

**JEROME PIKWANE Transcript: 30 June 2024**

GABI ZIETSMAN [INTERVIEWER]: So let's start off with what about the tokoloshe myth first attracted you to it?

JEROME PIKWANE [INTERVIEWEE]: I think we all grew up with it, with one aspect of it or another. It was interesting that, you know, when we were doing research, different regions have their own take on the myth. There are like a few changes here and there in the myth, but more or less it's, you know, this evil spirit that steals children and enters your dreams. There's a lot to do with, like the psyche, people that have been cursed, how it affects their psyche, people that believe they've been cursed. It's kind of South Africa's bogeyman. Every country has their own bogeyman - I did research, Brazil has theirs [the cuca], South Korea [the Kotgahm], whatever the culture may be, they have that figure that their parents told them about so that they can behave. I found that there's obviously more going on there from a cultural and psychological perspective in terms of why we need these figures in society and in culture and what do they actually represent and how I think these figures can take [on] different meanings for different cultures. And I found that there was almost a sexual aspect to the tokoloshe - a rape aspect, if you could call it that?

So how do you use fantasy as an allegory for trauma? Because [the film] had started off as a bogeyman tale, but then it was kind of like, what is the core of the film? Like what is that central theme and the central theme for us became trauma. If you look at the film, it starts off like - you have this character who's trying to avoid her trauma at all costs. And then by the end of the film, she has no choice but to deal with the trauma. And that's what I think a lot of the classical heroes' journeys are about. It's about how do you overcome those obstacles? I think for me at least, the films that fascinate me are of - and I think for most people - [where] the characters that have an arc where you kind of just see this person either become better person or become worse. I don't know if my character became a better person or worse, but they definitely dealt in whatever way with their trauma they were forced to because of circumstances. I think that's what fascinated me about the story. It's like, how do you tackle trauma? And at that time also, in South Africa, we're talking about 2016 I think when we really locked the script, started shooting in 2017 or so, around

about there, completed in 2018. So there was a lot of, at that time, you know, prior to COVID, there was a lot of that Me Too movement and it kind of also came from that. There was this sort of this moment of reckoning, and we had to look at that. Because when we started the script, I think we started talking about the script in like 2010, me and my writing partner, but it was a completely different script like that. It was very horror, it was a very straightforward horror film, you know, it's a monster film. Then it kind of became something [else]. As you grow up and life happens to you and I ended up having a kid, I had a daughter and then you start asking yourself questions about the world and etcetera, etcetera. And I think [Kunzmann] also had a kid at that time. And you just felt like you can't make a film about this thing that chases people, you know? It has to be about something more and so I think that sort of also informed [it] - like your personal life informs the type of work you do. Not to say I've ever been in that sort of situation, you know, I can't imagine being in that situation. I spoke to victims and we did a lot of research, but obviously the research is only gonna go so far. It was an eye opener. I think that's the beauty of filmmaking is that you can, for a time, live in someone else's shoes, or at least relate, or try and get into their world.

GABI ZIETSMAN: There have also been a few imaginings of the tokoloshe folklore in movies and TV shows. Have you seen any of them? What do you think of them in comparison to your version?

JEROME PIKWANE: Uh, no, I haven't, to be honest with you. I had heard of some, but I think they are more straightforward, you know? I don't wanna say shlock horror, but you know what I mean? Yeah, they're a very straightforward genre, yeah.

GABI ZIETSMAN: So the one that I've seen, I don't know if you know *Die Spreeus*, which is an Afrikaans supernatural detective story on Showmax. So they have one episode with the tokoloshe, but it was very interesting that they also went with sexual abuse, in that episode as a theme, but also a lot of tokoloshe folklore is about them being familiars of witches or sangomas. And I was wondering, was there a reason you didn't go for that aspect of it or was that just not what you considered when you so [wrote the story], and also in terms of how the tokoloshe looks in your film - normally in a lot of the folklore it's this like this hairy,

impish creature and you went with a quite a quite a different creature design, so also wanted to ask about that.

