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Title	Atomized solidarity and new shapes of resistance: Visual activism in South Africa after apartheid
Authors	Thomas, Kylie
Publication date	2022-12-30
Original Citation	Thomas, K. (2022) 'Atomized Solidarity and New Shapes of Resistance: Visual Activism in South Africa after Apartheid', in Shipley, L. and Moriuchi, M.-Y. (eds)., The Routledge Companion to Art and Activism in the Twenty-First Century, 1st edn,. New York: Routledge, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003159698-21
Type of publication	Book chapter
Link to publisher's version	10.4324/9781003159698-21
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Download date	2026-11-17 12:02:54
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/14693

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THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION TO ART AND ACTIVISM IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Edited by
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First published 2023

ISBN: 978-0-367-74817-3 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-0-367-74820-3 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-003-15969-8 (ebk)

Chapter 17

ATOMIZED SOLIDARITY AND NEW SHAPES OF RESISTANCE

Visual Activism in South Africa after Apartheid

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DOI: 10.4324/9781003159698-21

The funder for this chapter is NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

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ATOMIZED SOLIDARITY AND NEW SHAPES OF RESISTANCE

Visual Activism in South Africa after Apartheid

Kylie Thomas

This essay focuses on the significance of visual activism in struggles for social justice in South Africa after the legislative end of apartheid in 1994. From the time of the Sharpeville Massacre on the 21st of March 1960, photography played an important role in documenting the iniquitous policies and violence of the apartheid state. Activist-photographers formed the anti-apartheid photography collective, Afrapix, in 1982, and launched what came to be known as struggle or resistance photography. They worked alongside artists who produced work in a range of mediums in support of the anti-apartheid struggle. The images these visual activists made during the last decade of apartheid were taken up in creative and powerful ways by the liberation movements and their supporters, both inside the country and across the world. These modes of resistance did not cease when apartheid ended – instead, in the now more than two decades since the first democratic elections, social justice activists, civil society organizations, artists, and citizens, continue to make use of visual forms to protest against inequality, sexual and gender-based violence, racism, state-sanctioned violence, and other forms of discrimination and injustice. This essay traces the emergence of the term "visual activism" in South Africa, from its first usage in the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, to the work of contemporary visual activists Haroon Gunn-Salie, Zanele Muholi, the Tokolos Stencils Collective, and the social justice organization, Section27. I argue that visual activist practices play a key part in provoking, documenting, and sustaining struggles for justice, and remain as critical today as they were during apartheid.

On the 17th of August 2013, South African artist and activist Haroon Gunn-Salie climbed a ladder, precariously positioned at the side of a highway in Cape Town and changed the names on the street signs directing motorists to the area of the city officially named "Zonnebloem." He replaced them with illegal but perfectly rendered stickers that read: "District Six," and in this way reinscribed the name by which the area was known before it was declared for "whites only" and bulldozed by the apartheid state. Removing and replacing the road signs was intended to draw attention to the fact that two decades after the end of apartheid, the more than 60,000 people who were forcibly removed from the multi-racial, inner-city neighbourhood of District Six continue to wait for new houses to be built, for reparations to be paid, and for the right to return to the city.[1] Gunn-Salie's video work, "Zonnebloem Renamed," documents his unauthorized act of restorative justice and marks the centenary of the 1913 Natives Land Act, legislation which was to be central in shaping

DOI: 10.4324/9781003159698-21
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the segregated future of the country and which has become a symbol of how Black South Africans were dispossessed of their land under apartheid.[2] In 2021, Gunn-Salie's signs remain in place, refusing to allow the violence of apartheid to be forgotten, and at the same time, exposing how the post-apartheid state has still not brought about justice for the former residents of the area.[3] Gunn-Salie's singular act gestures towards and is bound to, the century of activism that precedes it – from the journey of members of the South African Native National Congress to London in 1914 to protest against the Natives Land Act,[4] to the ongoing work of the District Six Museum in commemorating the history of the area and contesting its erasure,[5] to the campaigns of the activist movement, Reclaim the City, in resisting spatial apartheid in contemporary Cape Town.[6] The ways in which Gunn-Salie's visual signs can be said to "act," are in and through these wider circuits of struggle.

Gunn-Salie's work also circulates within a different visual economy – he is a successful artist, who is represented by a commercial gallery and his work has been exhibited internationally and was included as part of the South Africa Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2015. Gunn-Salie, like Zanele Muholi, the person who has come to be most closely associated with the term "visual activism," exemplifies how South African visual activists have successfully infiltrated (and in a more cynical view, have been appropriated by), the global art market.[7] If the display or exhibition of visual activism within galleries and museums can serve to commodify and even neutralize protest, the works of these visual activists indicate that the social and political effects of visual activism are not easily contained. As Tessa Lewin has noted, activism is not intrinsic to the image, nor is it situated within the frame, but is located in the spaces of organizing, mobilizing, and acting that are contiguous with it, and that always exceed it.[8] What role then, does the visual play?

