

Remembrance

African Activist Archive Project

Documenting Apartheid: 30 Years of Filming South Africa

By Peter Davis

During April 2004 and beyond we were constantly reminded that this is the tenth anniversary of the first democratic all-race elections in South Africa. I was shocked by the realization that last year also marked the thirtieth anniversary of my first visit to that country, of my first experience with apartheid. After that first trip in 1974 as part of an African tour I was doing for the American NGO, Care, I was to devote a large part of my working life to the anti-apartheid struggle. For those of us who were involved in that struggle, it was such an everyday part of life that it is hard to grasp that there is already a generation out there that does not know the meaning of “apartheid”.

The struggle against apartheid took many forms, from protests, strikes, sabotage, defiance, guerrilla warfare within the country to boycotts, bans, United Nations resolutions, rock concerts, and arms and money smuggling and espionage outside. Apartheid, which was institutionalized by the coming to power of the white National Party in 1948, lasted as long as it did, against the condemnation of the world, because it had powerful friends. Chief among these were the United States, which saw a South Africa governed by whites as a useful ally in the Cold War; a Britain whose ruling class had close links with South African capital; and German, French, Israeli and Taiwanese commercial interests that extended even to sales of weapons and nuclear technology to the apartheid regime.

I never believed that apartheid would be beaten on the battlefield. I concluded early on that the critical struggle over apartheid would be above all else a propaganda battle. After the image of apartheid as a lethal system was established with the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960, which shocked the world, South Africa’s information agencies set out to erase this negative image. Huge sums of money were poured into public relations services, from propaganda films to junkets for journalists to bribes to influential people in foreign governments. Through willing agents, they even bought into newspapers and television news services overseas in an attempt to control, or counterbalance, reporting on South Africa.

Media technology had a vital and changing role in the struggle against apartheid. During the Sharpeville shooting, a newsreel stringer raced to the township. He seems to have shot no more than one roll of film, 100 feet, two and a half minutes, of which only about 65 feet are extant. Arriving at the mopping up stage, the few images he shot are

devastating. Dead women and men are sprawled in their own blood; a dazed and wounded man sits on the ground, unable to get up. A body is being lifted into a truck; a group of four black men are carrying a corpse in a sheet, under the supervision of a policeman with a sjambok, a giant whip. These were images that constituted irrefutable evidence of the lethal nature of South African racism, and they became part of the anti-apartheid propaganda arsenal for the next decades.

The opposing forces to apartheid in this massive media war were not inconsiderable, but they were never under any central command. Paradoxically, this may have been the movement's strength. There was no way you could exert central control over thousands of journalists throughout the world, hundreds of NGOs, church groups, trade unions, and political parties ranging from the centre to the far left, actors, musicians, artists and a motley crew of dedicated individuals that included independent film-journeymen like myself. Communist governments routinely condemned apartheid in outraged terms, but in the context of the Cold War, it was in their interest to keep Africa on the boil.

Thirty years ago, concern about apartheid was unevenly divided in the world's media. In Western Europe, especially in the UK, Holland and Scandinavia, and in Canada, close attention was always paid to the ongoing abuse of human rights in South Africa, but the United States lagged far behind. America's own civil rights upheavals were still reverberating, but more than that, the country was in the middle of a divisive war in Vietnam that was viciously racist. I would be surprised if, during the period 1948 to 1976, there were as many as 20 programs aired on American television about apartheid and most of these would have been on PBS.

My first small taste of what apartheid meant in human terms came when I was en route to Swaziland in 1974 on my trip for CARE. I was checking into a hotel in Johannesburg when the desk clerk, who had been receiving me politely, suddenly noticed some minor infraction on the part of one of the black porters, who had probably put a bag down in an inconvenient place. The clerk's face contorted. He started to scream at the porter at the top of the voice, calling him a stupid kaffir. And then back to me in a normal tone. It was astonishing, like switching a light on and off. The difference between – click - the way you treat a white man and the way – click - you treat a black.

