

**PRESS PACKAGE AUGUST 2007**

# **THE MOTHERS' HOUSE**

© Undercurrent Film and Television / Luna Films 2005

**76 min, Documentary Feature Film**

SABC2  
Open Society Foundation  
National Film and Video Foundation  
Sundance Documentary Fund  
Fonds Images Sud

**August 13, 2007**

**The Mother's House : The Feminist Review**

**By Francois Verster**

**Luna Films/Undercurrent Films**

We are living in the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy era, succumbing to the 10 second commercial highlights of young African girls beaming, "I am a leader." We, for the umpteenth time, applaud Oprah for her work. Then steps in Francois Verster with *The Mother's House*, a full force gut punch, equipped with the tight fist of the blooming and troubled years of pre-womanhood. A 76 minute documentary that traces four adolescent years of Miche, an 11 year old growing up, post-Apartheid, with her family agitating and loving under one roof. A stirring wake-up call with its raw footage of South African adolescence, *The Mother's House* rips to the vulnerable bones of one girl's growing pains for domestic peace and personal fulfillment.

Among many foci, the primary relationship with which Miche most struggles is with her mother, a universal truth that cuts across language and culture. Although feeling trapped by her mother's choices and feverishly yearning for more, Miche is bound by the heavy chains of familial love and loyalty. This documentary is a disturbing and restless picture, a rarity. A sometimes fragmented glimpse into the rage, desperation and faith of one family, this coming of age documentary covers a cache of devastating issues as AIDS, drug use, cutting and the inevitable identity struggle of self vs. family.

While the self-motivated, but not self-centered Miche is a captivating, unfolding character, the documentary has its valleys. At times, the overwhelming juxtaposition of issues no longer shocks or grips its viewers; it leaves them with a montage of unsettling issues. *The Mother's House* does a thought-provoking tight rope walk between question and answer, relief and hunger, pity and awe. The viewer, however, may sometimes feel like she or he is in a waiting room, wanting for either good or bad news, but answers nonetheless. The waiting room, though, is worth it. This quietly intense film has subtitles, grit, honesty and movement. With no cinematic climax, the viewers are ushered out as they were ushered in, with stunning intrigue and a scattering of resolution.

***Review by Lisa Factora-Borchers***

**July 1st 2007**

## **SOUTH AFRICAN DOCUMENTARY WINS AT DURBAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL**

**The Mothers' House**, a local documentary directed by Francois Verster and produced by Neil Brandt of Luna Films, has won Best South African Documentary at the Durban International Film Festival in South Africa. The film has won multiple awards and received numerous accolades both in South Africa and around the world, seven of which were Best Film or Best Documentary awards.

The film won the Best Documentary award with its premiere at the Cape Town World Cinema Festival at the end of 2005, the Premio Diocesi di Milano at the Milan African, Asian and Latin American Film Festival (2006), the Jury Special Mention at the Norwegian Documentary Film Festival (2006), recently winning Best Documentary at the Docusur Film Festival in the Canary Islands as well as just having screened at the Fribourg Film Festival in Switzerland.

Described as astonishingly intimate, overwhelming and shocking, **THE MOTHERS' HOUSE** is a record of four years in the life of Miché, a charming and precocious teenager growing into womanhood in post-Apartheid South Africa. Living in a "coloured" township outside Cape Town, she has to face not only life in a community beset by gangsterism and drug abuse, but also what it means to break the cycle of violence imprisoning her own female-only family. Miché's mother Valencia is an ex-Struggle activist, now unemployed, HIV positive and about to give birth to a third child. Dominated by unresolved conflict with her own mother Amy, she increasingly directs her own problems onto her daughter. Miché is in many ways an ordinary high school girl: she has her ears pierced for the first time, hosts her first dancing party, and finds her first boyfriend. But having to bear responsibility for both her mother's anger and health and the well-being of her younger siblings forces her to be strong beyond her years. Torn between escaping abuse by leaving home and protecting those she loves, she takes a wrong turn - before finally coming to terms with her mother, grandmother and the world she lives in...