I understand visual activism to operate as a call that links those who look and those who act, and to narrow, even sometimes close, the gap between them. While acknowledging that the use of the term "visual" may serve to decentre other forms of activism and modes of protest, I have chosen to employ it here to describe how visual media is deployed for activist ends. It is a term that I associate with South Africa, and with the forms of protest art and struggle photography that characterize the country's long history of resistance to apartheid, although the phrase itself only emerged in the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the late 1990s and early 2000s.[9] This was also a time in which South African visual culture underwent a seismic shift – the strictures of apartheid were lifted and prominent cultural and political figures advocated the "rediscovery of the ordinary"[10] and a move away from the injunction to create art for political ends.[11] Soon, however, the euphoria of liberation was tempered by the ongoing struggle for survival as the short-lived socialist dream and the promise of "houses, security and comfort for all" was overtaken by the cold betrayal of neo-liberal capitalism. Everything, including the history of struggle, was up for sale. At the same time there was a resurgence in politically engaged visual response – initially to the crisis of HIV/AIDS and subsequently to gender-based violence, xenophobia, and police violence, most notably the Marikana Massacre of 2012.[12] Since 1994, South African visual activists have honed their skills in public space, developed new forms of representation that have opened up and challenged gallery spaces and museums, and have embraced the digital sphere as a site for mobilizing for justice.

The term "visual activism" describes how visual images are used as a form of resistance to power and to oppose systemic, structural and physical violence through non-violent means. Visual activism can be distinguished from terms such as "art activism" and "artivism" because it describes a social phenomenon that is not always linked to art, artists, or the art world. Instead, visual activism can be, and often is, practised by non-professional individuals

and collectives, who make use of visual forms to express and document dissent and to protest against injustice. It is important to recognize the wider contexts in which visual forms of activism emerge and circulate, as indeed, the textual, performative, auditory, and sensory often coincide with, even constitute, forms of visual activism. Visual activism includes, for instance, someone filming police violence with their cell phone and circulating the footage on social media, posters made by people attending a demonstration or protest, and the creation and distribution of photographs that expose instances of injustice.

Visual activism can be understood as a mode of expanding the political reach of individuals and of spatially bound collectives or groups to provide a way to extend beyond local or even national borders. The reach of visual activism has been extended even further through the use of digital technology, including digital cameras, websites, social media, and digital archives to produce media that is circulated online as a form of resistance to the power of the state or of other powerful groups. As states develop increasingly sophisticated methods to monitor and control national and global populations, so too have activists and artists invented, adapted, and refined modes of response and resistance, including methods that make data visible, such as, for instance, digital mapping of sites and incidents of police violence, and producing graphs and other visual forms that translate statistics into accessible forms. Digital visual activism plays an increasingly important role in how past conflicts are remembered and engaged with in the present and in how contemporary experiences of, for instance, living in a state of war, are recorded, circulated, and understood. At the same time, powerful forms of visual activism continue to depend on interventions and physical presence in public space and have been amplified rather than replaced by the advent of digital technology.

Visual activism also often entails occupying public space, and can be performed through presence, movement, gesture, and bodily signs. In this sense, the term can be understood in relation to Hannah Arendt's influential work on the importance of appearance for meaningful participation in the political sphere.[13] However, visual activism moves beyond the bounds of political representation in the Arendtian sense, and seeks to disrupt the hegemony of public space – what Chantal Mouffe describes as "agonistic interventions."[14] The significance of the right to occupy public space, to gather, and to protest, is redoubled in the South African context in the aftermath of five decades of segregation and centuries of racist oppression.

In the sections that follow, I approach visual activism from two sides, showing how the dominant paradigm in South African visual culture continues to centre on political concerns, and how struggles for justice in the country continue to take remarkable creative forms. I focus on how visual artists subvert gallery spaces, transgressing the boundaries between political and aesthetic space and showing them to be interlinked, and on how activists make use of visual media in their campaigns in order to inspire and sustain political action.

Blood Matters

At the opening of their 2014 exhibition, "Of Love and Loss," in Johannesburg, celebrated South African visual activist Zanele Muholi stripped themself of their clothing and climbed into a transparent coffin, in which they lay, surrounded by flowers, for the remainder of the event.[15] In this way, the artist inserts the possibility of their own death, even the probability of their own rape and murder, into the centre of the space of the exhibition. The focus of *Of Love and Loss* is on the relation between two ceremonies – queer weddings, and funeral services for lesbians who have been raped and killed – and Muholi's photographs convey both the importance of these rituals and how the recognition of the rights of Lesbian, Gay,

Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) individuals and of their relationships, have been marred by homophobia and violence.