JEROME PIKWANE: Originally with the design, our influences were Geiger, we wanted to go Geiger, but Geiger's also very industrial, so we didn't see how that would fit. So, what we wanted to do was we wanted it to be almost phallic, the tokoloshe, because of what we're dealing with, you know, the subject matter. And, in terms of the impishness, I think that is kind of the generic description of it, and I've heard different descriptions of it, like I said, depending on what region you're from. Some people think of a tokoloshe as zombie, like the witch doctor uses a hot iron or poker and you put in the skull of a corpse and resurrect it and it becomes a menace. I'm from the Northern Cape, so that's how we see it in folklore. We also have the, you know, the bricks, the bed on the bricks thing. But that's how we see it more like, you know, like a zombie. I think you're talking more according to like the Zulu in terms of [folklore]

GABI ZIETSMAN: Yes, I think that's the one.

JEROME PIKWANE: It's like similar to Zimbabwe and KZN. And it's more similar in terms of the mythology, because of culture, the shared language and then and so on. But in terms of the Northern Cape, it's a bit more different I think.

GABI ZIETSMAN: OK, cool. That's good to know. Yeah, and I know there are also lots of differences, so I just wanted to check which one yours were.

So, you make a very interesting, particular cinematic choice in how you filmed *The Tokoloshe* with your wide-angle shots. So I wanted to know why you went with that choice?

JEROME PIKWANE: I think the way we filmed, like the cinematography, was informed by whatever was happening with the character [Busi] internally. Even if you look at like it, it's wide because a lot of the time of the film, she's very insignificant, she's small. And also from her perspective, the world needs to feel big. It has to overwhelm her. And as you know, as things start to get crazier, we start becoming more claustrophobic. And then you know

towards the end when we have the climax, then we get a bit more wider because you have all these sugar reeds and things and you don't know what's gonna come at you. So, I think it's all informed, the cinematography for me at least, is informed by the character's state of mind.

GABI ZIETSMAN: Are there any reactions to the film that's stands out for you, either negative or positive?

JEROME PIKWANE: In general, because of the type of audience we played to, like people were positive because they knew - I mean, if you're at a horror festival, if you're going to a horror film, you know what you're gonna watch. I did have a screening earlier on for a couple of journalists. And one journalist just jumped up and she ran out towards the end, there's a scene where we reveal the [monster] and she just ran out. She's like had it with this sh\*\*, and was like, "Sorry, I don't know if I can anymore". Yeah, she just left, which I don't know if it's positive and negative, but she was just like so... which I found strange because I felt the film was so mild, it's such a mild film, comparatively. I mean, unless because of the psychological and spiritual aspect of the film, maybe that's what affected her.

Like I said, it depends. Each to their own, some people are affected more by blood, like people being hacked. I find, you know, anything to do with my mind, where the filmmaker [lets me] create the horror, that scares me more. I think that sort of film scares me more, like *Jaws*. That's why we tried to show us a little as possible, because I just think your mind has so much power with audience participation, you know?

GABI ZIETSMAN: Yeah, I think for me, I love horror, but I can't handle torture - physical torture.

JEROME PIKWANE: Like *Hostel*?

GABI ZIETSMAN: Yeah, I cannot and like I haven't even watched any *Saw* movies because I can't handle that kind of physical torture. Like obviously people get hacked to death and

stuff, but to me, that's not the same as torture. It's like this prolonged experience, the pain, and to me that's the one thing I just can't do.

JEROME PIKWANE: Yeah, that's sort of the sadistic aspect of horror. I'm not a fan of that as well. I think that there's something that, you know, I think when it's done properly, it can really work well as an allegory and there's good medicine in it. You can deal with things, you can talk about things in that space. Whereas I think if you do it straightforward in a traditional drama, it can become preachy.

But I think with genre, you have that space where you can address certain [issues], especially with our society, there are so many ailments, you know? And I think you can address is, because people go in and they think, "Oh, it's gonna be a cool science fiction film, cool horror film", and then it turns out like, "Oh, you know, they dealt with all sorts of other things that I wouldn't have wanted to deal with". And I think that's what's cool about it. So I'm also not a fan of torture - torture porn, I think, that's what they call it.

GABI ZIETSMAN: I think they call that yeah.