The film is a co production between Undercurrent Film and Television and Luna Films, and was funded by SABC2, the Open Society Fund, the National Film and Video Foundation, the Fonds Images Sud, and the Sundance Documentary Fund. It has been described as a "coming of age" for local documentary, and is scheduled for limited cinema release over the next few weeks.

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**March 28th 2007**

## **SOUTH AFRICAN DOCUMENTARY WINS AT PLAY-DOC**

**The Mothers' House**, a local documentary directed by Francois Verster and produced by Neil Brandt of Luna Films, has just won the Best Feature-Length Film Award at the third Play-Doc Film festival in Tui, Spain. This is the fifteenth LAUREL this film has won around the world, of which seven were Best Film or Best Documentary awards.

The film, which won the Best Documentary award with its premiere at the Cape Town World Cinema Festival at the end of 2005, the Premio Diocesi di Milano at the Milan African, Asian and Latin American Film Festival (2006), the Jury Special Mention at the Norwegian Documentary Film Festival (2006), recently winning Best Documentary at the Docusur Film Festival in the Canary Islands as well as just having screened at the Fribourg Film Festival in Switzerland.

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**2 NOVEMBER 2006**

**SOUTH AFRICA SCORES AT INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY FESTIVAL (Docusur, Spain)**

The South African documentary industry has over the past week raised huge interest at the first edition of the Docusur International Documentary Film Festival, which took place in Tenerife, Spain. The festival, which screens films made in Latin America, Africa, Spain and Asia, programmed a special South African section of ten documentaries, covering a wide range of local directors.

A South African delegation consisting of Rehad Desai, Zivia Desai Keiper, Dumisani Phakati and Francois Verster attended the festival. These filmmakers, apart from introducing their own films, took part in various conference events on South African film, north-south relations and other important global filmmaking issues. A large number of South African documentaries were also on sale at the Docusur Market, and sales interest was expressed in at least three films.

South African films in the festival were extremely well received, and the festival's top honour (Best Film, International Long-form Competition) was awarded to Francois Verster's *THE MOTHERS' HOUSE*. This film also received the Documania Award, which is linked to broadcast on Spanish television.

The local Tri Continental Film Festival, which assisted in sourcing South African films this year, has agreed with Docusur on a partnership for future festivals.

**October 2nd 2006**

## **THE MOTHERS' HOUSE WINS BEST DOCUMENTARY AT THE APOLLO FILM FESTIVAL**

Immediately after winning an Emmy for "A Lion's Trail", Francois Verster again scored, this time with "The Mothers' House" at the Apollo Film Festival held in Victoria West on Saturday the 31<sup>st</sup> of September. The jury commented,

*"The jury was blown away by this lyrical and at times eerie masterpiece of observational documentary filmmaking. THE MOTHERS' HOUSE manages to tightly and sensitively portray a microcosm of a society trapped in cycles of violence and abuse. We as the jury observed that Verster earned the remarkable trust of his subjects, allowing for unprecedented access into the lives of three generations of women – subjects who are allowed to talk for themselves. The coming-of-age story of the central character Miche is riveting, at times gently humorous and at others heartbreaking. The filmmaker walks a precarious objective tightrope, and knows precisely when to lower the camera or to make a cut. The cinematography, sound design and editing are outstanding. All in all, THE MOTHERS' HOUSE is a landmark in South African documentary filmmaking – holding up a mirror to our battered selves."*

The film, which also won the Best Documentary award with its premiere at the Cape Town World Cinema Festival last year, the Premio Diocesi di Milano at the Milan African, Asian and Latin American Film Festival, and the Jury Special Mention at the Norwegian Documentary Film Festival, will further be showing at the 3 Continents Film Festival in Johannesburg and Cape Town and at the Africa in the Picture Film Festival in Amsterdam this coming week.

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**September 7th 2006**

## **THE MOTHERS' HOUSE WINS BEST DOCUMENTARY AT THE ZIMBABWE FILM FESTIVAL**

At the prestigious closing night event of the Zimbabwe International Film Festival held on Saturday 2 September, *THE MOTHERS' HOUSE*, a 76-minute documentary by local filmmaker Francois Verster, was selected from an array of award-winning films for the Best Documentary award.

