

Conversation with Rashid Lombard in Cape Town 11/85

I was born in 1951. I was born in Port Elizabeth. I grew up there for about ten eleven years. And since, I've been in Cape Town.

My pictures have been exhibited in two Staffrider exhibitions, 1984-85. I also had an exhibition in Zimbabwe, a one man exhibition, a focus on South Africa, in Harare, at the university of Zimbabwe. That was after the festival in Botswana which was 1982, that whole festival on south african artists. I did not participate in Botswana. We have been exhibiting locally under the name of Backalisa. I am one of the founder members of that group.

I am working on a book on the moment on an industrial book on Cape Town, a focus on industrial buildings in Capetown. I am doing the photographs and it's coming out later this months. I am working as a free lance with the publisher. I am not being employed with Murray and Roberts for this project, though that's who I work for usually. I work as an industrial photographer for them. I am also incharge of all the audio visual productions, for tending purposes. This is a form of a book, sketches, all audio visual material for bids the company does.

Rashid: Yes, I do freelance work, but most, the bulk of my work is for community organizations. And community organizations and community-based newspapers like Grassroots. I am mostly trained as an architectural draftsman. And I think this is where I have developed an eye for Photography. but prior to that I was doing mainly documentary, social documentary work and commercial.

Margaret: When you were describing the current work you are doing, you work for community organizations and they alternative press, is there any thing you could say like you are pursuing working with unions or anything like that?

Rashid: Yes, I do document events of unions, civic bodies, organizations irrespective of what leanings they have. Community meetings. We must ...not only work for the unions ...but all of them. (And largely you are documenting stuff around Cape Town?) Cape Town, it is mainly Cape Town, we try to get up into Joberg occasionally....but mainly Cape Town is where I work most of the time.

Rashid: besides these papers, which is going to be an ongoing thing. It is the one James Mathews wrote out, the first volume which is called, Those were my pictures, concerned journalists have also formed this body to publish the news that normally doesn't come into our media, and try and do it on a national basis. Not being registered, we had different names, Solidarity, Bulletin, Eye of the Journalist. This is like a newsletter of the concerned journalists in South Africa.

Rashid: Yeah, First ten years in P.E. then I moved to Cape Town. I've done most of my schooling, primary and high school here. (And how big a family?) Only two, a brother and sister. (And what about your parents they come from P.E. as well?) They are both from PE and well,

they come from quite big families, both of them.. (Did growing up, what sort of area did you grow up in?) Well, In P.E. I grew up in a place called Korsten. And I think living there for those few years, actually helped me to realize that there's something wrong at that age, as a kid. Why I say that is because behind us along a trail, there lived all these black people called the Audana?? We were obviously involved with them, playing and going into going into their homes, their shacks. And about, after about four years, they build a railway line to that place, next to the place and people thought, well industry is coming to Korsten,. and when we discovered that that was meant to cart the people out. You know, without giving them any notice. They just loaded them all on this truck and they moved out. And since then, I couldn't understand how could something like this be done. (Were these your friends, the kids?). Most of them, and the people living there and I use to eat in their houses. They used to eat Mealie meal and meat. They were moved out to Transkei. In a matter of three days.

Alex: Was this next to a colored township where you were living?

Rashid: It was next to a colored township. Colored township was called Korsten. And they lived right next to us, And since then, I have always had this feeling that something is wrong here. Until I came to Cape Town, here I became much more politically aware. Even up to now, having tea on Sunday on Sunday, to assist ..

He was one of the top journalist for the Sunday Tribune in Johannesburg and, of course, because of his reporting he was banned and he was harassed. He is Afrikaaner and he went over to Holland where he stayed for about four years and wrote for the Dutch, and now he is back home. He does a lot of documentary programs for the Dutch, to keep them informed. And he went to interview Mary Blackburn, who has exposed all of these atrocities, and Dr. Wendy Orr, But also, by having the chance to go to P.E. again, I went to family of mine. They are still apolitical. Not only apolitical, I know we have one Korsten, and New Brighton, were really have four townships.

Alex: Where you ever forced to be removed, your family or that area?

Yes, in fact, when I was there, I just gave them a tour of a place called South End which was on that hill. similar to district six., ten minutes to walk down from South End into the central town. And all those people were moved out, to Galvin Bay or And the landmarks right now are the mosques and the churches which are still standing.

They only started now building on the land now. I'm talking about at least fifteen years since everyone was finally moved out. Now only they started building houses. And it was the same type of thing with District 6 .There wasn't much of a campaign. You know the removals right here in Cape Town.

Alex: And again forming friendships across what this could be at all at home?

Rashid: Not really, no not my parents, definitely not.

Margaret: Did they make an effort not to say anything?

Rashid: Yes, they always always tried to, they always had this idea that things will come around. Even up to now, with my involvement, they are always trying to tell me to be careful, not to do anything. Even up to now with Polly (his wife) being retained. And I have to go their daily to tell him that everything is okay and not to worry.

Alex: When you came to Cape Town you were about 14 or 15? Yeah, (and then you went into the schools here. We talked about your becoming more aware politically, but what happened?

Rashid: You know the change from Port Elizabeth type of school, and slowly getting involved here, coming to Cape Town where immediately I decided that people are much more aware. First you could, the colored community was so much bigger. And they were spread out economically differently. You know, you'd find the petty bourgeois, the middle class and the really poor, which all would be at the same school. You know, and this type of thing was discussed all the time. And this is where my real awareness came out and this is also where I decided that we have to contribute in some way.