JEROME PIKWANE: Yeah, I'm not a fan. Sorry, I did watch, I have to say, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, the original, the other day. And I have to say, I think if you're gonna start off as a filmmaker and you wanna like, just make films, that was one of the films I looked at in terms of just using your limitations, because [the director] really uses it and that's from the 70s, but that film like sits with you. I watched it a week ago and it still like sits with me.

GABI ZIETSMAN: I think for me, one of the exceptions was *Cannibal Holocaust* that I had to watch for one of my classes. Or, they said we don't have to watch it because it's so intense because they kill actual animals on the screen. But I wanted to see it because it's one of those, like cult things. And I was very surprised how good the story was outside of just the shock of it. And they really wanted to make a point and I have to say, I think they did it well, except now unfortunately for killing animals, unfortunately not great, but the story was really interesting.

Okay, so how would you describe the film's cinematic gaze, especially in terms of how Busi looks and is looked at by other characters?

JEROME PIKWANE: I think she's almost childlike because, you know, her growth was stunted, and so she's very childlike and I wanted the audience to feel almost helpless in what she goes through. And I think a lot of people feel that way when they read all these things, cause what can most people do? You read the news and hear about these horrific things that are happening, you know, and even within the film, when we start the film as a voice-over, like a news report of all the statistics and stuff that's happening and I think that's kind of how I think the audience sees her - just this helpless woman until, you know, she's no longer helpless and she's no longer a victim. Even though we think she's helpless, she is actually fighting for something. She's fighting for a better life for herself and her sister, and once that's no longer obtainable, that's when we see her make a different stand.

GABI ZIETSMAN: And do you think a male audience and a female audience would react differently to how that's set up?

JEROME PIKWANE: I think because when you look at the character, it was interesting - and I discussed this with the actress and even as the way we dressed her, we wanted to make her quite conservative as well - but at the same time we did want the male audience to find her attractive but yet also feel guilty about that. Even with that bathing scene, you know, she's ultimately exposed there. Even when you look at like from a male perspective, you look at other horror films, you have [in] *Halloween* Jamie Lee Curtis. A lot of men in their mid-30s, mid-40s, you know that 10-year gap, cause you grew up in the late 80s, 90s, you [looked at] Jamie Lee Curtis in a certain way. You know you look at *Halloween* and it's like she's vulnerable, but at the same time, there's still that sexual component. So I think that is what's interesting about these sort of films - the victim is seen in two ways. And that's something that the audience also has to reconcile themselves in terms of their feelings. That's what we spoke about in terms of the actor's performance.

GABI ZIETSMAN: And so, you know, there's that section [in the film] with Abel, the blind character, and in a shop where you know there are African masks, which have been

transformed from the ritualistic to the fetishised, to the aestheticised as tourist trinkets over Africa's history - how would you describe the film's use of the African mask?

JEROME PIKWANE: When you look at those masks, most of the time, for most people, I don't think they actually have any meaning. They're very touristy, but if you then break it down - the mask we used, his name is Lumukanda. He's the cannibal chief, so he wards off evil spirits. Now [with] a lot of these masks, each mask has its purpose and what we wanted to explore because of the psychological aspect of the film, when you put value to something, even to an inanimate object, how much power does that object then get? Do you know what I mean?

I heard a story about when Alexander the Great conquered India. He went into this temple and he grabbed one of these holy relics and this brutal fight broke out between his soldiers and the priests and they ended up killing most of these priests. And the one priest that's survived, they asked him like, "Why were you guys fighting so much for this thing? What's this thing that's like a child's toy?" And the priest said, "What you guys don't understand, it's not about the thing. It's what the thing means and what spirit resides in that thing, the value given to that thing". So, I think that's what we wanted to explore, is this idea of what are those masks, you know, what do they mean? What does an object mean, a shrine or whatever you wanna make it?

GABI ZIETSMAN: And you know, also coming back to Abel, he's like an interesting character as the one male character that Busi can trust, guided by his spirituality and was there a specific reason why you made him blind?