The film, which also won the Best Documentary award with its premiere at the Cape Town World Cinema Festival last year, the Premio Diocesi di Milano at the Milan African, Asian and Latin American Film Festival, and the Jury Special Mention at the Norwegian Documentary Film Festival, will further be showing at the 3 Continents Film Festival in Johannesburg and Cape Town and at the Africa in the Picture Film Festival in Amsterdam this coming week.

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July 5<sup>th</sup> 2006

## **LOCAL DOCUMENTARY CONTINUES ITS TRAVELS ON INTERNATIONAL CIRCUIT**

THE MOTHERS' HOUSE, a 76-minute documentary by local filmmaker Francois Verster, has been accepted at the Zanzibar Film Festival taking place this year in July. It has also just been screened at SILVERDOCS: AFI/Discovery Channel Documentary Festival presents "Celebrate South Africa!", a special program of new South African documentaries plus discussions featuring South African artists and a concert this June, which Francois Verster attended. The Mothers' House was also recently screened at the Beeld voor Beeld festival in Amsterdam to strong audience response.

The film, which won the Best Documentary award after premiering at the Cape Town World Cinema Festival last year as well as winning the Premio Diocesi di Milano at the Milan African, Asian and Latin American Film Festival, was also shown at the Gotheborg International Film Festival and the One World Human Rights Film Festival in Prague. Furthermore it has been accepted to the New York African Film Festival, the Beeld voor Beeld festival in Amsterdam and the Norwegian Film Festival in Volda. Says producer Neil Brandt, "We like to think that THE MOTHERS' HOUSE tells a universal story in a very specific local situation - it is great to see a film that seems to have had immense local impact also being taken seriously on the international circuit".

Astonishingly intimate, overwhelming and shocking, THE MOTHERS' HOUSE is a record of four years in the life of Miché, a charming and precocious teenager growing into womanhood in post-Apartheid South Africa. Living in a "coloured" township outside Cape Town, she has to face not only life in a community beset by gangsterism and drug abuse, but also what it means to break the cycle of violence imprisoning her own female-only family. Miche's mother Valencia is an ex-Struggle activist, now unemployed, HIV positive and about to give birth to a third child. Dominated by unresolved conflict with her own mother Amy, she increasingly directs her own problems onto her daughter.

Miché is in many ways an ordinary high school girl: she has her ears pierced for the first time, hosts her first dancing party, and finds her first boyfriend. But having to bear responsibility for both her mother's anger and health and the well-being of her younger siblings forces her to be strong beyond her years. Torn between escaping abuse by leaving home and protecting those she loves, she takes a wrong turn - before finally coming to terms with her mother, grandmother and the world she lives in...

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**June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2006**

## **LOCAL DOCUMENTARY HITS INTERNATIONAL CIRCUIT**

THE MOTHERS' HOUSE, a 76-minute documentary by local filmmaker Francois Verster, has received the jury's special mention at the Norwegian Film Festival in Volda. It has also just played at the Hotdocs festival in Toronto, Canada, to strong audience reaction and is currently at INPUT 2006, the international public television conference taking place in Taipei in May.

The film, which won the Best Documentary award after premiering at the Cape Town World Cinema Festival last year as well as winning the Premio Diocesi di Milano at the Milan African, Asian and Latin American Film Festival, was also shown at the Gotheborg International Film Festival and the One World Human Rights Film Festival in Prague. Furthermore it has been accepted to the New York African Film Festival, the Beeld voor Beeld festival in Amsterdam and the Norwegian Film Festival in Volda. Says producer Neil Brandt, "We like to think that THE MOTHERS' HOUSE tells a universal story in a very specific local situation - it is great to see a film that seems to have had immense local impact also being taken seriously on the international circuit".