In his review of Muholi's exhibition, Michael Smith notes both the conceptual importance of the coffin and what he considers its aesthetic failure:

> In the main volume of the gallery, one is greeted by an installation of a Perspex coffin filled with cotton wool balls and strewn with dead flowers, and with a framed photo of the deceased at the casket's head. While perhaps not the most successful piece of art – it is frankly not aesthetically commensurate with the seriousness of its concept – the work functions as an anchor in relation to which all other photographic works must be seen.[16]

In spite of his critique, in describing the artist as "the deceased," Smith's review reveals the affective force of Muholi's performance which powerfully conveys how, regardless of the global acclaim their work has received, they continue to live under the threat of rape and murder. The message of Muholi's staging of their death at the opening of the exhibition and their inclusion of their self-portrait in the coffin was clear to the approximately 200 mostly Black LGBTI visitors who attended the opening of the exhibition.[17] In her account, Aluta Humbane describes how the ecstatic atmosphere at the Prince Claus award ceremony was rapidly transformed when the audience entered the exhibition. Humbane writes:

> Some people were streaming tears at the sight of Muholi's "corpse" The feelings of pain, anger, and fear resurfaced as they were forced to confront everyone's worst fears – those of losing a child, aunt, sister, friend to hate crimes. Suddenly death was staring us in the face. The reality of losing a friend or lover, a sister or brother registered fully! Others were comforting the shaken ones.[18]

If what Muholi's work makes manifest are the psychic effects of living in a context of extreme violence, their staging of their death is both a performance and a means of making the vulnerable position of LGBTI individuals visible. Lowering themselves into a coffin can be read as a sign of the artist's morbid state and as a terrible pre-figuring of the murder they have not yet endured. It is also a political act that defies the prohibition against publicly recognizing and mourning the loss of lesbian and trans people who have been killed, and asserts the right to resistance, in the tradition of the public "die-ins" held by the activist movement ACT-UP in the early years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in North America.

In addition to the portrait series, *Faces and Phases*, and the self-portraits, *Somnyama Ngonyama* (Hail the Dark Lioness), for which they are most well-known, Muholi has also created works in a range of media, including images made using their own blood.[19] Muholi's "bloodworks," direct expressions of the artist's rage and grief, are presented on pieces of torn cloth, the blood in which they are rendered unmediated by paint or ink. [20] For this reason, the colour of the words inscribed on the cloth – the names of lesbians who were murdered in South Africa between 2005 and 2010 – is a dull brown, the colour of blood exposed to air, in the aftermath, in the time when the spectacle of violence has faded and all that is left is the ugly stain that will not be erased (Figure 17.1).

These works, like Muholi's now extensive body of photographs, films, and performance pieces representing and engaging with the lives and experiences of Black LGBTI individuals, have ruptured the hermetically sealed white spaces of the art world. They also provide insight into the psychic toll of Muholi's commitment to documenting and responding to some of the most painful aspects of life in South Africa after the end of apartheid.[21] In a review of

