

SPOTLIGHT ON

ZANELE MUHOLI

Stonewall

Who are Stonewall?

This resource is produced by Stonewall, a UK-based charity that stands for the freedom, equity and potential of all lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning and ace (LGBTQ+) people. At Stonewall, we imagine a world where LGBTQ+ people everywhere can live our lives to the full. Founded in London in 1989, we now work in each nation of the UK and have established partnerships across the globe. Over the last three decades, we have created transformative change in the lives of LGBTQ+ people in the UK, helping win equal rights around marriage, having children and inclusive education.

Our campaigns drive positive change for our communities, and our sustained change and empowerment programmes ensure that LGBTQ+ people can thrive throughout our lives. We make sure that the world hears and learns from our communities, and our work is grounded in evidence and expertise.

Stonewall is proud to provide information, support and guidance on LGBTQ+ inclusion; working towards a world where we're all free to be. This does not constitute legal advice, and is not intended to be a substitute for legal counsel on any subject matter. To find out more about our work, visit us at www.stonewall.org.uk.

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Zanele Muholi (they/them)

Zanele was born in South Africa in 1972.

They're the youngest of 8 children and their dad died shortly after they were born.



Apartheid

Zanele grew up during South African Apartheid. At this time, white people were treated well and People of Colour were treated very badly.

People of Colour had to live separately from white people. They went to different schools and had to use different facilities.



Family

Zanele's mother provided for the family by working for a white family.

In 1991 Zanele told their family that they date women. Their mother continued to be supportive of them after they came out.



What else happened in early 90s South Africa?

South African Apartheid ended in 1991.

At the age of 21, Zanele was able to vote in the 1994 election. This was the election that brought Nelson Mandela to power.



Change for LGBTQ+ people

During Apartheid, it was illegal to be LGBTQ+.

After Apartheid South Africa banned discrimination towards LGBTQ+ people.

Despite this, Black LGBTQ+ people in South Africa face a lot of violence.



Becoming a visual activist

In 2002 Zanele moved to Johannesburg. They co-founded an organisation called the Forum for the Empowerment of Women. It's a Black lesbian organisation which provides safe spaces for women to meet.

At around this time, Zanele started developing as a photographer.



“I picked up the camera because there were no images of us that spoke to me at the time when I needed them the most.”

Zanele Muholi

Zanele's work

Zanele's photos have always celebrated Black LGBTQ+ South African people.

Their work explores both positive and negative parts of people's lives.



Ongoing growth

In 2009 Zanele achieved a Masters degree in Documentary Media.

In the same year, they founded Inkanyiso, an organisation for LGBTQ+ visual artists in South Africa.



International success

Zanele has found international success and has exhibited their work internationally.

Their self-portrait series entitled Somnyama Ngonyama, which translates to ‘Hail the Dark Lioness’, is their most famous body of work.

By 2018 Zanele had started using they/them pronouns.