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## **PRESS RELEASE 10 MAY 2006:**

### **FURTHER SUCCESS FOR LOCAL DOCUMENTARY**

Hot on the heels of previous festival successes, THE MOTHERS' HOUSE, a 76-minute documentary film directed by Francois Verster and produced by Neil Brandt, has been awarded a Special Jury Mention at the Norwegian Documentary Film Festival, Volda.

The film, which won the Best Documentary award after premiering at the Cape Town World Cinema Festival last year as well as winning the Premio Diocesi di Milano at the Milan African, Asian and Latin American Film Festival, was also shown at the Gotheborg International Film Festival and the One World Human Rights Film Festival in Prague. Furthermore it has been accepted to the New York African Film Festival, the Beeld voor Beeld festival in Amsterdam and selected for INPUT 2006 in Taipei.

Says producer Neil Brandt, "We like to think that THE MOTHERS' HOUSE tells a universal story in a very specific local situation - it is great to see a film that seems to have had immense local impact also being taken seriously on the international circuit".

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**PRESS RELEASE: 27 MARCH 2006**

## **LOCAL DOCUMENTARY WINS AT MILAN FESTIVAL**

Two years after winning the prize for Best Documentary with his film WHEN THE WAR IS OVER at the same festival, local filmmaker Francois Verster has been awarded the Premio Diocesi di Milano at this year's Milan African, Asian and Latin American Film Festival for his 76-minute documentary THE MOTHERS' HOUSE.

The film, which also won the Best Documentary award after its premiere screening at the Cape Town World Cinema Festival last year, is a record of four years in the life of Miché, a charming and precocious teenager growing into womanhood in post-Apartheid South Africa. Living in a "coloured" township outside Cape Town, she has to face not only life in a community beset by gangsterism and drug abuse, but also what it means to break the cycle of violence imprisoning her own female-only family. Miche's mother Valencia is an ex-Struggle activist, now unemployed, HIV positive and about to give birth to a third child. Dominated by unresolved conflict with her own mother Amy, she increasingly directs her own problems onto her daughter.

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The jury praised the film "for its commitment and sensitivity in recording the story of a young girl and her mother over four years" and emphasised "the clever use of music".

The film is a coproduction between Undercurrent Film and Television and Luna Films, and was funded by SABC2, the Open Society Fund, the National Film and Video Foundation, the Fonds Images Sud, and the Sundance Documentary Fund. It has been described as a "coming of age" for local documentary, and is scheduled for a cinema run at the Labia Theatre in Cape Town later this year.

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**PRESS RELEASE 29 NOVEMBER 2005**

**LOCAL DOCUMENTARY HAILED AT CAPE TOWN WORLD CINEMA FESTIVAL**

THE MOTHERS' HOUSE, a feature-length documentary by Francois Verster and produced by Neil Brandt, has been chosen from six local and international competition films to receive the Best Documentary Award at the Cape Town World Cinema Festival.

The documentary film jury was fulsome in its praise for a director who crossed race and gender lines to tell an intimate story in a women's household. They said his brave, risky film, which premiered at the festival, went "against the rules of storytelling" and departed radically from conventions. Says Verster, "We are all extremely happy and honoured to receive this award, especially since this is the first festival where THE MOTHERS' HOUSE is being screened. It comes at this point as huge and important local affirmation after a long and difficult process!".

THE MOTHERS' HOUSE spans four years in the life of Miché, a charming and precocious teenager growing into womanhood in post-Apartheid South Africa. Living in an impoverished area with her mother and grandmother, she has to face not only life surrounded by gangsterism and drug abuse, but also what it means to break the cycle of violence imprisoning her own family.

The film had its world premiere screening at the Multipurpose Centre in Bonteheuwel on Sunday 13 November, where it was warmly received both by members of the community and visitors. The screening was followed by a lively question and answer session, with locals hailing the family for their courage and strength in allowing this very intimate portrait of their lives to be made.

The film has already drawn interest from major international film festivals as well as from a number of US and European broadcasters, and will also be shown in schools and community centres around the Western Cape.

