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## PRESS KIT



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**Professor Sidney Bloch, determined to confront his guilt for colluding with Apartheid, returns to South Africa with his teenage son.**

56 and 52 min Documentary, Study Guide & DVD with 45 min extras

Rod Freedman - Writer, Director & Producer

[freedman@changefocus.com.au](mailto:freedman@changefocus.com.au)

Tel. + 612 9810 9899 Fax. + 612 0810 9799

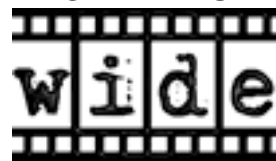
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# SYNOPSES

## 1 line synopsis

**Professor Sidney Bloch, determined to confront his guilt for colluding with Apartheid, returns to South Africa with his teenage son.**

## 1 para synopsis

Sidney Bloch, an internationally recognised professor of psychiatry from Melbourne Australia, returns to Cape Town for his medical school reunion. Sid has suffered from a troubled conscience for forty years and wants to resolve his guilt for colluding with Apartheid – but what will it take to free him from his past? He's accompanied on his quest for reconciliation by his son, Aaron, who is also his harshest critic. Narrated by Aaron, the film explores how a good person accepts racism and injustice.

## 1 page synopsis

What's the price of being a bystander? Sidney Bloch is an internationally recognized professor of psychiatry, ethicist, loving father, singer and author of books on mental health. He is also a man with a troubled conscience. Sid is returning to South Africa for his medical school reunion, determined to resolve the guilt that has troubled him for forty years. He's accompanied by his teenage son, Aaron who turns out to be his harshest critic.

In the Apartheid era, Sid had benefited as a 'White', contributed negligibly to the struggle against racism and then left for Israel the day after his medical graduation in 1964. A sense of guilt and shame accompanied him throughout his later move to Australia.

Growing up in Apartheid South Africa, Sid abhorred the system but did almost nothing to oppose it. So how does a man who lost fourteen relatives in the Holocaust become complicit with a racist system? In 1964, twelve of the one hundred medical graduates in his class were classified 'Non-White' and were subject to a myriad restrictions – blacks couldn't examine white patients, couldn't attend post-mortems on white bodies and couldn't socialize equally. Sid and his white colleagues barely registered this reality.

Sid wants to confront his lack of courage during the Apartheid years. He's determined to hold a reconciliation event at the reunion, despite warnings that he may be taking people back to where they'd rather not go. But Sid won't be put off. Connecting with his one 'Coloured' friend, Irwin, to, Sid finds Irwin's frankness confronting.

Flummoxed by black South Africans who say they've forgiven the Apartheid regime, Sid is himself unable to forgive the Afrikaners, who he always regarded as the enemy, akin to Nazis. In an unexpected encounter, he comes face to face with his own prejudice. Joining a '*Facing The Past*' workshop, he feels for the first time a sense of belonging and is overwhelmed with emotion. Yet he still appears stuck in his dilemma as a bystander and his sense of guilt. Who is there to forgive him? He seems unable to accept that changes have occurred and that people have moved on.

Sid seeks out victims of Apartheid, former colleagues who stayed to make a difference and political activists such as Judge Albie Sachs, measuring his own stand against theirs. What were his choices? What do they think of him? Aaron critically observes his father's explorations, provoking him to move on and at least, forgive himself. Redemption comes from an unlikely source on notorious Robben Island. In Nelson Mandela's former cell, Sid and Aaron are given a symbolic new start, their key to a new future.

The film explores how easy it is to accept injustice and compromise one's morals. Though it's easy for any good person to become a bystander, it's not so easy to live with the consequences. ***Wrong Side of the Bus*** is the story of a journey to forgiveness.



## **WRONG SIDE OF THE BUS – KEY CREATIVE PERSONNEL**

Writer, Director and Producer	ROD FREEDMAN
Co-Producer, Script Editor	LESLEY SEEBOLD
Editor	JOANNE LEVITAN
Cinematographer	MARC RADOMSKY
Sound Recordists	CRAIG LARKIN ROD FREEDMAN GARY RUNDLE
Original Music	TODD HUNTER
“When God Made Africa” sung by	THEMBA LONZI
Online Facilities	ROEN DAVIS, CBD THABO NEL
Sound Post Production	TONY WEBB PHOENIX AUDIO
Opening Titles	MICHELLE FRENCH

**For full credits list, go to end of Press Kit**



## **BIOS OF KEY CREW**

### **Rod Freedman – Writer, Director, Producer**

An independent filmmaker, Rod Freedman's films have screened in dozens of international film festivals, winning international and Australian awards, including two AFI nominations for *UNCLE CHATZKEL*. With partner Lesley Seebold, Rod's company, Change Focus Media produces documentaries, corporate, promotional and educational videos.