JEROME PIKWANE: It's kind of like this old saying, "In the land of the blind..." You know it's all that. But also, we thought it be interesting to have this character that, you know, he's blind, but he sees the most. And that we thought was really interesting. He sees everything around him, but he can't physically see, you know, and also having a positive father figure was something we wanted, we felt was important, because it was just like there are so many males in this film just doing bad things. We didn't want this to be like the sort of - we don't want people look at this as sort of this negative, feminist take on men. So we felt like

we need to have like this positive male figure, cause we have all those guys just doing bad things. How do we have like just this one positive male figure? And it just happened to be the blind sangoma.

GABI ZIETSMAN: So at the end of the film, it's never confirmed if the tokoloshe was real or part of Busi's imagination, and why opt for this type of ambiguity?

JEROME PIKWANE: Yeah, I know. It was strange because when I watched the film, I thought for me it was clear. I didn't want it to be in your face, like I didn't have like lots of flashbacks. But it was clear for me.

GABI ZIETSMAN: What is it for you?

JEROME PIKWANE: Yeah, I hate telling people what to think in terms of like the film, you know? OK, let me ask you, what did you think?

GABI ZIETSMAN: I am on the fence. I think for me the question of Gracie being Busi as her younger self – [then] the tokoloshe also couldn't be real, but I wonder if the tokoloshe, as you said, can invade dreams that a real entity does invade her psyche in that sense and manipulates her in that way. But I'm more leaning towards nothing of it [was real]. It was all in her mind cracking, fracturing under being retraumatised by her white boss.

JEROME PIKWANE: Ruatomin

GABI ZIETSMAN: Yes, who the actor played very interestingly, especially in the car scene, I think that's one of the best scenes. Just in the car and we just see his hand and how it moves.

JEROME PIKWANE: Yeah, but that's trauma. Because, remember, you can't behave like that unless you also have been traumatised, like that dude comes from something. You know what I mean? The fact that he's always lurking, looking around, waiting for her to be alone so he can do something. He's always in the shadows and then she's not the first woman he



does that to, you know, he's done this to a lot of women in the hospital because none of them talk about it. But he's the minotaur, and that hospital is his maze. And that's what Rautomin is, reverse the spelling - minotaur.

GABI ZIETSMAN: So I wanted to ask as well, because for me the film takes a lot of Gothic traditions and was that something that you wanted to incorporate, the idea of the Gothic but in an urban setting?

JEROME PIKWANE: I don't know if you know the term "Sturm und Drang" literature can be characterised by its chaos, violence, and intense expressions of emotion.. It's German. It's this whole idea of deconstruction, you know, and we found with the Gothic world - well kind of neo-Gothic, Johannesburg neo-Gothic - it lends itself well to that deconstruction because everything has to come back to the fact that this woman's mind is slowly starting to unravel. Another film that was cool that we looked at was Jacob's Ladder. But in terms of visuals, one of the films I loved was *Se7en*, it does that deconstructed look, it's very Gothic. It's very dirty, ugly, and I thought Johannesburg as an aesthetic lends itself well to [that], you know, New York as well, because New York is also very Gothic. And I liked this idea of the areas we shot in Johannesburg with the old Hillbrow - you get the sense that the old white people left and migrants moved in and you look at those buildings [which] look [like] from a different time. They don't look like they should be there, but they are. So I just love that sort of aspect of it, how it complemented what is going on in her mind.

And going back to what you said, how everything, the tokoloshe, Grace is influenced by what she thinks. This whole thing comes from her mind. We're in the character's mind. That's what the films ultimately is.

GABI ZIETSMAN: The rural setting of the film, was that supposed to represent anywhere specifically, or is it a lot more just general rural South Africa?

JEROME PIKWANE: It's supposed to be generic, in terms of just speaking about how a lot of women migrants - whether it's from other provinces, whether it's from some other parts of Africa, and even just men as well, as migrants - they had to leave their homes and go and

work, women had to go and work, leave the kids to be cleaners, send back money. That's still happening, or men had to go and work in the mines, or as gardener or as labourers or whatever. So, it was just generic. It's an aspect of South African life, you know, and I think we all can relate to that. We've seen that, we all know that aspect.

GABI ZIETSMAN: So, what is your relationship with your culture's mythology and folklore?

