

NUUS

Documentary depicts complexity of forgiveness

Deur **Tandy-Lee Marinus** | 27 Junie 2016 06:00



: Tilmann Feltes, Friederike Bubenzer, Mark Kaplan, Prof Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, Harris Sibeko and Deon Snyman before the screening of Black Christmas in Worcester. PHoto: tandy-lee marinus

Residents of Worcester remember the Shoprite bombing of 1996 for the traumatic event it was. But it has also set the scene for a truly South African story of transformation.

Black Christmas, a recently released documentary film, may have opened many wounds for local victims, but according to award-winning South African filmmaker Mark Kaplan it shows the inspirational way that survivor Olga Macingwane reached out to perpetrator Stefaans Coetzee, providing the inspiration for forgiveness among other survivors.

In so doing, the hour-long film, which was screened this past weekend in Worcester, explores how complex it is for many to find the courage to forgive, and what it took for perpetrator Coetzee to change and, in the victims' eyes, deserve parole.

The story has also motivated Professor Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela of Stellenbosch University, producer of the film, to initiate research into the historical experiences of human violations and how they transform lives afterwards.

It tells both sides of the story, building a knowledge base of what the possibilities are when people listen to each other.

"When it comes to different race groups, we are so afraid or don't trust each other, but when you hear the pain and truly listen the unexpected can happen," Gobodo-Madikizela said.

According to Kaplan, who in the past has made films dealing with issues relating to apartheid, the film is not only important for Worcester, where extraordinary things have happened, but for South Africa. It sheds light on the kind of dynamics and depths of hatred that led to the bombing in the first place, dynamics the country still grapples with today.

"The extent to which people overcome their fears and prejudices, as is evident among the survivors in the film, is something everybody will relate to," Kaplan said.

Of the subjects of the many films he has directed, Kaplan believes Coetzee is the only one who has so far shown true remorse. The documentary articulates black pain, not only through the eyes of the survivors, but also through those of the perpetrator.

Its Worcester screening was a collaboration among the local community, Deon Snyman of the Restitution Foundation, who works with the Worcester Hope and Reconciliation Process, and the Khulumani Support Group.

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