Ernest Cole: Lost and Found (2024, France, 105 min.), written and directed by Raoul Peck; with Lakeith Stanfield (Voice of Ernest Cole). In English.

--In Memory of All Those Who Died in Exile

The film opens with the following written titles:

In 1967, the South African photographer ERNEST COLE published his iconic book HOUSE OF BONDAGE. It revealed to the world the horror of Apartheid. Fifty years later, in 2017, 60,000 unknown negatives were found in a Swedish bank vault. This is the story of what happened between these two dates, as told by Ernest Cole himself. All photos in this film are by Ernest Cole unless otherwise identified. Adopted from testimony from family, friends, and witnesses of his short life.

"The total man does not live one experience."—Ernest Cole

Ernest Levi Tsoloane Kole (later Cole) was born in 1940 in Eersterust, Pretoria, South Africa. Though he would achieve worldwide fame—for a time—as the photographic chronicler of Apartheid, Ernest Cole began his career in a very humble manner: sweeping the floors of a photography studio in Johannesburg in the late 1950s. A very bright young man, he had already dropped out of school with the imposition of the Bantu Education Act in 1956. The Act had served to further downgrade an already inadequate education system for black South Africans, so he opted for correspondence courses offered by Cambridge University in England. By 1958 he was working as a photographer's assistant for *Drum* magazine in Johannesburg, working with the photography section head, Jurgen Shadeberg. There he learned how to shoot, develop, and print photographs, skills that he would put to use a few years later in pursuit of a secret project to record the everyday reality of life under the oppressive apartheid regime and then to show that reality to the world.

He described this project for us in an article that appeared in *Ebony* magazine in 1968. (I've reproduced this very informative article for you in its entirety further down in these notes.) Here's how he describes it:

From the fall of 1959 until the spring of 1966, nearly seven tense, danger-filled years, I photographed the police, the miners, conditions in the hospitals, the locations, the schools. I had to work for newspapers to earn money for films and cameras. I went into debt and ignored my creditors. During 1965 and early 1966 I was ducking bill collectors as well as police as I quit my job in order to devote full time to my book.

Cole knew that once he had finished the project—if he survived that long, he would have to leave the country if he wanted to get it into print. And that's what he did—first to Europe and then to New York, where he was able to secure publication of *House of Bondage* by Random House. It opened the eyes of the world to conditions in South Africa, which was its central purpose. However, as we gaze at the many individual photos from the book (and allowing us to discover and experience them is one of the film's chief accomplishments), we see that these are more than just carriers of a message—they reveal deep humanity in preserving for all time moments in the lives of his fellow South Africans, presented with exceptional technical skill and artistic vision.

He initially reveled in life in New York, felt a strong kinship to his black brothers and sisters there, and not only with the artists, writers, and intellectuals. He was amazed by the freedom that they (and he) were able to experience in their daily lives. But even as Cole was experiencing success for his work, he began to experience the burden of life as an exile, despairing that he would never be able to go home again, feeling a sense of alienation, and also coming to better understand first-hand the limitations of life as a Black man in America.

He continued to photograph non-stop while in New York City, and he secured a grant from the Ford Foundation for a series on Black Americans in the South and in Northern cities. We will see those as well in the film, and they too are exceptional. However, for some reason he never submitted them to the Ford Foundation, and they were never published. In fact, until 2017, when their negatives (60,000 in all!) were discovered in safety-deposit boxes in a Swedish bank vault. they appear to have disappeared for good.

Because by the end of the 1970s, Cole was experiencing a steady emotional, psychological, and financial decline—as we'll see in the film, this is not unusual for political exiles, who despair that they will never see a government turn-around and will remain forever in alienation and limbo. He seems to have abandoned photography and lost control of his archives by 1980. He went through periods of homelessness and died of

pancreatic cancer in 1990, ironically just a few days after Nelson Mandela was released from prison.

Although his death was marked by an obituary in the *New York Times*, by 1990 Cole was effectively a forgotten man, symbol of a past moment in history. The facts of his decline remained a mystery. The question of why he never published the photographs that he took in the 1970s, though his friends knew that they had existed, remained a mystery. And then, with the discovery of the negatives in the Swedish vault, the mystery only deepened. Why were they there? Who put them there and kept them there? Who was this man Ernest Cole really?

