CHAPTER ONE
TRANSCENDING A CENTURY OF INJUSTICE

Keynote Address by Justice PN Langa,
Deputy President of the Constitutional Court,
delivered on the occasion of the official launch of the
Institute for Justice and Reconciliation,
Cape Town, 10 May 2000.
I wish to express my thanks and appreciation to the organisers of this function and to the Institute for inviting me to deliver this address. The emergence of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation at this stage is timely, following as it does the cathartic Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) findings and report, when the inevitable question being asked is, where do we go from there? South Africans (and the world) now know roughly what was going on in this country: the cruelty, the shame, the heroism and the treachery and yes, the sacrifices of many common men, women and children. Much of what was in the disputed terrain is now common cause. Many who were perceived as villains in the past have emerged as heroes and some of the heroes of yesteryear have been revealed as villains of the worst kind. Although the amnesty process is not yet complete, many have been granted amnesty and they must now make their peace with themselves, their consciences and their communities. There are lingering areas of controversy. Obviously some of the truth has not been told. The issue of reparations has not been finalised. I trust sincerely that the impasse will be resolved soon.

When all the TRC structures have been dismantled and when those of our fellow citizens who did not know what was happening under their very noses recover from the shock of discovery, who will carry on the critically important and ongoing work of reconciliation? I believe passionately that this is the role of all facets of our society: government, public institutions and civil society. I believe, however, that an organ such as the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation is eminently suited to play a central role in this vital undertaking.

**Historical Context**

The theme is “transcending a century of injustice”. This is the year 2000. A hundred years ago today, events, which were to have a profound impact on our lives, were playing themselves out in different parts of this region. Southern Africa was in the throes of the Anglo-Boer War. History records that although the main protagonists were the British and the Afrikaner, many members of the indigenous communities became involved and many lost their lives in that conflict. There had been other conflicts before this, involving the indigenous peoples amongst themselves and settlers embroiled in wars against the indigenous communities in various parts of this southern tip of the African continent. That period of conflict represented a number of things to different people and groups. Each segment of our history, however, resonates with the sound of conflict, tales of struggle, resistance and conquest. There have always been deep divisions, betrayals and exploitation of those who happened to be weaker. Today, a hundred years on, have we, as a nation, learnt anything from that experience?

That first ten years shifted the terrain of combat, from the military field to the political. That first ten years culminated in the formation of the Union of South Africa. For some, this was a symbol of unity and of hope and held prospects of prosperity and peace. For many others it represented the betrayal of being discriminated against on the grounds of race or colour and signalled a new beginning—a new life. For the African land, it was almost the entire hundred years. There were two World Wars, both major catastrophes of the century. South Africans from all population groups became involved in both wars, in various capacities, not least of which was as combatants. Again there were feats of heroism, there was sacrifice, there were lives lost. But when the dust settled after each of these wars, those brave South Africans who had made such a sterling contribution to the cause of peace and freedom on this planet, came home to a South Africa which was in the throes of deep political, economic and social divisions. Race and the franchise were major issues. Race determined who could vote and what property one could own and enjoy. The various Land Acts, for instance, and the colour bar, were always major sources of conflict and bitterness.

Clearly, those who fashioned the various constitutions since Union in 1910, took great care to fashion a uniquely South African system which excluded the majority of the population from the benefits that have always been taken for granted by those who live in democracies the world over. It all culminated in the formalising of apartheid, the institutionalising of oppression and the constitutionalising of injustice and racial inequality. Union itself was founded on the exclusion of the majority population group. It was precisely this exclusion which was to cause the misplaced hopes for a partisan unity which the architects of Union cherished in 1910 to flounder and eventually to be dashed. I hope we have learnt something from all this, because we cannot afford another hundred years of waste and costly mistakes.

I think one of the lessons we have learnt is that there can be no freedom without justice. We have learnt, I hope, that a vibrant governmental system cannot be sustained without addressing issues of inclusiveness in a common nationhood and justice for all in this country. How to achieve this in a meaningful way will depend, I have no doubt, on how we deal with the two sometimes seemingly contradictory concepts, justice and reconciliation. This, I am sure, is going to be the burning theme through the next decade. I have no doubt that is what the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation is all about.

**Society in Transition: A Bridge to Where?**

The decades of the seventies and eighties saw oppression and resistance intensified. We won. We defeated apartheid and we are now a society in transition. We are building a new nation, on new values. We have embarked on a new direction. When we adopted a new Constitution in 1994, that momentous document described itself as a historic bridge between the past of a deeply divided society characterised by strife, conflict, untold suffering and injustice and a future founded on the recognition of human rights, democracy and peaceful coexistence and development opportunities for all South Africans, irrespective of colour, race, class, belief or sex”. These were not just elegant phrases, nice-sounding sentiments. It was a challenge to all South Africans, a description of our journey from an ugly past, in respect of which we say “never again”, to a future we have to build. A future where the recognition of human rights is foundational to our society; where we not only engage in democratic practices, but we also have a stake in embedding participation.
development opportunities are a reality for all, not a two-world situation where some enjoy the best while others are exposed only to the worst, simply on the basis of their race, colour, sex or other such attribute or because the skewed history of this country has conferred privilege on them or severely disadvantaged their opportunities for development.

Justice and Reconciliation

In a crime-ridden society, justice becomes a buzzword. It brings to mind notions of law and order, crime and punishment. Straightaway the inclination is to look at the effectiveness of institutions set up to administer justice and uphold order in society. The police, the prosecuting authority and the courts. It is trite that all the good things we say about our Constitution will not be worth much if these institutions are either not functional or not effective. It is also true that national reconciliation itself will be extremely hard if it is not underwritten by justice. All of us have an interest in seeing justice achieved. Anything that interferes with its attainment impacts directly upon fundamental rights. Every person is entitled to the protection of the law against unlawful invasions of their rights: to life, to respect for and protection of their dignity and their property and their right not to be subjected to torture of any kind. When those rights are invaded, those who are aggrieved are entitled to obtain redress in the ordinary courts of the land and those caught perpetrating such violations are answerable before such courts, both civilly and criminally.

Justice therefore is critical. The Constitutional Court has time and again emphasised the important role of effective law enforcement and the apprehension of those who break the law. Those who commit crimes disregard the fundamental human rights of innocent persons. They must therefore be apprehended and given appropriate punishments by the courts. That is why the institutions involved in the administration of justice must be credible and accountable and must enjoy the confidence of the people they serve.

They should be properly resourced and assisted to do their work without fear or favour. Conversely, they have a responsibility to protect their independence, and their impartiality and integrity must be exemplary. They must earn the respect of their communities through the manner in which they conduct themselves and do their work. That is what the Constitution requires and that is how the cause of justice will be best served.

But what the Constitution says and what public institutions do is only one side of the coin. There is a broader context to justice and it bears a relationship with reconciliation. The words of the intermin Constitution pose a challenge to us, not only as government, or as public institutions or as state structures. We are challenged as South Africans and as citizens in our own democracy. The challenge is for all South Africans to take part in the delivery of justice to a community that is only just emerging from that “past of a deeply divided society characterised by strife, conflict, untold suffering and injustice”. It is to make this a just society.

inequities. What will really matter is how we intervene in the lives of those adversely affected by those injustices and inequities, the people outside, in our communities, townships, informal settlements and the farms. A just society then means a change in the mindset that says that the world began in 1994; that everything that happened before that does not matter because our brand new Constitution accords to every person equal rights, we are all equal, and we are none of us our brother’s keeper.

Justice means restoring an equilibrium. If the system before 1994 skewed everything in favour of some people and disadvantaged others, justice would demand a levelling of the playing fields. Some would say that this should in fact come before any talk about equality and equal access to opportunity. But the Constitution is a national blueprint of the type of society we want to be, and we have no wish to postpone implementing it. It is a NOW document, a programme that spells out the essential guidelines for today. The challenge, however, is that in our implementation of this programme, urgent attention should be devoted to correcting the wrongs that have severely disadvantaged and weakened or incapacitated sections of our community. We must remove the distortions that prevent us from being a truly normal society today and which will undoubtedly bedevil our future if they are not addressed urgently.

What happens, though, when a whole community has been wronged by laws and practices of a governmental system, and have not yet recovered from the debilitating effects of those wrongs? And will continue to do so for years to come? We see the inequalities everywhere: residential areas, businesses, schools, even hospitals and cemeteries. Those inequalities are obvious. The confront us everywhere. Is there no role here for ordinary South Africans to help restore some sort of equilibrium? How do we safeguard this nation from the bottomless pit of bitterness and resentment that will be our inevitable lot if we are not seen to be addressing this injustice?

It is in that extended context that I think we can all be involved in the delivery of justice and reconciliation to all sections of the South African community. Democracy means that we can all vote together on a common voters’ roll, take part in regular elections and elect our representatives to the various forums of government. It also means we can enjoy together the warmth and intimacy of a common South African citizenship, which in turn entails duties and responsibilities attached to that citizenship. I am, however, concerned with the exercise of a common citizenship that goes beyond the prescriptions of the Constitution. What the Constitution and the laws prescrib can only be basic guidelines, the framework within which the life of the nation must be nurtured. They provide the basic minimum and, indeed, they can do much more than that. It is for the people of South Africa to give content to, at flesh out, some of the ideals foreshadowed in the Constitution.