At that stage one didn't think of throwing stones or things like that. as the contribution, a group of us decided on working on group writings. And me always being a bad writer, so terrible with spelling, I was interested in drawing. but not so good that I could contribute. I could contribute and this is where the visuals came in. And this is when I started photographing. We actually bought a collectively a camera. Collectively, It was a group of people. We taught ourselves to take pictures. It was quite costly then because we could only do color, because you can send the color to a lab and it comes back. And then send it to print out and we'd have to reproduce it black-&-white. It was quite costly, and you know, one didn't think of darkrooms...

Alex: When did you start thinking about the social documentary type work? Did you photograph that sort of thing right away?

Rashid: Yes, I have, in fact when, in Matric we normally had to do a little theme and at the time I was living inriver,...which is was a farm, but now is built up. We lived in this old house and on the farm there were the stables and the other little places that animals used to live in. And that's where people lived. And again, it was like being back in P.E. but those of were coloreds, now coloreds, not Africans. Having to play with the people and being in their houses I started documenting. Not the best of pictures, but I had the idea then that has to record this. I was eighteen then.

Alex: And again forming friendships across what this country would call a race barrier and you are forming friendships with people who are from different backgrounds then you. That is fairly unusual, I think for most people we talked, to Apartheid has been very successful at keeping them separate from others.

Rashid: Oh, yes, yes. I agree. I am only talking more personally.

Even like things going into the townships, when we lived in P.E., my father was a trader. So we had to, the people from New Britton, all the black townships. They use to buy from us and we would deliver. You know they would send a note for all these goods and we would deliver on the truck. And that is where I also got to meet all these different people. And when I came to Cape Town, the township being on your doorstep. And also my interesting music, I started spending weekends as a young person, sleeping at the edge of the township. Or sleeping at Shabeens that I'd know. That's why, now I find I walk freely in any township and lots of journalist come here, normally, and get me, just for that purpose. Sort of as a guide, only as a guide. I always stress that go in and meet the people so next time you don't have to get me again. I'll always want to do something else. For me, this barrier, I think, has been broked down long ago. And it is the same kind of thing with my kids now. Whenever I go out, I try to take him with me. And I think that I have actually succeeded, even if my youngest daughter is seven.

Margaret: It was real interesting that you were saying that you had this group of people, none of you knew how to use a camera, but you decided that there was a need to have a camera and start taking pictures. What did you imagine, what did you use the pictures for at that point?

Well, we started this for this magazine at school. Although it was A-3 folded in half. And it was based around school activities. And we use to work on an article once a particular article, focusing on a particular student. There was one quite amazing woman, who was interested in social work, and we were both standard 8. Already she had this idea that she would do social work. Her mother been a social worker as well. Faieda was her name. Then she could look at the particular student and realize that he has problems, because of his schoolwork. And that was one of the interesting articles that we would do. We use to take a particular student, go to his home and just photograph the situation at home and we use to feature a particular person --which was quite difficult because it was like exposing him to the school.

So we had, it was hell of a difficulty getting a person to agree. In most cases, it happened that he didn't want to be in the photograph himself, so we would feature the family. (By making the whole school aware about his problems and things that they should be concerned about with their community of students.) We focused on the family be in that very situation. I had discussions surrounding that people wrote to our magazine. And it took off quite well, because two schools around us followed us. Acadia High, and South Peninsula High. is our camera. All you do is click.

Alex: You have never really made a living as a photographer?

When I left school, my father always thought photography was for hippies. That era was also the hippy era, it was like long hair, and that was my scene. Bob Dylan and the wierdest sounds. And I also spent time with musicians all the time. I was totally into the musicians.

But he thought that, you know, it was not for me. And I was forced into doing architectural drafting. I went to tech. I done a three year course and finished two years and I felt I had enough. I know enough. And I dropped out. And I didn't work for three years. And I lived on taking wedding pictures, childrens pictures. And it was, I mean I earned such a lot of money, that I could start buying equipment. I could afford my first enlarger doing weddings. And then I was a page boy actually three times. And I can remember being going to a studio, a photography studio, and a picture like with one of those backgrounds, and we not only went to the gardens, but we go to the beach, sandy cove where there are a lot of and I tried to take pictures there.

Margaret: At the same time were you doing other type of things in the community?

Rashid: No, I was trying to pursue a photographic career, make a living. And so I was doing weddings, I was going around to houses, children's quarters. (Would this be colored people?) No, colored and black people, but mainly colored. A colored person with a wedding, he wants like from the house, to the home, to the gardens, back home, back into their new bedroom. So it was like a days work. And you sit at the end with a fat album.

Alex: During all this time are you having much contact with whites in this country?

Rashid: Very little, very little. And actually now I somehow don't regret it. But like I got to understand all the various communities, the black communities. Only in much later years, when I started becoming active, politically active. And I got in touch with whites. Up to now, it I am still trying to understand and communicate with whites.

Alex: Why is that? What is so difficult about that? Do you know so little about the way whites live, or the way they think?

