

# DAZED

**& CONFUSED**

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THOKO MASILELA PHOTOGRAPHED BY RANKIN

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## FUTURE + POSITIVE

### THE SOUTH AFRICA ISSUE

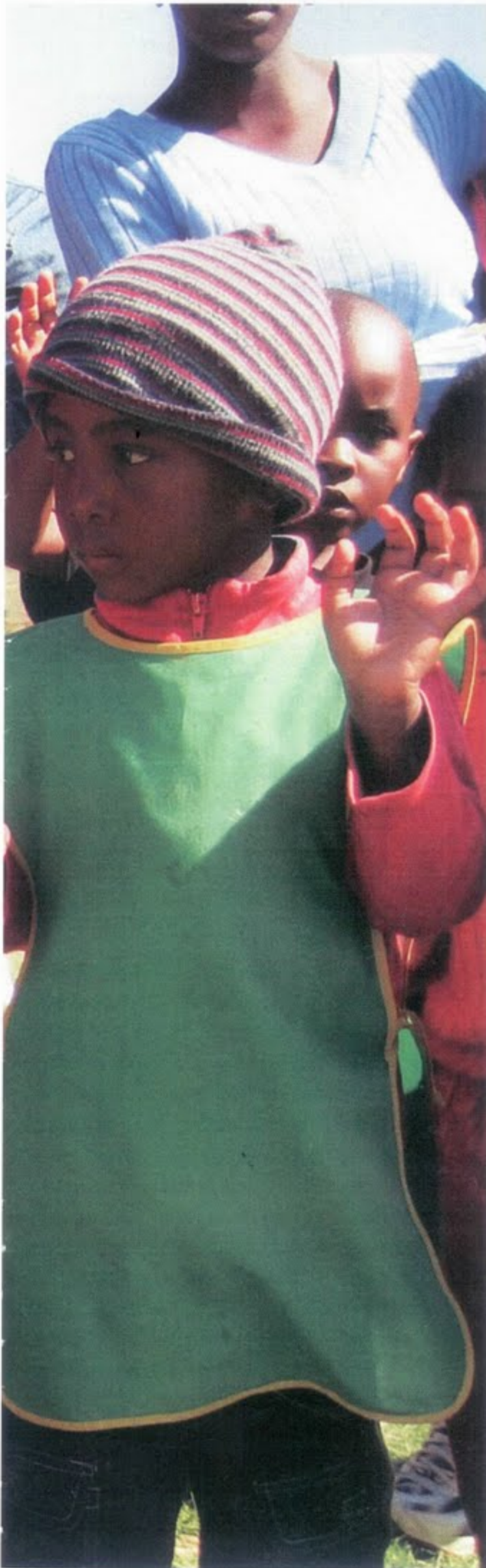
TEN YEARS OF FREEDOM - ATTITUDES. ARTS. AIDS. ASSIMILATION. ASPIRATION.

DAZED & CONFUSED VOL.2 #15 S.A. ISSUE DESMUND TUTU BONO HUGH MASEKELA BOB GELDOLF ZOLA

# A.S.A.P.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY JEFFERSON HACK





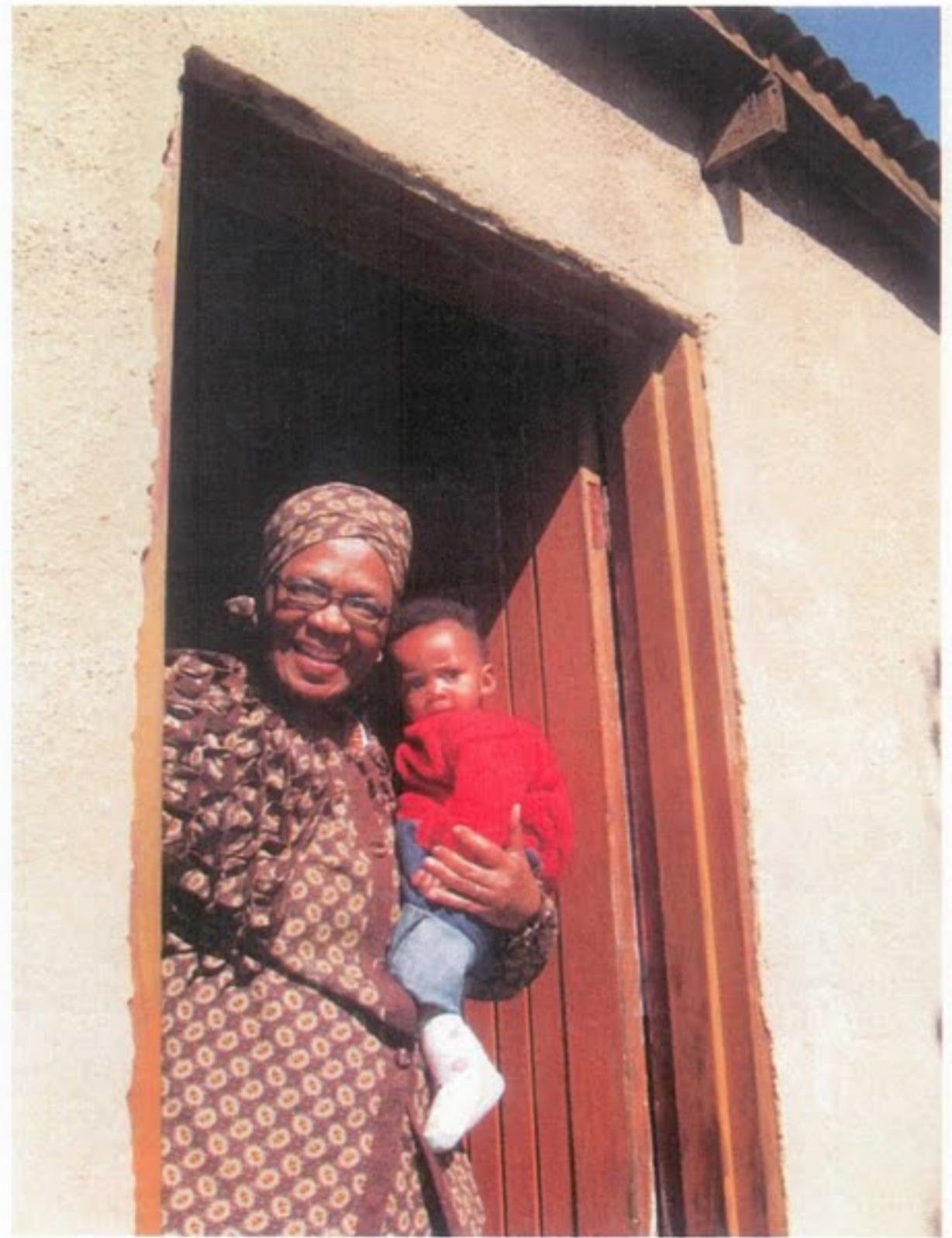
WHEN WE ASKED THE ELTON JOHN AIDS FOUNDATION WHICH GRASS ROOTS PROJECT WE COULD SUPPORT, THEY PUT US IN TOUCH WITH AFRICAN SOLUTIONS TO AFRICAN PROBLEMS (ASAP). THANKS LARGELY TO THE WORK OF JOURNALIST, CAMPAIGNER AND FUNDRAISER PRISCILLA HIGHAM, A.S.A.P. HAS MANAGED TO BRING INCREDIBLE SUPPORT TO RURAL COMMUNITY PROJECTS IN SOUTH AFRICA. DAZED WENT TO SEE EXACTLY WHERE 10 PER CENT OF THIS ISSUE'S GROSS ADVERTISING REVENUE IS GOING TO GO.