When I visited Swaziland, I became aware of the peculiar role played by that country vis-à-vis South Africa. Swaziland is a tiny landlocked country situated between South Africa and Mozambique. By a quirk of British colonial politics, it had escaped being absorbed into South Africa, and so was free from the tyranny of apartheid, if not from the overwhelming political influence of its neighbor. But it acted as a kind of safety valve, because activities forbidden by law in South Africa were tolerated in Swaziland. These included gambling and interracial sex. As a result, Swaziland maintained a casino that thrived on tourists from South Africa, and had a busy sex trade. I approached CBS, and got a contract from Sixty Minutes to do an exposé on sex and gambling in Swaziland. It offered a subject about which you could moralize in comfort, unveiling, as it seemed to, the hypocrisy of white South Africa. The resulting film, *Hello, from Swaziland!* was relatively innocuous, and certainly no threat to the apartheid regime, but it did allow me to explore South Africa. My next project was much more ambitious.

Reduced to basics, what was happening in South Africa was competition for the same piece of land between two different ethnic groups, for the sake of simplicity, one white, one black. It is the classic formula for friction that we see in Palestine-Israel, the Balkans, Indonesia, the Philippines and numerous other areas of the world, and it brings with it murder and ethnic cleansing. I determined that my subjects would be: first, a history of the Afrikaner people who held sway in South Africa, and then, the history of the forging of an African nationalism for the many distinct black peoples of South Africa, out of the struggle against white domination.

For the first project, I pulled together co-production financing from Swedish Television, the United Nations, and CTV Canada, although the project was still severely under funded. I wanted to do the history of Afrikaner nationalism first, because this creation of a white African nation was a matter of pride for Afrikaners, and I thought would gain us access to the country, which it did. To present African nationalism to the apartheid authorities would have been totally unacceptable.

For a couple of weeks, we filmed without any problems, although I always wondered if we were being watched. The strategy was to interview only Afrikaners, but by then, in 1976, there was a sufficient range of dissent within the Afrikaner camp to find opponents of apartheid. A leader of this opposition was Beyers Naudé, a clergyman of the Dutch Reformed Church who had denounced apartheid on moral grounds. About halfway through our schedule, we happened to be in Grahamstown at the same time as Naudé was giving a lecture at Rhodes University. We filmed his lecture and interviewed him the next day.

After that, we checked into a hotel in Umtata, in the Transkei. Shortly after midnight - the classic hour for such things - there was a knock at the door, with an announcement that it was the police. When I opened the door, I saw that they were not uniformed, so I assumed it was the Special Branch. Across the hallway, Barry Callaghan, our interviewer, answered the knock on his door clad only in the scantiest of bikini underwear. Dressed, Barry is an imposing figure. Nudity only added to his corporeal substance, and the arresting officers were duly impressed. Barry got dressed in his own good time. In my room, I spent some desperate moments flushing the names of contacts down the toilet.

We had been arrested in the Transkei, a designated "black homeland", and had no white jail. We were driven several hours through the pre-dawn countryside to the nearest white jail, which was in East London. Arriving there, we found that the white men's prison was full. The only solution was to stick us in the white women's prison. Being in prison is always an educational experience. Mercifully, my spells in prison education have been brief, but I have always learnt a lot about the country whose unwilling guest I was, and they were things I would not have learnt otherwise. South Africa was no exception. The most subversive things I saw in South Africa were scribbled on the walls of the women's prison of East London; modesty prevents me from quoting them.

Most painful about being in jail, apart from the personal discomfort of sitting on stinking mattresses, was that we could look down into the courtyard below, where our rented car was parked. Our car with our latest exposed film in it. I had taken the precaution of

secretly all of our other footage with friends in Johannesburg, but the car contained our most recent footage. From our vantage point, we saw two Special Branch officers walk across the courtyard and open the trunk, but we didn't see them remove anything. Still, we couldn't be sure that they hadn't done so earlier. I was astonished to find, when we were finally released, that all the footage was still there. I still don't know why they didn't confiscate it.

