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Ambitious student documentary explores apartheid murder

6 July 2015 - Shadi Garman



Students record the soundtrack for Under Investigation. Photo from Under Investigation Facebook page.

NEWS On 3 July 1985 Johannes “Papi” Spogter, who was only 15, was dragged out of his home in the middle of the night by police. Earlier that day he had taken part in a UDF demonstration against the murder of the [Cradock four](#). Shortly after the demonstration Spogter witnessed the police shoot dead 19-year-old Mzwandile “Zed” Miggels, who organised the march and was a leader in the UDF.

After his arrest Spogter was was thrown into the back of a police van. According to local accounts, the cops kicked Spogter to death. His death certificate merely stated, “word ondersoek” (under investigation) as the cause of death.

The deaths of Spogter and Miggels shook the community of Steytlerville, a small town in the Eastern Cape.

Following the events, two members of Black Sash, Beva Runciman and Cornelia Bullen-Smith, chained themselves to the railings outside Parliament in Cape Town in protest. They were subsequently arrested and fined. Black Sash members Di Oliver (then Bishop) and the

late Molly Blackburn attended Spogter's funeral alongside members of the Progressive Federal Party youth.

Thirty years later, a documentary focusing on the circumstances around Spogter's death titled "Under Investigation" will premier this week on Friday 10 July at the Royal Hotel Steytlerville.

Students from Carel Du Toit High School in Steytlerville wanted to explore what happened as a way of making sense of the future. With the help of volunteers, past members of Black Sash, and Steytlerville community members, Under Investigation was made. The participating adults include Di Oliver, Judy Chalmers, Vumile Spogter, Sam Keloe, and Ann Jamieson. After filming concluded in Steytlerville, it was edited in Scotland.

According to Jamieson, "The film contains extracts from two interviews with residents who were in Steytlerville that night and who were involved in the struggle. There is also a short contribution from ex-ANC MP Judy Chalmers giving background. Judy was active in the struggle and Black Sash along with her sister, the deceased Molly Blackburn. The film is held together with shots taken at the graveyard, the spot known as Angola from where the Police began firing tear gas at the young members of Steyco... and the entrance to the Police Station where Johannes Spogter died, and with the group singing. It is very moving."

Production on the documentary began in March 2015. The students involved include Lungelo Sinuku, Siphonathi Douz, Voyulwethu Miggels, Sinothanda Stawi, and Zintle Miggles. All are aged between 15 and 17. They had never filmed before or worked together in such a capacity. They were determined to uncover the truth about what happened to Spogter. On the Under Investigation Facebook page, they write, "it would heal many wounds." The students had a particularly prominent role in making the film as they identified and arranged all interviews save for one. Di Oliver said, "They were fully participant in early editing of content and giving direction to the story."

The documentary-makers hope to screen *Under Investigation* in October in Cape Town. They also want to create a website archive of all their interviews. Ann Jamieson said, "It is important to understand that we have made this movie as part of an ongoing process of community development. Our fundraising has done more than augment the voluntary efforts, which contributed greatly in making the film. The fundraising has provided the local Carel Du Toit High school with an Internet connection and paid for a year's [worth of Internet access]. Six computers had already been donated and set up in the school by Big Wide Talk from the UK."

Copies of the film will eventually be sold after all fundraising donors have received their copies and the film premiers in Steytlerville and Cape Town successfully occur.

Jamieson said that documentary shows the moral dilemmas young people face “in the light of the memories of the struggle which they have documented.”

Two of the young women in the student group said they want to be the first and then second female President of South Africa. Their resolve to make this documentary shows they might just have what it takes to achieve this dream.

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