

Farmworkers in South Africa: 2013-2014

Schneider Hall Galleries, University of Louisville

Oct. 7-November 5, 2021

Opening Reception: Oct. 7, 5-7 pm

The Hite Art Institute is pleased to announce our newest exhibition ***Farmworkers in South Africa: 2013-2014***. This exhibition consists of a series of photographs taken by Shachaf Polakow while working with the farmworker's union organizers just outside of Cape Town, South Africa. On view from October 7-November 5, guests are invited to join us for the opening reception on Thursday, October 7 from 5-7 pm in the Schneider Hall Galleries.

Almost 30 years after the end of the Apartheid regime in South Africa, the social economic reality of most South Africans has never been so bad. The economy is stuck and most young people don't have jobs.

Even after so many years, the majority of the land and resources in South Africa is owned by white people. Much of the land is owned by white farmers who have owned it for generations, and have consistently depended on the cheap labor of farmworkers. Some workers live on the farms or in nearby townships. These farmworkers can hardly afford the cost of living, and rarely find ways to escape this reality. As a result, poverty is passed between generations and families are stuck with little hope for a better life.

This series started in the beginning of 2013. Farmworkers outside of Cape Town were on strike and protesting to demand better conditions and higher pay: asking to raise the daily payment from \$8 to \$24 a day (2013 exchange rate). The strike was met with police violence that left at least one person dead, and many others injured by rubber bullets. As a result of the raid and attacks on communities the strike ended not long after the clashes with a small raise to \$10 a day.

For the next year Polakow joined the farmworker's union organizers and documented their lives. Some were born on the farms and lived there all their life. Once they get older they are under the threat of eviction with very few options. "The generosity and welcoming of these farm workers never ceased to amaze me and I will forever be thankful to them for inviting me into their houses, often under the threat of punishment by the farm owners. While I mostly avoided confrontation with them, I will never forget the one white farmer that raced toward me while yelling 'I own them and I decide who they can see and meet'". says Polakow

Farmworkers in South Africa: 2013-2014 will be on view in the Schneider Hall Galleries from Oct. 7-November 5, 2021. An opening reception will be held on Thursday Oct. 7 from 5-7 pm. This event is free and open to the public.

The Schneider Hall Galleries are open Monday-Friday 9am-4:30 pm. For more information please visit our website.