We were kept overnight. Burt, our sound man, and Barry were interrogated, but I wasn't, which I took as a personal affront. I had no great concerns about what they would do to us, I knew that typically in South Africa offending foreign journalists were held at the most three days, and then deported. The only exceptions to this – and there were only a couple that I can recall – were when there was a suspicion of espionage. Penalties for South African journalists, of whatever color, were of course far more severe.

We were served with an expulsion order to leave the country the next day. We booked our flights back via London, but I was still not sure that they wouldn't confiscate our film on the way out, and I didn't dare ship it out other than hand-carried. So I took an earlier plane out to neighboring Botswana with all the films, leaving the others to fly to London. From Botswana, I could ship the film through another route than Johannesburg. Then I booked a flight to London via Johannesburg, since that was the quickest route. All I had to do was change planes in Jo'burg, so I did not anticipate any problem.

As I flew out of Jan Smuts airport, I opened the evening paper to read that the police had fired that morning on students demonstrating in Soweto. It was June 16th, an unforgettable date; this was the first act in the drama that became known as the Students' Revolt. It would be the background to my editing at the United Nations in New York during the next several months, a dismal record of protests and strikes put down with brutal police suppression, torture and murder.

When the film was nearly complete, I went to WGBH, Boston to see if they would sponsor the documentary for broadcast on PBS. As was their right as potential co-producer, they asked to look at my script. To my astonishment, my text was subjected to a 10-page critique with which a South African censor would have been perfectly comfortable. This was while the Students' Revolt was still going on, when some 700 students had died – this was the figure admitted by the police – and when thousands of students had been arrested.

There always seemed to me to be a stratum of sympathy among American broadcasters for white South Africans. Reluctant as I was to come to the conclusion, I could only explain that sympathy in terms of racism, perhaps unconscious, which was well concealed under the mantle of a "balanced presentation." You did not need "balance" on apartheid, any more than you needed "balance" on the Holocaust.

The title I gave the documentary was *White Laager* – a "laager" being a circle of covered wagons that the Boers used for defense in their trek north through Africa. It was the dominant icon of embattled white supremacy for the Afrikaner people, the image that defined them as a racial minority in a hostile continent. Reduced to basics, Afrikaner Nationalists – who constituted by far the biggest block of the Afrikaner people – had chosen to sacrifice human rights for security. Now, the human rights they had sacrificed

were largely those of the non-white population, but it had severe repercussions on freedom of speech and action even within the white population, and on the concept and practice of justice. And if we need to understand this frame of mind, we have to look no further than 9/11 in the United States and Canada, where the same sacrifice, in the name of a broader security, has been made. The United States has constructed its own laager, with all those who do not support it – whether inside the United States or without – considered as the enemy, and this is precisely what happened in South Africa.

White Laager came out in 1977. Now I had to do the history of black struggle against white domination, something that had not been done before. But I had been deported from South Africa and they would not let me back in again. However, for my purposes, this was not as formidable a barrier as it may seem. The historical material I needed was for the most part available from film libraries like Visnews in the UK, which I could supplement from International Defence and Aid (the main anti-apartheid media locus, situated in London) using their film and photo collections. In the phase of the struggle current at that time, the centers of resistance to the apartheid regime were all in exile anyway, the ANC headquarters being in Zambia, and PAC (the Pan-Africanist Congress) headquarters in Tanzania. Other resisters – by now, hundreds from the wave of student unrest – were to be found in enclaves in Botswana and Lesotho and Angola, countries that bordered South Africa or Namibia.