JEROME PIKWANE: Look, so I'm Christian. But I do believe that there are... Like for example, I was very careful about certain aspects of this film that I didn't want to touch. You know, there's certain things I don't wanna get into. I really felt like I wanted to explore the socio-economic aspects of the film and also just talk about what's going on at that time. There was a lot going on in terms of the reckoning happening with MeToo and all that. So I think that was the aspect I was tackling it from, but culturally like I said, I don't want to speak on behalf of any group. It's very tricky to do that.

GABI ZIETSMAN: And how do you think African horror film might be distinctive from Hollywood, or European or Asian horror films?

JEROME PIKWANE: I think by talking about what Africans are going through and drawing that back to whatever your culture is. I think what we have is new stories we can tell, where I think [for] those guys - there's only so many stories you can tell. Like we grew up with their mythologies and their culture. And I think what's interesting is that's why you are seeing a lot of Hollywood now taking African film stories you know? That's happening, whether it's *Black Panther*, whether it's - there's this new show, also from Japanese aspect, *Shogun* - I love that show, it's great show - but I think they are running out, there's only so much they can tell us. So now they're looking at other parts of the world.

So, I think it's a good time and I hope that corporates and various institutions that fund these films, continue to do so, because that's our strength. Trying to make generic stuff that's like Hollywood - I think there's a novelty there. It's like, "Oh that's cute", but after all it runs out because they do it so much better. Why have a cheap imitation when we can be our own and make our own stories. And I think we can do it as well as them now. I mean the

technology is there, the tech has made it so competitive for us to be able to tell those stories whereas if we try and do their thing, I don't think it's gonna work.

But I'm excited. I think we just need the corporates and the public sector [to also come to the table]. See I was very strategic, I said 'public sector' and not the G-word. I hope they come to party as well. And you know, just [that] we start telling more South African stories but [in] high quality - good cinematography, good craftsmanship and we have the people. I think we do have the people, just we need the funding and we need to tell our stories. I think that's, like I said last time we spoke, I think, like right now you're being dictated to. Like this is the type of films to tell and it's like it's so blatantly knockoffs and I don't want to do that. It's like why?

GABI ZIETSMAN: Is there a positive way and a negative way to incorporate African mythology into a film?

JEROME PIKWANE: If it doubles down and reinforces narrow, negative stereotypes, yes. But no, I think we need to see more African mythology. Cause I think that gives, especially the younger generations, a sense of belonging. They never had that, you know. Like I never knew there was such - and I was like a comic book guy growing up, of what we could get - but I never knew of Black Panther. I never knew such a character existed and I grew up in the 90s and I'd never heard of it, like Black Panther? Like I knew Blade when the movie came out, you know, but I've never heard of Black Panther before in my life.

GABI ZIETSMAN: That's really interesting.

JEROME PIKWANE: I mean, besides Blade and Spawn, I've never heard of any other black super heroes, and there's this whole pantheon that we're finding out now, but because of censorship...

GABI ZIETSMAN: Yeah, they curtailed positive black representation.

JEROME PIKWANE: Representation, yeah.

GABI ZIETSMAN: Have you ever received backlash for how culture is depicted in your film?

JEROME PIKWANE: No, I think there's just a critique about the film, like the genre itself. Why make this genre film? It's dark. Because like I said, South Africa is very conservative, which is strange because I think even as a Christian you can't pretend there isn't darkness. It's like there's evil and there's good and sometimes they reside in one person.

GABI ZIETSMAN: Is culture political and can it be political in the horror genre? Or can it come across as being exploitative as an aesthetic?

JEROME PIKWANE: It can be political if it's propaganda. But if you're trying to depict a certain group this way, you're trying to reinforce a certain ideology.

I don't approach it [that way]. I don't think most horror filmmakers approach horror that way, because horror is an institution because of the fans, not because of the corporations. Because anytime the corporations try to institutionalise it, you end up with that rubbish, like *The Exorcist* [sequel]. The same guy directed [the *Halloween* reboots] though – David Gordon Green. He did *Halloween*, the remakes, the trilogy, and that was a really good remake, really good remake, and then he did *The Exorcist: Believer* and oh my God.