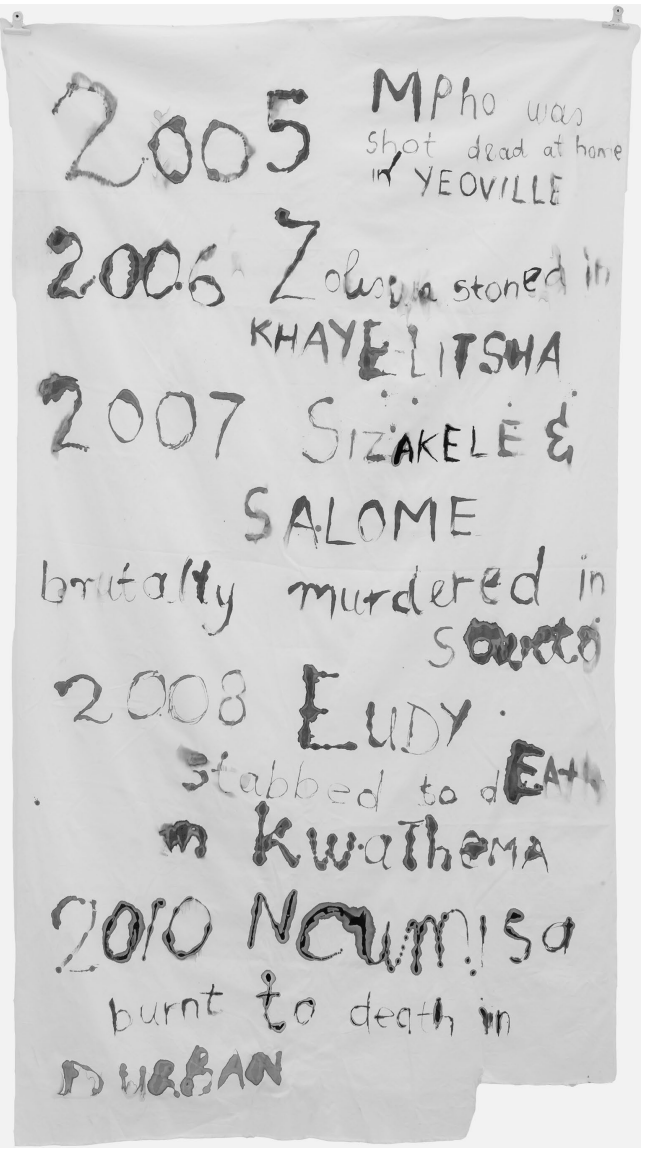


Figure 17.1 Zanele Muholi, *Untitled*, 2011. Blood on fabric, 220 × 119 cm. Courtesy of Stevenson Gallery

the artist's solo retrospective show at the Tate Modern, Laura Cumming describes "Muholi's exquisite images of South Africa's black LGBT and township communities" as "a magnificent act of solidarity."[22] The use of the word "solidarity" is interesting, particularly as Muholi's own affiliation and connection to those they represent is clear, and is one of belonging. As Antje Schuhmann notes, "The community Muholi archives in her work is the community she comes from, and the one she returns to when documenting how hate crimes affect the lesbian community and their friends and families."[23] What is less certain is whether and how those who view these works in distant parts of the world might take steps to address the crisis

of gender-based violence in South Africa. Cumming's reading of what she terms Muholi's "portraiture as activism" emphasizes the image and substitutes looking for acting. Within the neo-liberal global imaginary (and economy), solidarity has become atomized – delinked from collective mobilizing, the activist force of Muholi's work takes new, and somewhat tempered forms. Its radical effects lie in challenging heteronormative and racist visual fields and in bringing new forms of representation of LGBTI Black lives into global circulation. At the same time, the ways in which the visual activist's work has been taken up across the world reveal the limits of the politics of recognition in bringing about material change.

In the sections that follow, I consider how visual activism can and has been linked to judicial activism both to redress the violence of apartheid, and to force the hand of the state in ensuring that the rights guaranteed by the Constitution are fulfilled.[24]

Grave Matters

In 2019, on an open piece of land adjacent to the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town, a huge fort designed by the Dutch colonists and built by slaves between 1666 and 1679, Haroon Gunn-Salie spent six months creating "an immersive sculptural graveyard" of 118 unmarked graves. The wide grassy stretch was once the site of the town gallows, where an untold number of people were tortured and executed during Dutch and British colonial rule. Gunn-Salie's intervention brings this repressed history to light and links the long history of colonial violence to that of the apartheid regime. Each empty grave symbolizes one of the 118 people who died in detention while in the custody of the Security Police under apartheid. Although these "graves" are no more than holes in the ground, they evoke the painful experiences of the family members of activists who were killed and who continue to wait to hear the truth about how their loved ones died and for those who killed them to be held to account. Gunn-Salie's installation formed part of "Infecting the City," the annual public arts festival held in Cape Town, and is intended both as a space of contemplation and as a call for justice to be done (Figure 17.2):

> When seen from above and viewable from the elevation of the Castle walls, the installation spells out the word JUSTICE – a cold reminder of the need to dig up the past and continue the fight for unresolved matters of transitional justice.[25]

Gunn-Salie's intervention at the site of the Castle is also a personal work, the title of which, "Crying for Justice," invokes his own traumatic experience as one of the youngest victims to have been tortured by the Security Police.[26] His mother, Shirley Gunn, was an anti-apartheid activist and a member of the armed resistance wing of the ANC, Umkhonto We Sizwe. While she was pregnant, she was falsely accused of the bombing of Khotso House, a building in Johannesburg that housed the World Council of Churches and numerous other anti-apartheid organizations.[27] After the birth of her son, they were detained together for sixty-four days. In her testimony at the TRC, Gunn relates how her son was taken away from her for a period of eight days, during which time the Security Police played recordings of Haroon, who was sixteen months old at the time, crying and calling for her as part of her torture.[28] In an interview Gunn-Salie states that the work should remain in place until justice is done:

