

**DEAR MANDELA TO HAVE WORLD PREMIERE AT DURBAN INTERNATIONAL  
FILM FESTIVAL**  
**DOCUMENTARY SHINES LIGHT ON UNCONSTITUTIONAL FORCED EVICTIONS AND A NEW  
GENERATION OF BORN-FREE STRUGGLE LEADERS**

On Tuesday together with the public, 150 Abahlali BaseMjondolo members will watch their remarkable story unfold on the big screen: How they stood up to protect their community against Red Ants, bulldozers, assassination attempts and forced removals, all eerily reminiscent of the Apartheid-era.

*Dear Mandela* will have its world premiere at The Elizabeth Sneddon Theatre on Tuesday, 26 July 2011 at 18:00 as part of The Durban International Film Festival. The documentary explores the inspiring story behind Abahlali BaseMjondolo, the largest movement of the poor to emerge in post-Apartheid South Africa, and the innovative leadership of a few members of South Africa's first post-Apartheid generation. Abahlali BaseMjondolo - Zulu for 'people of the shacks' – won a landmark victory in The Constitutional Court in 2009 to overturn The Kwa-Zulu Natal Elimination and Prevention of Re-emergence of Slums Act, which legalized mass evictions within informal settlements.

The premiere's timing is perfect: This week, the KwaZulu Natal-based movement won another victory in court when 12 Abahlali BaseMjondolo members were finally acquitted of all charges related to a September 2009 attack on the organization in the Kennedy Road informal settlement in eThekweni. Clear evidence of an attempted police frame-up emerged in court.

Now the story of this remarkable group is being told in stunning cinematic style. A coup for the South African documentary scene, international filmmakers Dara Kell and Chris Nizza have chosen the Durban International Film Festival for the world premiere of *Dear Mandela*.

American Christopher Nizza, and KZN-born Dara Kell whose editing work includes the Oscar-nominated documentary *Jesus Camp*, are recipients of Participant Media's Outstanding Filmmaker Award representing Africa, and developed the project with support from the Sundance Documentary Film Program. The documentary is beautifully shot by Emmy-winning cinematographer Matthew Peterson and co-produced by South African Neil Brandt of Fireworx Media (*uGugu noAndile*, *A Lion's Trail*).

Dara, who will be in Durban for interviews from Monday 25<sup>th</sup> July, says, "Abahlali BaseMjondolo won a victory, but it's a partial victory: every few weeks we hear of a new community being evicted, usually where they don't know their constitutional rights. The story is far from over and we hope our world premiere will kick-start an essential national conversation."

The title of the documentary refers to a comment by Mnikelo, one of the three main characters in the film and the spokesperson of Abahlali baseMjondolo. "I would like to meet Dr. Nelson Mandela and ask him how he feels about the unstable conditions we are living under after he spent 27 years in Robben Island for a better life for all. He's like Jesus Christ himself... What he has been jailed for has never been achieved." Sixteen years after Mandela was elected president, the number of families living in informal settlements has doubled and "housing for all" seems like a promise the government will be unable to keep.

The documentary is a coming-of-age story about the new generation of born-free leaders emerging to continue Madiba's struggle for equality. As Mnikelo says in the documentary, "You don't need to be old to be wise."

*Dear Mandela* is set to be one of the most talked about and inspiring films at this year's Durban International Film Festival. Dara, Christopher and the lead characters from Abahlali BaseMjondolo are available for interviews to discuss the film, evictions and the housing crisis.

*Dear Mandela* will also screen at eKhaya Multi Arts Centre in KwaMashu at 6pm on Wednesday, 27 July 2011 as part of Durban International Film Festival, as well as on Friday 29 July 2011 at Luthuli Museum in KwaDukuza at 3pm and at The Nelson Mandela Youth Centre in Chatsworth at 6pm. "It's a homecoming from the film - which was born in the shacks and has its story told by shack dwellers," says Dara.

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