White Laager had been partially sponsored by the United Nations, and they again gave me some backing for my next film as did my old employer, Swedish TV. Despite the increased news interest in South Africa after the Soweto Uprising, WGBH did not come in on the second film. Still, I had enough money to go to the frontline states. In Zambia, ANC gave me only limited access. I could interview but not film their headquarters compound. Their search for security was wise, but in the event futile; the compound was later bombed by the South African airforce. Paradoxically, in Tanzania the PAC, an organization that was dedicated to black power and by definition suspicious of whites, even let me go and film in one of their training camps. I could film openly; I was shocked by this. I made sure that in the final cut, no faces of the young men could be recognized, even though this seemed a matter of indifference to the PAC leadership.

When we got to Botswana, I tried to cross the border into South Africa, but my name was blacklisted, as I expected. While I was at the airport, looking to charter a small plane, I met the American ambassador for Botswana and Lesotho. He was about to fly to Lesotho, a country completely surrounded by South Africa – and he offered to give a lift to myself and my companion, an extraordinary piece of generosity that would surely be impossible today. From Lesotho, where we filmed some of the exiles who would later be assassinated, we crossed over a bridge into the supposedly independent territory of the Transkei. And from there, I could have gone anywhere in South Africa. Actually, this was just a test, because we did have another crew working in South Africa. We didn't linger long. But I had proved that it could be done, and this would come in useful in the future.

With the bloody 1976 Students' Revolt, the American media snapped to attention, and discovered apartheid – which from then on became the hypocritical rationale for covering the violence in South Africa, the real bait for the networks. The Soweto Uprising had caught the authorities by surprise. Newsreel crews from around the world, now equipped

to record sound with ease, captured not only the violence, but what blacks felt about it. However, white men were still shooting the cameras and selecting the shots. I do not know of any black newsreel or documentary cameramen active in South Africa at that time. But there would be a later technological chapter to the reporting of apartheid.

Black history in South Africa appeared to me to be one of cycles of protest in different forms, and that is why I had given my documentary the title of *Generations of Resistance*. It was prophetic to the extent that it anticipated the next wave, but only because the strength of oppression and of the counterweight of black nationalism made it inevitable.

This came in 1984, and brought about the declaration of a State of Emergency. The world's television networks between 1976 and 1984 had switched entirely to video, with all the immediacy of satellite near-instant transmission. For the South African government, this was the worst possible development, and for the first time, they imposed a strict censorship on the foreign media, clearly aimed at television coverage. Frankly, I have never understood why it took them so long. From now on, text and images would have to be submitted for clearance by the authorities, and any transgression would lead to withdrawal of accreditation.

This meant that the images could be manipulated by the authorities. In practice, the censor clamped down on the recording of police brutality, but fully allowed what came to be called black-on-black violence, which gave the impression that there was a savage civil war going on inside black society with only the forces of law and order to stop it. By this time all television journalists operating in South Africa had to rely on local help, because it was too dangerous for whites to go into the townships. It was this more than any altruism that led the foreign media to train black cameramen for the first time.

There had evolved by then South African film-makers whose anti-government activities entailed working with foreign entities, ranging from foreign television to the National Council of Churches, whom they depended on for funding, and who depended on them for getting out uncensored images. A group called the Free Film-Makers fed underground material to the outside world; they were secretly funded by International Defence and Aid. Bear in mind that we were now into the new technological phase, the age of video, which was far easier to disseminate than film.

After *Generations of Resistance*, I made *The Nuclear Axis*, an exposé of South Africa's move towards the acquisition of nuclear weapons' capability. In 1984, I embarked on a documentary on Nelson and Winnie Mandela, intended to depict them as a highly successful political partnership. Winnie was the only one of the couple not in jail but she was in exile, in a township called Brandfort, in the centre of the country, far away from her home base of Soweto. My plan was to go to the Transkei, and to try to reach Winnie from there. The Transkei was a bantustan, a country deemed "independent" by the white government as part of the apartheid strategy to divide all of South Africa into a number of small black nations under the control of one dominating white nation, in fact a policy of balkanization.