For more information, please contact [info@themothershouse.co.za](mailto:info@themothershouse.co.za)

## **Awards and Recognition for “The Mothers’ House”**

### **BEST DOCUMENTARY Sithengi 2005 Cape Town World Cinema Festival:**

Francois Verster underlined his standing as a pre-eminent documentary filmmaker when he won Best film in this genre for 'The Mother's House, shot in Afrikaans. The documentary film jury was fulsome in its praise for a director who crossed race and gender lines to tell an intimate story in a women's household. They said his brave, risky film went "against the rules of storytelling" and departed radically from conventions.

### **PREMIO DIOCESI at the Milan African, Asian and Latin American Film Festival 2006**

Two years after winning the prize for Best Documentary with his film WHEN THE WAR IS OVER at the same festival, local filmmaker Francois Verster has been awarded the Premio Diocesi di Milano at this year's Milan African, Asian and Latin American Film Festival for his 76-minute documentary THE MOTHERS' HOUSE.

### **JURY’S SPECIAL MENTION at the Norwegian Film Festival 2006**

The Mothers’ House received the Jury’s Special mention at the Norwegian Film Festival held in Volda this year.

### **Official Competition Selection at the Zanzibar Film Festival 2006.**

### **BEST DOCUMENTARY at the Zimbabwe Film Festival**

At the prestigious closing night event of the Zimbabwe International Film Festival held on Saturday 2 September, 'THE MOTHERS' HOUSE, a 76-minute documentary by local filmmaker Francois Verster, was selected from an array of award-winning films for the Best Documentary award.

### **BEST FEATURE LENGTH FILM AWARD at the Play-Doc Film Festival in Tui, Spain**

### **BEST SOUTH AFRICAN DOCUMENTARY at the Durban International Film Festival**

# The Mothers' House

SUMMARY: (ca. 280 words:)

Described as astonishingly intimate, emotionally overwhelming and sometimes shocking, THE MOTHERS' HOUSE is a record of four years in the life of Miché, a charming, precocious yet troubled teenage girl growing into womanhood in post-Apartheid South Africa. Living with her mother and grandmother in Bonteheuwel, a "coloured" township outside Cape Town, she has to face not only life in a community troubled by gangsterism and drug abuse, but also what it means to break the unbearable cycle of emotional and physical violence imprisoning her own family.

Miché's mother Valencia is an ex-Struggle activist, now an unemployed single mother, HIV positive and about to give birth to a third child. Deeply affected by the world she has grown up in and dominated by unresolved conflict with her own mother Amy, she increasingly shifts responsibility for her own problems onto Miché.

Just entering high school, Miché is in many ways an ordinary innocent girl: she has her ears pierced for the first time, hosts her first dancing party, and finds her first boyfriend. Yet her home situation forces her to be strong beyond her years: she has to bear the responsibility not only for her mother's anger and general health, but also for the emotional well-being of her younger siblings.

Torn between leaving home to escape abuse and protecting those she loves, she takes a wrong turn - before finally learning to make sense of her mother, grandmother and of the world she lives in...

THE MOTHERS' HOUSE gives the viewer a powerful insight into three generations of women striving to untie the knots that bind and to find peace and love amongst all the hurt and anger within their community and themselves.

## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT:**

THE MOTHERS' HOUSE originally grew out of a previous film. Valencia Moses, the mother of Miché, the main character in the film, was originally intended as one of the subjects in WHEN THE WAR IS OVER, which looks at teenage anti-Apartheid fighters 15 years later. At the time I felt a great sense of personal commitment towards her: I saw her as someone who had fought for her country's freedom, who had given up her youth, and who in a free South Africa yet had nothing but ongoing difficulties – all of which she seemed to face with courage, commitment and humour, and much wanted to bring material I had of her into a new film. She is an extremely powerful and articulate presence on camera, and I felt that through someone like her a far broader story about the position of women, about healing, and about disadvantaged families in a still-troubled post-Apartheid South Africa could be told.

