

Black African Queers for Bamako African Photography Encounters

...dealing with a 'taboo' subject matter where some of our queer-phobic african leaders perceive homosexuality, queerness as 'sin' and un-african' is an act of transgression as i continue to queer the space beyond South African borders.

in my short term career i've had an opportunity to visually explore the lives of black queers ((queer = Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender & Intersex) beings in South Africa, post Apartheid era. as an insider within the LGBTI community one is aware of the challenges that our community encounters on daily basis. censorship, invisibility, underexposure, marginalization are some issues that prompted me to embark on my visual activism.

as black queers both living on the continent and within the Diaspora. we became independent beings who make our mark in the world economically, culturally, socially and politically. yet, because of the histories and legacies of colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and modern day white imperialism, very few of us make it into his-herstory books because the official history is still dominated by queer-phobic patriarchs, by Eurocentric narratives of Africa became as a developed nation.

the photos expositioned here represents blackness, gayness and beautiful bodies and faces of black queer-identified beings whose birth roots reflect African beginnings. there are friends and acquaintances that i met at various places in johannesburg. their lives and experiences are layered with multiplicity of identities based on race, gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and nationality.

this project is about our presence in/outside african border, in a place that both reflects our displacement as black queers around the globe, and our ability to create a 'home' nonetheless. though all that is mere dream if one is refused citizenship, if one is too poor to cross borders that are forever censored by either queer-phobic patriarchs, if one has no formal education or medical-care, weimp will always remain on the outside.

my projects are inspired by all the african queer ancestors who came before us, and by those who are living today. it is the documentation aimed at profiling our queer spirits for the future generations. for no matter what obstacles we face in our lives, we still carry on through the support of other sensitive humans, whether they be lovers or partners, mothers, daughters, sisters and friends.

*in loving memory of La Rochelle who passed on on the 2nd Jan. 2009
she touched us all with her presence and her extraordinary performance.
she remains the best African Queen in drag scene*

*i would like to thank all participants featuring in this series
martin machapa - singer and traditional healer
muzi khumalo - drag performer and student nurse
bayabonga dladla
nico bhengu
jabu radebe
la rochelle*