How, for instance, can we bring life into and enrich the concept of “a common South African citizenship” in the light of our nationhood, to ensure that its meaning goes beyond the mere ability of each citizen to take part in elections? The concept clearly embraces the idea of a common humanity. This is an attribute that was so graphically demonstrated by South Africans in the wake of the flood disaster in Mozambique. South Africans rushed in to assist with no expectation of reward. Ma
This spontaneous show of solidarity with our neighbours in their time of need was just one demonstration that South Africans are a caring people—that in times of great need, the bond of a common humanity is strong indeed.

Disasters sometimes serve to remind us how fortunate we are and that there are, among us and as our neighbours, many who are unable to enjoy the things many of us take for granted. One of the most damaging consequences of the policy of apartheid was the almost watertight compartments different communities were put into. Sandton and Alexandra, physically within shouting distance of each other, were worlds apart. So were Constantia and Crossroads or Khayelitsha, KwaMashu and the Berea. South Africans living in the affluence of the one area were shielded from witnessing the abject poverty, crime and squalor in the next area. We were made to live in ignorance of the plight and desperate conditions under which many in our communities lived. Some of the more fortunate among us did know the other side and did try to help. Their efforts and unselfishness are no less significant than the contribution of those who were engaged in helping to put Mozambique back on its feet. They recognised and did not shy away from the responsibilities that are inherent in the bond of a common humanity.

Can I, as a man, properly enjoy my rights if the women and children in my family are deprived of theirs? Or if my neighbours, for that matter, are denied theirs? Our enjoyment of rights will never be complete if those alongside us, in the same country, the same towns and cities, are unable to enjoy theirs because of poverty, ignorance or disease, or simply because they are of a different race or sex. Nor can we live in dignity if those next to us are subjected to the indignities and disabilities that are a legacy of past policies. The effort to reconstruct our society will be severely hampered if we close our eyes, or are oblivious to the horrendous conditions in which the weakest and poorest among us live.

Should we then not combine, as fellow South Africans, and declare war on poverty and embark on programmes for the upliftment of the poor; the provision of shelter to the homeless and the restoration of human dignity to all who call this country their own? Should there not be coherent programmes and targets set by government, working in concert with the business community, non-governmental bodies and other institutions of civil society, to accelerate the satisfaction of these needs? That way, we would not be asking what the country or the government can do for us. We would instead be looking out for those things that we can do to make this a better country for ourselves and our children. The exercise of our common citizenship would then take on a new and enriched quality that would make us all proud to be South African.

The manner in which our society deals with the socio-economic disadvantages in our country will have a profound impact on the future of our country. Our Constitution provides certain guarantees of a socio-economic nature, such as the right of access to adequate housing, to health care, sufficient food and water, social security and education. Addressing these needs remains one of the biggest challenges for our society. It may be a daunting prospect, but we have faced other serious challenges. Quite clearly, the state alone cannot meet these needs. It must carry out its responsibility of realising these rights; it must involve us all, to the extent that its resources allow. In this it cannot abdicate our part. I am referring to us as individuals, families, religious, educational and cultural communities who are the torchbearers for our new order. Those who have no shelter, people who daily feel the pangs of hunger, the unemployed, the poor and the sick in our community are part of us. Achieving and maintaining a minimally acceptable standard of living for all of them is part of the building of this nation and is thus an assignment given to all of us.

This is not merely because an ethic of caring is suggested by our Constitution. We build our nation and develop our country not only because we are driven by a spirit of altruism. We do it also out of self-interest. A higher standard of living for all is a wonderful heritage for all of us and for future generations. We are in the unique position of being able to lay the foundations. This generation, which triumphed over apartheid, can also defeat and eradicate the very serious legacy of inequality in this country that manifests itself in various ways.

What I am advocating here is a common approach, a common effort, to deal with the challenges we face as a nation. Basically the theme is: our neighbour's problems are our problems. And quite often our neighbour is right here with us, within our own boundaries and our own yards, and has been there for generations.

I have no doubt that the extent to which we achieve both justice and reconciliation, and the urgency with which we do it, will determine the quality of the emerging nation we have the privilege to try to shape.

Achieving Reconciliation

How do we measure the distance we have travelled on the road to reconciliation? The TRC process was a start. It could only be a beginning. In determining whether or not it was a good start, there is no mathematical score sheet or balance sheet, just a collective value judgement. The problem with that kind of judgement is that those who will be judging will be coming from all sorts of different directions. Some will have been in favour of the exercise in the first place, for various different reasons, and there will be others who have always carried a heavy bias, even hatred, against the TRC process. The need for an objective assessment cannot therefore be over-emphasised if we are to make a useful contribution to the recording of this aspect of our history.

Measuring must also take into account other facts. Firstly, what is the legacy we had to deal with? The wounds that had been inflicted were very deep. They will take a while to heal, but it is in the national interest that they should heal. As a result of the past, there are, on the face of it, many urgent, imperative facing the new democracy: It must get on with its life politically, economically and socially and cannot afford to mark time or to suffer a relapse. The economy has to develop rapidly to meet the vast developmental challenge in a manner that will make the democracy meaningful to those who have been previously excluded, incapacitated and disadvantaged. It has to wage a relentless war against poverty and ignorance and disease and take effective measures to bridge the obscenely wide gap between the haves and the have-nots. This will require an influential role internationally, which might mean mak
quite unsavoury roles in the past, even in propping up a discredited apartheid regime.

In measuring the distance we have to travel, we realise we must first confront the past. There are crucial reasons for this. Firstly, as a civilised society we must recognise the worth and dignity of those victimised by past abuses. If we fail to confront what happened to them in a sense we argue that those people do not matter, that only the future is of importance. We also perpetuate, even compound, their victimisation.

The second reason for confronting the past has to do with justice and establishing and upholding the rule of law. It is important to send a message to the effect that everyone is subject to the law and that justice is important. The rank and office of those who victimised others must not be allowed to insulate or insulate them from society's efforts to confront the past.

A third reason is the question of deterring future abuses. Again this is a fact of justice. If we know that there is a price to pay, hopefully we will think twice before repeating some of the mistakes of the past.

What does national reconciliation mean? Let me start with what it is not. It is certainly not forgetfulness. It would be naïve also to imagine that reconciliation, in a national sense, only becomes a reality when mass amnesia is induced. Those who equate reconciliation with the obliteration of memory grossly misjudge the far-reaching effects of the gross violations of the past, particularly on the victims. And I think they discredit the whole noble process and thus hamper reconciliation. This is so because quite often, the memory that is sought to be obliterated is that of the victim and not that of the perpetrator. Imagine the crucial moment, when perpetrator meets victim, when the torturer meets the tortured. It is not reconciliation when, at this meeting, the perpetrator embraces the victim in an enthusiastic greeting as if to say, “we are now both on the same side, thank goodness!” This without taking into account the distance which the victim must necessarily travel to get to the point of forgiveness, of reconciliation. Can the victim be blamed, in those circumstances, if the instinctive reaction is to recoil, to draw back and say “wait a minute. How dare you take my forgiveness for granted? Should you not help me to get over the pain you have subjected me to, and then talk about how we can both be reconciled.

And, if there are perceptions that apartheid brought massive benefits to people and massive disabilities to others and that nothing much is happening to bridge that gap, the road to reconciliation will remain very difficult indeed. Reparations go hand in hand with general upliftment of the community. That is part of the restoration of human dignity for victims, for the whole nation. I believe that national reconciliation must be seen in the context of the conflicts of the past and in the light of the new nation we seek to build. Clearly something must happen regarding those deep divisions in the social and economic sphere.

In conclusion, I make two points: Firstly, there cannot be reconciliation without justice. A serious programme for reconciliation must include strong efforts to address the sense of grievance in the victim community. Addressing socio-economic issues vigorously, is a step in that direction.

Secondly, reconciliation and forgiveness must never be taken for granted. The mandate given to the TRC to establish a complete picture as possible, was an acknowledgement of the truth we must know how deeply others have been wounded before reconciliation can get off the ground. And that having been revealed, someone or somebody must surely take responsibility and everyone else must recognise that we are all part of this nation in which these things have happened. I find the idea of reconciliation without contrition quite difficult.

Thirdly, there is a long way to go, and the sooner we show urgency, the better. It will be a long haul, but then I think it would be a mistake to think that reconciliation is an event. It will require the on-going commitment of all levels of society.

For me, the manifestation of reconciliation will be the way we collectively interact to build one nation and to prevent and deal with potential flashpoints, racial or otherwise, which are a legacy of a racist past. What was deeply divided must be united. Reconciliation will ultimately mean the coming together of the South African nation, which has lived so long in two worlds. Our challenge for the next decade is to create one world, one that is caring and concerned about all its citizens. This will be a secure foundation for a healthy democracy. It will help make the next hundred years a season of regeneration and peace.
Without a memory with which we are able to take ourselves along in the future, we won't have one. The future is viable from memory alone, as well as being the motivating and mobilizing element of our present. – Jörn Røsen (1998:221)

Memory, as far as human beings are concerned, is necessary for survival. Because human beings, compared to animals, are poor in instincts, they have to be socialized through a long learning process into the collective wisdom of their predecessors and ancestors. In the customs, language, rituals and laws of a society the experiences of the past have sedimented themselves as a memory that directs the lives of people. In this general sense memory can be said to be a precondition for survival.

