



uMhlaba Film Festival

Inspired by uMhlaba Talks Podcast

In 2025, the Land and Accountability Research Centre (LARC) launched the uMhlaba Film Festival; a new initiative generated from the success of our podcast, *uMhlaba Talks*. The festival is happening at the University of Cape Town and it is pushing forward LARC's mission of growing public awareness of the related issues of land, identity, and social justice, particularly among the rural communities in South Africa.

uMhlaba Talks opened fresh channels of popular education and debate by integrating law, spirituality in conversation with activists and academics. The podcast has now become the creative gem for the uMhlaba Film Festival, realised on the screen through documentaries that amplify rural voices and push against the legacy of land dispossession.

The festival will showcase a thematically edited selection of films such as *Umhlaba Wokhokho: Land of My Ancestors*, *Mathonga Elizwe: Spirits of the Land*, *A Piece of Ground*, and *This Land*; each of them addressing different themes of land repossession, ecological preservation, and inner-city housing struggles. These are not merely visual stories but advocacy films, encouraging viewers to reflect on the spiritual and political significance of land in South Africa.

By creating a space for critical screening, discussion, and reflection, the uMhlaba Film Festival invites students, academics, community members, and the broader public into a collective dialogue about restoring dignity through land justice.



uMhlaba.Talks

The Land and Accountability Research Centre (LARC) launched uMhlaba Talks, a groundbreaking podcast series aimed at advancing rural democracy through discussions on land administration, traditional governance, and the rights of mining-affected communities. As part of LARC's commitment to expand advocacy tools and connect with younger audiences, the podcast serves as a vital platform to inform and empower listeners in the rural land sector. Across its seven episodes, uMhlaba Talks explores land-related issues from unique perspectives, weaving together spirituality, politics, and law to uncover overlooked dimensions of South Africa's land debates. Each episode engages with renowned academics, activists, and traditional health practitioners to shed light on the complex impacts of land dispossession—from the struggles of farm labourers and mining-affected communities to the historical trauma endured by Khoi and San communities. Key themes include the spiritual significance of land, the socio-political impacts of mining and dispossession, and the resilience of communities in reclaiming their land rights. Featured guests include prominent voices like Reverend Mavuso, Nonhle Mbuthuma, LARC Director Nolundi Luwaya, and Professor Nomboniso Gasa, who advocate for bold, often-neglected solutions to the land question. Available on various podcast platform and Youtube, uMhlaba Talks is set to be a compelling series, inviting listeners to explore the profound connections between land, identity and justice in South Africa.



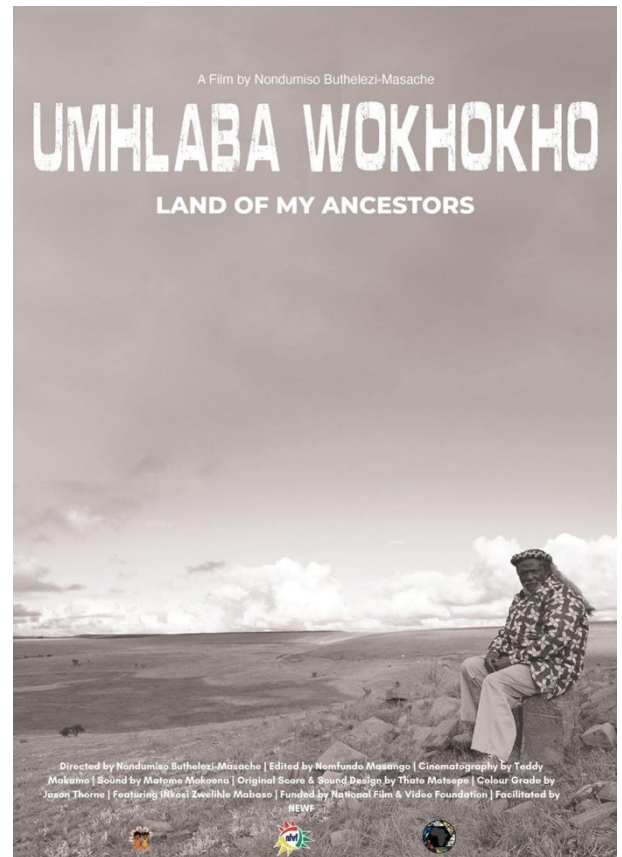
Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omGmfw0wVz8>

Screening information: Wednesday 6 August 18:40 – 19:40 (60 min)

Umhlaba Wokhokho: Land of My Ancestors

Guided by the hopes of fulfilling a prophetic vision, iNkosi Mabaso embarks on a mission to reclaim his ancestral land in the Mabaso Kingdom of eMgundeni, renamed Utrecht during apartheid. With a deep respect for his heritage, iNkosi Mabaso, whose name Zwelihle means ‘Beautiful Land’, seeks to honour the legacy of his ancestors by restoring his community’s connection to their land that has been threatened by a history of exploitation, dispossession and colonialism, whilst also undertaking an emotional journey to locate his grandfather’s grave. With nearly half of the nation’s water supply stemming from eMgundeni, iNkosi Mabaso advocates for land conservation, championing land stewardship, and emphasising the role of rural communities as protectors of the environment. Umhlaba Wokhokho—Land of My Ancestors, explores the profound relationship between land, communities and the fight for preservation.



