

Finding the filmmakers of the future

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At the end of June, [The South African](#) successfully concluded their first Student Film Competition with a film called [Stigma](#) taking the top spot and a R10,000 cash prize.



The short film, produced by Nqobile Cele, an honours student from Afda, tells a story about the shame young women face when looking to terminate unwanted pregnancies, and the challenges they experience when trying to access reproductive healthcare services.

The competition was open to all South African film students. Entrants were asked to document the realities of some of the many social issues South Africans face today, with a total of R15,000 up for grabs for the winner and runner-up.

The finalists were judged on the relevance and impact of the social issue chosen, as well as the technical quality of the video.

All entries were assessed by an expert judging panel, which included BBC TV producer, Jonathan Crane; head of the postgraduate department at Afda, Durban, Arushani Govender, and Neo Thale, training, technical and quality manager at Blue Sky Publications Group.

The judges' decision counted for 75% of the final score, with the remaining 25% coming from public votes.

The Student Film Competition concept came to life when Blue Sky Publications, a multinational media company and publisher of *The South African*, was exploring video collaboration opportunities with [Afda](#), the number one film, TV and performance school in Africa.

"We really have been blown away by the overwhelmingly positive response from the industry and the quality of the submissions," says Thale. "All the entries submitted good bodies of work, making it tough to choose a winner. But *Stigma* was powerful because it highlighted the contemporary obstacles faced by many women in South Africa when trying to get

decent reproductive health services. And from a cinematic perspective, it was shot very well, with strong imagery that drove home the documentary's overall theme," he adds.

"Student film competitions are so important because they offer young filmmakers a place where they can screen their work and showcase their creative ideas to a broader audience," says Bianca de Jongh, operations and finance director at Blue Sky Publications. "This competition in particular served as a platform where young South African talent could communicate how they feel about the world we live in.

"South Africa has so much talent to offer. Many just need that break that will give them the practical, on-the-job-experience to kick start their careers," De Jongh adds.

Blue Sky Publications has always believed and invested in young talent.

In 2020, it launched a #gigs4students initiative, in collaboration with Facebook, which provided training, on-the-job experience and much-needed income to dozens of students affected by the hard lockdown, as well as the economic downturn caused by the pandemic. Some of the students who participated in this programme are still employed with the group today.

Given the competition's resounding success, Blue Sky Publications is already very excited to start planning its next film competition.

If you wish to get involved, please reach out to Bianca de Jongh on at Bianca@BlueSkyPublications.com

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