But there is a special sense in which memory is necessary for survival. This special sense relates to the memory of uniquely decisive events in the lives of people. It is the kind of event of which people usually say, “Never again!” The event itself was profoundly traumatic, and to forestall any recurrence of anything similar for the future, it is necessary to remind people of such events.

At the same time, however, the recalling of horrible instances of the past may be tantamount to a retraumatisation of those involved in the original event, or of those confronted with the past. This special sense of memory presents a dilemma.

On the one hand, too much memory – the apparent inability to forget injustices, the incessant digging up of the past – may be crippling to a society. It fosters bitterness and resentment, a refusal to come to terms with the present reality. Too much memory may be the cause of too much conflict.

On the other hand, too little memory has its string of problems as well. Suffering that goes unrecognized because of a conspiracy of silence may restrict, quite conveniently, probable causes of vast social conflict to the private worlds of victims. But this strategy of repressing memory ends up with its pockets of festering social sores too: family violence, political violence.

How does society cope with the memory of traumatic events, especially that kind of traumatic event caused by institutions of society that – according to the sedimented memory of the collective wisdom of a society or of humankind – exist for the common good i.e. the family, and ultimately, the body politic?

The factor that complicates memory of trauma in this case – as compared to trauma precipitated by natural disasters – is its ambiguity. How does one mobilise memory in a way that does not fall victim to politically correct amnesia or pathological digging up of the past? How does a society live with its memory?
1. Ways of Remembering and Public Art

What is the function of public art in society? What is the role of war monuments and war memorials? According to Arthur C. Danto, there are "tacit rules that govern the distinction between monuments and memorials" (Danto, 1987: 115), and which amount to the following:

We erect monuments so that we shall always remember, and build memorials so that we shall never forget. Monuments commemorate the memorable and embody the myths of beginnings. Memorials ritualize remembrance and mark the reality of ends. The Washington Monument, vertical, is a celebration, like fireworks. The Lincoln Memorial, even if on a rise, presses down and is a meditation in stone. Very few nations erect monuments to their defeats, but many set up memorials to the defeated dead. Monuments make heroes and triumphs, victories and conquests, perpetually present and part of life. The memorial is a special precinct, extruded from life, a segregated enclave where we honor the dead. With monuments we honor ourselves (ibid. 112).

If, for the sake of arguing, we stretch Danto's description to the point of becoming a typology of monuments, it may yield something like the following: On the one hand, there are monuments in the strict sense of the word. They are signs that remind one to remember, namely that which one can take pride in to remember, and which deanimate a decisive moment as a (new) beginning - a triumph or a victory. The remembrance of such a decisive moment from the past is rendered by in the present by heroic figures and these heroes embody the historical self-perception of the founders of the monument. The subject of the monument in this sense is a collective "we", symbolising an uninterrupted continuity between the represented heroes, the founders, and a possible public who ought to identify with what is represented, and thereby bind themselves to the tacit oath of allegiance to the collectivity the monument celebrates.

On the other hand, there are memorials. They are erected as an antidote against forgetting. Memorials ritualise remembrance and deanimate a decisive moment as an ending. It reminds one that what is remembered through this sign may never happen again. Memorials are about victims. Instead of experiencing a recognition of their feelings of self-worth (as may be the case when visiting a monument), visitors to a memorial are induced to feel that they owe the victims something. Or, said in another way: monuments celebrate abundance, therefore the visitor must experience a feeling of grateful indebtedness towards the heroes of the past; whereas memorials mourn losses, which the visitor has to experience as an obligation to prevent for the future.

Whatever the case may be, war memorials are exclusive. They never commemorate an enemy. Whenever an enemy appears in a war memorial, it is always in a negative sense, either as slain or as the aggressor, but never as the centre of attention. This pedestrian fact accounts for a subtle transformation of meaning that takes place in the interaction between memorial and public.

as the possible enemy. The memorial closes the ranks of the "we", and ritualises the experience of a collectivity. Only "we" have victims or heroes. The memorial institutionalises the victims, they become recognisable and recurring icons, a general asset. A semantic shift is the immediate result: "we" have only victims, and only "we" have victims. "We" thus become the objects of our own reverence. And through this subtle but profound semantic shift the palette of memory is reduced and the politics of memory becomes synonymous with a politics of forgetting.

2. Hiroshima and Auschwitz

This self-refutation of a politics of memory can be illustrated by the following two examples.

Firstly, the Peace Park in Hiroshima, Japan. The inscription on the Atom Bomb Cenotaph reads as follows:

Let all the souls here rest in peace; for we shall not repeat the evil.

What exactly does this mean? An explanatory note in Japanese and English was added to the cenotaph in the early eighties, which says:

It summons people everywhere to pray for the repose of the souls of the deceased A-bomb victims and to join in the pledge never to repeat the evil of war. It thus expresses the 'heart of Hiroshima', which, enduring past grief and overcoming hatred, yearns for the realisation of world peace (Buruma, 1995: 93).

But, as Ian Buruma comments on this explanation:

[what is interesting about Hiroshima...is the tension between its universal aspirations and its status as the exclusive site of Japanese victimhood. Tucked away in a corner, outside the park, is a monument to the Koreans who died from the A-bomb attack. Many of them had been forced to work in Japan during the war...They were not enshrined in the Japanese park, and later attempts by local Koreans to have the monument moved into Peace Park failed. There could only be one cenotaph, said the Hiroshima municipal authorities. And the cenotaph did not include Koreans (Buruma, 1995: 96-7).

The result is that the Peace Memorial in Hiroshima impresses on visitors the fact that the Japanese were the sole victims of the World War II in that region, obliterating the fact that they were not solely victims. Part of the history of Japan's involvement in World War II is about the Nanking massacre of 1937, when the Japanese raped, tortured and killed an estimated 300,000 Chinese civilians, mostly women and children. If a Japanese politician were to mention this fact of the Japanese past in public today, let alone propose for...
monument contain only the names of the more than 58,000 dead Americans of the Vietnam War in order of the dates of their deaths. To this "special precinct, extruded from life, a segregated enclave where we honor the dead", a bronze statue of three servicemen by Frederik Hart was added as a concession to part of the public who demanded some kind of "exacting" heroic realism as intrinsic to war memorials in general. Danto describes the Veterans Memorial thus:

Like innocents...[the three servicemen] see only rows and columns of names. They are dazed and stunned. The walls reflect their obsessed gaze...gently flexed pair of walls, polished black, is like the back of Plato's cave, a reflecting surface, a dark mirror. The reflections in it of the servicemen...are appearances of appearances. It also reflects us, the visitors, as it does the trees. Still, the living are in it only as appearances. Only the names of the dead, on the surface, are real (ibid. 113-4).

If one disregarded the bronze statue for one moment, this memorial as an instance of minimalist art is apposite to its purpose. Structurally, it is nearly the exact opposite of the obelisk. Its principal axis is horizontal instead of vertical (cf. Beardsley, 1989: 124-5). Instead of soaring up into the limitless sky, it descends into the earth, obstructing the desert with two walls meeting in a corner in which the names of the first and the last fatal casualties of that war are juxtaposed on two separate panels. According to Lin, "thus the war's beginning and end meet; the war is 'complete'...yet broken by the earth that bounds the angle's open side, and contained by the earth itself" (quoted in Beardsley, 1989: 124). As such, the idea of walls with the names of the deceased engraved on them is a fairly common memorial strategy. One comes across this way of memorialising all over the world.

Initially, the Vietnam memorial commemorates no heroes and no heroic event. With its present overall form, situated as it is between the Washington monument and the Lincoln memorial, the American public can have it both ways. On the one hand, the memorial serves a "cathartic function," calming trauma into memory. In this, especially, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a stunning success. It is the continual witness of tearful homages to the deceased. Flowers and mementoes are regularly left there. These visible expressions of grief are eloquent demonstrations that the individual and collective wounds of Vietnam are still raw, and in need of remedy" (Beardsley, 1989: 125).

On the other hand, this memorial confronts the visitor with the stark results of war; people reduced to cold statistics, columns of faceless names of dead people. The memorial itself mourns the fate of the dead. Small wonder it evoked such controversy before its dedication. As anti-representational, conceptual art it indict the wielders of political and military power to think on the wages of war. I do not know of any other memorial that underscores the tragedy of war so effectively by its understatement of grief and its stubborn, even iconoclastic, abstinence of heroism. Altogether 58,000 meticulously recorded war casualties overwhelm the spectator. The magnitude of this visual record incites the viewer to produce an imaginative representation of the
face of each single victim – an impossible task, which quickly stuns the imagination. Each name then becomes an abstract, de-personalised instance of the universal voiceless victim of the modern war-industry.

4. The Dachau Memorial

The Dachau Memorial by Olid Nandor created in the late sixties also fits Danto’s “tacit rules that govern the distinction between monuments and memorials” but for different reasons from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Although it shares the Veteran Memorial’s decided anti-monumentalism, it is not as iconoclastic. Similar to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial the founders of this memorial are the people who survived the events commemorated here who organised themselves in the Comité International de Dachau. Money was raised internationally, and the former West German government contributed DM300 000 towards the memorial. And like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial this memorial commemorates something that did not take place on the exact spot of the memorial.