Rashid: No, I think one has always grown with the idea that the whites have everything, and they, by having everything, they wouldn't be concerned about the struggle happening here. We also then believed that you can not blame the individual, it is the system that has created the barriers between us. It is only really now, in fact, since the formation of the UDF that contact is happening with the whites, otherwise it was totally where I live and in that area.

Alex: We've come across a whole range of concerns that the photographers have in this country. Some people say they take pictures purely in political terms, other people say they try to be neutral or maybe they, if their pictures make a political statement, fine, I just wonder how you fit into that?

Rashid: Are you speaking in terms, for example, that news photographers are suppose to be subjective. No, I think I have, I know that I am being objective about my pictures. I do portray, when I take a picture, I try to portray something that effects me and

affects that particular person. In otherwords I am making a statement towards a, call it a left leaning....I have also come short with my doing freelance work or like for the Swedish newspaper, something new, Morning Mail, where I was doing an assignment for them. And they actually asked me you know, can't you try to be more neutral in what you are trying to say. It was very difficult. I could go shoot a marathon race or sports, but as far as in statements are concerned, that's why I don't think I would make a good news photographer. Unless I am going to have to photograph a funeral for example. You can only get certain kinds of image for the news.

Alex: What kind of photographer would you describe yourself as -- a social documentary?

Rashid: To earn a living, I would prefer to be an industrial photographer, because I have worked on many projects for construction companies, not only for Murray and Roberts, I have been getting lots of freelance work. I'm doing a lot of buildings. Just to earn a living I'll definitely do that. But what I really want to do, when I put my mind to it, is social documentary. Even if I go on sight, I've got pictures of workers in their situation, So my eyes always ready to catch that moment. And I'm always fortunate through my commercial work that I do, I get into situations, factories. And then even after sometimes do you have to photograph at a certain angle where they can actually see I'm concentrating on the worker. You know, and I have some reason for doing that.

Alex: Do you feel that photographing can change things?

Yes, I, to me personally, a camera is a tool of social conciousness. And I feel through my visuals I can make people aware of situations which they would never get themselves into or get at. And by doing that, that's one of the contributions which, which I think I can bring the best our of me. So doing social documentary, I'd do anything which assists in changes in this country.

Margaret: Right now photography is growing, it seems to me that over the last few years, more and more photographers, people are taking pictures and getting to know one another, What Omar calls, the school of documentary photography is growing, how is it working and what is the effect of that?

I'll always say if we have in Cape Town, if we have 500 people documenting the events here, we would be so much better than ten people. And right now there are about ten people. And this is why I have been having photographic classes, that's weekend classes. We talk about the camera, how it works as a machine. Put that aside that is your machine, like your car. But why do you want to take pictures, that is what we spend most of the time. Why do you take pictures, what do you want to use the camera for? And to work over Saturday and a Sunday and show people printing-- simplist form. Because once they are in the darkroom, they will start finding their own way own techniques. So with most organizations we have youth, we have people who are starting to take their own pictures ...and always coming back because it is not right or they are not happy with it. In

the past you would get four calls over a weekend to come and photograph. You know, you can't get four meetings. You definitely need people within, an organization, because they would know what to cover for their needs.

Alex: Why photograph all these meetings though. What is the point of covering all these meetings? That is something that I do not think people would understand so much in the states. Because a meeting is words. Why do you need pictures of meetings.

What I do with lots of meetings, I record the sound as well. I get quite high quality recordings that and at all meetings I take color and black&white. One of the reasons is that I think maybe twenty or thirty years time, if there is changes, I hope there are changes by then, I would like to publish a book on the struggle over the years. That is why meetings are important to me. And also speeches, I concentrate on lots of speakers. Get them in the meeting and go to their house and talking to them and recording them. Recording comes with the color that I do with slides...Because you can do an audio-visual tomorrow. It doesn't have to be twenty years down. And with the audio-visual it is another means of making people aware of what is happening over period of time.

Alex: It seems like the easiest think for you and your family to do is just tread water and wait for things to change. Look what happened to you and your family right now because you have taken an active role politically, could you talk about that for a while, your decision and your wife's decision to be so active.

Rashid: I think I have been more active over the years. She has always been aware of my activities and until she joined a factory and realized whats happening in factories. Then she was approached as one of the people who started this new clothing workers union in opposition to the big garment workers union where you have 60,000 color workers, women workers in factories. And since then, she has actually taken a more active role, political role. Now with her detention, I try to play a much lower profile, mainly for them not to know what I am really doing. Right now, I do give them the impression that I am a news journalist. But that hasn't stoped me working, hasn't stop me with this new law as far as publications goes, hasn't stoped me sending pictures out, sending pictures over to Joberg to group of people for a calendar and news letters...

And like last night, they had this vigil with candlelight and there were people it was amazing. and I took pictures, undercover, with the camera under the jersey. but there was a bus burning, ... (But that picture could never be published?) It could be published, you know, I could get it out of the country. That is not why I am taking it. But I have got that pic. And when I focused I just thought, I have got the first fire after the ban on the media. And, let's use it without my name. And I can sell it to Sigma or ...and why I take this sort of

Alex: Are your children now very active?

