

South African short film wins Audience Award for iamAfrica competition

In addition to receiving the Jury Award at the 'Shnit Worldwide Shortfilmfestival' in Cape Town last year, South African short film, *The Letter Reader* has now also received an Audience Award for the iamAfrica Short Film Competition - a collaborative initiative between YouTube, the Pan African Film Festival (PAFF) and the Africa Narrative at the University of Southern California Norman Lear Centre.

The Audience Award is granted to the semifinalist film that receives the most votes from the online public.



The film will be screened locally at the Rapid Lion Film Festival taking place from 6 to 15 March at the Mar Theatre in Johannesburg and internationally at the Pan African Film Festival on 22 February in Los Angeles California, United States.

It's about a 12-year-old Johannesburg boy, who is sent to rural KwaZulu-Natal to live with his grandmother. He becomes the letter reader for the largely illiterate community and one day he has to read a letter with big news. The letter spells the end of a marriage of a beautiful woman and the boy has to decide between breaking the woman's heart and saving her.

Writer and director Sibusiso Khuzwayo was inspired to write the film after reading the book, *The Dream Deferred* by Mark Gevisser – the biography of former South African President, Thabo Mbeki. The film draws parallels with the childhood life of former President Mbeki, growing up in the Eastern Cape, where his mother ran a store and as a young boy, he read and wrote letters for the illiterate customers.

“ In a time when Africa is rising to its greatness, I feel blessed and privileged to have been used as a conduit to tell this beautiful African story. ”

“The Letter Reader is my first short film that I have written and directed under my company Sleeves Up

Media, in collaboration with the Ergo Company. The production of the film was made possible by the funds that I secured from the KwaZulu-Natal Film Commission and the National Film and Video Foundation,” he says.

The cast and crew includes internationally-recognised award winning filmmaker and cinematographer, Lan Gewer who photographed *Tsotsi*, the late Andile Gumbi (former Isibaya actor), Bahle Mashinini, Nokuthula Mazibuko and Nomalanga Shabane.

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