With Film Australia, Rod has made *UNCLE CHATZKEL* (1999, Producer/Director), the *EVERYDAY BRAVE SERIES* (2001, Series Producer, *Best TV Series, Tudawali Awards*) made with Indigenous directors, *WELCOME TO THE WAKS FAMILY* (2001 Co-Producer, 2<sup>nd</sup> Unit Director), *THE WINNERS GUIDE TO THE NOBEL PRIZE* (2006 Co-Executive Producer) three series of *AUSTRALIAN BIOGRAPHY SERIES* (2002, 2005, 2007 Series Producer/Director), and *CHANGE THE WORLD IN 5 MINUTES* (2007 Executive Producer).

Independent Films include: *WRAP ME UP IN PAPERBARK* (1999 Producer), *ONE LAST CHANCE – WAR CRIMINAL* (2000 Producer/Director, winner of 3 USA awards) *CROSSING THE LINE* (2004 Producer, *Best Documentary, Social & Political, Atom Awards*), *IT TAKES A VILLAGE* (2008 Producer/Director), *STAY STRONG* (2008 Producer/Director), *STRONG AND DEADLY* (2008 Producer/Director), *LOOKING FOR A MONSTER* (in production).

### **Joanne Levitan – Editor**

A mutiskilled script-writer, producer, director and editor, Joanne has worked in current affairs, actuality television and documentary films in both South Africa and Holland. In late 2000, she co-founded the production company, Pandamonium Productions ([www.pandamonium.co.za](http://www.pandamonium.co.za)), which became recognised in the South African television industry for its consistent production of high quality, innovative, creative, entertaining and thought-provoking programming. Over 8 years, the company produced two successful series and a number of documentary films, many of which have screened internationally. In 2003, Joanne spent a year at the United Nations in Den Haag, Holland covering the Yugoslavian War Crimes Tribunal. She arrived in Sydney in 2008 and worked with Change Focus Media on various projects.

### **Lesley Seebold – Co-Producer, Script Editor**

Lesley has had an extensive and varied career in film and television as researcher, presenter, writer and director. As a freelance director, Lesley worked for SBS-TV, Channel 9, Channel 10 and USA Networks and was a staff director at ABC TV for 12 years. Since co-founding Change Focus Media, Lesley has written and directed a wide variety of corporate and educational resources, she has interviewed an impressive line-up of distinguished Australians for ABCTV and travelled extensively making programs for the Rural Health Education Foundation.

*"He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it.  
He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it."*

*- Dr Martin Luther King*



## **ROD FREEDMAN - DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT AND VISION**

I grew up in South Africa until 1965, when my family emigrated to Australia. Making this film with Sid and Aaron was my first return to South Africa. My father was a medical graduate of the University of Cape Town, where Sid graduated, so I felt drawn to this film through historical connection and shared experience.

My experience in directing *'Uncle Chatzkel'* (two AFI nominations and several international awards), a personal journey to meet my Lithuanian great uncle, was a natural foundation for exploring another part of my history, South Africa, albeit through another's eyes.

The central theme is the dilemma of being a bystander and the price of not taking action. Sid's journey with his son, Aaron, is about reviewing his past moral choices, re-evaluating his actions and investigating how other people responded to the situation. I was intrigued by Sid's capacity to openly express his dilemmas to Aaron, who naturally questions the choices his father has made.

The themes of being a bystander, facing the past and forgiveness are relevant to Australian and international audiences. To a greater or lesser extent, we are all bystanders. We may oppose the government's treatment of refugees, or we feel something should be done about indigenous health, but when it comes down to it, what do we do? Is helplessness sufficient excuse?

Sid left South Africa in 1964 at the age of twenty-three, strongly disaffected by the country's racist system. My early memories are similar to Sid's, though he is ten years older. Although I was only fourteen when I left, I recall clearly the effects of Apartheid on all of us – the everyday injustice in our society, the inequality of opportunity for whites and blacks and revulsion of the police state which arose to keep the white minority in power. All this was complicated by a sense of helplessness to change the system and a fear of speaking out.

Like Sid, my family is Lithuanian-Jewish background, so we were not only a minority of Whites within a Black majority, but also a Jewish minority within the White English-speaking minority. Our forebears had migrated from the oppression and poverty of Eastern Europe to a land of opportunity in South Africa. Paradoxically, we became oppressors, simply because we were white.

We never felt comfortable in this role and regarded ourselves as not being part of 'the system'. People in our neighbourhood were placed under house arrest, we knew people under indefinite detention and my father helped an uncle escape over the Botswana border because he was about to be arrested as a 'communist'. Unable to imagine peaceful change or a future for their children, my parents opted to leave Johannesburg around the same time as Sid emigrated from Cape Town and for the same reason – we abhorred Apartheid. But to what extent did we, and fellow Jewish White South Africans, also collude with the system? Certainly we were beneficiaries, even if we all professed to disagree with it.

