



SUFFRAGETTE INSPIRING THE MOVEMENT



A scene from the film 'Suffragette', directed by Sarah Gavron



Pamela Mhlanga leading the discussion

One wise speaker once said “The suffering of one woman in Africa is the suffering of all women”, or something to that effect. Watching the movie “Suffragette” I got the feeling that the feminism, gender activism no matter what shape or name it takes is the burden of all women.

The story of the Suffragette movement is as inspiring today, if not more so, because of the strides made since. What makes this film relevant today is the fact that there are still women somewhere in the world without a right to vote and that there are some women who have the right to vote but choose not to exercise it. It's not that this film was well made that makes it special, it's the fact that everybody needs to see it, that's what makes it special. Not only women need to see this film but men, boys, girls...so that they can appreciate the value of their vote.

After watching the film, there was the *Women's Movement Building Dialogue* and what an inspired IIFF moment! With Pamela Mhlanga, Executive Director ZWRN and also Chairwoman of the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe as the moderator, the discussion was in the right hands. To kick-start the dialogue, Professor Rudo Gaidzanwa remarked by referencing the film, saying the struggle for women is

costly, as it costs them their children, families and the system always tries to turn women against each other as we witnessed in the film. Professor Gaidzanwa also challenged women to think outside the box in how they strategized. Pamela also emphasized the need for women's organizations to come together and to work smarter and be more adept in their approach to challenges.

Another speaker, Rudo Mudiwa, spoke on the need for women to recognize that the over-arching goal is to secure an equal foothold in every sector. She also bemoaned the lack of respect for women's health and the need for women to constantly fight off sexual harassment.

The ensuing debate was wide-ranging, swinging from provocative to robust engagement to camaraderie. All things having been said and still to be done, one thing that clearly came out was the need for the women's movement to be more united, more strategic and, most importantly, to keep going, as women's movements have come too far to slow down towards the finish line.

We hope IIFF will keep an open line for the possibility of hosting such fora throughout the year, culminating in a conference at the next IIFF.

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ZIFFT @ IIFF

A solid, no-frills presentation by *Zimbabwe International Film and Festival Trust (ZIFFT)* Festival Coordinator Elton Mjanana at the Film Industry Forum aptly titled *'Breaking Down the Walls'* might just be the first blow to tearing down the walls that have segmented the film industry. A recurrent theme amongst the speakers that have made presentations at the film forum is the need to engage Government and Mjanana also emphasized the need for introspection by filmmakers at how best they can do business with Government. This comes hard on the heels of the proposal by Government which is still in the consultation stages, of introducing film in the education system from primary education right up to tertiary institutions. Noble as this initiative is, filmmakers present questioned Government's motive and serious questions were posed as to who will staff these teaching programmes.

Mjanana's presentation sparked robust debate when he postulated that another major wall that needed tearing down was the wall between trained or so-called professional Filmmakers and the glut of up-start or the lesser experienced filmmakers who currently seem to enjoy a purple patch in the market as their products are being consumed at large by the Zimbabwean audiences. Debate centered on the quality of work being produced in large quantities, with seemingly no regard for the craft or art of filmmaking. A working relationship needs to be cultivated between the two communities of filmmakers was the consensus reached, as this will ensure the output of products that can compete on a global scale and the creation of a real film industry.

As with any gathering of like-minded people, resolutions were made to try and bring filmmakers together on a regular basis and one firm resolution was made to instruct film institutions to sit down and find a way of bringing a platform



ZIFF Coordinator Elton Mjanana speaking at IIFF 2016 Film Industry Forum

like the now defunct Pamberi Trust *Wednesday Film Club*. It was argued that such a platform has the ability to bring filmmakers of all walks of life to a neutral space where positive and non-intimidating conversations and critical analysis of each other's works is possible. A film directory was forwarded as a motion and was unanimously adopted by the filmmakers present. A skills audit was resolved as a way of finding the key gaps in the industry in terms of skills. Sound engineering was noted as a key component missing from Zimbabwean products and also that training in sound engineering was lacking.

Watching Elton Mjanana in his ZIFF t-shirt and Karen Mukwasi in her IIFF t-shirt as moderator sitting at the top of the table, two representatives from the country's premier film festivals, talking about engaging Government in policy formulation, talking about the need for filmmakers to come together, one got the feeling that the first wall has fallen and its time to focus on the building.

A PAINTING POOL: A VIVID PORTRAIT

The Iranian community came in their numbers to watch their official entry. It was a full house at the screening of the Iranian film *'A Painting Pool'* at the National Art Gallery. The film is a hauntingly beautiful love story of Reza and Maryam, two mentally handicapped factory workers trying to raise their 4th grade son the best way they can. There is something humbling when those deemed to be of a lesser stature shine a light through their innocence and love for each other.

Parenting is hard, and this poignant picture sheds light on how even more difficult it is for parents with limited mental capacities. The lead actor reminds one of *Forrest Gump* but with a much bigger battle of life, love and parenting. This film

is most definitely in the class of *Gump*.

Reza and Maryam struggle to keep up with the demands of their gifted son Soheil, who seeks alternate surrogate parents in the mold of his school teacher. No matter how hard they try, this is one of those films that questions if love alone is enough. In the tradition of Iranian films, this film stands out as one that takes the less travelled road into the real lives of ordinary struggling people, dealing with the biting reality of sanctions. The film by Maziar Miri is real and is worth reflecting on.

WHAT THE PEOPLE SAID

...AT THE FILM INDUSTRY FORUM:

"This is excellent! All we need now is to bring more young women into these platforms."

- Sizakhele Mukwedeya, filmmaker

"I think we need to take our talking into action, we need practitioners to do more to match international standards." - Fungai Makoni, filmmaker

"As long as we have these platforms, we can move film forward in this country."

- Takudzwa Nyangani, filmmaker