Early during 2003, I was visiting Valencia and her sisters at the home of Renecia, her closest sibling. They were discussing their family situation and how they were trying to cope with it – and both what they were saying and the extent to which they seemed to be unaware of the implications astounded me. Renecia mentioned how she wanted each of the family members to write down their life stories on paper and eventually try to publish these in book form, in order to somehow understand, as she put it, why she and her sisters are the way they are – and it suddenly seemed to me, as I then suggested to them, that making a film could be an even more effective option.

I subsequently began the long-term filming process with Valencia, Leandra, Renecia and Míche, and also with their mother and grandmother Amy, even though I had massive reservations. I was exhausted by the difficult and dangerous physical and emotional demands of the previous film, and it was clear from the beginning that this would be a film that would be very difficult to make, not only because of very complex battles and dynamics amongst family members or the sensitive nature of many areas that were to be explored, but also because of the political dimensions of being a white male filming a group of less-empowered black – or, then, “coloured” – women. We decided from the beginning that process here would be at least as important as product: if the film was not going to benefit the family, I did not want to make it. Furthermore, it seemed that the only way to go ahead was to be able to eventually stand in front of an audience with family members right there: I put the option to them of pulling out until October 2003 – but they committed clearly at that point. As it turned out, some of the legally and otherwise sensitive areas explored during the filming process were eventually left out during the edit.

I believe that especially in observational documentary films, the tension between how people want to be perceived, how they see themselves and how they really come across is placed in sharp relief. While Amy was initially most hesitant about being filmed, it was Valencia who, once she was aware that certain facts had become apparent to us, increasingly withdrew from the filming process. By that stage, it seemed to me – also because Valencia gave “real” openings into herself only very rarely - that I had a far stronger main character in her daughter Miché. If the film was looking at the two-way effect of violence between family relationships and society, it seemed to me that recording the progress of an innocent – one

who had not yet been “inscribed” by the world around her and who at least had the option of growing up in a better world than that of her forebears – would be a far more effective way of achieving this end. As part of a new generation she represented hope for the future: the chance to avoid making the same mistakes and repeating the cycle of violence perpetuated by her mother and grandmother. The decision was entirely correct: Miché proved to be a central character with immense charm, general screen presence and also vulnerability, and I am sure that audiences are going to care a great deal for her when watching the film.

More importantly, I would be making a film about someone who I myself care about intensely, and who by now has become something like a daughter to me. Over the past few years, we were able to help her where the family did not, and as with other long-term observational films, a bond has been made probably for life. It is most of all for her that I hope the film makes a difference, either personally or by opening doors elsewhere.

When people ask why one makes this or that film, the answer never seems entirely clear. The truest response, albeit somewhat pat, is probably as follows: had I been able to answer clearly, I would not have made the film. For me, as a privileged white South African, documentary is a way of learning in very intense ways about things I have been separated from. But of course the socio-political reasons for making a film like this are also fairly obvious: more than a decade after Apartheid, violence still has a huge impact on people’s lives within poor communities. The battle against racial discrimination has now been replaced by a battle against new problems such as ongoing poverty, AIDS and the more widespread availability of harmful illegal drugs. The position of women in poor areas, even if extensively furthered by South Africa’s new constitution, has hardly changed at all. Much is made in the media about gangsterism, about rape, about child abuse and familial dysfunctionality – but the voices of the people inside those families themselves affected are seldom heard. It seemed to me that it would be through the medium of observational documentary that *insight* could be obtained into certain types of situations in the Cape Flats – a question not of numbers and hard facts, but of association and empathy with people that are actually living through the effects of Apartheid and broader patriarchy, and are having to deal with new issues facing their communities, individual selves and families on a direct level. The intention with the film is not to lecture, not to put forth a polemical argument, but to give the viewer an experience of what it may be like to *be there* as a young woman, and to gain insight into the kind of family conflicts that can easily be racialised from the outside. Social workers, sociologists and psychologists usually work with the issues explored in the film at a remove – this film, however, observes life under difficult circumstances as it occurs first hand, and in that way has for me great value as an intimate document of at least one life in the process of being shaped.

