



## Africa Film Special – “New films from North and South Africa“

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### SOUTH AFRICAN REUNIONS\* IN COLOGNE

South African directors **Ntshaveni Wa-Luruli** and **Oliver Schmitz** hadn't seen each other for a long time before they met this weekend – at the invitation of FilmInitiativ – in Cologne, to present their latest feature films. It emerged that their films – despite having different subject matters and settings – had one thing in common: neither are set in South African cities or townships, which, according to Wa-Luruli, “have become iconographic settings for films about black South Africans“. **Live, Above All** by Oliver Schmitz was shot “in Elandsdoorn, 200 kilometres from Johannesburg” and is the first film in the Sepedi language. Ntshaveni Wa-Luruli's film **Elelwani** is the first in Venda, the language of the smallest ethnic group in the north of the country. Both directors consider addressing traditional African cultures “that were oppressed during the time of Apartheid” is of key importance to South Africa's future. Ntshaveni Wa-Luruli said in Cologne, “He who doesn't know where he comes from, doesn't know where he should go.” The Venda have been discriminated against in South Africa right through to today and are “seen by many as foreigners”, which is the reason they were victims of the xenophobic violence seen in South Africa in 2010. Both directors raise the issue of the problems resulting from the conflict between tradition and modernity in their films. The film by Oliver Schmitz centres around a 12-year-old called Chanda who challenges the fact that AIDS is considered a taboo subject. Ntshaveni Wa-Luruli depicts a young woman who revolts against her arranged marriage to a Venda dignitary. As they both emphasised during the heated debates in front of more than 100 film enthusiasts, the two directors delivered “deliberately hopeful closing scenes”. Chanda manages to get her mother to return to the village after she has been banished because she suffers from AIDS. When the neighbours want to try to attack her house, her affluent and therefore respected aunt steps in and reveals that her son did not in fact die in an accident, as she has professed up until now, but “from the disease”. She summons the villagers to finally abandon their hypocrisy. In Wa-Luruli's Film, university graduate Elelwani initially accepts the forced marriage to the king of the Wenda that her parents have arranged for her, in order to spare her sister the same fate. But when she arrives at his residence, she exposes the intentions of the king's first wife to make her son the ruler. When the king dies, Elelwani herself is his rightful successor and finally feels like she has found herself and freedom. The Cologne audience thanked the South African guests for their lengthy discussions with a long round of applause. To conclude the South African programme, the feature films **Come Back, Africa** (5:30 pm) and **Hopeville** (7:30 pm) will be shown this evening (22.09) in the Filmforum in Museum Ludwig.

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