot of the photographers ended up being placed in-- a lot of newspapers and working with a lot of newspapers. So there is quite a lot of-- change that does happen through the images that are taken in South Africa. But at-- but at the same time, I think that in as much as there's the-- photojournalistic-- approach-- I think that it does not take away from photo-- more contemporary image making and that both-- both approaches are equally valid.

And because also it's not-- it's not-- it's not just a place where there's war. There's people living. There's people celebrating. And photography becomes that tool where it can show the different-- different sides to-- to the country and to-- to the politics of the country, too.

SEAN JACOBS:

Can I just-- I don't know how much time we have left. I think I'm gonna-- it would be interesting and useful to also get maybe the audience to-- ask a question or two. But I have one other question, which is the center was founded by Goldblatt-- by David Goldblatt. And David Goldblatt is primarily identified with, you know, social documentary photography.

How much of that imprint or that impulse-- still drives or guide the work of the Market Photo Workshop? And I'm-- and I'm sort of asking that because if you look at Lebohang's work, it's kind of moving in a completely different direction. So I'm curious if you could say, like, how much of-- how has the curriculum changed? How are new kind-- these new kinds of way of making work-- also becoming part of-- being part of-- of the workshop?

LEBOHANG KGANYE:

I mean, I arrived at the Market Photo Workshop 2009. And there was still very much a focus on-- documentary or photojournalistic app-- photoj-- journalistic approach. And when-- I think in twenty-- around 2011 I think less so. So the groups that-- that then went into-- went to do the advanced photography-- actually had very interesting-- very interesting projects started coming up-- from that point on.

And I think that it allowed for-- for both programs to kind of have equal status-- in the institution. Because before that we knew that a lot of funding was coming in for the-- the photojournalistic program. And I think after that I think a few-- a few years later it started having-- or it started being recognized, the advanced photography pr-- program, which is very much around-- more conceptual-- more conceptual work-- or more art-driven-- driven work. That's-- well, that's-- that's my view, what I noticed.

LEKGETHO MAKOLA:

I-- I think, I mean, it was in-- inevitable that-- Market Photo Workshop would be known as a documentary photography training space because of the nature of its founding, 'cause it was founding on-- founded on the principle of that-- that people are being given a tool to-- to document and tell their own stories.

So the visual storytelling element from a witnessing perspective was in-- was the-- the-- the core basically of the practice for-- for your '90s-- until you got into the-- early 2000s when you started having different types of-- of trainers coming in who were much more exposed to the global practice. But also access to information played-- played a huge role.

Music videos-- became critical because young people, you know, consumed those-- on a daily basis. Advertise-- advertisement-- so basically the industry-- the visual industry had a impact in terms of how students want to present-- represent their own story. So it was not the Market Photo Workshop that kinda instigated the change but the students themselves.

Basically what we do, we respond to the-- the trends that students bring into the classroom. So that's why we-- we-- we call it the knowledge-- cultivation space. So a trainer and-- and-- and-- a trainer and a students are on equal base. 'Cause-- and the students bring an experience that needs to be enhanced in that classroom space.

So-- we have started-- in-- in the times that she's-- she's-- she's talking to-- we started seeing kind of-- a shift, you know, in-- in how-- many young photographers start-- start-- start-- begins to explore the medium-- in a more complex way because I think they are very complex-- thinkers-- who want to drive, you know, the-- the-- the discipline into the area of their own-- interest. And we are there just to enhance it.

SEAN JACOBS:

I don't know how much time we have left for a question. How much--

YUKIKO YAMAGATA:

We have (UNINTEL).

SEAN JACOBS:

Okay. So-- I'm gonna have other questions. But I'm-- I'm assuming members of the audience have-- have questions. Anybody with a question? If you would just-- I don't know. I suppose you can identify yourself and just ask your question.

LEKGETHO MAKOLA:

Bring it on. Don't be too scared. We are very nice people.

SEAN JACOBS:

Don't be shy.

YUKIKO YAMAGATA:

I was just corrected. We've got 10 minutes.

SEAN JACOBS:

Oh, we have 10 more minutes--
(OVERTALK)

LEKGETHO MAKOLA:

Garret (PH).

SEAN JACOBS:

There isn't much time.

LEKGETHO MAKOLA:

Is your hand up?

SEAN JACOBS:

There is a hand there.

GARRET:

Thank you guys so much. I'm Garret. And I-- I'm just curious to know. So you mentioned-- a lot of work coming out of the Fees Must Fall movement-- kind of thinking-- rethinking this moment in South Africa that we're-- we're kind of-- I think the new generation is-- is ready to-- to look at again. But I'm also curious to know-- there's been a flip side to the Fees Must Fall Movement and how it's treated.

I mean, I think-- I mean, if-- correct me if I'm wrong, but David Goldblatt is moving his archive out of South Africa-- to-- in response to what he sees as censorship by the university. So I'm just curious to know about that flip side or that tension within the Fees Must Fall movement as it relates to art.

LEBOHANG KGANYE:

I think my understanding in terms of that was because of a lot of-- I mean, also I think in thinking about uprisings and what happens during-- during those times, there will always be-- because I was there for quite a few of the-- the marches. And there are always people that will try and discredit what's happening there-- to shift the focus from what you guys are actually fighting for.

And with that in terms of of what you are asking about about David Goldblatt, I think one of the-- the libraries was torched. If-- if I remember correctly, it was in relation to-- to something of that sort and the students saying that there aren't enough-- black artists represented in the universities-- most of the universities in terms of who they are name-- named under-- named after. Sorry. In thinking about actually where Fees Must Fall started, it actually started with-- I think it was Rhodes Must Fall, which-- which was the first one.