The memorial is in the form of a camp fence, but the barbed wire is formed by the grotesque and partially dismembered skeletons of Nazi concentration camp victims. The original design wanted the visitor to approach the memorial from the right or the eastern side, where a wall bearing an inscription from Job 38 would have been erected. Passing this wall, the visitor descends into an excavated space, flanked on the one side by the memorial. After coming to the central feature of the memorial, namely the group of emaciated and contorted figures which the visitor views from underneath, one ascends to a wall on the left where an urn with the ashes of the Nameless Prisoner has been interred.

The original design was only partially realised. The flanking walls (with the inscription and the urn with the ashes) were left out. And although the inscription from Job 38 is absent from the present precinct, it remains an important key to understand and experience the edifice. The inscription should have read as follows (Job 38, 16-17):

...[H]ast thou walked in search of the depth?

Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? Or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?

This quotation from Job constitutes the framework of reference, namely of a descent into a valley of death, invoking associations of a trench, a mass grave and the pits where murdered victims of Nazi gas chambers were cremated. At the same time an expectation of, or a longing for, redemption from above is suggested. How does this dialectic of threat and redemption work in this memorial?

The visitor descends into the depths of despair, to be confronted and overwhelmed by the suffering victims of the Nazi system. The presentation of the victims follows the medieval tradition of the triptych, with the centrepiece alluding to the crucifixion. The portrayal of suffering is grotesque: victim and instrument of torture are fused into one. The skeletons are the barbed wire.

Nandor’s sculpture is expressive of the unthinkable horror of the Holocaust – the co-optation of the victims in their process of destruction (cf. Bauman, 1989: 117-150). In this sense this memorial has to witness for the suffering in all Nazi concentration camps. The location as well as the styling of the sculpture alienates the visitor from the portrayed victims. The victims are barely recognisable as human shapes. Not only are they (and were they, once upon a time, in the past) physically maimed, but they are also sculpturally mangled. Empathising with the victims is prevented by showing them stripped of their humanity and dignity – their suffering is complete, beyond comprehension even in the portrayal thereof. Not a semblance of human dignity remains. In front of this memorial one can only mourn the inefable suffering. As Adorno intimated, to accord the suffering of these victims any positive meaning, would have amounted to an insult (Adorno, 1967: 352).

An interesting feature of Nandor’s work is the treatment of the crucifixion motif. The figures in his sculpture refer to incidents that occurred in the concentration camps when prisoners committed suicide by falling on to the electrified camp fence. The few photos of such incidents have become icons of Nazi atrocities. Nandor stylised these incidents to a unity of victim and instrument of torture. Iconographically, Nandor has his precursor in Jean Veber, a French caricaturist at the beginning of this century. Veber drew political cartoons for a French newspaper of the British war effort to conquer the two Boer republics in South Africa. Because he did not report on site, but rather commented on events, he chose to portray his views of the progress of the war in terms of well-known works of art. Gericault’s Disaster of the Medusa was “quoted” and graphically inverted by Veber to invoke the utter sense of despair that had to befall the victims of the Anglo-Boer War. One of Veber’s portrayals of British war strategy under the heading Les Progrés de la Science shows Boer prisoners of war trying to escape but becoming crucified in a camp fence (Veber, 1901: 396). Art historically, this is the first transposition of the crucifixion motif to a part of modern industrialised warfare. (This distinguished Veber’s from Goya’s portrayals of impalings in the latter’s Los Desastres de la Guerra.) As far as can be ascertained, Nandor was not acquainted with Veber’s specific portrayal. When one looks back from Nandor’s work to Veber’s cartoon, the latter becomes part of the preceding history of the Dachau memorial and represents a step in the process of creating icons of suffering by connecting portrayal of the sufferings of war with the well established tradition of the crucifixion motif, eliciting the same reverence for victims of war as the crucified Christ.

5. The Women’s Memorial

As a memorial for (some of) the victims of the Anglo-Boer War the Women’s Memorial was informed by a different iconographical and iconological tradition. Instead of the crucifixion motif, the Women’s Memorial used the motif of the Picta. Several reasons, from the history of this monument, amongst others, can be adduced for this preference.

Danto’s “tacit rules” seem not to have existed or not to have been acknowledg-
unveiled in 1913. Like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, it was funded by public donations.

The driving force behind the completion of the memorial was a foreigner, Emily Hobhouse. "That Englishwoman" was a vociferous member of an anti-war, mainly Whig-inspired faction of the British public during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902. She did much to alleviate the suffering of Boer people during the war, involving herself very closely with relief aid in the former Boer republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, much to the ire of the British colonial and military authorities and much of the British public.

The design that won the public competition was by the German architect, Max Soff. His design was for a monumental obelisk to be erected on a hillside outside Bloemfontein. The obelisk would be adorned by a bronze statue of a Boer woman with two children. The original maquette did not satisfy Emily Hobhouse, and she was entrusted to supervise the making of the statue by the Dutch-South African sculptor, Anton van Wouw, who was sent to Rome for that purpose.

Van Wouw made the statue under Emily Hobhouse's supervision: not only had Van Wouw torn his own work down several times, but "that Englishwoman" insisted on Van Wouw changing his entire original concept.

Her final judgment was expressed in a letter dated April 5, 1912:

The standing woman seems to me very good, full of feeling and the sitting mother is better, though still far from satisfactory. The child on her knee is nicely modelled though still only appears to me a sleeping child and neither sick nor dead. I suggested he should get leave to go to a hospital and study one or two dead figures (ibid. 513-514).

And (from a memoir):

Mr Van Wouw as you know reproduced the scene in bronze. Had he seen it with his own eyes, the child would have borne more directly the aspect of emaciation and death (ibid. 112).

What she wanted him to portray, was the following:

...I was called to see a sick baby. The mother sat on her little trunk with the child across her knee. She had nothing to give it and the child was sinking fast. I thought a few drops of brandy might save it, but tho' I had money there was none to be had...There was nothing to be done and we watched the child draw its last breath in reverent silence.

The mother neither moved nor wept. It was her only child. Dry-eyed but deathly white, she sat there motionless looking not at the child but far, far away into depths of grief beyond all tears. A friend stood behind her who called upon Heaven to witness this tragedy...

when Mr Van Wouw came to Rome to carry out the monument...I described to him this scene as it seemed to me to hold in itself the centre and core of the tragedy: broken-hearted womanhood, perishing childhood (Hobhouse, 1984: 112).

How this portrayal was understood by the public, expressed on behalf of the male survivors by Rev GD Kestell, sounded thus:

A woman sitting with her dying or dead child on her lap, staring into the distance. Is there despair in her eyes? No! Her eyes are saying: 'My child is dead, but I shall not perish (non omnis moriar). My people shall not be destroyed.'

Another woman stands next to her and she sees something in the distance: the future of her people. We could apply the words written of Moses to her: 'For he endured, as seeing him who is invisible' (Van der Merwe s.a.: 20).

Clearly one can speak of a clash of interests between Emily Hobhouse and the male representatives of the Boer people. She wanted a memorial to "broken-hearted womanhood" and "perishing childhood". They wanted a vehicle of restitution. Emily Hobhouse understood this well. In her dedication speech she mentioned compassionately "the supreme offering [that] was made, the supreme price [that] was paid". "[The dead] will live within us not as memories of sorrow, but of heroic inspiration." And she exhorted the Boer people: "When you remember the ill done, remember also the atonement made" (Hobhouse, 1984: 404-5). Her text, for the occasion, allowed for popular sentiments.

But her text conveyed other sentiments as well. The climax of her speech contains these words:

"Your visible monument will serve to this great end – becoming an inspiration to all South Africans and to the women in particular.

For remember, these dead women were not great as the world counts greatness; some of them were quite poor women who had laboured much. Yet they have become a moral force in your land.

And their influence will travel further. They have shown the world that never again can it be said that woman deserves no rights as Citizen because she takes no part in war. This statue stands as a denial of that assertion.

My Friends: Throughout the world the Woman's day approaches; her era dawns. Proudly I unveil this Monument to the brave..."
land and dying for it, affirmed for all times and for all peoples the power of Woman to sacrifice life and more than life for the common weal” (Hobhouse, 1984: 406-7).

What strikes one as remarkable is the elegant, unabashed feminism of Emily Hobhouse, and the consequent direction of her particularisation and universalisation. Although hardly novel, that is philosophically the interesting point about her interpretation of the history of the suffering of the Boer women and children. Emily Hobhouse elevates the Boer woman to the ranks of the Universal Woman’s struggle for recognition. And the Boer woman forms part of a whole that transcends herself: she fights along with other women in that part of the world. The meaning of her struggle is not parochial, but universal. It is a contribution towards a greater solidarity of humankind. That is what makes her struggle moral, and allows the Boer woman to teach others a lesson in history which speaks across the political divide between Boer and British, between white and black. But it is exactly this point that has, very significantly, been censored – omitted – in later commemorative issues of Miss Hobhouse’s dedication speech. I quote the censored passages (indicated by [ ]) at length:

“In your hands and those of your children lies the power and freedom won; you must not merely maintain but increase the sacred gift. Be merciful towards the weak, the down-trodden, the stranger. Do not open your gates to those worst foes of freedom – tyranny and selfishness. Are not these the withholding from others in your control, the very liberties and rights which you have valued and won for yourselves?”

