

[Skip Navigation](#)

1. [Admissions & Aid](#)
2. [Academics](#)
3. [Medical](#)
4. [Research](#)
5. [Global](#)
6. [Arts](#)
7. [Libraries](#)
8. [Athletics](#)
9. [Giving To Duke](#)

- Schools
 - [Trinity College of Arts & Sciences](#)
 - [Divinity School](#)
 - [The Fuqua School of Business](#)
 - [The Graduate School](#)
 - [School of Law](#)
 - [School of Medicine](#)
 - [Nicholas School of the Environment](#)
 - [School of Nursing](#)
 - [Pratt School of Engineering](#)
 - [Sanford School of Public Policy](#)
 - [Duke-NUS graduate Medical School \(Singapore\)](#)
 - [Duke Kunshan University](#)
- University Institutes
 - [Duke Institute for Brain Sciences](#)
 - [Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions](#)
 - [Kenan Institute for Ethics](#)
 - [Institute for Genome Sciences and Policy](#)
 - [Duke Global Health Institute](#)
 - [John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute](#)
 - [Social Science Research Institute](#)
 - [Interdisciplinary Studies](#)

- Duke Tools
 - [Maps](#)
 - [Calendar](#)
 - [Mobile](#)
 - [A-Z Directory](#)
 - [Services & Administration](#)
 - [Emergency Alerts](#)
- Duke Resources
 - [Computing](#)
 - [News](#)
 - [Social Media](#)
 - [Employment](#)
 - [Diversity](#)
 - [Giving to Duke](#)
- Resources For
 - [Students](#)
 - [Faculty](#)
 - [Staff](#)
 - [Alumni](#)
 - [Duke & Durham](#)
 - [Visitors](#)

Duke University. Durham, NC 27708 / [Contact](#)



[Search or Browse all of Duke University](#)



[Duke University - Center for Documentary Studies](#)

- [About](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Exhibits](#)
- [Classes](#)
- [Awards](#)
- [Books](#)
- [Projects](#)
- [Donate](#)
- [Visit Us](#)
- [Blogs](#)

- [Home /](#)
- [Projects /](#)
- [Lewis Hine Documentary Fellows Program /](#)
- [Documentary Gallery /](#)
- [Alex Fattal](#)

- [Jennifer Carpenter](#)
- [Libby Conn](#)
- [Annie Dlugokecki](#)
- [Alex Fattal](#)
- [Gretchen Ferber](#)
- [Victoria Fleischer](#)
- [Chris Fowler](#)
- [Maital Guttman](#)
- [Barnaby Hall](#)
- [Amara Hark-Weber](#)
- [Rebecca Herman](#)
- [Kate Joyce](#)
- [Sarah Leeper](#)
- [Julie Norman](#)
- [Emma Raynes](#)
- [Elena Rue](#)
- [Amanda van Scoyoc](#)
- [Erika Simon](#)
- [Anne Weber](#)
- [Lucy Wilson](#)
- [Hart Documentary Fellows](#)
- [Sarah Chasnovitz \(Hart Fellow\)](#)
- [Peter Jordan \(Hart Fellow\)](#)

Images of Childhood in South Africa Ten Years After Apartheid

By Alex Fattal (Lewis Hine Fellow, 2002-2003)



Baldwin. Kwa Zulu-Natal. Photograph by Salumu.

"This is my older brother Wawa. He wants to be a musician in his life—his favorite musician is Tupac. He calls himself Tupac whatever he's doing. Even in this picture he posed like Tupac. If you know Tupac, you will see how he resembles Tupac. Everything is Tupac, Tupac, Tupac. In this picture he's dressed 'pocket down' and calls himself a 'nigga.' In every part of his life he wants to be like Tupac."—Salumu, 14

From *Images of Childhood in South Africa Ten Years After Apartheid*, by Lewis Hine Fellow Alex Fattal.