And-- and then Fees Must Fall then came I think-- a year or two later. And in thinking about-- I thinking about that, then you know that it's-- what the students are fighting about, it's about who the-- the university-- who the universities are named under and how those people America actually critical in-- in terms of apartheid-- being-- being there, in terms of funding apartheid, in terms of all of those things.

So-- and the archives in those schools and what the-- the galleries-- who they're named after.

So in relation to the conversation around Goldblatt, I think it was in relation to-- to them saying that there aren't enough black artists-- represented in the university's collections if I remember correctly. I stand to be corrected on this one.

LEKGETHO MAKOLA:

Yeah. I think also lack of understanding-- bas-- basically the importance of-- of-- history, that even though, you know, this doesn't suit you, it doesn't mean that it needs to be destroyed because there's a mark that represents a certain time in-- in memory that we need to be always aware of. I think there were individuals within the movement who were angered by the fact of some of the things that they mentioned and some of the images in terms of representation.

'Cause I know there was an image-- that was illustrating-- Sarah Baartman. And some people took it that it-- "This is insulting us as black-- black women. Why should we have this in this university that's supposed to be our university?" And-- those become f-- first victims basically of-- of-- of this urge to destroy-- anything that represent oppression. So those are the contrasts that exist. And I think-- from Goldblatt's side because he kept his archive-- in-- at the UCT, he felt that it might also be-- in risk. And he decided to remove it from South Africa. The sad thing is that he removed it from the continent. And-- and-- and the works are about the continent. It's a very problematic kind of move that-- needs to be called to order.

LEBOHANG KGANYE:

But also, spaces like-- the UCT, the University of Cape Town, are highly contested spaces. I mean, Cape Town as a city is-- is so problematic on so many levels. So I think in as-- you know, in as much as we expect for-- a peaceful protest to happen, it's bound to get ugly, like, in a space like that.

SEAN JACOBS:

I think we can have one more question over here. Oh, we'll take two. One and one.

FEMALE AUDIENCE MEMBER:

This is sort of a follow-up question to Garrett's question. We talked earlier about safe spaces for people, safe spaces for the creation of artwork. So I'm wondering are there any safe s-- what are the safe spaces for archives?

LEBOHANG KGANYE:

I don't know how to answer that.

LEKGETHO MAKOLA:

Safe space for archives? And the question, which archives? I mean, the term itself in South African context is problematic because only certain-- works were regarded as of value and kept in vaults. So-- the nature of archive and archival practice is that keep it away from the people and-- and preserve it. And I believe the best way of preserving and conserving is to make it accessible.

And in that way people really feel that they are part of it because archives represent, like I said, the past. So unless the practice kind of adjusts itself, they are not safe. But they are more of in high security vaults. As the Market Photo Workshop, we want to shift that because I think we represent a very important kind of post-apartheid-- repository of images that we believe needs to be treated differently.

Even if we-- we-- we get rid of the term and-- and come up with a new term that is much more consumable, and acceptable, and accessible by many people-- I think for us that's the way of going forward. But not discrediting, like, the practice as a whole. But there are spaces that-- you find-- like, your-- your-- your-- South African history archives-- which they're-- they're trying to make it much more accessible online. The Nelson Mandela-- Archive, which-- they-- they interact with schools and-- and different-- spaces of learning. But those are little steps I think going to the right direction.

SEAN JACOBS:

I think we have one last question over there.

JACKIE BISCHOF:

Hi. My name is Jackie Bischof. I'm an-- deputy editor with Quartz and a contributing editor of Quartz Africa. And I was really-- wondering-- if you could follow up on your decision not to use the word training for the work that you do. I was really curious about that. Is that a really strict decision on your part? And-- and why do you choose not to use that word?

LEKGETHO MAKOLA:

It's-- it's not necessarily strict. I think it's something that I-- in my engagement with my team also just the collectives that we-- we-- we part-- participate in, the term, how it's used and referred to, and-- and how people coming into a learning environment-- expect-- this trainer to do, it's-- for me, it's-- it's a little bit archaic because students-- because they're coming to be trained, they-- they become passive-- and not interactive.

So I believe that if you change-- change terminologies 'cause I think terms-- language is really critical. If you change terms and you use something different, I think that affects the

psychology of a person. They see themselves as a participant in this knowledge cultivation. 'Cause we cannot talk about knowledge cultivation space-- and-- and-- and talk about being trained.

And, you know, it's-- I think train can-- training can apply to certain-- elements of practice-- where-- the sharing of information allows for one to be directed and channeled, you know? Because I think-- the-- the activists out there who believe education-- the training model is making people zombies. They get into a system, you stuff them, and they come out of the system, and they either become zombies to respond to-- a monopoly, you know? So training becomes a political-- terminology. So we want to kind of deconstruct that and-- and probably become learning and teaching. You know, we learn and teach maybe.

SEAN JACOBS:

On-- on that note of quoting the great Fela Kuti, zombies-- (LAUGHTER) that didn't work at all.

LEBOHANG KGANYE:

No. (LAUGHTER)

SEAN JACOBS:

I want to thank Lekgetho and Lebohang for being part of the conversation. I know (UNINTEL) don't get to talk to them. And thanks to Open Society Foundation. Thank you.

LEKGETHO MAKOLA:

Thank you. (APPLAUSE)

YUKIKO YAMAGATA:

Thank you so much. Thank you, Sean, Lebohang, and Lekgetho. Yes?

MALE VOICE:

Can I take a photo of you guys?

MALE VOICE:

Nice.

SEAN JACOBS:

Look at-- look at how--

* * *END OF TRANSCRIPT* *