[We in England are ourselves still but dunces in the great world-school, our leaders still struggling with the unlearned lesson, that liberty is the equal right and heritage of every child of man, without distinction of race, colour or sex. A community that lacks the courage to found its citizenship on this broad base becomes a ‘city divided against itself, which cannot stand.’]

[We too, the great civilised nations of the world, are still but barbarians in our degree, so long as we continue to spend vast sums in killing or planning to kill each other for greed of land and gold. Does not justice bid us remember today how many thousands of the dark race perished also in Concentration Camps in a quarrel which was not theirs? Did they not thus redeem the past? Was it not an instance of that community of interest, which binding all in one, roots out racial animosity?]

Philosophically speaking, Emily Hobhouse takes the stand of a moral universalist. There are universal moral principles which imbue human actions in time and in places with moral meaning when the actions contribute towards the eventual realisation of these principles (cf. Roberts, 1991: 273). Such principles are, among others, the great ideals of the Enlightenement, i.e. the humanity and dignity of man, as an equal right. This morality legitimises itself through its purported moral weight, its capacity to extend itself unreservedly. No exception should be allowed. What is good for the particular can only be good if it would be good for all. The morality of one specific event or action is contingent upon its relationship with the universal principle, i.e. whether it can be an instance, an exemplary embodiment, of that principle. When the action is without precedent, or unrelated to any universal principle, its moral relevancy (if at all) is difficult to assess. But when the action in its uniqueness sets an example that should be imitated, it embodies the moral principle in an original sense. This explains the preponderance of the hero as a cultural topos in Emily Hobhouse’s thinking and in the culture of war memorials until after World War I. The idea of the hero embodies moral and aesthetic principles at the same time. Perhaps it is at this juncture that feminist readings of the Women’s Memorial (cf. Cloete, 1992, Landman, 1994) have a point, but, then, I think, for the wrong reason. The Women’s Memorial – from Emily Hobhouse’s viewpoint – was not to enshrine the Afrikaner nationalist male perception of the volksmoeder. Feminists would have a point, however, if they raise the issue of the honouring of the memory of Emily Hobhouse. It is definitely a travesty to have had the name of a moral universalist, and a pacifist at that, bestowed on a Daphne fighter class submarine of the South African Navy. It is a telling instance of the deafness of the Afrikaans-dominated political establishment to the principles of Emily Hobhouse, a deafness that was even intellectually engineered – by politicians who extolled the virtues of Jan F.E. Celliers’ man wit sy man kan steun.

In this way the Women’s Memorial expresses a universalised, and not a truly universal, imperative: it mobilises the Boer people to see a particularised significance in the suffering of their kin. This is an understandable reaction, and it did indeed serve as a consolation, especially in 1913. But it is clear how this interpretation of the meaning of historical suffering is immediately restricted: it ignores the recorded fact (by Emily Hobhouse, in her war diaries, and explicitly referred to in her dedication speech) that according to official figures, 13 315 Africans also died in English concentration camps (Spies, 1977: 266; cf. Hobhouse 1902: 350-355), and it blots out the moral dimension of this commemorative sign, i.e. to remind people of the horror that once was and that may never occur again, not only to them but also never by them. The censored reprint of Emily Hobhouse’s dedication speech in 1963 thus confirms a tendency that was started by the process of the institutionalisation of the Women’s Memorial, i.e. to monopolise the meaning of the suffering of the war for whites only. Evidence for this can be found in Van der Merwe’s updated brochure, written some time between 1926 and 1941: even the latter shuns all references to the suffering of black people during the Anglo-Boer War. By disavowing the memory of 13 000 black concentration camp victims, the Afrikaner circumvented the issue of black sacrifice for the sake of soil and freedom. By the same token Afrikaner nationalism internalised imperialism, rather than expurgating it. That would also be the reason why many Afrikaners would insist on the uniqueness of the Boer concentration camp trauma – it affords them a claim to political power which they have earned collectively through the suffering of (some of) their forebears. It came as a shock to the concentration camp victims, as well as the
record of even greater sufferings not so long after the Anglo-Boer War and not so far removed from the former Boer republics. The mortality figures on the side of the indigenous population of the Boer republics is nearly eclipsed by the death toll of the genocide on the Herero and Nama in German West Africa (today’s Namibia). From 1904 to 1907, 65,000 Herero and 10,000 Nama were driven into the desert by the colonial German authority to die there of hunger and thirst. That was the colonialist response to an uprising (Chalk & Jonassohn, 1990: 230-248). And the concentration camps of the Anglo-Boer War had their precursors in the reconcentrados of the Spanish-Cuban War of 1896, in which more than 100,000 Cubans lost their lives (Spies, 1977: 148).

To wrest the meaning of the concentration camp history from its nationalist mould may offer a way to the search for justice. Instead of fetishising a historical instance of suffering by elevating it to the ultimate instance of suffering in a limited universe of suffering and injustice, memorials should facilitate the ability to recognise suffering whenever and wherever it may occur.

I conclude this presentation, without further commentary, with a juxtaposition of three icons of suffering: Michelangelo’s Pieta, Anton van Wouw’s Mother and Child for the Women’s Memorial and Sam Nejma’s 1976 photo of Hector Petersen.

It is for the sake of the search for justice that the true war memorial functions as Mahnmal. It speaks silently on behalf of a “we” regardless of gender, class or race, and it seems to say that as a particular people we have come to know what suffering entails, and we shall never let it happen again, neither to ourselves nor to any other human being. The future course of history has to be different from what is commemorated by this monument.

Bibliography


• This paper is based on research that was facilitated by the Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria, the Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut in Essen, Germany and the Slovenian Society of Aesthetics. I would also like to express my indebtedness to Mr Neels Nieuwenhuizen and Ms E. Wessels of the War Museum of the Boer Republics in Bloemfontein, and to colleagues at the Rand Afrikaans University for their invaluable assistance in drawing my attention to, obtaining and reproducing archival material. I owe Professor Jörn Rüsen of the Bielefeld University, Professor Detlef Hoffmann of the Oldenburg University and Professor Jonathan Webber of Oxford University a great deal for drawing on their resources and participating in their project on Die ästhetische Inzenierung der Demokratie. Last, but not least, a word of special thanks to Dr Ales Erjavec of the Institute of Philosophy at the Slovene Academy of the Sciences for being instrumental in getting me to start thinking about the “aesthetics of war”.
MEMORY, MEMORIALS AND MONUMENTS. I actually do not know why I have been asked to be a respondent because my history on this subject has actually always been a wrong history. Some people might remember my thing about the Taal Monument. I called the Taal Monument a dick and landed in trouble. So I am a little reluctant.

My involvement with issues of recollection of memory, memorials and monuments in the past have all been rather funny. I remember for instance during the eighties, as a student, I approached a university committee and later went to Prof (Jakes) Gerwel to ask that a hostel at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) be named after Allan Boesak. I still remember Jakes' response. He said: "I am actually uncomfortable with the idea of naming memorials after living people because you do not know what might happen to them in the future." Prophetic words indeed!

Another instance, also at UWC. We were trying to re-name the hostels after heroes. But soon we had to face the problem of inclusivity and exclusion. We wanted to find heroes. We knew our heroes were African nationalists but we wanted to be inclusive. So we ran around trying to find coloured heroes – but coloureds who were supportive of our cause. “What about the broader African context?” we were soon asked by some of the students. No sooner had we started that discussion, when we realised that we had to find some women heroes too. So we found ourselves needing to wrestle with the question of memory, memorials and monuments in a truly inclusive and democratic way.

This discussion ladies and gentlemen did not take minutes to conclude. It took hours and hours of debate. It involved friends making enemies. Boy friends losing girl friends. At the end of the day UWC had hostels named after many different interests in our society. I think the aim of it all was to unify UWC. But my recollection is that when I left the campus, UWC was not yet reconciled. In fact UWC became more segregated by those debates. Maybe in the future those debates will resolve themselves. Maybe UWC will be anaesthetised and forget all those things about the past that divide.

As I think back on these experiences I cannot help think that they are not things worth taking too seriously. I find them so technical, so nebulous and of little purpose for the broader masses out there. As a social commentator or social critic, I need to tell you I have not seen memorials and monuments working in a functional way to unite people. I do not know what happened to the hostel we wanted to name after Allan Boesak. It does not really matter anymore. But there was a ring of truth to what Jakes said that day in 1988 at UWC.

Further experiences also make it very difficult for me to take this whole thing about monuments seriously. I once went to Maputo. In the middle of Maputo there is a monument. Guess for whom? Louis Trichardt. What struck me about that monument was that it was lily-white and white washed. It had all the semblances of Stellenbosch. And I was thinking: "Stellenbosch in Maputo? I must check this out." So I rushed over to the monument and found that it was a monument for Louis Trichardt. His stone was laid right in the middle of the revolution in 1974, 'n Steen gele deur sy edele WH Punt. How weird, I thought. Then I remembered that the Voortrekkers were once there. Maybe he died fighting a war with the Mashangaans in the south of Mozambique, I thought. But then I discovered he was killed by malaria. "Old Louis was capsized by a mosquito." What really amazed me was that even at the height of the animosity between South Africa and Mozambique, that stone was laid by WH Punt. Dit was mooi gekalk, properly whitewashed, clean and just standing out there for everyone to see. Mozambicans could have scribbled and written anything they liked on that on the stone. But they did not. They found it among themselves not to bother Louis Trichardt while he was lying there. His monument is still standing there. I find that fascinating indeed.