Link:

<https://encounters.co.za/film/umhlaba-wokhokho/>

Screening information: Tuesday 5 August 17:10 – 18:15 (65 min)

Mathonga Elizwe - Spirits of the Nation

Mathonga Elizwe – Spirits of the Land is a film showing the struggles of Black South Africans in obtaining land today. The film zooms in on three cases where white landlords are adamant in holding onto the land whilst frustrating the land claimants and the land reform process overtly and covertly. The characters in the film articulate that there's no freedom without landownership.



Link:

<https://encounters.co.za/film/umhlaba-wokhokho/>

Screening information: Tuesday 5 August 18:40 – 19:40 (60 min)

A piece of ground

A Piece of Ground reveals South Africa's complex history, a 300 year tale etched with the pain of land dispossession, echoes of chattel slavery, and the scars of forced removals that continue to haunt the nation to this day.



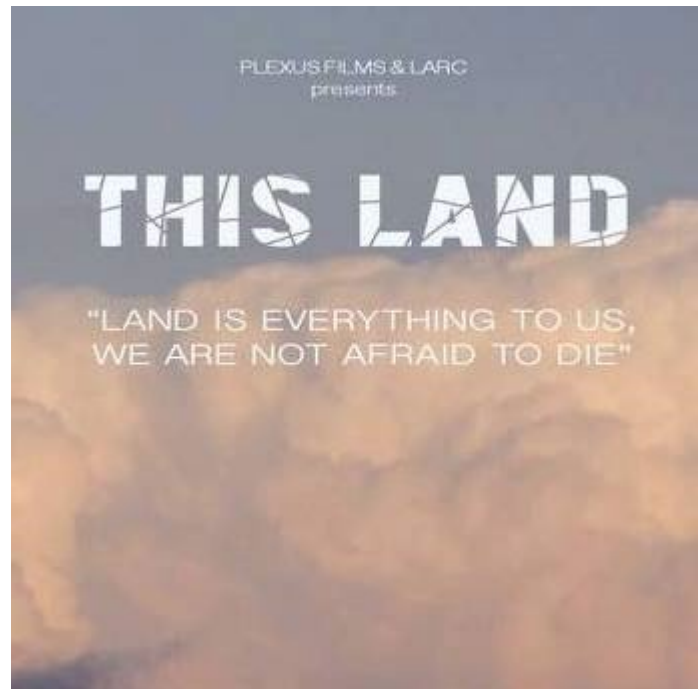
Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOHPnlyC3cg>

Screening information: Wednesday 6 August 17:05 – 18:15 (70 min)

This Land

In Makhasaneni, a hamlet in rural KwaZulu-Natal, scores of villagers are under threat of forced removal for the second time in as many generations. Forcibly moved here by the apartheid government, now their homes are under threat by a mining company in cahoots with the Entembeni Zulu Royal Family, and who seek to exploit the land over the heads of the people who live and work on it. An eloquent portrait of the activists and residents of Makhasaneni, This Land is also a brave and necessary exposé of the inadequacy of customary law in a predatory capitalist state. It raises the question, "Is monarchy compatible with democratic land reform?".



Link:

<https://www.afridocs.net/watch-now/this-land/>

Screening information: 17:05 – 18:00 Thursday 7 August (48 min)



LARC presents = uMhlaba Film Festival

5 - 7 August 2025
Kramer LT2

Tuesday, 5 August 2025, Kramer LT2
17:00 – 18:20
Umhlaba Wokhokho: Land of My Ancestors
A traditional leader's spiritual and environmental mission to reclaim land in eMgundeni.
18:40 – 20:00
Mathonga Elizwe: Spirits of the Land
Three communities resist white landowners still holding land post-apartheid.

Wednesday, 6 August 2025, Kramer LT2
17:00 – 18:20
A Piece of Ground
300 years of land dispossession, slavery, and forced removals in South Africa's history.
18:40 – 20:00
uMhlaba Talks Podcast Episode 3
Decolonising Land: The erasure of the Khoe-Khoe and San people

Thursday, 7 August 2025, Kramer LT2
17:05 – 18:00
This Land
In Makhasaneni, scores of villagers are under threat of forced removal for the second time.

For more info on the film festival, visit www.larc.uct.ac.za
Light refreshments will be available, first come first served.
RSVP your attendance to: amilinda.wilkinson@uct.ac.za

Film Festival Programme

Venue: Kramer Building, University of
Cape Town, Rondebosch

Screenings run daily from 5 pm – 8
pm

Dates: 5 - 7 August 2025

Follow us on social media:

X:

<https://x.com/larcuct?lang=en>

TikTok:

<https://www.tiktok.com/@umhlabatalks>

YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/@LARCUCT>

Spotify:

<https://tinyurl.com/mtpbw96h>

Apple Music:

<https://tinyurl.com/548t6enw>