However fraught at times, I believe the film process has been a positive force in starting to heal the complex and distorted relations within the family itself - and that in some ways the film is actually stronger and more insightful because of having been made by an outsider. At times things were particularly difficult within the family – and by extension with me and the film, which had by then itself become an object of conflict amongst family members. But relationships formed in filmmaking of this kind are not only complex but also deep, and some of it made sense when Amy assured me that her shouting at me in the same way as at her children was a sign that I had been accepted in the family...! By all accounts, the SABC

broadcast in early August 2005 has brought about massive positive attention to all family members: Amy, Valencia and Miché have all received interested and meaningful support often from complete strangers; Valencia has been invited to appear on radio shows, other family members indirectly managed to find jobs, and so on. The film seems to have touched a chord with the broader community – many viewers described incredibly emotional responses and recognition of their own lives in the film; as Miché put it, the Moses family is no different from other families in Bonteheuwel or other similar communities: they merely had the courage to make their lives public. Responses from the broadcaster and from other filmmakers were also positive to a massive and unexpected degree.

Perhaps the value of *THE MOTHERS' HOUSE* lies for me most effectively in its being a record of how the most charming, pure-minded life can go wrong if nothing is done to help – in both large and small ways. I believe that this is a film made with honesty, integrity and commitment on both sides, and hope that it will be perceived in this way. The family has shown extreme bravery in going ahead with the process, and while I am glad to have come to the end of a long and difficult process both in terms of filming and editing, it is my wish that it will work out extensively in their further favour!

Francois Verster  
20 October 2005

## STATEMENTS FROM CHARACTERS:

### MICHÉ MOSES, the daughter:

On the filming process:

*“I see the film as an eye-opener to our family members – it shows not hatred, but a lot of emotions, expressing everyone’s feelings towards each other; for years, even before the idea for film, there was always this tension amongst family members – our relationships were always on and off. When Francois came in, it really gave us a chance to see ourselves in a mirror, what we are doing and not doing, what was wrong. Since filming began things have changed for the better for our family in the sense that the relationship between grandma and ma has changed, between me and my aunts has changed; allowing us to look deeper than first reactions to each other, allowing a different point of view, always allowing us to ask “why?” “*

On the film:

*“When people look at the film, they should not criticise our family, because what you see in the film is happening in every second house in Bontebouw – it is just that we had the courage to admit it in a way that others do not – we see where we are wrong and where we are right, but we are still a family. People need to see this, and see us as part of community and try to understand what we go through.”*

### VALENCIA MOSES, the mother:

About the filmmaking process:

*“What made me angry about the film was the filmmaker’s persistence, his busy-bodiness, his scratching and never getting tired of scratching... it made me mad...but now I can say that it really helped. I would say that the making of the film was very therapeutic in a very constructive way. It was very difficult for me to watch the rough cut when it was finally ready, and through a lot of I really felt horrible – but I also think that people, especially those who are in my situation, should see this, and learn that they have choices in their lives.”*

*I think that In the end, the process of making the film was equal to a lifetime of psychotherapy.”*

### AMY MOSES, the grandmother:

*“The film allowed us to speak about the traumas of our lives. Speaking on camera allows you to review your life, how it may have been had you done something in a different way. To see this movie allows you to reflect on your life, and maybe if you had done things a different way at that time, then maybe things could have been different. Also, it gives the younger generation an insight into what the mistakes of the older people were, so that maybe they won’t repeat those mistakes.”*

"It is easy to tell stories that dance around on the surface of human existence. It is much harder to delve into our complexities with honesty and dignity... This film succeeds [in this]... African storytelling at its finest."

- SYLVIA VOLLENHOVEN, HEAD OF SABC FACTUAL

"Verster underline[s] his standing as a pre-eminent documentary filmmaker with [this film]."

- SASWA

"Remarkable... An incredible visual experience providing a glimpse into an unusual family."

SYBRANDUS ADEMA, DIE SON

"[This] brave, risky film [goes] against the rules of storytelling and depart[s] radically from conventions."