GABI ZIETSMAN: Yeah, that was bad. I just saw the trailer was like [no].

JEROME PIKWANE: And now they've got a new dude to do it, and that's what I'm saying. Because now it's corporatised, it's the flip, and Marvel did that as well. "We're gonna tell the fans how [the story goes]". No, it doesn't work that way. And then they have their agenda. It's like no. These nerds don't want this stuff, you know?

GABI ZIETSMAN: And how do you attempt to frame culture in your films?

JEROME PIKWANE: I think culture is constantly evolving and I think that's what film has to do, film has to talk about that. We're living in a post-COVID, post-MeToo world. The culture

is completely different. The relationship between men and women aren't like what they used to be. I'd like to think it's more balanced, you know. Well, in my house it is, you know.

GABI ZIETSMAN: I think people are more open to discussing those issues rather.

JEROME PIKWANE: I think we still live in a patriarchal society, but I don't think it's as authoritarian as it used to be? It isn't as stringent. I think there is more discussion. In my household, compared to the way my parents lived, whereas in my household, it's completely different. There's a lot of discussion that happens now – there are three women in my house. So it's a lot of discussions.

GABI ZIETSMAN: So you know, we've talked a bit about trauma or repressed trauma, which is such an integral part of the horror genre. But where do you think the line is with presenting that trauma in film and how much of real-life trauma seeps through into artistic work?

Is there a line to how much you can show that within the horror genre without it becoming exploitative?

JEROME PIKWANE: No, I think to each his own. It's what your palette [can handle], I mean my palette can maybe take a lot less than what your palette can and vice versa. I think to each his own - like I said, I'm not a fan of torture porn and you know having people's limbs chopped off while someone's giggling with a chainsaw. Like there has to be a purpose to these things. Else, what are we doing?

I mean, I have a friend, a horror director, but he's from overseas, so their culture and markets are very different, you know? But he does, like intense horror sequences. His films are good, but you have to have a very strong stomach for them. It's kind of like the *Saw* vibe and *Hostel* and that sort of thing. But yeah, to each his own.

GABI ZIETSMAN: And do you think horror subverts social institutions, or does it reinforce social institutions?

JEROME PIKWANE: Which type of social institutions?

GABI ZIETSMAN: Just generally, like patriarchy, class...

JEROME PIKWANE: I think it subverts. I think it explores what's wrong with a lot of it, you know, with a lot of institutions. And I think what people have to understand is even with horror, it's binary, right. So you have conservative horror, and you have liberal horror. Conservative horror is like, it's those people, the ones there in the woods, the monsters are coming for us. And liberal horror says, the monster is inside of me. It's Jekyll and Hyde. I have to control the monster, [there's] this duality, the evil and the good are within. It's not that you're a good person because you [you can't do] bad things, its cause you control the bad things you can do, right?

So I think horror is binary. For example, I think the institution of family is a good thing. So I think if horror speaks to how, you know, maybe you don't have a traditional family in the sense that these are the people that you were born into a family into, but these are the people who chose to be a family, you know what I mean? So it depends on what institution we're talking about. Not all institutions are bad. Not all institutions are good.

GABI ZIETSMAN: And would you say Busi is a good person or bad person, if you think about the implication that she killed her parents potentially by burning the house, as you're not sure if they're in the house or not?

JEROME PIKWANE: No she did kill them. She definitely killed them. No, I mean, that's a full psychotic episode, that we saw at the end.

GABI ZIETSMAN: But do you think she's responsible for her actions in the film?

JEROME PIKWANE: I can't call her a good or bad, but I don't think her actions were good. I don't think it's good to deal with things that way, but I've never had the things that have happened to her happen to me. So, we're talking about someone who had a complete and

utter [breakdown]. If you look at it in a court case, I don't think she'd go to jail. Let me put it that way. Do you know what I mean? What she did at the end, it wasn't premeditated. She dealt with the events as they were happening to her.

So in a sense, maybe she is a victim, I don't know. But I don't see her as a bad person. I think she did bad things cause society did bad things to her first. There were elements of the film that we wanted to make it feel a bit more like Hollywood at the end and stuff, a bit more action, but ultimately it's not a Hollywood film, it's an arthouse film. It's not really a horror film, but it is what it is.