Under South Africa's own terms, if the Transkei was an independent country, then I could only be prevented from visiting if the Transkeian authorities didn't want me. I

wrote and got permission from the puppet government of the Transkei. We were a team of three: myself, Kenneth Mdana, who was a Xhosa from Grahamstown, a friend of some years, and David Mesenbring, a white American with years of experience as a missionary in South Africa. The Transkei was the birthplace of Winnie and Nelson. Both were Xhosa, like Kenneth, our soundman and we filmed in the areas where they had grown up. We had contact with ANC members there, but they were under surveillance by the secret police of Matanzima, the puppet who ruled the Transkei (who, incidentally, was a relative of Nelson Mandela).

A frustrating time was spent in trying to contact Winnie. I had her number there, and I would typically call the Brandfort operator (there was no direct line), who would ask me in a thick Afrikaner accent what number I wanted. When I would give Winnie's number, the operator would say, "Mrs. Mandela is not available right now." Then we had a piece of luck. By coincidence, when we were filming in Winnie's birthplace, we heard that she was nearby. A relative had died, and Winnie had been give permission to go to the funeral. We tracked her down, but she was just about to go back to Brandfort, because she had leave from the police to be away for only a few days. I told her we wanted to interview her, and she replied, as she was about to leave, "Come to Brandfort." And then she was whisked away in her minibus.

It was like a royal command: "Come to Brandfort." Well, then, that's what we would have to do.

We arranged to leave early one morning, crossing from the Transkei into the Orange Free State at a border crossing that was supposed to be relatively unwatched. But the night before we were due to leave, Umtata blew up.

Specifically, the oil storage depot for the city was sabotaged. We watched lugubriously as the plumes of smoke rose above the city, and police vans dashed everywhere, sirens wailing. There was no obvious reason, and consequently no obvious culprits, for this sabotage. As far as we were concerned, this was irrelevant: we assumed that the border posts would have extra guards on duty to catch suspicious travelers.

We did some hard thinking. If we were to visit Winnie, it would have to be within the next few days, because we were due to leave. I felt that I had to give it a try, because it was now or never. I left it to the others as to whether they would come or not. There was no risk for David, who was not, unlike me, persona non grata in South Africa, but Kenneth was a different matter. Being a black South African, he could get into a lot of trouble. But he decided to come anyway.

We gave it one day for things to calm down a little, and then we left. We drove the 450 miles to Brandfort, a 10-hour journey, without seeing a single police car. The only incident was when we stopped for food, and the restaurant-owner refused to serve Kenneth so we drove on. We arrived in the white town of Brandfort, and then had to ask the way to the black township. It must have been perfectly obvious what we were there for.

We found Winnie at her small cinderblock house busy helping a young student with her schoolwork, but she broke off to receive us. She was, as always, charming. In the mid-

80s, a dozen African-American actresses were competing to play Winnie, but no-one could play Winnie as well as she played herself.

We started the interview, arranging with one of Winnie's friends to have each 10-minute can of film spirited away as soon as we had shot it, in case of accidents. Halfway into the interview, Winnie raised her hand – a car had stopped outside the house. "The Special Branch," cautioned Winnie.

But, our luck held, and incredibly, they drove away again. We never knew if they had bothered to call in the number on our rented car, which was parked outside, but in any case, there was no further problem. That is, not with the Special Branch – we had sabotage from within. At one point, Winnie was talking about Xhosa men. Not specifically accusing Nelson, Winnie declared, "Oh, Xhosa men are the worst men in the world!" At which point Kenneth Mdana, our Xhosa soundman, switched off the tape-recorder. With difficulty, he was persuaded to switch it back on.

We finished the interview, and started to wrap our cables and lights. Winnie is the only person I have interviewed who has ever offered to help us pick up the mess we had made of her living room.

We drove to where our exposed film was hidden, then out of the township, and away from Brandfort. We were so cocksure by now that we stopped in Bloemfontein, a large white city, and stood ourselves a dinner at a first-class restaurant, where Kenneth had no trouble being served together with us. We drove back home to Umtata through the night.