Yes, my son is quite active at high school. That is why I grounded

him for as long as I did. He's one of the guys on the SRC, student representative council and they were looking for eight of the guys. They picked up the one who was from another school. And he was one of the guys that they were looking for. And for that reason I keep him at home. The police are looking for him. Had my wife not been in detention, because I think maybe he should experience being detained, because I know being detained and coming out only makes people stronger. There is one in five hundred who drops out because of detention. But for him to be detained now is going to shatter her inside. When I saw what she said that, "we will handle things inside." that I should go on with whatever I feel necessary. Obviously I am being more careful now, but I think that my work should go on.

Alex: How do other people treat you at work that you know casually when they know that your wife is being detained?

Rashid: It is actually quite terrible, you know, because its like shame. Shame, how are the kids? Shame are you OK? They feel sorry for me (instead of proud of you). Yes, or they try to encourage you. And so many people come visit you. I feel, in fact, that they want to do something that's quite nice, that shows that they are concerned. Like everyone wants to take my kids out now. And I feel that it is more important that I should spend all the time with them now. Now, because now I have to build a new relationship with them--with Colleene being away and then when she comes out she is going to have a lot to do, you know. So I also feel as a father, I must take over the role she has, to give her scope and time, to go on with what she has in mind. And I can go on with my work. But I do feel that right now her work is more important than what I am doing.

Margaret: Do the kids have an understanding of all this? Are they feeling encouraged or strengthened by what is happening in Cape Town right now?

Rashid: Yes, actually, just looking at my own pictures it is very encouraging. Looking back at when I was younger and a few years ago, seeing my sisters kids at their age. You know, these kids now are so strong, We ride pass a Caspir and and they all out of their windows shouting and gesturing, and I have to tell they could pick you up for doing that. And even my youngest daughter who is seven, and that to me is very encouraging. But it takes a lot of talking to them and spending time with them to explain to them why. You know, right now I have to go tell them tonight, someway that their mother is going to be detained indefinitely. So I am trying to get over for a visit. They suspended visits. I am using the line that I am going to tell the Colonel that I need to go in to tell her to stop fasting because I know now they have fasted in detention up ta stage that two of them have been in the hospital, and for everyone to end up in that situation could have a physical effect on them. So I think if you can fast up to a certain stage and stop in that is strength. ..you know the next time when you have to fast, then you can double that time. You know, there is nothing we can do outside.

Alex: A lot of people have told us that the system can either energize you as a photographer, or it can somehow crush you and make

you feel like nothing is worth doing at all. Have you gone through both of those things. Or does the system sort of energize you to work?

Rashid: Definitely energizes me. I am aware that I'm going to try to avoid being crushed. The fact that she been asking why her (arrested), and not me, and they know about me, they know I am a photographer. They have got a lot of pictures of me taken by the cops, with Jimmy MAtews, either doing sound or doing stills. and who I am working for, that type of thing. So I can expect that, the raid on my place you know. Probably wanting most of my negs. That's what they do. They take all your negs and make contact sheets. Scratch some of them which they think are important and then they return it to me. (And that energizes you), yes, yes. Because right now it is a cat and cat and mouse game. As far as I am concerned with them. I'm definitely going to try to beat them. The important stuff that I take, I'm obviously not going to leave it lying about at home. Even if I have got to send it out of Cape Town to some family that is totally apolitical. I'll do that.

Alex: Yeah, I think it would be hard to understand for people outside of this country, that this kind of pressure that you feel actually makes you want to work harder instead of make you want to, the point of the pressure is to keep you from working is to keep you feeling dejected but it doesn't seem to do that.

Rashid: Definitely not to me, because with this clamp down on the media, they are obviously, because they can move freely in townships and park Caspirs where ever they want to. And to me this is like setting up amazing pictures. No, really amazing I pass on my way home, and nearBridge, they always stand there. This one particular evening, the bridge comes over like that, and there is another one like that. And in the Center there is a field on which the black guys come from the township and they normally practice soccer there. And at the top there were two Caspirs standing there and I rode past them, like amazing shot. I went home put on a track suit and I ran back. Unfortunately I couldn't use the camera I wanted to, I used this little Rolei. Which takes quite good shots. And I went there, ran around the field a bit and sat with the newspaper and, through the newspaper, I shot the negatives. If you see it, I mean, these guys with guns and a couple of kids off practicing sports. And then this morning, on my way over to work, again on Klipfontein road, all the school kids going to school and another Caspir, the army guys, and all, they had this high bar?? but they were sitting on the bar with Rifles, I put on the brakes reversed into the first shop. And told the guy, look here, I am going to take a shot. And just two students came then, just put them together like that, and took a shot through them. So I have a picture and they are going to school and these guys are sitting there with guns.

Alex: It sounds like what you are saying though is that people have an understanding of what you are doing and the local people are trying to help you, could you talk about that a little bit when you are photographing them?

Oh, yes you have to. Yes, because immediately they see your camera you know. Where is your card? You walk against a...And this is before the clamp down. This is the situation happening and you have a camera and they ask you instead of taking your cameras off, pass your press card, where is your partner?

Alex: What did you say it's like a gangster?

Rashid: No, no, I am talking about the gangster type of person, the more rough guy, who would normally see the camera and mug you. He isn't now he is asking you, "Where is your press card." Who do you work for? And you've got to whip your card out. But having been on the street, I find that it is very seldom I have to pull a card. I normally talk and tell them what I am doing.

Alex: What about the local people, the citizens, do they help you in some way?

