

Politics and Photography in Apartheid South Africa

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Abstract

Resistance or struggle photography is a term describing the photographic documentation of conflict between oppressed and oppressor from the perspective of the subjugated. An example of this genre is explored in the context of apartheid South Africa during the 1980s through the work of a collective called Afrapix. This group's images of the repression of Black and Coloured populations by the apartheid regime, although largely curbed in South Africa, found an extensive international reception. These photographs contributed to the worldwide condemnation and sanctions that ultimately led to the collapse of the apartheid government. Whether photographs should be used as weapons in the political struggle, a position fostered by the African National Congress (ANC) and accepted by Afrapix, is explored through the divergent views of the photographer David Goldblatt. The decline of Afrapix is examined in relation to shifting market and aesthetic considerations following the end of apartheid.