It was these many mysteries and a desire to rediscover and understand a fellow exile that led the great Haitian filmmaker, Raoul Peck, to undertake the project that would become *Ernest Cole: Lost and Found*. Much as he had done in his excellent film biography of James Baldwin, *I Am Not Your Negro* (2017), Peck told Cole's story not through a series of talking heads, as we commonly see in biographical documentaries, but almost entirely in Cole's own words: through letters, grant applications, his essay in *Ebony* mentioned above, excerpts from *Bilder för Miljoner*, a 1969 film by Rune Hassner featuring Cole, supplemented by testimonies from friends and family and newsreel footage from the time. Cole's own words were voiced by the actor Lakeith Stanfield, much as Samuel L. Jackson had done for *I Am Not Your Negro*. Stanfield's narration, full of despair and self-doubt, has the effect of bringing us deep into the mind and experience of Ernest Cole.

The result is a powerful, carefully-constructed collage that becomes a very moving testimonial to a man and a moment in history, restoring him to us while preserving the many questions that remain.

Below in these notes you'll find the *Ebony* article by Cole, an illuminating interview with Director Raoul Peck from the film's press packet, and the press packet's bio for the director.

--Notes by Michael Dembrow
Cascade Festival of African Films
Africanfilmfestival.org

"My Country, My Hell": Ernest Cole writing about his book, *House of Bondage* in *Ebony,* February 1968
https://books.google.com/books?id=H84DAAAAMBAJ&dq=%22ernest+cole%22&pg=PA68#v=onepage&q&f=true

South Africa is my country—a big, beautiful land filled with millions of beautiful black people, the warmest, most human in the world. In the spring the land around the locations (restricted areas outside Johannesburg where black people are forced to live) turn a fresh green and Johannesburg itself is so beautiful it almost takes your breath away.

Yes, South Africa is my country. But it is also my hell. For the first 26 years of my life I was one of the 13.5 million black people who live (or should I say "exist" under a system that takes away all of their rights as human beings and uses them as "things" to do the menial labor for some 3.5 million whites who control the government, the economy, the army and the police of the fifth richest nation in the world.

"How can 3.5 million people control 13.5 million?" I am frequently asked as I travel in the U.S. today. It seems incredible to an outsider, but it is a fact. I have already said that the black people are warm and human. They are also unarmed, impoverished and divided. For years they lived in hope that through non-violent protest and legislation, they could win the rights they had been so long denied. By the time black leaders realized that the warmth and humanity they took for granted because they had so much did not lie within the hearts of the whites, it was too late. Unarmed and helpless, they could look to the Sharpville massacre as an example of the violence of which the white man was capable.

I grew up in a family that had learned to accommodate to the system. My late father hated the system but my mother kept the family in line and she sacrificed to help my three sisters, my brother and me gain as much knowledge as possible. She could never understand it when I quit school in 1957 rather than go along with the "bantu" education for servitude which had become more strict than before.

I found work in Johannesburg as a trainee with Zonk, one of the magazines published by whites for black South Africans, and continued my high school work through a correspondence course. Since I lived in a township some 2.5 hours train ride from the city, I had plenty of time to prepare my school work. I was already interested in photography and when I later moved on to Drum, another magazine, this interest was given a boost by the photo editor, Jurgen Schraderberg, who let me work as a darkroom technician. He was one of the pioneers in 35mm. and available light photography in South Africa and he helped me develop into a perfectionist both with the camera and in the darkroom. As I got better and better with the camera, I decided to make photo-journalism my life work. I felt that through my pictures, I could lift the curtain hiding what life was really like for the black man under the white racist regime.

My discontent with the system increased greatly as I worked daily in the city where no black man is allowed to live except as a servant in the house of his white master. All blacks had to

carry passes and I could be thrown into jail and fined merely for leaving my pass home. Black policemen enforced the white man's laws and black informers made a living squealing on other black men who showed signs of stepping out of line.