Rashid: Oh yes, yes. Last night was a good example. People were standing on corners and I could stand with my camera and actually place them, so that I am not seen taking the picture, or lean on them to shoot at an eighth of a second or a fourth of a second. It doesn't matter (if I know them.)

Alex: Why do people instinctively know you are working for a good cause?

Rashid: I think the one thing I hope is that people recognize me, because I walk a lot. I never drive or I park and I walk the streets. That is one, and the other thing is, the fact that you..you come there saying, you know, that that is a beautiful shot--and talk about the shot, the actual shot. And immediately they will realize this is not the police guy. There is more to it. I'd say, you know, that in this state of emergencies it is difficult, but you guys just help me, We need to record that. And even if you can't speak in their language, slang Afrikaans.

Margaret: So they see the value of photography for their struggle on their intention, you are an extension of that?

Rashid: They would ask if it is for the newspaper. As soon as you say no, then...

Alex: Why? What do they have against the local newspapers?

Rashid: With a lots of the local newspapers, pictures have appeared with people's faces quite clear, in a stone throwing. And that's how people have been picked up. And if they see you are taking a picture of guys, particularly at a barrier, that is when you might run into trouble. Once the barrier is up and the fire is going and maybe get a shot of a guy coming with a bicycle. Fast, you know, they realize that it's image. Or, going over the fire or past the fire...

Alex: You've met a lot of outside photographers, what is your feeling of the way they work here?

Rashid: The few that I met, they all work on hard news. That is all they are interested in. If it makes a story, that's it. If I look at a lot of my visuals, it could also make a story. Only difference is that I don't take it to make an on the spot statement. Well, what's different is that I'm building up this report of events that have been happening. If I get an assignment, I'll definitely be able to give them pics immediately. I have just been real unfortunate of not getting good contacts outside. If I do get employed or on retainer basis with Omega, who bought some of my work, or Sigma, then I can give up my job. And then I would work as a, as journalist which is what I want to be doing. It would give me so much free time, so I can do field work and I can do my work.

Alex: You said a couple of minutes ago, that you hope that in twenty or thirty years things will have changed, is that how long you think it will take?

No, I, I'm thinking much sooner. I am hoping in, first in my lifetime, I am thinking about ten years. And when I think of change, I hope it will happen in the next three years. At least, people will start talking. This is what I am concerned about in talking with outside organizations and inside people. I know for complete and total change, it might take much longer because of the type of system we have here - the educational programs we will have to go through with people. But as long as the main obstacles, or the main pillars of apartheid has been broken, that could at least, well when you talk in terms of an interim government, for a period of time. But I think it will be much sooner than twenty years.

Alex: It seems everytime there has been unrest before its always has been eventually crushed and there is nothing for few years and then it happens again, but it doesn't seem like it is dying down.

Certainly not, '76, '80, it was students, '80 was students. It was always said that the students would start it, but it should be taken over by the workers -- which is happening now. Not only workers or the parents, like his fathers, aunties. And last night you could see it. I mean, it was so emotional for me, because you found these people riding in cars with candles, there were lit inside. And you can see it's not the ordinary activists, you know. People who four years ago you wouldn't imagine would do things like that. Because they are riding up up and the caspirs are's coming down. And they would stand outside with the candles, they ride in the car with the candle.

Alex: Why are these people now involved when they were not three or four years ago?

I think that the formation of the UDF has a lot to do with that. In that, with the formation of the UDF lots of prominent people started standing on platforms. The religious people which clergymen, which played a big role in the Muslim and Christian communities. And, in the past, they mostly stood in the background making statements, but now they are on platforms. And each one has their own congregation which is the people. The other thing is the kids, the way the system has come down on the kids. In the past it wasn't as bad then as is

now. And this is brought out parents with schools, principals, teachers, standing with the kids urging parents. They are using totally different strategies then '76 or '80. I had not idea he was doing this. I just froze.

Alex: How will these kids be kept from hating and being so against the system that they will never be willing to compromise to talk to the whites. Each generation seems to be getting more radical.

Rashid: Yes, this is one of the things which the old people are fearing, that if nothing is done soon, we are going to loose control of these guys. If the workers don't take over from the kids, we're going to have a mob of kids which we won't be able to control. You know, like stoning of buses with your very parent on the bus which we are totally against. Stoning of cars of people in the community, we are totally against that. Somehow we have to start, and that just happens and we stopped that. And for a few weeks until that "State of Emergency" was clamped down. But if that is lifted again they might just go on to that same strategy. You know which we don't go with. You are going to get that very parent in that bus against the whole struggle, The buses won't be able to go into the area, they won't be able to get to work. They'll have to walk miles to a bus and stand in the outskirts. I think these are all things which we must look at. But they are RADICAL. Oh, this very generation.

I think we, the generation I am in, has a lot to be blamed for it. I can be talking to my son but, through the years, in our home we use to talk about what is happening, and action, and action ... Then he goes to school and all this time he has been absorbing this, and not contributing. And he's at school, and he comes home and he says nothing. But we get reports from his teachers and other people who say that he is standing up in a hall of five hundred, and saying let's march on Pollsmore Prison, like real radical statement,

Or I ride in car and I see this kid running on top a barricade, and it is my son. As a parent you are shocked and concerned, where in the past you would like... On one hand, you want that, but now you're being affected by it and I think a lot of parents are affected that way. And I think this is what's been happening to them. Parents have been talking and are realizing that the kids are, without consulting them, are going to take over. And this is why I have to spend such a lot of time with Chivana -- talking to him, talking to him about strategies and, you know, like don't expose yourself because now he wants to be at school. He wants to go to school to write his exams and tear up his papers. I could tell him you are playing right into their hands. (How old is he?) He is fourteen. But he is prepared to sit out another year. If he has to sit another two years -- as long as the struggle continues in school. There I won't object to it. I am not going to tell him his future is more important. That your education is more important.

