

EVENT REPORT

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

SOUTH AFRICA

JULIA GUSE

August 2018

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BREAKING THE FETTERS

SOUTH AFRICA 31 YEARS AFTER DAKAR

On the 20th of August, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation South Africa hosted a film screening of the film 'Breaking the Fetters', directed by Hennie Serfontein. The public event, which took place at the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre in Johannesburg, was attended by over 65 participants consisting of representatives from the private sector, and the academia, civil society organizations such as the Johannesburg Junior Council as well as ordinary South African citizens. As South Africa moves to celebrate 25 years of democracy, it is valuable to reflect upon an event that set the ball rolling on the road to a negotiated settlement. The overarching aim of the film screening, followed by a panel discussion, was to examine what has changed since the Dakar meeting and, therein, shed light on the protagonists' personal experiences and memorable moments while also considering present and future obstacles for democracy.

The event started with welcoming remarks given by Mr. Henning Suhr (Resident Representative, Konrad Adenauer Foundation South Africa) and Ms. Anli Serfontein (Freelance Writer, Filmmaker and Journalist). Mr. Henning Suhr began his speech by introducing the work of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, its worldwide engagement, projects and partners with the aim to promote sustainable democracy, good governance and the rule of law. He highlighted that it is of utmost importance to acknowledge the **outstanding successes** that the Afrikaner community and the exiled ANC members have achieved at the **Dakar meeting**. Mr. Suhr also

pointed out that by supporting the documentary film screening; the Konrad Adenauer Foundation South Africa wants to **raise public awareness** on civil courage, solidarity and active citizenry which is required in order to sustain a prospering democracy.

Ms. Anli Serfontein firstly expressed her gratitude towards the Konrad Adenauer Foundation for providing funding and assisting with organization of the events as well as the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre for providing the venue. She was especially thankful to have been provided with a platform to promote her father's documentary and honor his legacy in this way. Secondly, she reflected upon her family's special bond with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and particularly her father's visit at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Berlin in 1969. She also addressed the secrecy and conditions of the film-making process. She concluded her welcoming remarks with a short slideshow of pictures of the protagonists and film crew while she expressed her gratitude to some of the protagonists who were present.

The film screening was divided into two parts: First, the film 'Breaking the Fetters' was shown, thereafter, Ms. Anli Serfontein moderated a panel discussion on the topic of the Dakar meeting, comprising of Dr. Leon Wessels, Member of Parliament for Krugersdorp (1977-1994), he also participated in the Codesa negotiations (1991-1994) and Ms. Matshaba Mthiane-Guliwe, former KAS/SAIIA scholar as expert speakers as well as some protagonists of the film.

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In the context of the Dakar meeting, Matshaba Mothiane-Guliwe argued that many aspects are still relevant today – how South African people can come together to understand the **humanity** of each other. During her speech, she posed an extensive amount of questions towards the protagonists as well as the audience. One such example is the following question; “Have we broken the fetters, have we broken down the walls in South Africa today?” Matshaba Mothiane-Guliwe continued her talk by stressing the **role of the young generation** which has not entered the public sector yet. Therefore, their influence on current political affairs is not significant yet. She concluded her presentation by reflecting upon the emergence of crisis and, therein, the inherent need for **cross-cultural conversation**.

Dr. Leon Wessels primarily spoke about his experience as a South African who served in government during apartheid as well as his current experience. According to Wessels, each generation has to take **responsibility** for what happened during its time. Many problems that were addressed within the documentary are still evident today. Therefore, parallels can be drawn to current political debates, highlighting the **continuing relevance of the documentary film**. Lastly, Wessels reflected upon the past decades of democracy in South Africa and pointed out that people are still dealing with a lot of **ignorance and misunderstanding**. To him, the ultimate solution is to listen to each other and find solutions collaboratively.

After the panel discussion, the audience was provided with the opportunity to ask questions, raise concerns and engage generally with what they saw in the film. One participant argued that South Africa continues to be polarized, unable to help other people who experience struggles different from ours. He also addressed the role of young people within creating political change by drawing upon the example of the **'Fees Must Fall Movement'**. Another participant pointed out that it is important for young people, especially pupils, to watch the documentary in order to

understand South African history and the **concept of equality**. One issue that was raised during the discussion was that **reconciliation has been misunderstood** in South Africa. The country is in a **'crisis of ignorance'** in which communities are isolated from one another and, therefore, unable to reach out to understand others.

Ms. Anli Serfontein (Freelance Writer, Filmmaker and Journalist) officially closed the film screening by expressing her gratitude to the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the speakers, the protagonists, her family as well as the participants whose active engagement during the panel discussions was highly welcomed and much appreciated.

Overall, the event was well-attended and the panel discussion provided the base for a fruitful debate.