- CAPE TOWN WORLD CINEMA FESTIVAL JURY

## **AWARDS AND RECOGNITION FOR THE MOTHERS' HOUSE**

Best Documentary, Cape Town World Cinema Festival 2005;  
Premio Diocesi di Milano, Milan African, Asian and South American 2006;  
Best Documentary, Zimbabwe IFF 2006;  
Official Competition , Hot Docs 2006;  
Special Jury Mention, Norwegian Documentary FF 2006;  
Official Competition, One World Human Rights ff 2006;  
Official Competition, Zanzibar IFF 2006;  
Best Documentary Apollo FF 2006;  
Input 2006;  
Best film, International Competition Docusur 2006;  
Documania Award Docusur 2006;  
Safta award Best Documentary 2006;  
Official Competition, FESPACO 2007;  
Best Feature-length film, Play-Doc 2007;  
Best Documentary, Durban IFF 2007;  
Official Competition, Docupolis 2007;  
Official Competition FCAT Tarifa 2007

## **FESTIVAL PARTICIPATION**

Cape Town World Cinema Festival, South Africa, 2005;  
SACOD, South Africa, 2005;  
Gothenburg, South Africa, 2006;  
One World Prague, Czech Republic, 2006;  
Milan Festival Cinema African, Asian & Latin American, Italy, 2006;  
Panafricana Roma, Italy, 2006;  
Hotdocs, Canada 2006;  
Norwegian Documentary Film Festival, Norway, 2006;  
INPUT Taipei, Taiwan, 2006;  
Next Wave Festival, Australia, 2006;  
New York African Film Festival 2006;  
Wild Cinema, Namibia, 2006;  
Beeld voor Beeld, Amsterdam, 2006;  
Leuven 2006, Belgium;  
Silverdocs 2006, USA;  
Encounters, South Africa, 2006;  
Zanzibar Film Festival 2006;  
Portobello Film Festival, UK , 2006;  
Zimbabwe International Film Festival, Zimbabwe, 2006;  
Africa in the Picture FF, The Netherlands, 2006;  
3 Continents, South Africa, 2006;  
CinemAfrica, Sweden, 2006;  
African Film Festival, Cologne, 2006;  
Suidooster Fees South Africa, 2006/7;  
Dockenama, Maputo, Mozambique, 2006;

Films from the South, Oslo, Norway, 2006;  
Escalaires, France, 2006;  
Helsinki Film Festival African Special, Finland, 2006;  
Oulu Children's Film Festival, Finland, 2006;  
Verzio, Budapest, 2006;  
African Film Festival, Cologne, Germany, 2006;  
Docusur ICAIC, La Habana, Cuba, Feb 2007,  
Muestra de Nuevos Realizadores del ICAIC, La Habana, Cuba, February 07.  
Festival de la Memoria, Tepoztlan, Mexico, March 2007.  
DOCS DF, Mexico, September 2007.  
Filmoteca de Canarias, Canary Islands, May 2007.

### **TELEVISION BROADCASTS:**

SABC 2;  
Televisio de Catalunya;  
Canal+ Spain;  
Sogecable;  
Sundance Channel;  
TV-hert;  
Television de Galicia

# The Mothers' House Credit List

Director	:	Francois Verster
Producer	:	Neil Brandt
Editor	:	Peter Neal
Music	:	Peter Coyote
Associate Producer	:	Lucinda Englehart
Camera	:	Francois Verster
Additional Camera	:	Richard Kruger
	:	Brian Wengrofsky
Edit Consultant	:	Per K Kirkegaard
Online Editor	:	Steve Mannering
Final Mix	:	Stef Albertyn
Production Manager	:	Yasser Booley
Edit Assistance	:	Minette Williams
	:	Mark McNamara
	:	Björn Johansen
	:	Bonita van Wyk
	:	Elsa Glenn
	:	Luke Younge
Production Assistance	:	Parmjit Kaur Bachas
	:	Marlon Jacobs
	:	Lara Taylor
	:	Andrea Pienaar
	:	Janni Younge
	:	Stefan Blank
	:	André Morgan
Security	:	Thurston Moses
	:	Abu Bak'r Isaacs
Accounts	:	Carmen Rosa