

Balancing the scales

Actor Fabian Adeoye Lojede focuses on telling complete African stories

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IT took all of 30 seconds for a member of the public to recognise and start waving at Fabian Adeoye Lojede, cast member of the local television drama series about crafty oil magnates, *Jacob's Cross*.

"We just finished shooting the last season of the show and there's so much I've taken from it that I'm using in my other endeavours," he says.

"But the biggest lesson for me has been that the world is hungry for an alternative view of Africa and that they are appreciative of a different take of our continent. *Jacob's Cross* has been shown and well-received in France and the Caribbean and each time, viewers raise the fact just how different it is from other productions that only portray the negative side of Africa."

Lojede recently produced *Man On Ground*, a film that won the Best Movie Award at this year's Jozi Film Festival. Did this team also strive to tell a balanced story of Africa?

Slip
Man On Ground also won the Best Ensemble Cast at the Monaco Charity Film Festival.

"We're by no means denialists who are misrepresenting Africa. We're simply trying to show that there is so much more to African stories than just the crime and famine," he says.

"But with that said, *Man On Ground* is about a young Nigerian man called Femi [Hakeem Kae-Kazim]. It's based on the real-life xenophobic attacks that took place in the East Rand in 2008. My older brother – played by Hakeem – is a successful London banker who comes to South Africa to look for me after the attacks. So yes, we do try to be as balanced as possible."

The film was written by Akin Omotoso and also stars South African Pana Mokoena. As someone who was also responsible for

sourcing funds for the project, what does Lojede think of non-Africans telling African stories?

"That is not a simple question to answer at all," he says, taking a moment to think.

"I think if the funding is from overseas, then they have a right to do whatever they wish with any story. They don't owe us to tell our stories authentically. It's showbusiness. But if the money is coming from Africans for an African story, then we need to cast Africans in these roles."

Does he think that filmmakers must first make the type of movies that will attract audiences, or does the public have to support them first, which will hopefully then result in them making great films?

"It's a bit of both. I've seen deeply touching stories not being watched by the masses, while slapstick African films have plenty of bumps on seats. But that doesn't mean we'll stop making relevant films," he says.

