



**Cross-Border Networking Event**  
**Co-hosted by Sisters Working in Film & TV South Africa, Counterpoints Arts and ScreenCraft Works**

25 January 2024

**Rebecca del Tufo:**

Welcome to our cross-border networking event co-hosted by SWIFT South Africa, Counterpoints and ScreenCraft Works.

I'd like to hand over to Zanele to introduce herself and SWIFT.

**Zanele Mthembu, SWIFT SA:**

Thank you very much, Rebecca. Good evening, good evening everybody. It is so wonderful to see all of you and so many countries represented here today. I'm going to kick off this session and just tell you a little bit about the organization that I'm representing here.

But before I do that, a little bit about myself. I am an industry person, particularly focused in the broadcasting space for many many years, both locally and in the US. I am now in a stage that I call preferment, not retirement yet but preferment, where I do what I prefer to do. So I lecture, I mentor, I'm part of SWIFT, I wear a lot of hats. It's a great time to be able to choose the projects that matter to you, the projects that are fulfilling and inspirational to you, and where you are able to give back. So that's where I am in my life right now and I'm really enjoying my preferment.

On that note I'll tell you a little bit about SWIFT. At SWIFT - Sisters Working in Film and Television - we are committed to really advancing the role and influence of women in the South African film and television industry. That's what we're about, and we are a collective of women across race, gender, age, experience in the industry - we've got new entrants, we've got women that are quite seasoned like myself, who've been around the industry 27 years, we are the mature, and we've got a lot of young people as well who are either emerging filmmakers or new new entrants into the industry. We do recognize, being in South Africa specifically, the intersectionality of our experiences, and we advocate for gender and race parity with a specific focus on advancing women of color. We are represented in the four provinces of South Africa - we have nine - the north of Johannesburg where we are, the southwestern cape, Cape Town, in Durban on the Indian Ocean Side, and a place that isn't known that much but is really famous for Marula (if you know Marula, a liqueur comes from the region of Limpopo where we're also represented). Our objective really is to challenge gender inequality in all its facets.

Just to give you a bit of background about South Africa, in case you don't know, where we come from and what is happening socioeconomically and politically in this country - we have

the highest rates of violence against women in the world, very complex cultural relationships between men and women. The majority of the funding bodies are run by women, however we're seeing a little bit of slow change in that space despite that. Yes, transformation is a priority for our government, we can see it in our BEE employment equity and all of that, but we have no unions because the labor laws in our country don't allow us to have unions as freelancers, and that is the majority of all of us that work in this industry, so we're not as protected as employees. And one of our other challenges is sexual harassment - on average in South Africa one in five women older than the age of 18 has experienced some type of physical violence and that trickles down of course into production space, which is a reflection of what is happening in society.

Against that background SWIFT women came together in Durban in 2016 to really talk about our shared experiences and challenges in the industry because of the environment that we operate in. Before we even started anything, we felt as an organization we've got to conduct research so that we know what the priorities of the organization would be. The research in which was conducted together with the National Film and Video Foundation, which is an agency of government that is tasked with developing and promoting the South African film and television industry, that research really crystallized what the challenges were. Part of the challenges were lack of ownership for women - very few women really own the means of production - and there's a lack of strong women narratives in the film roles. Of late we're seeing some narratives come through, but there isn't very much change, or women are very much masculine in the roles and not as feminine. There's limited access to financial resources. And of course there are stereotypes that are limiting our creative expression - women being seen as primarily documentary filmmakers, women not occupying key production roles and being relegated - and there are a number of reasons why we end up as women in the production office. And of course I did include sexual harassment and it is a key factor.

As SWIFT, what we are calling for at the end of the day is for our voices to be heard, our talent recognized as women and our stories to be told from our point of view by us, on our terms, and to have equal share in all available opportunities, whether it's funding opportunities or training opportunities. In order for us to really be able to play a role and be recognized and be part of the transformation, as SWIFT we realize that we have to focus on core programs that will address these challenges, and advocacy is our main - of course we've got to advocate for this change that we're talking about - and under advocacy we have key programs. The flagship of SWIFT is really the safety contact officer program, which is focused on the prevention, creating awareness, reporting and managing complaints of sexual harassment in the industry. This is who we've become synonymous with is we're the sexual harassment organization in the country, but I must say that this program has really put us on the map and given us the recognition that we deserve to be able to do all these other things that we are now doing.

The programs also under advocacy is looking at setting up a research unit - we cannot properly advocate without the data to support what we're saying. We've got skills and mentorship, which is another pillar of ours, we look at development of women whether they're new entrants or professional development through workshops and master classes, and we also have networking sessions. We also have what we call Sisterhood Cinema where we really screen films that are made by women and we profile the filmmakers behind them. Those are the three core pillars - advocacy, skills and mentorship, as well as Sisterhood Cinema.

We have our key stakeholders, which are our members, who are very active. We've been adversely affected by Covid, and we're building SWIFT. We've got also our board of directors and we have a new board as of October last year, and we have an Advisory board that also offers diverse skills that we don't have in our own board, from legal to finance to auditing, all of that. National and provincial government agencies that support us such as the National Film and Video Foundation, the Gauteng Film Commission, and of course the Department of Sports Arts and Culture that has been assisting us with the capacity to be able to run this organization, and of course partnerships such as yourselves at ScreenCraft Works, and locally, internationally, we're building those networks.