The whole system, based on white supremacy, taught me to hate, to steal and to lie. Looking back on it now, it seems that I almost had to be in a trance to exist within the system. I had to live as if it were a sin to be black in a country where more than 75 percent of the population was black. I learned to hate and distrust the white man. I felt that I could kill, that I could be as inhuman as the white man seemed to think I was.

Then, in 1959, something happened that shaped my purpose in life. I was given a book, Henri Cartier-Bresson's *The Decisive Moment*, a book of excellent photographs which showed life as it was. Later I traded this book for Bresson's *People of Moscow*. I knew then what I must do. I would do a book of photographs to show the world what the white South African had done to the black. I knew that if an informer would learn what I was doing I would be reported and end up in jail. I knew that I could be killed merely for gathering the material for such a book and I knew that when I finished, I would have to leave my country in order to have the book published. And I knew that once that book was published, I could never go home again so long as the whites, Boers or Englishmen, Nationalists or Progressives, remain in power for they all reap benefits from the racist society.

From the fall of 1959 until the spring of 1966, nearly seven tense, danger-filled years, I photographed the police, the miners, conditions in the hospitals, the locations, the schools. I had to work for newspapers to earn money for films and cameras. I went into debt and ignored my creditors. During 1965 and early 1966 I was ducking bill collectors as well as police as I quit my job in order to devote full time to my book.

Early in 1966, I obtained a passport ostensibly to make a pilgrimage to Lourdes. I was then a Catholic and as such convinced authorities that that was my reason for going to France. On May 9, 1966 I shot the last picture planned for my book and two hours later I was on the plane headed for Europe. Some of my photographs had been smuggled out earlier by friends. My negatives were mailed to me later. Finally, last October, my book *House of Bondage* was published by Random House. On these pages are a few of the pictures which appear in that book. They should give readers some feeling of what it is like to be a black man in South Africa. And they may also explain why in, of all countries, I should feel somewhat at home in the United States.

Photo of miner getting food: ***Using a shovel,*** *mine employee dishes up food for miners. When crops fail in rural areas or in neighboring Angola and Mozambique, men travel to Johannesburg to take jobs in mines. They live in compounds where no families or women*

are allowed. They must sign contracts for at least a year, sometimes are away from homes and families for four years.

Photo of black policeman leading a young man, who is staring back at the photographer, in handcuffs: ***Arrested*** *during a pass raid, young student waits transport to station. A schoolboy under 16 does not need a pass but if he looks older and wears long pants he will often be picked up by police. Working youngsters and all over 16 must carry passes. Blacks found in "white areas" (more than 85 percent of the country) without passes can be fined and jailed.*

Photograph of a mother speaking to her young son in their home: ***Talking*** *with her nine-year-old son, a mother warns of the dangers that follow when a child runs away from home. Many South African children learve their homes to live by their wits on the streets. They feed themselves by begging and stealing, are constantly harassed by police. Poverty-stricken families have little to offer youngsters, government ignores them.*

Photograph of a white man and a black child: ***Begging on the streets,*** *a young boy is slapped by white man. "Penny boss, please boss, I hungry" is a common cry nightly in downtown Johannesburg. Most of the beggars are runaways who sleep in doorways, back lots, often grow up to a life of crime.*

Photograph of a street scene in Johannsesburg: ***Upset by touch of black hand,*** *white man does not realize that his pocket is being picked by youth behind him. Working as teams, black youths called "tsotsi" have turned to crime rather than work as gardeners or messengers, the usual jobs for them.*

Photograph of a large group of black people at a religious rally: ***Christianity is used by many black South Africans*** *as a means of escaping oppression. Christianity teaches them to love their enemy but the government teaches whites to kill if necessary. Heavy drinking, smoking of marijuana are other escapes for blacks. Young Africans oppose black political parties which they say are totally ineffective.*

Photograph of children on their knees writing in their school notebooks: ***Kneeling on floor*** *of bare classroom, black children prepare lessons. The government does little to furnish schools for blacks. Pupils have to pay tuition, purchase their own pencils and books. Parents are required to pay half of the school building costs and for extra teachers and desks and chairs. An inferior education comes high for tots like youngster below* [close up of child crouching, writing in notebook, covered in perspiration] *in sweltering classroom. Education for whites is free.*

Photograph of a hospital: ***Because of shortage of beds,*** *hospital patient (below) sleeps on chairs. Some hospital wards leave mattresses under the beds to take care of additional*

patients. There is a serious shortage of doctors and it can take up to a week just to be admitted to a hospital. Half of the black child population does not live to sixteen years. Some 150 blacks are killed each year falling from overcrowded trains.