One day I was going out to photograph, and you know I always had this idea that I will document the important things that happen, no matter what I see. And we drove down the street, him with his video camera and me with my still camera, and we came to this burning barricade in the street, where kids have set it up in order to draw the police in.

So I jumped out of the car with my camera and Jimmy with his video camera, and I put the camera up to my eye, and there was my own son, with his fist raised, next to that barricade. I had no idea he was doing this. I just froze.

And I was with Jimmy Mathews, and we stopped, he had his camera and his sound, and I couldn't take a picture. I was more concerned about being there, this whole idea of mine about documenting these things went totally out of my mind. It was just weird. I have been thinking about it for a long time. I hope it doesn't happen to me again. Freezing in a situation like that because it is someone close to me. I should realize that all kids are close to me, which I do feel but feel ...when it is your own son...

Margaret: Well, did you talk to him at that meeting or talk to him afterwards about ...being there.

Rashid: What happened, Jimmy took the call, and he said to me, there is your son. We got in the car and went past the barricade and they tried to stop us but we went on we didn't want to talk to him. What happened after that, was they were confronted by private police, and a gun was pointed, they looked down at the barrel of the gun and four of them, two of them threw whatever they had in their hands and moved. And they ran to a lawyer. They ran all the way to the lawyers office. These two guys were after them. And then they took him a car and brought him to me. But he was terrified. When he saw a Caspir coming he would dive into our car. Just the fact that he was holding the barrel of his gun.

Margaret: Has Coleen, have you been able to see her?

Rashid: I have seen her once. And they were quite good spirited. They were well looked after. (Has she been able to see her kids at all?) Yes, I got permission for myself, but when I went down, I insisted that she should see her. And they gave her five minutes where there was physical contact. And I think that has strengthened them. I have been told by P.P.F.C. not to take kids there because it has an emotional effect on them. I took them into Polsmore and I said this is where Mandela is kept, this is where your mother is kept. They could see the bars closing, and the guards closing the door and an old sound and rustling of keys.

Alex: What does it mean to be arrested now. Within the community how do people look on it?

Rashid: People see it as an honor. I see it as really being a waste of people being taken away. I know that certain, or few people have come out of prison who have been in a month or two. All of a sudden they have a certain status. Which again, I don't believe should happen. Because you have been detained, you have that status. I believe more the person who can evade the cop all the time, he is the guy who we should look at. Its like one of the union workers now, she is determined to go back to the factory and I have been telling her whole Union left to organize it, just stay clear - rather work with people inside, we have organizers inside, let them do the work. But

she is curious and she wants to go to that place, its not productive. You are going to be picked up and thats one risk.

Margaret: What about your son and his friends that are, maybe being picked up and going to detention. How is he coping with the idea of the prospect that he'll, that that could happen to him?

Rashid: Well, he's on to this, he just in this frame of mind that if he be detained, then you come out then you are strong and you are looked up to. For some of his friends, they have been released and they are so much stronger. You get to know what its like to feel so much stronger. For me, it takes a long of talking and trying to get him to imagine how it is to be to have been detained. Also trying to tell him which hasn't happened to many students what you could go through. And why it is not worth to want to (the real torture).

Then the cops started putting roadblocks up in Durban. My younger kids are seven, ten and fourteen. The girls very strong, they, my middle one tends to fantasize a lot. ...You know, it hasn't really struck him about our whole situation. But when he sees the Caspir, he gets excited. He doesn't know what the meaning of Caspir is really in the township. Although, he writes poetry and he writes about people throwing stones, people dying and I still can't figure that out. But he really fantasizes about the own thing. He has a completely different personality where he's, the older one is a more serious person. He is into disco dancing and break dancing and going on stage and break dancing and all ...But I realize that he is still a kid. So I want him to, to enjoy that.

Alex: Everyone in this country has to deal with it. There is this side which says, I have a right to live a normal life, which means break dancing, which means if you want to go photograph trees, you go photograph trees. If you want to go to a concert, you do that. And there is this other side that says, you have a responsibility to the movement, you have the responsibility at all times put aside those things. That is something you have to deal with and now it seems like your kids have to deal with that too.

Rashid: Also, in the group we that I belong, "Backalisa". There is no time for landscapes or seascapes. Everything that we hang up for exhibition purposes must make a political statement, must be political. And that's how my work is done as well. Although I love taking pictures of kids, it is one of my favorite subjects. And, of course, commercial work which I'm forced to do.

Rashid: The word has gotten out in the townships that photographers are OK and the people really help you. The last funeral, when we saw this helicopter landing on this bridge, and most of the cops left just a few photographers stayed. Then they just started shooting. And quickly we were taken into a yard, we were hiding behind a wall, but I was determined to get my shot, and Jimmy was shooting too, and they were looking for the journalists. Craig was shooting too. They took the journalists, and then we were taken through this house, over the

Conversation with Rashid Lombard at His home in October, 1985. In the room also are his wife, and Omar Badsha, Margaret and Alex. This conversation precedes the previous one on this disc.