We've made some progress to date. We're continuing to build the capacity of SWIFT, and we've had the Code of good practice on handling and prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace adopted by a number of government agencies, industry organizations. We're conducting training, we're seeing mentorship, we are partnering with film festivals to screen the work that is made by women, and profiling these women through panel discussions. This year - starting from last year actually - was specifically focusing on women in crew, which is an area that doesn't always reserve the kind of attention that it deserves. And of course we keep laboring to make sure that through our operations team, Noluthando, Lindi, Lorato, who are here with us, to make sure that this organization delivers on its mandate.

I will rest there, to hand over to you Tom.

**Tom Green, Counterpoints Arts:**

Thanks. And thanks for that overview.

I'll just give very brief introduction to Counterpoints. We're an arts organization based in the UK, we're based in London, we work nationally and internationally, and our focus is on the arts, refugees and migration in many, many different ways across art forms. We work to support artists of all kinds at all stages with their work. We produce work and commission work and run learning programmes. We're always interested in collaborations and networks and having conversations with anyone whose work connects or overlaps with ours. We manage Refugee Week in the UK, which is a big national - and increasing international - arts-led festival celebrating the creativity, contributions and resilience of refugees, working to change a narrative around how displacement is represented and understood.

A lot of our work isn't overtly about anything other than helping artists make the work they want to make, but Refugee Week is a time with a more of that campaigning element. And then more recently we've been working more deliberately around narrative change, so to a certain extent inspired by work in America, and we have our own Pop change programme. You can find details of that on our website. We're looking at the power of pop culture, including film and television, to help broaden, diversify and normalise narratives around migration and displacement. Right at the heart of that is a consultancy programme working with filmmakers, film streaming, TV, to help them make projects more accurately reflect and involve people who have experience of those subjects. We know we can't just tell people that certain shows should be written, directed, produced, whatever by people in those backgrounds. You can't just tell people and make it happen. Of course we can talk about it and advocate for that involvement and help support projects that are led by people with that lived experience. But we also know there are projects that are well underway and often they realize a bit too late that they need a bit of guidance. This has always happened in an ad hoc way, so we've been developing consultancy for people generally from creative backgrounds who in an organized way can get involved in projects and help make them authentic and

generally better. We also see that as a way of getting people access to the industry, to contacts and ultimately with opportunity to make their own projects.

So obviously that work is completely International. By the nature of displaced people they are generally people living here in the UK, but of course film projects are often international, distribution hopefully is international, so one of the things we were really pleased to be invited to this conversation and to the work that Rebecca and Elizabeth are doing, is to have this international platform, because we do feel there's a lot of potential for these kind of collaborations.

There's many more things to say, but I suppose the important thing to register with this group is to say, please get in touch at any point if you feel something's going to be of interest. We're always happy to speak to people, and especially if you've got connection - if you're in the UK, of course, but people who are outside the UK, who have UK connections or are looking for UK connections. We're not a huge organization but we'll always do what we can.

### **Rebecca del Tufo, ScreenCraft Works:**

I'm a co-director of ScreenCraft Works along with Elizabeth McIntyre, who's also here. ScreenCraft Works is an international community of cross-border mentoring, talks and networking, and we support under-represented production and post-production talent in film and TV. We bring together industry talent across world regions, connect diasporic communities and help displaced craft talent integrate into their new local industry.

We have three core programmes. Cross-border mentoring is a nine-month scheme connecting under-represented production and post-production talent with an industry mentor from a different country to share knowledge and experience, widen networks and bring new cultural perspectives. The mentoring partners meet every month over Zoom for an hour across nine months, working on soft skills, technical skills, honing your profile, your resume - the partners choose. We've had three cohorts of mentoring partnerships over the last two years - 55 pairings, so 110 people. Both mentors and mentees get a lot out of these meetings, learning from each other, the mentees gain confidence and learn new skills and ideas, and we're really thrilled at the feedback we're getting from mentees and mentors.

We also have our cross-border talks. Cross-Border Conversations are a free-flowing discussion between industry professionals from different countries and at different career stages, sometimes across different departments. Just a couple of days ago on Tuesday we had a discussion about working across fiction and non-fiction with two editors and two composers. Our next talk that will be announcing soon will take place in March and will be about sound mixing and post sound. These talks always include a first-time speaker to help promote talent and give people confidence and a platform.

We also have Cross-Border Careers talks, where an industry professional shares knowledge and information relevant to people who are looking at a global career in film and TV. Our next careers talk is on Tuesday 4th February about working sustainably, in a green way, on international productions.

Finally we offer Cross-Border Networking, which is what we're here for tonight, seeking to make new, interesting connections. There's also always networking after our talks.

Finally we have Cross-Border Coffees, which are one-off Zooms for advice or networking, and we introduce people across our community for useful connections.

Everything we do is free for users. So we invite you to join our community - it's a really short form - and you then receive our monthly newsletter which will tell you what's coming up and what's happening.