Photographs first of a nurse holding a naked toddler, who is severely malnourished, and then of a black maid holding a well-dressed white toddler: ***Dying of advanced malnutrition**, baby is held by nurse. One out of every four black babies dies before his first birthday because parents cannot afford adequate food. Black maid holding white baby (below) said: "I love this baby even though I know it will grow up and treat me just like its mother does. But now it is innocent." White South Africans refer to blacks, regardless of status, as "kaffirs"—barbarians.*

FROM THE PRESS PACKET: A CONVERSATION WITH FILMMAKER RAOUL PECK

What did Ernest Cole's work mean to you prior to making this film?

The first thing you should know is that, while I am probably a bit younger than Ernest Cole's generation, that's still my generation. So I remember a lot of those pictures. For example, the one of the older woman sitting on the bench that reads "White Only." But I didn't know it was Ernest Cole. And in the '70s, there were not many recognized Black photographers. It was rare. That's why those photographs are so unique.

I grew up with the anti-apartheid fight. I was in Berlin when I was 17 and many people engaged in the fight were in exile. The ANC (African National Congress) was in exile. Various liberation movements were in exile and we did demonstrations together. I helped write a pamphlet and did photography at the time. So this is not a foreign story to me. On the contrary, it was something I could totally relate to.

The film is so powerful, partly because of your creative choice of letting Ernest tell his own story through your writing. You guide the viewer into his headspace with the help of his photographs and his words, braided with your own writing.

I wasn't going to tell this story through talking heads—that would have been a totally different story, like a biography. And I don't do biography, I tell stories. I want you to be able to watch this film twice, get into the story and be caught by it. That means you need characters, you need motivation, conflict, evolution, redemption, all of that. And because I write screenplays, I know how to attain that, both in narrative and documentary form. And so the most important decision here was that *he* tells the story.

It was important for me to understand is why Ernest, a well-known Black photographer from South Africa, sort of disappeared. I was angry each time I read that Ernest was

depressed, that he became homeless, or that he had paranoia. They didn't see him as a human being or respect him as an artist who was going through something. So I read all that and thought, “I know that nobody becomes homeless just because they are lazy, or because they are crazy.” So it was important to me to really understand how he got there and give a human explanation to that black box.

Getting in Ernest Cole’s skin was not hard because I knew that sensation of feeling that you're not at home, that you don't belong. I had it all my life. And the depression he went through, too. I knew what it meant not to have a room at some point. When in Berlin, I suddenly had to find a new room one day. I didn’t have my family there. Yes, I had friends, I could crash on a couch. But it's not the same thing as having the people you grew up with. So I knew what that insecurity meant.

Another aspect is, I wanted to let Ernest respond to the mostly white experts’ opinions about his work. And because I base my films on research, I bump into this in all my works: I go to all the experts, I read all their literature, their thesis and see that those experts are primarily white. White journalists, white historians... And you can’t not see a sort of patronizing. You can’t not see the lecturing. And I use that in the film.

On that note, it’s unbelievable that Ernest Cole’s powerful photographs in the American South, where he draws parallels between the apartheid and Jim Crow, were received coldly and labeled so inaccurately as “having no edge.” It’s startling to hear that false take for those incredible photographs.

You know, those sentences are true. I didn't invent “he didn't have any edge.” Again, I let Ernest respond to that. And his experience reflects my own experience. When I became an official Black Filmmaker, one of the few well-known Black directors was Spike Lee. We were not that many. And from the generation before, filmmakers like Charles Burnett, Haile Gerima. And they were so politically involved that they were disregarded in the established media. So we had to fight for our voice. One of the things I had to watch out for is people with access wanting to help me. Because in order for them to help me, I had to somehow submit to their protection—as an artist, you can't accept that, going to a gatekeeper or a paternal figure that protects you.