> How can you remove a public artwork with justice unrealised? No! It's only until the families have closure, until these historic records and inaccuracies are corrected. The work and its appeal for justice – which is read upside down and a cry to the heavens essentially, but also a cry to the courts – that whole lexicon should not be removed.[29]



Figure 17.2 Haroon Gunn-Salie, *Crying for Justice,* 2019. 118 open graves spell out the words "Justice," aerial view from the walls of Cape Town Castle. Courtesy of Haroon Gunn-Salie

Gunn-Salie's visual activist intervention is timely – in 2017 a landmark verdict was passed in the re-opened inquest into the death of anti-apartheid activist Ahmed Timol, who had ostensibly committed suicide while he was detained by the Security Police at John Vorster Square (now Johannesburg Central Police Station), in 1972. His family were forced to wait more than forty years for the truth to be told about how he had died and for his killers to be called to account.[30] In 2017, Judge Billy Mothle found that the anti-apartheid activist did not commit suicide, as his interrogators had claimed, but that he had been tortured and murdered by the Security Police. The verdict in this case has opened the possibility for other unresolved cases of activists who were detained and killed under apartheid to be re-opened and for apartheid-era perpetrators to be tried.

The Timol case is one of more than 300 instances of gross violations of human rights committed during apartheid that were meant to be pursued when the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission drew to a close, and which have been suppressed as a result of political interference. The fact that they are slowly being reopened now has come about as a result of the tireless campaigning on the part of family members of those who were killed and of the organizations that have supported them. In July 2020, a petition was circulated by Cassiem Khan, co-ordinator of the Imam Haron Commemoration Committee and issued on behalf of families and friends of apartheid-era victims, calling on President Cyril Ramaphosa to open a commission of inquiry "to find out the reasons for the undue delays by the NPA in investigating and prosecuting over 300 TRC cases."[31] The petition was accompanied by an image composed of several photographs that portray activists who were murdered by

the Security Police, their funerals, and their loved ones who survived them.[32] Each portrait included in the collage of photographs testifies to the individual crimes of apartheid, and the assemblage of faces testifies to apartheid as a crime against humanity. The collective portrait provides visual affirmation of the position articulated by Kaajal Ramjathan-Keogh, director of the Southern African Litigation Centre, a civil society organization that has called for those accused of murders committed under apartheid to be tried for crimes against humanity.[33] She argues that the Timol case,

> …is not about a single murder […] It is about how a single murder is connected to the system of apartheid and therefore becomes a crime against humanity. The crime of apartheid has never been prosecuted, and this case should pave the way for such prosecutions to commence.[34]

Since the re-opening of the Timol inquest, images of activists detained and murdered during apartheid have re-entered public space, both as part of news articles relating to the cases and through the work of visual artists and activists. The interventions of visual activists are particularly important in relation to instances where states have sought (and seek) to render their own practices secret and opaque. This includes forms of violence that are rendered invisible, or that are extremely difficult to monitor and track, such as enforced disappearances and the torture and murder of activists in prisons. Visual activism can work to illuminate how experiences such as domestic violence, or situations where individuals fall ill due to exposure to environmental toxins, which are often assumed to be part of the "natural order," are forms of political and structural violence. In South Africa after apartheid, social justice activists have employed visual activist strategies to draw attention to the persistence of structural racism and inequality.

Black Lives Matter

In 2014, the guerrilla tactics of the anonymous Tokolos Stencils Collective made headlines when members of the group placed a full portable toilet in the up-market Brundyn+ gallery in Cape Town.[35] They brought the toilet filled with excrement into the gallery because, they argue, "The gallery only tolerates art that doesn't physically challenge the segregation of rich and poor."[36] Like Muholi's work made with her own blood, the Collective sought a way to introduce the abjected "real" of the embodied experiences of Black people into a space (and society) that not only works to aestheticize suffering, but as Rinaldo Walcott writes, "simultaneously spectacularize[s] and disregard[s]" Black lives and deaths.[37]

The collective's introduction of the porta-toilet into the space of the gallery draws upon and re-signifies modes of protest that have emerged in the struggle for essential services in post-apartheid South Africa. In what the mainstream media have described as "poo-protests," angry residents who inhabit places that do not have access to running water, sanitation, and electricity, have brought containers filled with human excrement collected from the portable toilets they are forced to use and have emptied them in public places. The portable toilet has come to signify the struggles of economically impoverished people who continue to live in inhuman conditions twenty years after the end of apartheid. Lack of adequate sanitation in the townships around Cape Town, and in particular in the largest of these, Khayelitsha, now home to more than a million people, most of whom live in shacks, has been at the centre of a political war between the African National Congress (ANC) and the current Western Cape provincial and municipal government, the Democratic Alliance

(DA).[38] In 2014, Chumani Maxwele expressed his rage at the persistence of racism and inequality by throwing a container of excrement at the statue of British colonist, Cecil John Rhodes, at the University of Cape Town. Maxwele's act inaugurated the Rhodes Must Fall movement at the university, which led to the removal of the statue and the protests, which called for the decolonization of universities, soon spread to campuses across the country and grew into a national movement for free education, known as Fees Must Fall. These protests spread to universities in other parts of the world, and received extensive coverage in local and international media.