Other monuments in Mozambique are as ridiculous. There are monuments to Mao and all kinds of people. There was a group of Mozambicans walking down the avenues as if Karl Marx did not matter for them. Just the name of a street. And now in the new dispensation, Mozambicans and their streets and monuments are still celebrating Karl Marx and others. If you ask them why, they would say to you, "ugh do not care about it". That is funny.

It is funny too to look at the Settlers' Monument in Grahamstown. Exclusion and inclusion is again a theme that springs to mind as you look at that monument. You cannot not think about division. Grahamstown has never been able to include me somehow, for a simple reason. It is because Grahamstown has got a moeuse kanon (a huge cannon) facing Xhosaland. When the English celebrated Grahamstown in the building of the Settler Monument, it was before they tried to include everyone in their feeling. When I get there I am supposed to feel something. I do not know what. The truth is I do not feel a damn about it. I think the nearest thing I got to feel about it is a twinge of anger about the arrogance of it all. We fought nine Frontier Wars against the English and there is no memory of us – no stone to make us feel anything – except, of course, a bit of anger. The only memorial or stone that depicts those nine years of colonial warfare in the Eastern Cape is the kind of stone one finds on top of the Grahamstown hill. What I am supposed to feel? I think, at best, that it is a big joke.

Now to June 16. I think it is a brilliant picture of Hector Petersen by Sam Nkomo. What is it all about? I mean really. There is something nice about that story, and it is a joke at the end of the day. Sam Nkomo took that picture which is famous all over the world, but no one – none of us commissioned it. He was in the right place at the right time. He saw and on the spur of the moment he took this picture. Sam Nkomo is not very proud of that picture because that picture, photographically speaking, brought Sam Nkomo nothing for his pocket. It becomes a joke just as I am beginning to take it seriously. At the wrong moment it becomes a joke.

On a personal note. We went to lay a stone for my granny two years ago. We did so with great pain and stuff. My granny had been "necklaced". The people in the community thought we are good people because we remembered. But as soon as we left for Cape Town, the comrades went to the stone and destroyed it. Again the possibility of some finality is not yet realised. It's always a possibility. But just that. Maybe it happens. Maybe it does not happen. In this case it did not happen and we must now go and repair the stone because people do not like to have stones that can speak to their memories in a proper fashion. I do
not think we are succeeding. So, debate, debate.

I shared these stories with a poet. It is nice to share things with a poet. Poets see in a way that most of us do not want to see. I discussed them with an anaesthetised poet from Norway, Liv Nudberg. Liv walks about as if she does not feel a thing. It is as if nothing touches her. I tell her these stories about me, my memory and all these things that I have told you. Liv says to me one day: "Sandle you know what, you know what you should do?" And I said "yeah what?" And she says "you should not try to remember. Maybe you should try to remember." I thank you very much.

**DISCUSSION**

**Fakier Jessa**

I work at the City Council as a Social Development Facilitator. Not enough has been done around justice and reconciliation since 1994. We somehow thought a democratic election was enough. But we still have low-scale war in the working class areas. The media, in turn, enjoys playing this up. In the consciousness of society we have a cycle of violence. So, now there is panic. And where there is panic it is difficult to find a workable solution.

If we are going to address justice and reconciliation in a serious way we need to do something about this - both the crime and the portrayal of violence in the media. We need to deal with it at an intellectual and physical level. If we do not do both these we will not solve the problem. We will deal only with the symptoms. We need to begin in the townships and [Cape] flats. We need to ask how crime is playing itself out in the minds of our young people, how it reaches into our schools and the how it is imposing itself on the minds of officials of national and local government - most of whom have no first-hand exposure to the realities of our working class areas. (Maybe we should no longer call them working class areas, because people are now unemployed...)

We must gain a serious understanding of why there is crime and who is driving it. It will take more than merely having a tough Minister of Safety and Security to solve the problem. And once we solve crime we will all find it easier to be reconciled. Crime is driving us apart while we talk about reconciliation.

**André Brink**

Just a very brief comment, on memory. A couple of years ago Peter du Preez from UCT published a psychology paper on memory in which he consulted various people to identify various definitions of memory. One of the definitions I have memorised came from a young boy who I think was 8 years old. It was a very simple line. The child just said, "my memory is the thing I use to forget with".

**Margaret Nash**

I would like to turn to the role of religious organisations and memory. In the Christian tradition, the liturgy for the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion includes the words "do this in remembrance of me". To remember in a religious sense means far more than to merely spare a thought for something. It means to engage the past, to ask what it means in the present and to have this memory inform our actions.

**Wilhelm Verwoerd**

I would like to ask a question of Sandile. The theme of Johan’s paper was “ways of remembering”. As I understand him he is critical of the ways of remembering identified by Johan. Can Sandile identify some other ways of remembering that do not generate the kind of political problems that he identifies?

**Anna-Marie Wolpe**

I raise a matter that has been bothering me for a while with regard to South Africa. It has to do with what Sandile has written in the past and what he has said today about memorials and memories. I am concerned about ways in which South Africa does not see itself in a broader historical context. We are so self-centred. We need to remember that the suffering that we have seen and experienced is not unique to South Africa. I think your paper, Prof. Snyman, raised these matters in a historical context. Your comment, Sandile, does not take this into account. Your examples are limited to South Africa. I understand that we are concerned with justice and reconciliation here and that the focus of this conference is on South Africa, but for me it is so important to remember that violence has always been a feature of world history. We should conceptualise violence in this universal sense. The particular must be seen as a manifestation of the universal. If we do not do this we are in danger of dealing only with the particular and not the propensity of violence to repeat itself.

**Patricia Hayes**

What is the purpose for showing the Sam Nkama photograph without saying much about it? There is richness in it and in the South African photographic archive that must be spelled out. We must be invited to interpret photographs and to challenge one another's interpretations. Silence could suggest the interpretation is obvious.

**Ntanduli Ndebele**

I was particularly interested in Prof. Snyman’s slides. Although Americans have commemorated many things about their past, they are yet to commemorate iconic figures of slavery and other things that have happened to African
Americans. The connection between the two seems to be that those who are in power have to grapple with how far they have to recognise the memory of those who do not have the power. What that means for the process of reconciliation, particularly for us today, is something worth thinking about. What is the capacity of the new dispensation to memorialise within the context of justice and reconciliation?

Matti Wouri

would like just to add to Dr Ndebele's very astute comment. I quote Milan Kundera: "The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting." So we have this connection between power and the suppressed memory and the legitimacy of memory.

RESPONSES

Sandle Dikeni

do not think its true that I am limited to South Africa or even South African afrocentricity. The expression of victimhood in South Africa is a experience limited to South Africa, but this does not mean it is not related to being a victim elsewhere. The South African experience at present is a vivid image in the consciousness of the world. That is why many of the things that are spoken about in the world tend to focus on South Africa.

I want to accuse you of something as well. I think that your presumption is actually based on a wrong European notion. That false European notion is a notion that constantly says to us --- and I have heard it so many times -- that black and white suffering is the same thing. Repression in East Germany is not the same as what happened in New Crossroads. No ways! It is repression in both places but different kinds of repression. One cannot be reduced to the other. To assume because you know this thing here you also know it there is nonsense.

I once said to someone in East Germany that I can see Nazism in South Africa. "I'd like to take you to Crossroads and you will see it." He said to me, no you can't compare". It is not the same way. It's not my argument; it's his argument. There is something about repression and violence that is peculiar to situation that cannot be universalised.

I think what you really want to say is that in South Africa we should also articulate our understanding of ourselves in relation to a broader understanding of the human thing happening out there. That was one of my criticisms of the TRC. It actually thought that the way in which we articulated our pain could be limited to the borders of South Africa. The TRC failed to show the link between what happened to us in South Africa and what happens to people who

important, but so is the difference. It is insensitive not to recognise and dwell a while on what makes a particular form of suffering particular.

Johan Snyman showed us some nice slides. I liked them. Now I am asked by Wilhelm Verwoerd whether there are other creative ways of remembering? I am sure there are. But we must find them. Part of that way of finding them is to look at the Vroue Monument and ask how we as South Africans who are not Afrikaners feel? How do these people feel about there being so many women who have died in the concentration camps? Do we as blacks really feel when we see the monument? If we do not feel it, we ought to be honest and say we do not feel it. We have to be honest...If a monument does not make people feel it fails. There are many monuments and memorials that don't work. I ask you again: How many black South Africans can actually get up and say they feel a universal pain when they look at Boer suffering in the concentration camps? You can't make me feel.

Maybe there are other ways to make me feel it. These we must explore.

Johan had a go at this in juxtaposing Hector Petersen and the vrou en kind. The whole TRC thing is about whether there any other ways that the world has not explored in dealing with the past. We told the world there is an alternative to Nuremberg. We have only just started to explore other ways. That is what we must continue to do in South Africa if we want to remember in an inclusive way.

