

# A MINER'S TALE

by Nic Hofmeyr and Gabriel Mondlane  
40 minutes, Mozambique/South Africa

Joaquim is a migrant labourer who is torn between his responsibilities for his junior wife in South Africa and his senior wife and family in Mozambique. When visiting his home village after a long absence, he is also torn between his

understanding of the responsibilities of his HIV status and what traditional society expects of him as a man. He has to make a choice: he cannot please and protect everybody at the same time. The elders are adamant that Joaquim must do his traditional duty and give his wife more children. What will he choose?

## **Synopsis:**

Joaquim is a migrant worker from Mozambique who works on the gold mines of South Africa. He is a diligent worker. Joaquim is a man who straddles two worlds — the modern, urban world of the mine and the traditional rural world of his family homestead across the border in Southern Mozambique. Joaquim's pay looks after his Mozambican wife and family, as well as his city family in South Africa.

Not far from the mine is a shack settlement, where his girlfriend Maria lives with the children he has fathered. Sometimes, so many years pass between his visits home to Mozambique, that Joaquim almost forgets about his wife and children there. But at the back of his mind is a vision of a rural idyll that he hopes to return to one day. He only came to the city to earn money. Eventually, he wants to go home, never to return to South Africa and the mine again.

But Joaquim has tested HIV-positive. And the time to visit home in Mozambique has come round again. Joaquim has known his status for a few years, but he still doesn't know if he has the courage to tell his Mozambican family about it. He feels he should, but there are many questions in his mind — will they grasp what he is saying, will they just try and ignore it, or will they curse him and throw him out?

It's the end of the month and Joaquim receives his pay. He prepares himself for his journey. He and Maria go together to buy clothes and useful household items for the homestead in Mozambique. His goods are piled on the roof of a minibus taxi and early in the morning the drive to Mozambique starts. At the border he waits patiently in a long queue, to clear immigration and customs. He struggles to get the customs officers to clear his goods.

Joaquim arrives at his village and he is received with warmth. He re-unites with his wife, Rosita, who is hurt by his long absence. After a day or so, a

community reception party is organised which includes several traditional ceremonies, including the slaughtering of a chicken. He meets his son, Mica, now an adult. Mica is upset, Joaquim is also upset.

Joaquim tells his wife Rosita about the disease. She doesn't really understand, and says they should speak to the elders and sangoma about it. Joaquim gets treatment from the sangoma, and talks to his uncle, who cannot accept Joaquim's need to protect his wife. He is adamant that Joaquim must do his traditional duty and sleep with his wife and give her more children, and that he must stop seeing other women. Joaquim asks his uncle how can he then protect his wife from dying?

Joaquim is confronted with the difference between the modern world of South Africa, and the traditional life in Mozambique. He cannot reconcile the two, and leaves without saying goodbye to Rosita or his son.

He goes back to the mine, and back to Maria.

### **Directors biographies:**

Nicolaas Hofmeyr has worked in the film industry since 1989, as a cameraman, director, and producer of music videos, documentaries, television programmes and series. In 1995, he directed a 53-minute special ***A Day in the Life of President Mandela*** was televised in the United Kingdom and Australia. In 1999, his feature-length documentary ***Main Reef Road*** was licensed, amongst others, to National Geographic Worldwide and screened at IDFA 1999.

Gabriel Mondlane

Mozambican Gabriel Mondlane's films have been screened at festivals in the former Czechoslovakia, Burkina Faso and Zimbabwe. His documentaries include: ***Pause de la vie*** (20), ***Pierres du Zimbabwe*** (30), ***Arbre Sacré*** (30), ***Festival d'Aot*** (30), and ***Chicualacuala*** (22). He is currently in production with ***L'Histoire de Thomas***.

### **Director's comments:**

*It is too exhausting to articulate the issues.*

This film is about the complications around life as a migrant worker, and the experience, especially of foreign workers, who seek a better life for themselves and their families through their work on the mines.

The making of this film was a very big experience for me. The issues are very sensitive and touching and become very personalized in the making of the film. The difficulties around approaching the family, and their whole situation, made it very stressful work.

The value of the film is very strong. It touches the lives of people in South Africa as well as people in other countries. It also exposes one further way in which it is very difficult to be involved with this kind of disease. Maybe the film will also create more awareness in those outside South Africa who think South Africa is the solution to all their problems, and highlight the suffering of the relatives of migrant workers.

In the context of HIV/AIDS, this film explores how the already compelling problems around migrant work are further complicated by HIV/AIDS. The social problems arising are enormous.

**- Gabriel Mondlane**

**Credits:**

Production Company	Cool / Uhuru Pictures
Directors	Nic Hofmeyr Gabriel Mondlane
Producer	Joao Ribeiro Rehad Desai
Camera	Nic Hofmeyr
Sound	President Kapa
Editor	Vuyani Sondlo
Music	Bright Productions
Professional Support	Siven Maslamoney Jacob Thuessen