Omar: There were several reports today about lighties stoning schools and buses and things like that, so that means the kids are now (in Durban) retaliating against Inkatha.

Rashid: And the cops are standing back.

Omar: Rashid I can tell you instances where I had to go and talk with the guys. Please why don't you disarm yourself, or do this or do that. And I had photographs published, where you see the cops in caspirs and you see all these lighties armed with pangas walking behind the caspirs.

Then the cops started putting roadblocks up in Durban, and confiscating all the guns in the Indian townships. You couldn't move from one end of the street to another. They took those guys guns and returned them, but they did ballistic tests with them, because what had happened, on that weekend, it was a war, both sides were seeking retaliation, and a lot of people died. The cops had to now act. They charged one teacher from Phoenix, he's standing for trial now, charged him for four murders and eight attempted murders, one guy. But in the African township.....

We had seventy people killed in ten days, seventeen of the UDF people were killed in one clash. But the first week when we had a memorial service at Umlazi, seventeen people were killed. First they (Inkatha) had a brie (barbecue) with the police on the top while they were having a meeting in the cinema. Then they marched in and attacked the people in the hall and seventeen people were killed. And not a word in the newspaper. There was a report, but the newspaper couldn't say that Inkatha did it.

Rashid: We started a community newspaper to tell what is happening in the townships. For the first two issues it didn't have a name. We pass it out free of charge. So the third issue will be called, "Solidarity" or any name. This grows out of frustration. So we have gotten people to send news to us.

Omar: YOU know what I said to the guys in Durban, what I said was, what the organization should do is every day to get a bulletin and put it on an answering machine, and make this phone number available to journalists from all over the world. And they can phone in any time to get the news.

Rashid. The word has gotten out in the townships that photographers are OK and the people really help you. The last funeral, when we saw this helicopter landing on this bridge, and most of the guys left just a few photographers stayed. Then they just started shooting. And quickly we were taken into a yard. We were hiding behind a wall, but I was determined to get my shots, and Jimmy was shooting too. And they were looking for the journalists. Craig was shooting too. They look for journalists. And then we were taken through this house, over the

back fence and two cars were called in, one to take us and another to ride behind us, so if a caspir does come, the guy could just stall. But when we got in the car, there were the cops, waiting for us. I was afraid they would take us from here to another place where nobody knows us.

Omar: They sometimes blindfold guys for a long period of time. A couple of guys I've seen after that kind of treatment, and you can't even go near them. Any person that comes near them, they start screaming. And the doctors said that it was because before they start beating you, they just pick you up, and put a hood over your head, and for the next two or five days, you had that hood over your head. And they beat you. So that when they take the hood off, you are so disoriented, so scared of anything coming near you, because with the hood you couldn't tell if they were coming towards you or standing right next to you. And you were expecting a blow to hit you any time. So even with that hood off, the doctors couldn't even touch them. They would scream. One of those guys, his mother took out a complaint against the cops, one of the Durban guys.

Rashid: The foreign journalists, I know they shoot for news, and I shoot to document what is happening, the situation of the community. And being committed to this, I get quite involved, emotionally involved, where I put my camera away and I get involved. If it is a mass of people moving and chanting, I get into that mass. And they start telling me, "you must be objective." But I say, "this is my country." And it gets quite heavy sometimes because the cops might see me and identify me with them and that type of thing.

Omar: the worse thing one for me was in the settlement, these lighties were fully armed and they started burning the place and there were also caught in the middle between the African groups in the squatter camps and the Indian groups. So I came in and I saw these caspirs and these lighties and I quickly photographed it. And I got talking and calming them down and talking with them. Now as I am walking with them and taking them out of the settlement, there is a whole line of photographers behind me, and they are all shouting, "Hey Omar, get out man, you are spoiling our pictures, get out from there.!" And I turned around and cursed them. And then they realized that they were in the wrong and they didn't say anything and they kept quiet.

But here, I was taking the lighties, I was trying to disarm the situation trying to calm the situation and moving them out of there, and the other photographers are worried about the picture. "Get out of the picture," the house is burning behind me. But I wanted to put that fire out because the people that live in that house are paying for it. A mattress is a mattress and costs a fortune for those people.

Rashid: I am hoping they will fire me at my job, but if they don't I am definitely going to leave, I am giving it till the end of the year. They have seen me on TV. Those TV guys, they shoot wide angle at the demonstrations and they get everyone, journalists, everyone, and at my job, they have seen me on TV. Also, my wife is involved in the Union. I just feel I am being watched. I don't think I would survive as a journalist full-time. The Cape Times has been buying some of my work,

especially of the townships where their photographers are not scared to go in, but I can just walk in and spend a lot of time there, going from house to house.

I have been sending lots of works out to friends, south africans who are based in Canada, in London. But it is constly, it drains me.

I have been photographing thirteen or fourteen years.

The unions, they call you up and say, " we are having a meeting at eight o'clock, they phone you at a quarter to eight, and ask me to drop everything and go there. So that is three rolls of film, etc. So there is no profit. I've been doing side work with Jimmy for TV, and at least that's some money. I've actually been offered, they told me to come in for an interview at the Cape Times, but, with my portfolio I know I could have that job. But I don't want to hand over my negatives to anyone. They would own my work.