Just one year before these protests began, a five-year-old child named Michael Komape died after the pit-latrine at his school collapsed beneath him. Incidents like this, and the infrastructural, everyday violence that continues to affect millions of economically impoverished people in the country, do not generally attract the interest of local, let alone global, audiences. The challenge of drawing attention to struggles that endure over long periods of time is one that has been taken up by social justice movements in South Africa and they have made use of visual activism to great effect. This includes the powerful work of the Treatment Action Campaign, which won a protracted battle against the state that brought about access to anti-retroviral treatment in the public health sector for people living with HIV/AIDS in 2003;[39] of Equal Education, a grassroots movement which began in 2008 and that has mobilized thousands of young people to claim their right to equal education;[40] and of several initiatives that have fought for justice in the aftermath of the Marikana Massacre in 2012.[41] All of these campaigns combine awareness-raising strategies, including visual activism, with skilful use of the law as a tool to secure social justice.

The South African civil society organization, Section27, produced a series of striking images as part of their campaign advocating for adequate and safe sanitation in schools and justice for the family of Michael Komape.[42] They made use of poignant, hand-rendered portraits, and photographs of children who had died in the most terrible circumstances to draw attention to an otherwise invisible crisis, ensuring that their names and faces would enter the public sphere. The organization has played a key role in supporting the Komape family in successfully suing the Department of Education for damages, and has waged a "now six-year legal battle against the Limpopo Department of Education (LDOE) and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to fight for the eradication of the pit toilets responsible for the deaths of learners at school, including Michael Komape."[43] (Figure 17.3) Mark Heywood, a civil society activist who has played a central role in both the Treatment Action Campaign and Section27, succinctly outlines what he describes as "An anatomy of new shapes of resistance" in South Africa after the end of apartheid that involves:

> Social Mobilization through making Political Issues Moral Ones
> +
> Launching Campaigns that Captured Public Imagination and Conviction
> +
> Empowering Communities through Treatment Literacy
> +
> Use of Law
> +
> Effective Use of Media.[44]

Heywood writes of how, in spite of the importance of legal proceedings in struggles for social justice, litigation "cannot become the campaign"[45] and for this reason:



Figure 17.3 Poster created by Section27 as part of the #Justice4Michael Campaign, 2017. Courtesy of Section 27

> SECTION27 explored innovative uses of media to mobilize public and political opinion. YouTube videos, a postcard-sending campaign from children of a similar age, roadside posters, a photo exhibition and a mural on a busy street corner leading into central Johannesburg catalyzed public awareness and outrage. In time Michael Komape, a child from a dirt poor family whose death would normally have been forgotten became a household name.[46]

Visual activism provides a point of access, a way of summing up socio-political contexts and events and making it possible for outsiders to glimpse something of the complexity of lives that are not their own, even to find ways to connect and to respond. Yet the presence of

signs on the walls of a city, however incendiary, or of works installed in a gallery that lead us to question, or that move us to tears, cannot, and do not, bring about social justice on their own. Sometimes these works function as a catalyst, and when they spark movement, it is because of the ways in which the visual is connected to other forms of activism, including the kinds of organizing that often remain unseen. The fates of Siyamthanda Mtunu, who died in 2007 at age six; Lister Magongwa, who died in 2013 at age seven; Michael Komape, who died in 2014 at age five; and Oratilwe Dilwane, who was disabled at age five; and Lumka Mketwa, who died in 2018 at age five, insist that to look is never enough. As the work of Zanele Muholi, Haroon Gunn-Salie, and the #JusticeforMichael campaign makes clear, visual activism operates as a summons, a call to move beyond visual modes of engagement (looking, seeing, watching), and instead to rise up and act.