Passing through Johannesburg airport a few days later on our way out, we met a group of black Americans, civil rights activists, which included Bayard Rustin, who wanted to do the same as we had done, cross into South Africa via the Transkei. We told them about our crossing route. A while later, we heard that they had been detained at that crossing, and subjected to intense interrogation. I have to say that more than any caniness, skill, or acumen, luck played a major part in getting my South African films done.

Only a few months later, when Winnie was absent from her home in Brandfort, the house was torched. Through a South African stringer, I got film of Winnie picking her way through the smoldering ashes. I think we were the last to film her in that place before the fire; just as important, I had copied family photos of hers that were destroyed in the fire.

I had intended my documentary to be about Winnie and Nelson. But with Winnie being so palpably present, and Nelson reduced to a minor role by his absence in prison, her story took over; I renamed the documentary *Winnie Mandela*. I felt bad about neglecting Nelson, and decided to make a documentary on him called *Remember Mandela!* Hard to believe as it may be now, Nelson had been written off by his enemies as a player in this struggle for South Africa's soul. When the film was completed, I had a call from an anti-apartheid group in Atlanta that wanted to show my biography of Nelson on the opening night of the 1988 Democratic Convention, which happened to coincide with Mandela's seventieth birthday.

I had no backing for this film, and it got no television screening in the United States, where I was living at the time. But it did quite well in non-television outlets. In those

days, when we were still working with film, there were groups – political organizations, churches, libraries, universities, unions, independent theatres – that would rent a 16mm print and follow a screening with a discussion. This was an excellent form of consciousness-raising, and I am not sure that video is as effective a medium as film was in that regard. It seems to me that video viewing is more of a personal and less of a group activity, and so less politically useful.

Conscious that the clampdown on the foreign press was inhibiting and even distorting reporting from South Africa, my friend Daniel Riesenfeld and I tried to get backing for a documentary that would deal with this. You have to be aware that network news from South Africa did not carry the caveat that it was being reported under censorship – what was broadcast was “the news from South Africa”, as far as the viewer was concerned. But given that the wave of violence of the mid-’Eighties had died down, we could not arouse any interest in our project. Danny Schechter, a fugitive from network television, did manage to raise funds for a weekly report called South Africa Today, which started to air in the late ’Eighties on some PBS stations. Schechter took all kinds of reports from what were considered unconventional sources, including a great deal from Free Film-Makers in South Africa.

Dan Riesenfeld and I had started on our apparently abortive project when we got the brainwave to go in a different direction. Instead of looking at how South Africa was being reported in the news, we decided to look at how it had been “reported” over the years in cinema. Our thesis, which we were able to demonstrate overwhelmingly, was that the image of Africa going back to pre-film times had always been that of the Dark Continent, where whites had traditionally been the central figures, and Africans cast as either the Savage Other or the Faithful Servant. This was true in the film *Voortrekkers*, a South African epic glorifying the Boer settlers made in 1916, and it was equally true in *Cry, Freedom* from 1987, which managed the extraordinary feat of making a white journalist the central character of a film about Steve Biko. I gave our opus the title *In Darkest Hollywood*.

Making this documentary involved interviewing film-makers and actors outside and inside South Africa. When I applied for a visa – it was now into the thaw of the early ‘90s – this time it was granted. (Provided we did not film, which we cheerfully ignored.) *In Darkest Hollywood* came late in the anti-apartheid game, but nevertheless it is a case study in how and why films come to be made – or not made – at certain times. It shows how cinema, far from being pure “entertainment,” is a creature of political and social circumstances. Believe me, there are still people for whom this is a revelation. Our two-part documentary was very successful, and we even made a reasonable profit from it. It has been enormously popular with educational institutions and at festivals.