Sid could be criticized for being a 'bleeding heart' and self-indulgent. He might be seen as self-righteous. But his openness attracted me and is a strength of the film. I thought he was courageous in asking challenging questions of himself, facing his past and attempting to reconcile with his colleagues and his conscience. By taking his son, Aaron, to pass on his story he was also prepared to be vulnerable.

I hope audiences will find this a provocative, relevant and ultimately inspiring film. At least, it should challenge audiences to consider their own roles as bystanders in everyday life and to consider the alternatives.





## **NARRATIVE VOICE**

Aaron narrates the story, to keep us inside the journey. I tried narrating it myself in earlier edits, but it felt less intimate. This narrative form will appeal to a high school audience. The narration provides factual and historical information at times to tell the Apartheid backstory, but for the most part, it is personal. We rely mainly on the dialogue between Sid and Aaron and key interviews to inform us of the events of Sid's twenty three years of living in a racist society. Sid is naturally candid and gregarious, readily sharing memories and expressing his feelings to his son. Aaron is sympathetic but also goads Sid at times, resulting in a dynamic ideal for television.

Since the film is mainly observational of Sid and Aaron's journey, their interviews and dialogue are used wherever possible for voiceover, to reduce narration. Sid was encouraged to use Aaron as his foil, so much of the story comes from their interaction, but because they sometimes had separate experiences, they are not always seen together. Apart from the organized interviews with social and political activists, there are also spontaneous voices in unplanned encounters (Sid has a tendency to converse with strangers) which add richness to the unfolding story.

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## **MUSIC**

Music plays a crucial role in Sid's life and was a vital spiritual resource as he grew up. Music and songs recorded on location are a strong thread through the film. The opening and closing song sung by Themba Lonzi, 'When God Made Africa', was recorded on location. In other sequences, Sid sings with the choir in the hospital, in his old synagogue and joins in the exuberant singing at the *Facing The Past* workshop.

Composer **Todd Hunter** (of iconic Australian band *Dragon* fame) is a Hall of Fame Award-winner and an experienced composer for film and television. Todd's original music features percussion and marimbas to give a South African flavour.



## ***SHOOTING STYLE***

Shot on 16:9 DVCAM, most of the film is observational verite style. We used handheld or a monopod for the verite material and shot the more formal interviews on the tripod. The style evolved out of the inquisitive, conversational nature of Sid's way of communicating. Both organised and spontaneous encounters have been filmed with minimal formality. We're mainly interested in the interchange of experiences and the living moments that occur, focusing on the reactions of our two protagonists to their encounters. As well as the gritty reality of townships and street life, there are also opportunities to show the extraordinary beauty of Cape Town.

The narrative moves between the personal present, the personal past and the political past via four main visual elements:

- verite observation
- formal interviews
- Sid's personal archival material
- South African archival material

Sid's rich personal archive of stills and slides from his well-documented youth give us a clear picture of the locations and moods of his time in South Africa.

South African archival stills chequerboard us between the past and the present, reminding us of the social and political milieu in which Sid matured. On the shoot, I visited the main sources for this material, the Mayibuye Archive and National Library of South Africa in Cape Town. We have also sourced photographs from a variety of other sources, including photographers active during the Apartheid years.



## ***PRODUCTION STORY by Producer/Director, Rod Freedman***

I was approached by Sid Bloch after he'd seen my documentary, *Uncle Chatzkel*, a personal journey to meet my great uncle in Lithuania. Sid told me he was planning to go back to South Africa for his medical school reunion and to take his son, Aaron, with him. He wanted to show Aaron what it was like growing up in a racist system, but he also needed to achieve some kind of reconciliation with his former medical school colleagues and deeper than that, with his own conscience. He invited me to film the journey.

I was intrigued. "But why would you want it filmed?" I asked. Sid responded, "I think the experience might be a good lesson for young people about the effects of racism. It might be used as an educational resource." I thought that was a good aim and decided to get to know Sid. I was interested to explore the issues Sid was raising, having grown up in South Africa myself.

I went to Melbourne to meet the Bloch family. I could see that their father/son relationship was dynamic - argumentative but appreciative and good-humoured. I really wasn't sure there was a film in it though. I warned Sid that we could end up with a home movie of the trip that wasn't particularly relevant to other people. But I thought the story did have sufficient ingredients to make a good film if there was a true journey, not just a 'roots tour' visit to the old country, which you see in a lot of films. In other words, things needed to happen to make a difference to Sid and Aaron by the end.

I hired an ex-South African cameraman/director, Marc Radomsky, who I'd worked with and we picked up a sound recordist in Cape Town, so the crew was just three – myself, camera and sound.