Notes

1 District Six was declared a "white's only" area on 11 February 1966, under the Group Areas Act of 1950, the notorious policy of the apartheid state that was passed to ensure that neighbourhoods would be segregated by race.
2 William Beinart and Peter Delius describe the Natives Land Act as "a key example of segregationist and racist legislation that increasingly fixed the discriminatory foundations of South African law" (William Beinart and Peter Delius, "The Historical Context and Legacy of the Natives Land Act of 1913," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40, no. 4 (2014): 667). To watch Gunn-Salie's "Zonnebloem Renamed" see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSB872bhIaw
3 In 2019, the government officially renamed the area District Six, but restitution processes have proceeded extremely slowly, and only a very small number of those who were forcibly removed have returned to the area.
4 Sol Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa* (Northlands: Picador, 2007).
5 Valmont Layne, "The District Six Museum: An Ordinary People's Place." *The Public Historian* 30, no. 1 (2008): 53–62.; Amie Soudien, "Memory, Multiplicity, and Participatory Curation at the District Six Museum, Cape Town," *Critical Arts* 33, no. 6 (2019): 67–82.
6 "Tactics: Be Flexible – Ndifuna Ukwazi (Dare to Know) Reclaim the City, Cape Town, South Africa", Lessons for Change, accessed October 9 2021, https://www.lessonsforchange.org/reclaim-the-city/
7 For an astute reading of how South African activists have navigated the global art market, see Tessa Lewin, 2019.
8 Tessa Lewin, "Queer Visual Activism in South Africa," In *The Aesthetics of Global Protest: Visual Culture and Communication*, eds. Aidan McGarry et al. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 42.
9 Since 2008, and the anti-capitalist movements that emerged after the financial crash, the term 'visual activism' entered global circulation and has since been used to describe the use of visual media for activist ends in places across the world.
10 Njabulo Ndebele, *Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays on South African Literature and Culture* (Johannesburg: COSAW, 1991).
11 Albie Sachs, "Preparing Ourselves for Freedom: Culture and the ANC Constitutional Guidelines," *TDR (1988–)*35, no. 1 (1991): 187–193.
12 In 2012, police officers opened fire on miners who were on strike at Lonmin Platinum Mine in Rustenburg, near Johannesburg. Thirty-four miners were killed and many more injured. On visual activism and the Marikana Massacre, see my essay, "Remember Marikana: Violence and Visual Activism in Post-Apartheid South Africa", *ASAP* 3, no. 2 (2018): 401–422.
13 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).
14 Chantal Mouffe, "Art and Democracy: Art as an Agonistic Intervention in Public Space", *Open! Platform for Art, Culture and the Public Domain*, January 1 2007, accessed October 9, 2021, https://www.onlineopen.org/art-and-democracy
15 "Of Love and Loss" appeared at the Wits Art Museum in Johannesburg from the 14th of February to 4th of April 2014. Muholi's staging of their own death is mirrored by their photographic

re-creations of crime scenes in which the photographer uses their own body in place of those who were raped and murdered.

16 Michael Smith, "The Constitution of Love and Loss", *Artthrob*, accessed July 3, 2021, http://artthrob.co.za/Reviews/Michael_Smith_reviews_The_Constitution_of_Love__Loss_by_Zanele_Muholi_at_STEVENSON_in_Johannesburg.aspx.

17 The framed photograph that appeared in the coffin is the self-portrait of Muholi used in the publicity material for the prestigious Prince Claus Award that the artist received in 2013.

18 Emphasis in the original. Aluta Humbane, "Black South African Visual Artist Lesbian, Zanele Muholi, in a transparent coffin of love and loss", *Inkanyiso*, February 24, 2014, accessed July 3, 2021. https://inkanyiso.org/2014/02/24/2014-feb-14-black-south-african-visual-activist-lesbian-zanele-muholi-in-a-transparent-coffin-of-love-and-loss/.

19 Zanele Muholi, *Faces + Phases, 2006–2014* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2014); Zanele Muholi, *Zanele Muholi: Somnyama Ngonyama, Hail the Dark Lioness* (New York: Aperture, 2018).

20 Two of these works appeared in the group show, "What we talk about when we talk about love" at the Michael Stevenson Gallery in Cape Town (1 December 2011–14 January 2012).

21 Other South African artists whose work has engaged with gender and violence include Berni Searle, Sue Williamson, Penny Siopis, Judith Mason, and Gabrielle Goliath. Also notable is the One-in-Nine campaign, and organizations such as Iranti-org and the Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW).

22 Laura Cumming, "Zanele Muholi Review: Portraiture as Activism," November 8, 2020, accessed July 8, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/nov/08/zanele-muholi-tate-modern-review-south-africa.

23 Antje Schuhmann, "Shooting Violence and Trauma: Traversing visual and social topographies in Zanele Muholi's work," in *Gaze Regimes. Film and Feminisms in Africa,* ed. Jyoti Mistry and Antje Schuhmann (Johannesburg: Wits University Press 2015), 59.