And Ernest went through that. Even in his great friendship with Joseph Lelyveld of *The New York Times,* you could see that there was a tension. And you can see that relationship in the very precise post-colonial context. Newspapers condemned the apartheid, but not really all the way, because they were always, “We need to protect the blacks *and* the white who are fighting the apartheid.” And that's the same hypocrisy when you hear Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher say, “We cannot boycott because that would be bad for the people

of South Africa." But today, they do boycott Russia. And they don't say "The poor Russians are suffering, too. You could punish Putin, but don't punish the whole population." So I've been aware of that double reality all my life.

What crossed your mind when you became aware that 60,000 negatives of Ernest's formerly unknown photos were discovered in the vaults of a Swedish bank?

I was more curious to see those pictures than to learn how they were discovered. Of course, from a producer's point of view, it was like, "Wow!" I knew that people would be interested in that story. But I more wanted to see those pictures and give them a new life. And then there's the contradiction of this work disappearing for more than 40 years. Your work does not disappear like this. Just recently (on May 7, 2024), the Hasselblad Foundation published a press release that says they will give back all the pictures, including the 504 vintage prints I mention at the film's end in title cards. Those vintage prints are the other big scandal. I did not give too much detail about them in the film on purpose and I hope that the journalists will work on that. Ernest himself printed those pictures. They are worth between 10,000 and 30,000 Euros each. So you can understand why Hasselblad would hang on to those pictures. They said they were taking care of them during all those years and are happy to be giving them back. But that's not the story. That's a lie. The truth is what we say in the film—they asked the Cole Family Trust to prove that those pictures belong to them.

So those are the pictures and some additional material they decided to give back as of May 7, 2024. But that has nothing to do with the 60,000 negatives that were in the bank vault. We still don't know how they got there. We still don't know who put them there. When you ask Hasselblad, they say they don't know. When you ask the bank, they say they don't know. So they have no record? The reality is, Hasselblad put them in the bank. I can't prove that. But the people who were executive at the bank were, at one point, executives at Hasselblad. Sweden is a small country, so the powerful people are the same.

As Ernest Cole's voice, LaKeith Stanfield unearths the depth of the text with expressive power. How did you cast him and what was your direction to him?

From the get-go, I knew that Ernest was telling his story, so that I would need an Ernest. And my Ernest should be an actor, not a narrator, not someone who will just read the text in a monotonous voice. It had to be like I did with ***I Am Not Your Negro***, with Samuel L. Jackson *being* James Baldwin, you know? And that's the magic of cinema. Once you are in it, you are in it. You don't go, "Oh, it's not Ernest." So I had a list of actors who I thought could be the voice—the criteria for me are the same ones I would use if I was making a narrative. Who could carry that soul? Who could be real enough to make itwork?

With Jackson, it was obvious because he is a very clear person in his politics. He grew up in the South. He was a theater actor. And for me, theater actors know how to build a character. And I needed somebody who could do that kind of job in a character study. And LaKeith had the same qualities. He has done theater, and he's a very mature person. He's very grounded and he has a persona. And I love his voice, a very nonlinear voice. There is crackle in it. He's sensitive and sensible. He told me that he had been photographing the last four years. He bought cameras and he's really into it. So there was a lot of connection. And he really went through a journey throughout the film. At the end, I didn't tell him to cry. I just told him, "From now on, everything that comes out of your mouth is in character. So if you lose your voice, it's in character." And we mixed it in the way that we could hear his respiration, his silences. We were totally with him throughout.

And when his voice breaks at the end, he was basically crying in the studio. And you cannot have that in a clinical way of doing stuff.

That's both a testament to his greatness as an actor and your authentic writing in Ernest Cole's voice. You mentioned earlier it wasn't hard for you to be in his skin. Could you open that up further? How did you write the text, which is adapted from testimonies of family, friends and those who briefly knew him (as you indicate on a title card near the start)?