Power and memory. This is a very difficult one. We are into the politics of nation-building. Nation-building means that the classical notion of perpetuation of power has actually shifted dramatically. In fact, what is now happening is that the people who were in power before are saying to people who were not in power before now that you are in power it is time for you to feel for the victims of the Anglo-Boer War. Only in this space called South Africa, can this happen. One has to ask the question again. How much of this is a gimmick? How much of this is real? How many black South Africans can actually get up and say actually they do feel a universal pain when they look at Boer suffering in the concentration camps? How many can really say so? You will find many of us saying we do, but we do not really feel. You can't make us feel. But you can facilitate the process for us to do so. We must explore ways to do this together.

But you can't just change the flag and then say, "now you must feel". You can't tell me for 50 years that the Boer is my enemy and then expect me to go to this monument and begin to feel. I think there is a process that needs to happen for us to achieve that. We need to re-interpret the power position in a more holistic way. When that happens we will understand more. We may even begin to feel and we will be in a better position to explore what it means to remember what is dear to those who no longer have political power.

Johan Snyman

I used the Hector Petersen photograph within a specific context. Coming from an Afrikaner background, having been introduced to the Holocaust, and working through it, it struck me that the Afrikaner historiography stops with the Boer being the victim. That is very particular and very restrictive. This is a

tend to experience themselves as the victim of so much that has happened in Europe. It is also the case with Jewish people. Somehow they cannot get to the moral dimension and address the similarities in their suffering with others. I pose the question: Does a sense of universal suffering create the possibility of a bond between people?

Standing in the Afrikaner community I juxtaposed the Women's Monument with the Hector Petersen photograph in an endeavour to enable Afrikaners to see that it is not only the Afrikaner who has suffered. Others have also suffered. It is intriguing that the postures depicted in the icons I showed of the Pieta, the woman and child and Hector Petersen are essentially the same. I was hoping this would open people's perspectives in gaining a new understanding of human suffering. I am arguing that it is important to contextualise the different portrayals of sufferings, but also to show the similarities that exist within situations of suffering. There are unique moments in local histories but these need to be seen within a global context. It is then that people can hopefully start to feel empowered to do something about their lot. They then have the possibility of seeing themselves not as victims but as members of a human race who have overcome similar situations of suffering.

A comment on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. It was a powerless group of the Vietnam veterans who claimed that although being part and parcel of American history, they had been excluded from official memory. The Vietnam War was something uncomfortable for the American public to handle. It is important to remember that it was not the American government that took the initiative to erect the monument. It was this minority group of Vietnam veterans who refused to allow their experience to be denied. The American public were required to face, in a visual and tangible way, what happened in Vietnam. And, for Vietnam veterans and presumably many other Americans, the monument works. They come in their droves to see it. Does everyone feel? It is difficult not to...
When I was invited to participate in today's reflections I realised that you expect me to contribute some thoughts on the ways in which the Afrikaners accommodated changes and transitions after the Boer liberation war of 1899 to 1902 and the advent of majority government in 1994. After all, it would be presumptuous of me to try to imagine how these events were translated in the memories of other participating or affected groups, such as the English then, or the Blacks and the Coloureds and Indians more recently. (You will note that I'm obliged to use the loaded terminology of a discredited categorisation, but the reality of grouping according to ethnic origin or cultural similitude is still very much with us; indeed, it may even have become reinforced of late.)

Let me make it absolutely clear that it is not my intention to venture into what ought to have happened or what should happen now. I have no special knowledge about the intricacies of transition, I fundamentally do not subscribe to the belief that confession will lead to forgiveness and therefore to reconciliation, and I'm not at all sure whether we are embarked on the road to nation-building or ever have been. So my own wishes and dreams and regrets will not figure in what follows. Except, of course, to the extent that hope springs eternal...

Furthermore, I have no specific understanding of the Afrikaners and certainly no mandate to reflect their views, that is, in the event of there being shared views. I am an Afrikaner (and inclined to say also, besides being many other things); in this case it is the language which makes me of an Afrikaner. I claim, as I have done repeatedly, that to be an Afrikaner is to be a cultural hybrid, perhaps even a mutant, but this affirmation doesn't cut any ice with my fellow South Africans. It would seem that creolisation, with its knack for transforming divided memories and harmonising diverse origins, as a model of adaptability and of metamorphosis, is not valued in this society. Obviously it is not going to stop me from being a bastard.

I am also white. Under the previous régime whiteness gave one access to privilege and position; in the present dispensation it has some drawbacks, such as progressively being evinced from national politics or the administration of the public sector, and this irrespective of what one did with or about one's whiteness under preceding circumstances. I can say I am self-evidently an African, and again I have done so on many an occasion, but the majority of my compatriots probably scoff at this affirmation as an attempt at saving my skin, or else they would premise my candidacy on the sufficient moral commitment and gesture. In other words, as white one is not born an African, but under certain circumstances and conditions you may qualify to become one.

I am not a racist, neither overtly nor subliminally or inadvertently or unconsciously. Whilst knowing that I am shaped by circumstances and conditions, as we all are, I'm not a victim of history. Whereas I hope to remember my share of responsibility for my actions and my words, I have no sense of participating in collective guilt. This does not mean, by any stretch of interpretation, organs and orgies of power then ruling the roost, and condoned in some way or other by the majority of whites.

History, like memory, other than in its factual manifestations, is never a fixed entity; its weight and its import become more or less with time and with interpretation. But I think we need to agree for the sake of sane understanding that the crimes of apartheid and colonialism are of another scale than the magnitude of the Shoah or the mass killings of Tutsis by Hutus or the massive exercise in people cleansing carried out by the Khmer Rouge of Pol Pot or, for that matter, the millions exterminated respectively by the régimes of Stalin and Mao Zedong in the course of mad social experiments.

Putting our situation in perspective can help clear the debate of excesses of hot air, for we have to live together as best we can with who and what we are, in this place and at this time.

My first remark will be that by bracketing the two processes, as presented in the title of the session (Different Ways of Remembering Political Transition at Two Ends of the Century), one would seem to suggest a given similarity. Can the comparisons be sustained? Yes and no.

In both instances, the Boers lost decisively, though in significantly different ways. It goes without saying that I have no memory of what the nascent Afrikaners felt after the defeat of 1902 – collective memory passed down the generations becomes myth or accommodation to propaganda; the closest approximation of what people experienced and felt will certainly be found in the creative writing of the time. Literature (the journeys of the heart and the mind) is always a better indicator than history writing.

After the defeat of 1902 did the Afrikaners expect to survive as a people and could they reasonably dream of regaining their autonomy? Probably yes. Do the Afrikaners of the year 2000 expect to survive as a people? It is too soon to tell, but I think they have a gut feeling that they may disappear as a definable separate entity. Do they now dream of re-establishing their Republic? No, definitely not.

Were the Afrikaners of that time a homogeneous group? No. Not only were there major differences between those of the North and their stay-behind and often bourgeois cousins of the South, but the Republican Boers disagreed about nearly everything among themselves. And the same holds true for present-day Afrikaners: from before 1994, and particularly since, they disagree profoundly about the assessment of their situation and about their ideals, and thus about attitude and strategies and tactics.

There is now, however, a measure of consensus about what the past was like. Did the “intellectuals” and writers of the time, those processors of dreams, significantly inflect perceptions and shape memories? Probably only very marginally, although we now remember those times through their eyes. Are intellectuals having any measurable effect at present? No, after undermining and weakening Afrikaner hegemony in the sixties the writers and thinkers have faded away as public actors.

After the destruction of their farms and the mass exodus to the cities (probably the most important migration of people in this country, not in numbers but in effect), and after the long years of absolute poverty, the Afrikaners of 1994,[-] their economic and political power again, most-
imperialist and anti-capitalist ideas. The present Afrikaners were, by and large, affluent in 1994, especially in comparison with the black majority. It is not so much that they have become poorer since then; rather, the gap between the economically deft and the previously protected who are now visibley starting to suffer from poverty is becoming larger — as is also the gap between the newly advantaged black bourgeoisie and those previously and still disadvantaged. It remains to be seen what the rich Afrikaners are willing to do to help the poorer ones, whether there will be again a surge of solidarity, and whether their political positioning will be to the left or to the right.

Were there leaders of stature after the Boer liberation war to take the Afrikaners into a new national configuration? Yes — one remembers Louis Botha and Jan Smuts and Barry Hertzog and Jan Hofmeyr, and on the other side people like John Merriman. And after 1994? I don’t think so. FW De Klerk, despite being instrumental in the orderly giving away of power, very rapidly forfeited any claim to Afrikaner leadership. And General Constand Viljoen was never more than a side show of admirable integrity. On the “other side” too, with the notable exception of Nelson Mandela, we did not have any real nation builders.

History does not repeat itself; it recasts the relations among its components. In South Africa, the Afrikaners figure nearly since the beginning. While their role and the nature of their interaction with others was constantly changing, they too were in a continuous process of inner change — arguing about their destiny and their identity and their values. It would be foolhardy to ascribe unifying characteristics to them, and yet they have a strongly developed sense of who they are.

The essential difference between 1904 and 1994 is the power equation. Running like a deafening roar of silence through all I have tried to indicate above is of course the unacknowledged presence of the majority of South Africans. The official history I have talked about thus far is a thin squiggle in the margins of the country. Although the so-called “Native Question” was an important and divisive issue at the time of forming the Union of South Africa in 1910, ultimately the dispensation was the result of a deal struck by former enemies, both white, and thus the then “new nation” was mooted.