**These children's faces are the face of the future of South Africa: a nation slowly recovering from systematic abuse, and now struggling against poverty and disease. A nation whose children have had little to smile about, but surely now have everything to live for.**

Take a four hour drive south of Johannesburg and you hit the foothills of the Maluti Mountains. The clouds hang over them, framing the border with the kingdom of Lesotho. It's here at the foothills that you know you've hit the end of the road. One of the last rural townships is Phuthaditjhaba. Outside of its tiny town centre is a sprawling collection of thousands of tin, mud and brick shacks. A handful of municipal buildings dot the landscape; a hospital, a few schools and then more and more of the natural rolling landscape. This is a beautiful, graceful looking part of the world; rich with bristling sunsets and deep valley views, but scarred with the harsh reality of poverty and few or no opportunities.

Where poverty is this acute it doesn't take a medic to work out that malnutrition and disease are an everyday spectre. But the horrific legacy of HIV/Aids in rural Africa makes the story of its children even more gut wrenching. In townships like this, the statistics have reached chilling proportions; 30 per cent of South Africa's rural population is thought to be infected with HIV. Many of these children have been orphaned or abandoned, some were born with HIV and it's estimated that one in 20 children in rural areas are HIV positive – a shocking legacy of too little being done too late.

# A.S.A.P.



The need for sustainable, community-based projects such as day care centres for vulnerable children is vital for their survival. "If we did not exist, these children would be on the streets. They would be open to abuse, they would go hungry and many would simply die," says Pulane Cuefar, the founder of the Kakaretso Development Trust, who has dedicated her life to preserving the future of these children. We visited about six of the 40 or so day care centres that are controlled and run by her organisation in the region.

The Sentebale day care centre is actually a class above most. A basic two room, single floor brick house, it has no lighting but boasts a clean kitchen in the rear where the food for the children is prepared. A few half tyres are brightly painted. There is a slide constructed from the metal panels of a truck, a swing or two. Many of the children are orphans, some are HIV positive, but all are in a vulnerable situation one way or another. The premise of these centres is not to segregate, but to mix the children regardless of their background and history. If a child becomes sick, they are quickly identified and taken to hospital. But in these small havens the positivity of some of the children can rub off on the despair of others. Hope is also found through the love and genuine compassion of the women who look after the children. Amazing women who according to Higham, "in some cases walk tens of miles to look after the children and others in need. Before I started working with them two years ago they literally had nothing. Now I show them how to monitor and evaluate the little funding they get, so the money can go a long way and also so they are accountable and can get funding again."

Another remarkable aspect of Cuefer's work is the integration of income generating projects alongside the centres. These small backroom work spaces might house a few ovens for baking bread or a couple of sewing machines for making clothes. All of this can be sold back into the schools and local community, bringing cash back to the women and the centres. Many have also been planting vegetable gardens sponsored by ASAP. It's a powerful, sustainable way to bring healthy food to the plates of the children and reduce their reliance on costly mineral and vitamin supplements.

In the first year that Higham got involved with the project they were responsible for 200 children. Now approximately 900 are being helped. "Ideally we want to build these projects so they can become models for other parts of South Africa," explains Higham. "The women are starting to become so empowered because they are learning that there are other women in South Africa who are doing similar things. Now through a grant from the Elton John Aids Foundation they are able to visit and learn from each other – that creates a lot of possibilities for even more really great work to be done." Like the future of the country they were born into – there is promise and hope for change and a brighter future for these and millions of similarly impoverished children throughout South Africa.

[WWW.EJAF.ORG](http://WWW.EJAF.ORG)

Above right: Pulani Cuefer holding one of the Sentebale day care centre's youngest children.



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Right: Volunteers at the Sentebale day care centre. A basic shack is the centre for this group of young activists who, also funded by ASAP, visit local school and community centres with Aids education and sexually transmitted disease awareness programmes.