



# 'Cries at Night' a redeemer

• Magreth Nunuhe

Film plays a vital role in addressing important issues in our society and many scripts have been written about HIV/AIDS or alcohol and drug abuse, but few have provoked or aroused debate like 'Cries at Night', a short film written and directed by Oshosheni Hiveluah.

The movie takes us back to one of the most painful chapters in the history of the liberation struggle – to the bad things that happened to those who were branded spies and maltreated in the Swapo 'dungeons'.

Some feel that the topic may open a painful can of worms and that it's not in line with the policy of national reconciliation, but should someone just forget or forgive those who caused them immense pain, especially if they could now be their neighbour, their child's teacher or their work supervisor in an independent Namibia?

'Cries at Night' introduces us to Lazarus (Ham Haukongo), whose past is brought into play when he runs into Victor Naseni (Panduleni Hailundu), the man who had just saved his young niece's life. But Lazarus recognises Victor as his former torturer in the 'dungeons' and is overcome with a need for vengeance.

The film asks a lot of questions – has the policy of national reconciliation been addressed properly in order to bring to light the plight of those still smarting from the injustices committed against them or their families? Or is it time to redress the wrongs through counselling and initiate debate around that chapter of history?

The fast-paced film uses brilliant cinematographic techniques from its choice of shots, such as close-ups to emphasise a point, to flashbacks that have been used effectively to influence meaning without using dialogue. The sound effects are just as powerful, bringing tension and suspense at the right moments.

Haukongo's acting is spot on and his reactions are natural and convincing, so that you could almost feel the man's bitterness. But Hailundu's acting, I feel, needed more sharpening. He came off a bit nervous and the words he spoke didn't fit with his body language at times, although he did well in the kidnapping scene.

I am not convinced that it was the best resolution for the movie. I actually expected something deeper to make Lazarus come to his senses that 'an eye for an eye' is not the best option.

What made Lazarus find redemption

in the end? Is it merely spending a night in an abandoned building with his captive that he decides to let him go?

Otherwise, I must applaud the art directors, Lutz Honsbein and Ernst Steynberg, for a job well done. The set dresser/make-up artist, Tamira Kessler, was just as great in her portrayal of the dungeons, although I think that it would have been best to use the same actors in the flashbacks rather than cast other actors as their younger versions.

'Cries at Night' was one of the scripts selected by the Pan-African Script competition, with the intent to encourage Africans to "engage with the challenges facing their continent through the medium of film". The film is supported by the Goethe Institute Johannesburg and the Art in Africa Foundation. The production crew of the short film include Steven Markovitz and Michaela Bauer as executive producers, Eike Zuleeg as director of photography and it was directed by Hiveluah.

If anyone out there is looking for a good film with redeeming values or an ethical message for our society, 'Cries at Night' is the film to see.

The film was premiered last Friday at the Goethe Centre. Future screenings still have to be announced.