

Diversity Literacy Week 5 – Gender

Group Film Assignment 2 – Difficult Love (2010)

Co-directed by Peter Goldsmid and Zanele Muholi

In 'Difficult Love' Zanele Muholi declares: "I call myself a visual activist, because what I do is radical and based on political issues. I want people to know more about our lives as black lesbians, we come from families, we work, we think, we care, there is so much going on in our lives... we exist as human beings, women, who love other women, so this is me presenting myself out there in the world for people to know more about who I am". In 'Difficult Love' Zanele talks about her works, and we see her at work making her portraits of lesbians for the book *Faces and Phases*. She explains that she is making images that speak to her, images that show her community and document her community: the black lesbians in the townships of South Africa. She is (as always) questioning the omnipresent heterosexual mind set. Heterosexuality is not the one and only sexuality, just one of many aspect of sexuality. In her artwork she presents alternative aspects of female beauty to the South African and the international audience. She says: "Beauty doesn't mean that you have to smile, show your teeth or... just BE!" And she creates a space in front of her camera, where her lesbian friends can be, and be photographed just as they are.

'Difficult Love' is an unapologetic film, which takes you into Zanele's world. We learn about her background, her passion, we see her at work and at home with her girlfriend, and we get to hear what South African gender theorists and art critiques think about her controversial art works."

Excerpt taken from <http://www.femininemoments.dk/blog/tag/zanele-muholi/>

Please read the questions below before the film starts. Think about the questions as you watch the film and then as a group discuss the Group Assignment question at the end and together formulate an answer. This is an academic piece, proper referencing required.

1. How does Zanele and Liesel's story about their relationship illustrate the intersections of race, gender, sexuality and class in South Africa? Think about, amongst other things, to Zanele's comments on domestic work.
2. How does the film explore the constructions of Africanness in relation to homosexuality? What are the major points of contestation around this intersection?



3. How does the film illustrate the challenge that lesbianism presents to patriarchy? How does the film illustrate the (often tragic) real life consequences of this challenge?

Group Assignment 2 (1500 words)

Please read "South African minister describes lesbian photos as immoral" by David Smith 2 March 2010. Accessed at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/mar/02/south-african-minister-lesbian-exhibition>]

The minister of Arts and Culture Lulu Xingwana said of Zanele's work: "*It was immoral, offensive and going against nation-building.*" Critics of the minister have called her "homophobic" and her opinion an example of homophobia in society. What do you as a group feel? Is her statement homophobic? Give reasons for your answer, taking account of the readings and the film.