24 LGBTI+ activists in South Africa have also made use of visual activism in support of legal battles – in this regard see Tessa Lewin, Kerry Williams, and Kylie Thomas, "A Progressive Constitution Meets Lived Reality: Sexuality and the Law in South Africa," *IDS Evidence Report* 7 (Brighton: Institute for Development Studies, 2013); Lewin, Williams, and Thomas, 2013; Kylie Thomas, "Rage against the state: Political Funerals and Queer Visual Activism in post-apartheid South Africa," in *Public Art in South Africa: Bronze warriors and Plastic Presidents*, ed. Brenda Schmahmann and Kim Miller (Bloomington, IA: Indiana University Press, 2017), 265–283.

25 "Artworks", Infecting the City, accessed October 7, 2021, http://infectingthecity.com/2019/artworks-2/?pg=2

26 Haroon Gunn-Salie was named after Imam Abdullah Haron, who was murdered by the apartheid Security Police on the 27th of September 1969.

27 At the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission Hearings, members of the security forces confessed to the bombing of Khotso House and were granted amnesty.

28 TRC, 1996. See also the short video interview with Haroon Gunn-Salie in which he discusses the title of his exhibition that can be accessed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xh3gu1kkrUE

29 Atiyya Khan, "Beyond 1976: Crying for Justice Through Art," *News24*, June 18, 2020, accessed July 8, 2021, https://www.news24.com/arts/culture/after-76-crying-for-justice-through-art-20200618

30 Imtiaz Cajee, *The Murder of Ahmed Timol* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2020).

31 The petition can be accessed here: https://www.change.org/p/president-cyril-m-ramaphosa-justice-for-apartheid-era-victims?recruiter=1129221506&recruited_by_id=fc99d010-c14e-11ea-9570-556a33de7107&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink&utm_campaign=-petition_dashboard

32 A larger version of this collage can be seen on the webpage created by the Foundation for Human Rights to monitor the re-opened TRC cases: https://unfinishedtrc.co.za

33 The Southern African Litigation Centre's Heads of Argument can be accessed here: https://www.ahmedtimol.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SALC-Heads-of-Argument-Rodrigues-v-NDPP.pdf

34 Geoffrey York, "Apartheid's victims bring the crimes of South Africa's past into court at last," *Globe and Mail*, April 16, 2019, accessed July 12, 2021, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-apartheids-victims-bring-the-crimes-of-south-africas-past-into-court/#comments

35 In 2014 the Tokolos stencils collective was invited to participate in a group show that focused on the work of street artists at the Brundyn+ gallery. In addition to the works displayed in the show

the collective spray-painted the words "Bourgeois Art Gallery" in purple across the wall at the entrance to the gallery. The exhibition of the work of contemporary South African street artists entitled "Plakkers" (an Afrikaans word that translates as "Stickers", to refer to people who stick images and text in public space) was held from 6 November–3 December 2014 and was curated by Justin Davy, one of the members of the Burning Museum Collective, a group of street artists in Cape Town who have produced works contesting forced removals and ongoing spatial injustice in the city.

36 Tokolos Stencils, "Statement: Tokolos Stencils banned by Facebook", Tumblr, August 26, 2015, https://tokolosstencils.tumblr.com. See also the interview conducted with the Tokolos Stencils Collective by Lloyd Gedye (2014).

37 Rinaldo Walcott, *The Long Emancipation: Moving Toward Black Freedom* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021), 11.

38 In 2013 the Tokolos Stencils Collective launched a campaign against the provincial government of the city of Cape Town (the DA), and have stencilled signs that rework the official slogan "This city works for you" and that read "This city works for a few" in multiple public sites. They also inscribed the words "Dehumanisation Zone" across a long row of concrete structures that house the public toilets that are visible from the highway that runs between the city of Cape Town and the airport.

39 Treatment Action Campaign, https://www.tac.org.za/.

40 Equal Education. https://equaleducation.org.za/.

41 Marikana Support Campaign, https://marikanajustice.co.za/.; "Miners Shot Down – Marikana Documentary," Miners Shot Down, https://minersshotdown.co.za/.

42 Section27 is named for the section of the South African Constitution that describes the right to access to health care services, sufficient food and water and social security. See: The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, https://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/constitution/saconstitution-web-eng.pdf

43 Section27, 2021. See also the feature, "The School Toilets Limpopo Forgot" on the Section27 website, which is a powerful work of visual activism in itself: http://limpopo-schools.section27.org.za

44 Mark Heywood, "The transformative power of civil society in South Africa: an activist's perspective on innovative forms of organizing and rights-based practices," *Globalizations* 17, no. 2 (2020): 298.

45 Heywood, 2020: 299.

46 Ibid.

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