

Brenda Efurhievwe – YLC event proposal

International Women’s Day movie screening and Panel Discussion

“Solidarity is our weapon” was the rousing war cry of the brave Polish women who initiated the 2016 Black Protest against the curtailment of women’s rights in their country.

The strength of this movement is underpinned by its intersectional, grassroots perspective which inspired thousands of individuals, previously not inclined to vocalise their concerns, to go out into the streets.

It is often said that a nation’s greatness may be measured by how it treats its “weakest members”. What the Polish Black Protests demonstrated is that, when a government attempts to curtail the basic human rights of women, over half of the population may suddenly be reclassified as an endangered, powerless “minority”.

The Women’s Strike movement, continues its struggle to prevent the abolition of legal abortions in Poland. However, those galvanised by its rise continue defending the human rights of other minorities in Poland, as demonstrated by the co-operation between women’s rights activists, LGBT+ groups and movements against racism and xenophobia.

The complex position of minorities in Poland may be demonstrated by a screening of POLYLAND, a moving documentary, which follows a year in the lives of three women:

POLYLAND gives a voice to three strong female characters from different minorities in Poland and explores the nuances of how it feels to be black, Muslim or LGBTQ+ in the most homogenous country in an ever more right-leaning Europe. POLYLAND's three women were all born in Poland and currently are citizens of Wrocław. Ania, Miriam and Elmelda seek to be seen, not as “the other”, but as a part of Polish society.

Their efforts involve creating self-help groups, organizing protests and appearances on local TV and... Everything appears to be going towards the right direction, the women believe that a liberal society is within reach until the recent, dramatic shift in Polish politics shatters their hopes and confidence.

Being focused on one city, POLYLAND explores macro problems of multiculturalism, discrimination and the rise of populism on a micro level, but globally the story of Elmelda, Miriam and Ania reflects many other stories across the borders. <https://vimeo.com/157570506>

The screening will be followed by a panel discussion regarding the role of women’s rights as a barometer of the respect for fundamental human rights and the means of defending against violations. The Polish example of an intersectional, woman lead movement will allow us to discuss the best means of defending human rights in a country in the midst of a divorce with democracy and the rule of law.

Proposed panellists:

- Dasa Raimanova (Director of POLYLAND)
- Marta Lempart (Head of Polish Women’s Strike, Lawyer)
- Elmelda Mashingo (President of the Colourful Children Foundation)
- Anna Piotr Smarzyński (President of Culture of Equality)
- Angela Jackman (Partner, Simpson Millar LLP and Senior Lecturer, The City Law School)

Proposed Venue: BPP University Law School, 68-70 Red Lion St, London WC1R 4NY

Proposed Date: Friday 2 March 2018