It's an organic process. It's not that I sat down one day and wrote the film. It's building block after building block. I remember the first text I wrote was a question: "How did I get there?" And that's a profound reflection to understand. "Why am I depressed? Why do I not feel well?" So as I'm writing Ernest's journal, the more I'm confronted with the things he wrote with testimony from his family, friends and colleagues, the fuller the picture became.

And at the same time, I was working on organizing his photographs. I found an app where I could have a thousand photos open on my desk, and I started making groups very rapidly. You know, it's like a puzzle. And what do you do when you have a 3000-piece puzzle? You go, let's put the green here and the blue there. It's the basic classification of stuff, because you have to enter it somewhere. You can't just look and look. You have to visually have groups. Then one thing that came up rapidly: mixed-race couples. So I started to put them in a group, maybe 60, 80 of them. And so the narrative was building there. And then I write, I take notes, I rewrite them, like 50 times as the edit progresses.

So it's really an organic process that is refined and modified each time.

In terms of grouping the photographs, you also take notice of some less obvious patterns. There are various photographs that signify the looks, sometimes alienating looks, that Ernest Cole felt on himself.

That is something I saw immediately. A lot of good photographs has this thing: there is always somebody looking in the camera in his pictures. So I had to deconstruct them. And when they are looking at the camera, suddenly you see a human being, not a victim. There's always either a little boy, a woman or an older man looking at the camera. And then that's the focus. So my choices were always very strict on that, asking, "Where does the photograph stand? What is he photographing? Why is he taking this particular photo?" You have to find it in the picture.

Godard has this expression: *Ici et Ailleurs*, the idea of *here and elsewhere*. That's my motto. This is something that has dominated my work since my first film. I am here and I'm elsewhere at the same time all my life. Whenever I was in France, in Germany, in the US, I was also in Haiti, also in Congo. And I could see the resemblance of this reality in Ernest's photos, too. People think, "Oh, you're in New York, so you're happy and you're free." No, you are carrying everything on your shoulder. There is this one sentence when Ernest says, "You carry the smell of the prison on you." It doesn't go away when you go to New York. The humiliation doesn't go away. It's embedded in you.

There were also groups of photos where I said: South Africa or New York or the South, you can look and see the racism there and racism here. You can see the parallels. People forget that New York in the '60s was basically segregated. James Baldwin wrote about that—he lived in Holland, but going to Manhattan felt like going to a foreign country.

You tap into something very haunting when you juxtapose the past against contemporary footage. It invites us to see history from the lens of today. What went into that thematic and aesthetic choice?

Narrative or documentary, I always try to make films that have all these layers, carry these different functions. One is to recuperate and preserve my own historical memory, and to still be engaged in the current fight for all the places I come from and the place I am currently at. And another important one is to deconstruct the world archive, world history. The history of the world is, there is a long hundred years where as a Black person, you didn't have access to write your own story. This is a fact. I cannot change it, but it's still my history. So my job is to go and find those traces. And when I find them, I have to deconstruct them. So I would never make a film that is only about the past. So when I show there are still these ghettos near an incredible stadium that costs millions, it is about the reality today.

And at the end, when you see the photos after Mandela's speech, you can interpret them two ways. You can say, "Wow, it's peaceful now." But then you see people doing nothing in empty spaces. For me, that means there is still work to be done.

And then I wanted to finish with Ernest, on his human notes. I knew I needed that because it's his film. He had the last word, and it's a human word. And the human connection, to look at the other, is what is important to me. And then the circle was closed for me.

What can you say about your collaboration with Ernest Cole's nephew, Leslie Matlaisane? He's so deeply in the DNA of the story.

That's the thing for me—he's not a talking head, he is a necessary character in the movie. Without him, we would never have been able to do the film the way we did. We had total access to everything: to all the negatives, to the contact sheets, to the notebook of Ernest Cole. I had access to all the emails and exchanges between Hasselblad, the bank and him. So I had his complete collaboration. And also when some subjects did not really respond to our inquiry, I could ask Leslie to interfere and call. So it was a really collaborative process. He came to Paris twice to watch the edit. I made sure that he knew the story I was telling, and he was okay with it. That was important. And I called him recently when I saw the Hasselblad press release. He said he didn't want to have anything to do with it, but now his picture is on it. He told me he felt that he was conned, you know? He went there to pick up the photos and Hasselblad had another goal. They knew they wanted the picture of him. But that's fine. It doesn't erase what is on the record in the film, and in the end credits. Everything there is true.