I really started because I liked to take pictures. There were lots of people living in our yard in Athalone, people who didn't have houses. I started only taking pictures of people, and then doing weddings of course which is money. So I could buy another camera.

When I became politicized and knew that something was wrong, I started taking pictures a different way. At school we had a magazine, and I was involved. And when I left school, matriculated, things started happening, and after that I got involved with older guys on campus and going off the campus to spend the day. I wanted to start recording what was happening here in Cape Town. And it was non-stop.

Rahshid: Working for my office, I am doing audio visuals. But often I will go somewhere for them and do my own work. I have quite a library on workers in various situations. I can move around very easily because I have my "Marion Roberts" jacket on. I just have to take two shots in the factory for them, and then I spend the afternoon talking to people and recording them.

Alex: We've been talking in the last week about how photography in the states and in Europe has so much grown out of an art medium, where people thing about it as an art or they think of the various movements in photography. Here it seems like that isn't a concern for people. you aren't looking so much at what other photographers are doing or have done, you are simply trying to document what is happening in your country.

Rashid: I believe the more people that are doing that, the better it is, the less work it is for one or two or three persons. And so I have been running lots of workshops with the youth groups, and my approach is to break down the myth that only the guy with a bag and several lenses and four cameras can take a picture. We've proven that over a weekend, we have a group of people, ten, in and sit in a circle and

talk and I say, " Why do you want to take a picture?" And we try to implant our idea of in most cases they will be working with some organization, and we spend most part of the day talking about why we want to take a picture. Then we go into the camera, the camera part of it, the light meter, etc. And we tell them not to be interested in what the film is made of. And then we say, " then you are going to go out." We split the group up into groups of three, and each group will talk about what they want to document. And each person can only take two pictures. We have only two cameras. You can imagine how each person will plan their shot. We don't want them to just go out and blow a whole roll of film for no reason, hoping that you are going to come up with something, that you have got to think about it. It is amazing, at the end of the day, be it three O'clock in the morning, when they look at the wet prints hanging up, 8 x 10, you should see the expressions on their faces. And if one person out of that ten continues taking photographs we have succeeded.

It is quite now in this country, so much demand for pictures. photographers want to start agencies, being approached by so many people. Guys who are just only taking pictures now for just a few months are going to start an agency, and want me to do some work.

Omar: But it's important. But you must do what we did (Afrapix). To sell pictures, but at the same time, guys who belong to the agency must be involved in documentary work. They must make themselves available to community organizations. Their files must be open. So you provide employment for people, because people want to take pictures. But at the same time, it is important to get people documenting organizations.

Rashid: The other problem is guys are starting to ask "What are his pics like?" I steer clear of that kind of guy. Because I part with my information all the time. If I see a guy who is not sure of his camera, and you find that a lot in the townships, I go up to him and give him some advice. And you will find him coming back immediately to get your number. And the guys in the Hostel, we have got a hostel here for migrant workers, and on site, doing my site work for Marion Roberts, they come up to me and tell me they have got a camera and will I come and look. And what they are taking pictures of is their friends and such to send home. And some of them are taking amazing pictures. I was watching this one guy. All he had done was he had got this camera and he showed me all his pics where he started. And now he's got to have them standing at the window with backlighting, but he'll actually walk up and take a reading and walk back and take a picture. And that's not bad. He must have realized looking at his shots that he was getting too much light.

The camera is a took, it's a weapon, it's a tool of social consciousness.

Rashid's wife: Sometimes camera is a kind of protection, or has been. Rashid can go to these marches and funerals and participate in what is going on, but with his camera he's not beaten up by police because they think he's media. The camera WAS a form of refuge.

Rashid: I've given her a camera a few times.

wife: anybody can take a picture.

Alex: There must be a problem though for you if you want to be involved and the camera distances you, forces you to step back and look.

Rashid: When the cops move in, I think I've got one or two or three shots, but I get so emotionally involved, that I couldn't take a pic, And I stood there helpless, thinking what happens to my Comrads? But I've got shots where people I know are being arrested and seeing me and the cops got them and they will clench their fist in defiance, and the cops dragging them, but what am I doing?

They don't use the word riot, they don't even call it that. I got beaten up once, I've been shot at twice. I even got arrested, confiscated my film and equipment and kept me in overnight.

Omar: It's bizarre, I go home and I say to myself, "what the hell am I doing? But on the other hand, you buckle down, you keep to your side of your work, everybody has to do his work. Some of these guys, they are not mainline news photographers, but I know that a guy like David, he will do a thing well, he will do a story very well, and not only that, the newspapers will use it, they will give him a good spread, where they would give another photographer only one or two pictures.

Magubane was shot recently. He's been banned, detained. I know Peter for many years.

Rashid: They say when he's working he says, "what's a couple of shots in the back when you can get a picture?"

Omar: Oh, he's got guts, that guy, a lot of guts. But I was very happy that he got shot. Because you see they have been shooting the photographers. He was not the first guy they shot. They were shooting a lot of them. They were actually lining them up and shooting them. But it is only when Peter got shot that it made the news. We couldn't get the name of any other guys into the newspapers. Only when Peter got shot did it make the news. Because Peter is news.