She reacted to society and I think that's what happens a lot of time with certain people, a lot of people in society are just reacting. They're just reactional and we see them on the news. And I don't think those people are bad, I just think that society has, and like you said, in certain institutions, have dealt with a lot of people in a very bad way, especially the most marginalised and the most vulnerable people. And I think, unlike most times, we read about these women who just were killed and nothing, like what happened to her sister. She [Busi] was not the one that got killed, she was the one that got retribution.

I don't know it's circumstances. It's tricky to ever go “good person, bad person” in the making of film, you know what I mean? Unless it's like, I don't know, *Harry Potter* or something.

GABI ZIETSMAN: But do you think - you mentioned earlier about conservative horrors versus liberal horrors - do you think maybe in conservative horrors there's a much clearer distinction between good and evil?

JEROME PIKWANE: No, I think both are from both perspectives, you know. Look, I'm not a radical person, you know? I was informed by both aspects of horror. I watched a lot of, *The Thing*, you know when you're dealing with communism and paranoia and how eventually everybody starts turning on each other - the McCarthyism aspect of American society, what happened there. And I think that's happening again and that's a form of conservatism, right?

And I think liberals are doing that too now. Liberals think they are liberal, but they actually are very conservative [in] their tendencies, you know? You can't say certain things. You can't talk about certain things. Don't offend, and I think that's where we're at. I think it's a warning that both sides can be very dangerous. Whether it's you will do anything to keep this institution [up] or whether you will do anything to destroy it. I think you have to find, at least from my perspective, you have to find a middle ground.

But maybe I'm getting old. You know, ten years ago, I think I could have leaned a little bit more on the other side then, but now I'm in the middle. I think you have to have that balance and I think that's where we are at the world. There's no balance anymore. It's extremes. You see it in the weather. You see it in everything, it's just extremes. Politics as well - extreme liberalism, extreme conservatism.

GABI ZIETSMAN: And also a key trope in horror films is the idea of the Other. And who or what is framed as the Other in your film?

JEROME PIKWANE: I don't have the Other in our film. I think the perspective of the Other is most of the time a perspective of privilege, if it's the Other, because they're coming to take stuff. So, we don't have that, because she is the Other, in that sense I guess, because she's a migrant, she's a nobody in a sense. She's one of a multitude of faceless women that are part of the workforce in this country and nobody cares, really. That's the society we live in, so I think maybe she is the Other if you put it that way.

GABI ZIETSMAN: But you didn't like try and create an Other in that sense?

JEROME PIKWANE: No, cause she's marginalised, she's part of the marginalised. Like I said, if there is an Other, maybe she is the Other. Like I said, I think the Other's, like a from my perspective, like a privilege perspective.

GABI ZIETSMAN: Do you think of the idea of the Other is different in African horror films compared to how Western horror films approach the Other?



JEROME PIKWANE: I think the Other in an African horror film deals more with socio-economic issues. I think from a Western perspective of what I've seen, you know, growing up watching Western horror films, because of politics, I think there was a lot of that, like I said, Communism and the strange people are coming or the downtrodden people are coming to take stuff. And so I think with African [horrors] it's a little different because it's different issues. It's a lot of different issues.

GABI ZIETSMAN: And do you think horror can offer a certain catharsis for certain African issues that other genres might not?

JEROME PIKWANE: Oh, definitely. I think fantasy in general can do that, because with fantasy I think you can get people that you - or horror or just let me say genre - I think you can get people that you won't necessarily get, because like I said, people feel like you're preaching to them. If you just go straightforward, you know, "This is about a woman [Busi] who's trying to save her sister from horrible circumstance. She works in the hospital and he's been stalked by her boss". That's like ugh, but if there's a supernatural element that she meets this girl [Grace] and this girl is plagued by this supernatural force, and it's like, "Oh really?"

So I think with genre and fantasy, it's almost like - you know how you give kids medicine, but you disguise it with other foods, you know, our parents used to do that when we were kids. I think that's what you can do with genre, you can deal with things in a more palatable way.

GABI ZIETSMAN: Awesome, I think that was the last of my questions.