

Director's Statement: Soft Vengeance: Albie Sachs and the New South Africa

2014 is the 20th anniversary of democracy that brought about the end of apartheid. Millions of South Africans voted for the first time on April 27, 2014. This film celebrates the hard work, tenacity and vision of the men and women who dedicated their lives to creating a new democratic society.

I was drawn to the story because I have known Albie Sachs since 1974, when he traveled to the US to secure support for the anti-apartheid divestment campaign. Meeting with him again in South Africa in 2009, I saw the potential for a film that not only focused on his life but also on the story that he and others embody-- about how a vision of democracy and human rights could be nurtured and expanded, even while a movement was in exile and imprisoned for more than three decades. This film is not a strict biography, but rather a portrait of a man who represents a unique response to violence perpetrated against him and the majority of South Africans. The film's title, *Soft Vengeance* is a phrase coined by Albie Sachs and is the title of his autobiography (*Soft Vengeance of a Freedom Fighter*). It reflects a message that needs to be heard today, particularly in the wake of Nelson Mandela's passing. Reconciliation, which was at the heart of the ANC's triumph in the new South Africa, is hard work, but enables the transformation of people and of a nation.

Albie Sachs is a citizen of the world, who travels the globe sharing his story with those who are looking for a different path to resolve conflicts. This film seeks to inspire new audiences, both young and old, to find creative, non-violent solutions to the conflicts that might otherwise destroy them.

As a director, one of the real joys of making this film was the opportunity it provided for me to meet some of the people who were at the forefront of transformation and change in South Africa. The film includes interviews with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Laureate Nadine Gordimer, Constitutional Court justices, Arthur Chaskalson, Pius Langa and Yvonne Mokgoro, ANC Deputy President, Cyril Ramaphosa and US Supreme Court Justice, Ruth Bader Ginsburg. These interviews along with those of National Party negotiators, Roelf Meyer and Leon Wessels provided unique insights into how South Africa managed to build its democracy from the ashes of apartheid.