You use some disquieting footage from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings where we get to listen to some harrowing accounts of what people lived through during the apartheid. Those testimonies almost bring Ernest's work full circle. Can you talk about braiding them into the film?

I knew that at some point, I needed to see and to show the naked truth: barbarity, abuse, torture… I went through those emotions. I cried when Steve Biko was tortured and assassinated. He was one of the great leaders for us. He was like a Malcolm X. So it was important that I showed that reality. That's also why I start the movie with the Sharpeville massacre. People forget it. They think apartheid is just a figure of speech. No, people were dying. People lived their whole life under constraints, like prisoners of their own country.

Those men in the film by the way, they were engaged in the ANC. They were not victims. They were combatants and it was important to show there was a resistant branch in the ANC. And they were tortured because of that. It was all over the press that the apartheid was torturing and killing people. So France, United States, Britain and their security service didn't know that? It shows the hypocrisy of those people, too. For me, that's a part of the circle as well.

What's something you hope that people, both who are already familiar with Ernest Cole and those who are new to his work, will hold close after hearing his story and seeing his photographs?

I would say that this is more than the story of Ernest Cole himself. What I hope the audiences will keep from this is to learn to be critical of what they are served, to learn how to deconstruct the stories around them. And they should apply that to everything. Ernest Cole is just one example, but you could do that for many artists, many Black artists, in South Africa, The States, in Europe. Challenge institutions who have been the gatekeepers and the so-called saviors of all their work. They need to be questioned. You know, there is a great movement right now to return all the goods to their original countries. For me, this film is embedded in that movement.

The other narrative I want people to consider is those living in exile and the refugees everywhere. People don't leave their country just because they want to go west. That's a total falsehood. People leave their land because they have no choice. Nobody wants to live where they were brought. They always say, "I want to be able to return to my country one day." You know, how many of them are building a house back at home hoping they will retire there? And of course, most of the time, it doesn't happen. For myself included—I rebuilt my grandmother's house, always hoping to be back there. But with the political situation, it is hardly possible. So this is not only about Ernest Cole. There is a whole construct around his particular story.

FROM THE PRESS PACKET: RAOUL PECK BIOGRAPHY

Raoul Peck's complex oeuvre includes such films as: *The Man by the Shore* (Competition, Cannes Film Festival 1993)**[CFAF 2004]**; *Lumumba* (Directors' Fortnight, Cannes Film Festival 2000)**[CFAF 2002]**; *Sometimes in April* (Competition, Berlinale 2005)**[CFAF 2006}**; *Moloch Tropical* (Toronto International Film Festival 2009, Berlinale 2010) and *Murder in Pacot* (Toronto International Film Festival 2014, Berlinale 2015).

Raoul Peck was a member of the Berlinale jury in 2002 and of the Cannes Festival jury in 2012. In 2001, the Human Rights Watch Association awarded him the Irene Diamond Lifetime Achievement Award for his commitment to human rights. In 2017, his documentary on writer James Baldwin, *I Am Not Your Negro*, was nominated for an Oscar for Best Documentary and won the Audience Award at the10th Toronto Festival and the Berlinale. In 2018, it won the BAFTA and the Cesar for Best Documentary. This film was co-produced with ARTE.

His film, *The Young Karl Marx,* co-produced with Agat Films, was presented at the Berlinale the same year. *Exterminate All the Brutes* is a groundbreaking four-part miniseries, produced for HBO, which tells a counter-narrative to white Euro-centric history and was also co-produced by ARTE. The mini-series won a Peabody Award in 2022.

His latest film, *Silver Dollar Road,* had its world premiere at the 2023 Toronto International Film Festival. His company Velvet Film was founded in 1989 and operates in the United States, France and Haiti. All of Peck's documentaries, feature films and television dramas have been produced or co-produced by Velvet Film.