

A Filmmaker's Journey Into the Chaos of Zimbabwe

Monash Alum Speaks of His Latest Trip to Cover the Political Situation in Zimbabwe

By Erica Contini

Documentary Film maker and Monash Law graduate Dominik Vukovic broke into the film industry in 2007. His award winning documentary "Bowling for Zimbabwe" examined the country's social and economic situation by following a young cricketer who, without his cricket and academic scholarship, would have been unable to attend school, and would probably have turned to crime as a means of subsistence. His story highlighted the impact the high level of poverty, unemployment, and increasing school drop out rates has had on the Zimbabwean people.

Following the completion of his film, Dominik returned to Zimbabwe where he experienced first-hand the run up to the controversial March 2008 presidential election between President Robert Mugabe and challenger Morgan Tsvangirai. Once again, Dominik has captured on film the environment in this fragile country surrounding this hopeful yet bloody election campaign.

Dominik shared the experiences he had, his thoughts on the political situation and footage he collected while in Zimbabwe during this pivotal period in its history during a Castan Centre public lecture held in July at Clayton campus.

After a brief introduction by Dominik, the pitch black auditorium was thrown into light and noise as the first images, a rally in support of Morgan Tsvangirai, jumped to the screen. Hundreds of men women and children, many holding signs supporting the MDC, were chanting and cheering as their candidate, a symbol of change in Zimbabwe, took the stage. Tsvangirai's positive and inspiring speech only fuelled the energy emitted by the crowd.

The footage quickly shifted to an older Zimbabwean man, who discussed his hopes for Zimbabwe's future and the importance of the imminent election. A number of other Zimbabwean citizens were interviewed throughout the rest of the footage, including a member of parliament. The message from those interviewed was clear, Zimbabwe needed change, and Morgan Tsvangirai was that change.



At the conclusion of the footage, Dominik went on to discuss the country's complex history and what he saw as the political, social and economic forces that enabled political change. In particular, he felt that the near-doubling in the number of seats available in parliament attributed to the possibility of a change in government.

Another factor creating political dissatisfaction is the massive drought in the country, which has further fuelled the call for change. In his discussion Dominik also reflected on his own experiences and individuals he had met during his time in Zimbabwe.

While Dominik left Zimbabwe just prior to the elections, his experiences and the video images he was able to capture provide great insight into the struggle and current challenges facing the country.

Dominik's film, *Bowling for Zimbabwe*, can be viewed on the Portable Film Festival website at <http://portablefilmfestival.com/video.php?video=480>

(Clockwise from top left) A poster for Dominik Vukovic's award-winning movie; the crowd at an MDC rally; Dominik talks to an MDC protester; a father and his children talk to Dominik.