At the time I was making *Remember Mandela!* apartheid's grip on South Africa, bolstered by its alliance with its powerful friends in the West, seemed to me depressingly firm. When, only two years after I made the documentary, Nelson was liberated from prison, and the ANC unbanned, I was completely taken by surprise. I believed that Mandela would not live to see a free South Africa. I was by no means sure I would see it myself. But during the '80s, a number of currents reached confluence. Many of these came from outside the country, like the fall of Communism, which made South Africa no longer strategically vital. At the heart of it all was the courage of the South African people, who were determined to have their own liberation. This kept the cause alive so that eventually even the Congress of the United States was moved to impose sanctions, overriding the opposition of President Reagan (who later had the gall to take credit for it). Inside South Africa, a new generation of Afrikaners realized that not only were they facing revolt every few years, but that this was very bad economically. No one wanted to invest in a country that seemed so intent on self-destruction.

In the months leading up to the first free elections in South Africa in 1994, I was working in nearby Zimbabwe. The elections were a great historic occasion, but I chose not to visit at that time. I was convinced that it would be bloody, there had been so much violence leading up to the elections. In fact, when it came to the day, it was remarkably peaceful.

While in South Africa in 1996 to make my first non-apartheid documentary, *SANGOMA*, about traditional healers in KwaZulu-Natal and their work in plant conservation and primary health care, I was a victim of a mugging in broad daylight on a main thoroughfare in Johannesburg, swarmed by six youths. There were two positive aspects to this experience: one was that a policeman was alerted by a black onlooker, and the other was that he arrived before I was physically harmed. Gratuitous violence is part of the syndrome of ethnic vengeance, from the Balkans to South Africa. The continuing high level of violent crime in the country, which is part of the legacy of apartheid, is surely, as a South African friend remarked, a form of low level civil war, the all-out race war that was averted by the ANC's peaceful take-over.

Burned by this attack, I returned very reluctantly to South Africa in 2002 to cover the summit of the world's indigenous peoples, which was held in Kimberley. It was hosted by the Khoisan people, commonly known as Bushmen. Maybe not coincidentally, at that time the government made a considerable land grant in the Kalahari to the Khoisan people, who are having to fight for recognition as a distinct people in a post-apartheid South Africa, even though they are most likely descended from the original inhabitants of the southern part of Africa. In Kimberley, indigenous peoples from Africa, Latin America, the Philippines, North America, northern Europe and New Zealand hammered out a charter of rights for indigenous people. This was taken to Johannesburg to present before the United Nations' Earth Summit. In the very last minutes of the last session, the charter was accepted by the United Nations – but of course with no binding power over nations that did not choose to become signatories to it.

Video-cameras in the '80s allowed anti-apartheid South Africans for the first time to use the new media technology as a potent weapon against apartheid. It became a method of recording organization and protest, and of disseminating it effectively, albeit underground. When captured by the police, these images would also be used as evidence of collusion and conspiracy; but it did mean that the resistance was no longer dependent on outsiders to document apartheid. With the demise of apartheid, apart from the solid old-guard like Free Film-Makers, there was a new generation anxious to prove its talent.

On my visit to Sithengi (the South African film and video market held in Cape Town) last year, I saw this generation in force. I am deeply impressed by the quality especially of documentary production in South Africa. It is in a special sense a revolutionary form, since the auteurs can for the first time explore aspects of South Africa that before were culturally or socially forbidden, from black gay life to investigations into police conduct.

The end of apartheid cut off sources of financing from foreign NGOs, but this has been partially compensated for by the interest of Europe in South Africa, although like everywhere else, funding is drastically insufficient. Budgets from South African Broadcasting are a pittance even by our low standards.

My South African documentaries had been shown widely, through UN outlets, international television, and cinema and group screenings, but I had never known about inside South Africa. While visiting Sithengi, a new acquaintance offered to drive me through the Cape vineyards, which I had never seen before. He was a senior figure in post-apartheid education, a former student activist. He asked me what I did, and when I mentioned *Generations of Resistance*, he exclaimed, "Oh, we used that all the time!" meaning during his student activist days. This moment was the apex of my work on South Africa.

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