Introduction by Alex Fattal

As a Lewis Hine Documentary Fellow I was assigned to work with the [Children's Rights Centre \(CRC\)](#) in Durban, South Africa, as a documentary researcher. The CRC, initially a peace-building organization during the violence in Kwa Zulu-Natal in the 1980s and early 1990s, has grown into a national non-governmental organization mobilizing and advocating for children's rights in every sector of South African society. My assignment was to explore challenges to children's rights in a qualitative, visual, and participatory way. For eighteen months, from February 2003 until August 2004, I traveled from one household to another, staying with my gracious hosts for three weeks at a time. During these brief but intense encounters I forged relationships and carried out small collaborative documentary projects with the children and their parents or caregivers. They would photograph in black and white, I would photograph in color, and various family members would then tell stories about the images. The narrative exercise allowed the family to reflect on their lives and communities by analyzing the content of the pictures as well as their motives for making the images.

My colleagues at the CRC were excited by how the images and stories illustrated and animated their policy and advocacy work, and they helped me synthesize these vastly diverse collaborative documentary projects into one exhibition, *Children's Visions & Voices: Rights & Realities in South Africa*. As the exhibition tours South Africa—from a health and population research institute in rural Kwa Zulu-Natal to the Constitutional Court in Johannesburg, from the Durban Art Gallery to a venue in downtown Cape Town, among others—it continues to be an extremely useful tool for the CRC to stimulate discussion about, and advocate for, children's rights in South Africa.

One year after putting the exhibition together for the CRC, I returned to the United States and the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University to work with the photographs from the project and re-explore what these images had to say about childhood in contemporary South Africa. Looking back through the images, I felt as though I was meeting all these extraordinary individuals and families again, and perhaps seeing them in a new way. I see moments that are more familiar than foreign, more personal than anything else. I'm convinced that the world is more complicated than anything we can say about it—and if this is true, perhaps these pictures can reach beyond the constraints of issues or politics to speak to our common humanity.



Above: All photographs were made by Alex Fattal in South Africa in 2003 and 2004. Names and specific locations have been changed.

Introduction to Photography by South African Children and their Caregivers

As a documentary researcher for the Children's Rights Centre, I approached the daunting task of representing issues surrounding children's rights by organizing the projects so viewers would see multiple perspectives—my own, as well those of the family and community members I came to know and collaborate with over the course of the project. I particularly wanted the children to present their understanding of their lives, rather than impose my own interpretation on them. I also wanted the parents and caregivers, who face difficult choices regarding their children, to offer perspectives on these realities as opposed to promoting the opinions of experts on children's issues and rights.

I began each project by working with the children first, leading a series of discussions about taking photographs in their everyday environments, and then teaching them the basics of framing, lighting, and operating a camera. Then they, in turn, would teach their parents (when their parents agreed to take part). The children were free to let their natural enthusiasms drive their picture-making—the only themes were “past,” “present,” and “future.”

I stayed with these families—sleeping on floors and couches, going to work or school with them, and helping with household chores—but much of their everyday lives is absent from the images I made. I knew this to be true, but never more so than when I sat with the children and their caregivers to discuss their contact sheets. For example, I would never have thought to photograph the top of a tall building in Johannesburg, because I have never felt so deeply the menacing insecurity of the streets they overlook. For Marlene, the skyscraper represented the precarious loneliness of fleeing from a drunken home to a seething city—two environments that did not provide for her needs.

This small selection of images and words by South African children and their caregivers is an invitation to consider what lies beyond an outsider’s gaze, even beyond visual perception—the emotion below the emulsion.



Above: All photographs were made by South African children and their caregivers in 2003 and 2004. Names and specific locations have been changed.

News

Children's Visions and Voices on exhibition February 14–May 28, 2007 at the Exploris Museum, 201 E. Hargett Street, Raleigh, North Carolina

Children's Visions and Voices on exhibition November 28, 2006–January 18, 2007 at the African American Cultural Center Gallery, Witherspoon Center, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina

[Read news about the Lewis Hine Fellows Program on CDS Porch](#)

[Visit the Lewis Hine Fellows Program Blog](#)

1317 W. Pettigrew Street, Durham, NC 27705 | Phone: 919.660.3663 | Email: docstudies@duke.edu

[Contact us](#)

Please contact us:

Brought to you by The New Eyes Project, k12photoed.org.

Your name

Your email address

Location on the Site

Comment