Sid's medical school reunion in Cape Town was just after Aaron finished his final year at high school. We filmed interviews and background material for a few days in Melbourne and then flew to Cape Town for 3 weeks. Sid wanted to show Aaron his personal family history first, but every visit was in the context of the experience of Apartheid and its aftermath. Sid had gone to an all-white school, which was now de-segregated, with very few whites. There was an Indian family living in his old family house, previously in an all-white area. The public facilities look normal to an outsider, but if you'd grown up in the tightly segregated South Africa as I did, it's a wonderful thing to see people of all colours in the pools, restaurants and theatres.

The changes in the country are highly visible. Sid's grandparents' house is now surrounded by barbed wire and an electric fence, as are most houses in the better suburbs. Security in the new South Africa is an ongoing problem. A sign of how much the demographics has changed is the transformation of Sid's old synagogue to an Asian emporium. The Jewish population is a shadow of its former self, as families like Sid's left the country for either moral, security or economic reasons.

At first Aaron was a passive listener to Sid's stories, but he soon became more engaged. He began to question his father more intensely about how they'd lived under Apartheid, to think about his own attitudes and how he might have reacted had he been there. Aaron's role in asking difficult questions of Sid meant that I didn't need to play as direct a role as I might have and there was little need for formal interviews. Some of the best sequences for me are when Sid and Aaron are having a heated discussion and we're just observing. There's real engagement and you can see both of them grappling with the ethical and moral dilemmas.

Being Jewish myself, I was interested in the issues confronting South African Jews under Apartheid. I'd always thought of my community and family as very liberal – we were 'the good guys'. In a sense we were, in comparison to the supporters of Apartheid and the dominating Nationalist Party. Of course, we were hyper aware of racism and anti-semitism, but that didn't mean that everyone actively engaged in opposing Apartheid. There was a disproportionate number of Jews who were activists and involved with the African National Congress and other banned organisations, but most people just got on with their lives.

Honestly confronting our role, we were all beneficiaries of an evil system and to a great extent, we were bystanders. It was a good life, if you were white. We all had servants, we were 'good' to them, but we enjoyed our standard of living at the expense of the 'blacks'. We didn't know any as friends, we never socialised with them and we didn't do that much to change things, except vote for the Opposition.

The questions Sid asks himself in the film were not only relevant to those of us who lived through Apartheid, but I think they're relevant to most of us at any time. When you see something you disagree with, what can you do about it? How much personal risk are you prepared to take? What price are you prepared to pay? And what is the cost to yourself and your community of doing nothing? Like Sid, you can't keep thinking about the past or hang onto regrets and guilt, but it's important to face the past so you can work out how you'll act in the future.

## ***STUDY GUIDE AND DVD***

STUDY GUIDE	Available for free download from Ronin Films and from <a href="http://www.wrongsideofthebus.com">www.wrongsideofthebus.com</a>
DVD & EXTRAS	56 minutes and 52 minute versions with 45 minutes extras including interview with director

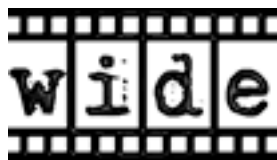
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PO Box 1005 Civic Square Canberra ACT 2608 Australia  
Tel +612 6248 0851 Fax +612 6249 1640

Email: [orders@roninfilms.com.au](mailto:orders@roninfilms.com.au)

## **INTERNATIONAL DISTRIBUTOR**



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40, rue Sainte-Anne - 75002 PARIS – France  
Tel +33 1 53 95 04 64 Fax +33 1 53 95 04 65  
Email: [wide@widemanagement.com](mailto:wide@widemanagement.com)

## **CONTACT:**

**Rod Freedman** Producer, Director

Change Focus Media

32 Beattie St, Balmain NSW 2041 Australia

Tel +61 2 9810 9899 Fax +61 2 9810 9799

Mob +612(0)418 219 053

Email: [freedman@changeofocus.com.au](mailto:freedman@changeofocus.com.au)

Website: <http://www.wrongsideofthebus.com>

# **FULL CREDITS LIST**

Written, Directed and Produced by  
Rod Freedman

Editor  
Joanne Levitan

Cinematography  
MARC RADOMSKY

Sound  
CRAIG LARKIN  
ROD FREEDMAN  
GARY RUNDLE

Co-Producer, Script Editor  
LESLEY SEEBOLD

Original Music  
TODD HUNTER

“When God Made Africa”  
by THEMBA LONZI

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THABO NEL

Sound Post Production  
TONY WEBB  
PHOENIX AUDIO

Opening Titles  
MICHELLE FRENCH

## **Archive Materials**

National Library of South Africa  
Cape Times Negative Collection  
Mayibuye Archives, UWC - Robben Island  
Cloete Breytenbach  
District 6 Museum  
Etienne du Plessis  
Jurgen Schadeberg  
Paul Alberts/South Photographs/  
[africanpictures.net](http://africanpictures.net)

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