

Photographers bring township artists to the fore

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OVER the past few years, Warren Nelson and Alistair Berg's non-profit photographic society, Impilo Yethu, has helped numerous township photographers hone their skills and exhibit their art to local audiences.

With one Impilo Yethu member, Mandla Mnyakama, recently having had the honour of appearing on the cover of the academic publication *State of the Nation*, the pioneering work of Nelson and Berg has once again come under the spotlight.

Nelson, a Lakeside resident, started a photographic group called Umlilo that operated from Langa three years ago.

"The idea was simply for people with a passion for photography to meet and explore the art form together. Then, two years ago

Alistair, who had relocated from the UK to Noordhoek, got in touch with us and things grew from there," Nelson says.

The complementary combination of Nelson's artistic vision with Berg's technical and organisational skills, saw the formation of Impilo Yethu (eye of the nation), which aims to provide township photographers with the resources and skills to develop their art.

"We started going on three-day township shoots, in which society members spend two solid days exploring and capturing their environment.

"During this time one of us downloads the pictures onto a computer from where they are edited, printed and laminated.

"All of this is in preparation for a street exhibition on the last day,

when we hang the pictures out in the street for all the residents to see," Nelson says.

These improvised exhibitions have not only revealed a wealth of talent among Impilo members but have also given people in the township a chance to see their lives through the eyes of photographers who share their way of life.

"It is a different kind of picture. Township life is so often portrayed by people who come in, take a few snaps and leave. The difference in our photographers' work is tangible. "Our next step will be to exhibit their work to a wider audience.

"It will hopefully give people a new perspective on township life and perhaps show everyone how much common ground we really share," Nelson says.



A group of Impilo Yethu photographers attended the launch of the Human Sciences Research Council's *State of the Nation 2007* publication at Kalk Bay Books. Mandla Mnyakama won the honour of having his photo displayed on the book's cover. In the photo are HSRC marketing manager Karen Bruns, Mandla Mnyakama, Lindeke Qampl, Warren Nelson, Alistair Berg, Mcebisi Dion and Thobile Nompunga.