The only way nation-building could be envisaged in 1994 was through the liberation and the emancipation of the black people. But that liberation was not enough to bring about reconciliation or build a nation. In fact, it could be argued that given the vast discrepancy in numbers between majority and minorities, it was not necessary to build a nation. Wasn’t, isn’t, the black nation sufficient unto itself, even if it has not yet fully taken possession of all the national powers and resources and attributes?

I want to note very carefully here that I am not making a moral judgement. I’m not suggesting that there were not important efforts at reconciliation (recognition to what? up to what point? with whom?), nor do I deny that leaders from all communities and all walks of life seriously considered and tried to put in place the ideals and the mechanisms for building one nation. Again, I’m not proposing that it ought to have happened. Was it really possible though, in the thrust for black empowerment, to accommodate and take along the minorities? Why would it have been necessary? Because they could disrupt the process if excluded. But in the end, they would be left in statelessness. Any criticism of
traumatised and stubborn froth of defensiveness. This can be seen in the way they cover for one another and draw a laer to protect themselves against what they insist on perceiving as mischievous and racist whites. They seem to suffer from a sense of persecution. And it is always much easier to beat the race drum than to admit to criminal behaviour in one’s own ranks.

When modernity – in this instance commercial farming, but the same can be argued for the campaign to combat Aids – is equated with the “West”, and thus seen as an imposition to the benefit of Western interests, the very notion of a functioning nation-state within the parameters of international systems becomes problematical. What do we intend to put in its place? When we have unleashed uncertainty, fear and instability (by, for example, refusing to speak up because of historical scars, or using patenty false propaganda as in saying “there are two nations, one poor and black and the other rich and white”, or again: “in South Africa 13% of the land belongs to blacks and 87% to whites” – these are old anti-apartheid slogans from before 1994), how do we then go about finding solutions to the pressing problems of development?

What, in all fairness, can the minorities do? They are the products and the protagonists of expansion, even of conquest – though since some time already not the only beneficiaries. To put it bluntly: modern states in Africa came about because of Western greed. But it is untenable to expect the descendants of these minorities to now live in abnegation and grief. Those who feel threatened because of their skin colour or their language or their way of life will inevitably bond. Blackness and whiteness become essential conditions, ideologies even, obtusely class differences.

There is no over-arching discourse to accommodate these “differences” or mobilise all the people around central ideas. There would seem to be very few dissenting voices emanating from the majority and when coming from the minorities they are published as only to be expected opposition from unpatriotic people who hark back to a lost order.

When the ruling party becomes confused with the state, when you have to be a member of that party – or, at a minimum, supportive of it – in order to get a job or to profit from social and cultural and political advancement, then it is easy to see how opponents will be branded as “traitors” and how this fanaticism (bred from despair) will lead to seemingly condoned patterns of intimidation and state terrorism. This is also what National Party rule was about.

Afrikaners are here to stay. Or, at least, significant numbers of them will remain here. As in 1904 they will have to elaborate spaces of survival.

I don’t fear the extinction of Afrikaans, that only common denominator among people who are quite different in their origins and their beliefs, the flowering of cultural activity and the vigour of internal Afrikaner debates show enough resilience. What I do fear are the crushing arguments of supposed pragmatism – economic and social – and the barely concealed hegemonistic project portraying itself as political and moral correctness to sideline Afrikaans in terms of reconciliation and rectifying past injustices, and thus forcing our richly varied societies into the mould of one blundering mode. What I fear is the elimination of Afrikaans from public sectors – the courts, the army, the universities – and hence the withering of acquired knowledge and skills, to the detriment of the nation.

(As was incontrovertibly the case in the past), is no guarantee to alleviate present inadequacies. Besides (and I quote from an article, “Language is a Virus”, in the March issue of PC Computing): “Many feel that while a single language would make personal and business interactions easier, more would be lost than gained. Monocultures can kill ecologies of ideas – and new ideas are the most important asset of any business.”

The continuing reinvention of South Africa that I spoke about earlier is intimately linked to language as an instrument of observing our own consciousness and thinking, and thus to diversity. Reconciliation is a dead and deadening process of turning over old attitudes and will do more harm than good unless it can be a dynamic and vigorous meeting of differences.

But similarly, survival and adaptation and modernity and transformation and invention itself demand of us not to remain or become enclaved within our specific cultural horizons. For instance, Afrikaans must actively share its accumulated riches in methodology and skills in order to survive. This is not a moral argument, it is a life necessity.

We are doomed to continue making and unmaking one another. This ought to be taking place as a meeting of minds within the context of the African Renaissance, for instance. But so far non-blacks have been clearly excluded from the debate. We must broaden the premises and the scope of our interaction if we want to avoid communicating and non-communicating in more abrasive and destructive and self-destructive ways.
The pattern of recent change just described shows us a progressive increment in the power of influence by black South Africans and its concomitant loss among white South Africans. But while the transfer of political power has been largely complete, changes in the power of dominant social and cultural practice remain relatively minimal but under way. The resolution of change in this domain of power relations is likely to be confused and more drawn out. Instead of clear-cut outcomes, it is likely to manifest itself in the emergence of a transcendent national identity rather than as an experience of gain or loss by any particular community. This is because the process of change will occur over a much longer time frame during which intercultural interactions of all kinds will take place, sometimes resulting in stressful tension and stabilising accommodations.

To ponder closely on this complicated situation, I would like to return to our Model C school. I can see a scenario involving three phases. We have seen the first phase: what I have called the initial phase of affirmation and discovery, of denial and acceptance. The second phase saw a steady increase in the numbers of black students accompanied by an often frustratingly slow increase in the numbers of black teachers. Depending on where the Model C school is located, there will tend to be a ceiling in the increase of black pupils beyond a certain level. The initial advantage for black pupils (in the initial pressure on the school to recognise the experience they bring), together with the relative absence of a critical mass of black teachers to consolidate initial gains, may taper off when the old administrative culture of the school regains its balance. Things may then be seen to be what they always have been. Perceptions of reversal may proliferate, lessening levels of confidence in the promise of change.

This suggests that there is a limit to the extent to which the movement of blacks into historically white settings will actually result in decisive permanent change to those institutions, unless certain factors are in place. This will be so in predominantly white businesses, with predominantly white shareholders. It will be so in predominantly white sporting codes with high profile histories. It will be so in capital intensive farming. It will be so in media institutions. It will be so in a range of non-governmental organisations.

There are some advantages to this situation. It is not to be expected that the levelling off of black participation, and the subsequent limitation in black influence in such institutions, should lead to their destruction. On the contrary, the services that many of them provide remain essential to the survival of the entire country. The perceived limitation in total black control results in the maintenance of essential productive capability and some measure of predictable stability. By the time a critical mass of blacks is in place, there will be an institutional tradition of company practices into which new members are socialised. This situation may not be desirable from the perspective of a short-term radical project. But such an understanding may be crucial for a longer-range perspective.

This long-term transitional process may have some particular benefits for a white society that has lost political power. It retains for them a measure of cultural familiarity, which assures them some basis for working levels of self-confidence. But to the extent that this domain of familiarity may consolidate itself into an autonomy of expectations, it may run aground and self-destruct in a way that will harm to ensure a large measure of...
TRANSCENDING A CENTURY OF INJUSTICE

My interest in why countries such as India, Indonesia, Nigeria and South Africa have not collapsed led me to a book called The Collapse of Complex Societies, by Joseph A Tainter. Tainter, discussing the nature of complex societies, writes:

Complexity is generally understood to refer to such things as the size of a society, the number and distinctiveness of its parts, the variety of specialised social roles that it incorporates, the number of distinct social personalities present, and the variety of mechanisms for organizing these into a coherent, functioning whole. Augmenting any of these dimensions increases the complexity of society. Hunter-gatherer societies (by way of illustrating one contrast in complexity) contain no more than a few dozen distinct social personalities, while modern European censuses recognize 10,000 to 20,000 unique occupational roles, and industrial societies may contain overall more than 1,000,000 different kinds of social personalities.

I have no idea how large the “number of distinct social personalities” in the entire South African economy, but the level of complexity for the modern sector of the economy is high. The question is: where are the points of growth beyond the transition? Growth opportunities in the inherited modern economic sector may be structurally limited, in the long term, allowing for a certain number of participants until they peak.

Such a scenario suggests that more and more blacks will be absorbed into a multiracial economic culture (small in number but huge in influence), tied to a global economy with diminishing ties to a huge and energetic informal sector of black citizens. If this latter sector is not to be frustrated, more growth opportunities must emerge within it.

At this point, I return once more to our Model C school where I left you with two of three scenarios. The third scenario has really little to do with our school. It involves a parallel development in other schools (township schools), which will absorb the rest of the citizens who cannot enter the mixed schooling sector because of inherent limitations we have seen. While the process of participation in the mixed sector is likely to be driven by individuals in the light of their needs and means, participation and development in the more homogeneous black environment will require a great deal of stimulation in the form of public policy intervention.

This scenario suggests that the third significant phase in post-apartheid South Africa, maybe around 2030, will see the taking off of complex economies in traditionally black localities around the country. When that happens, it should signal the beginning of a process of maturation for this democracy, whose inventive capacity in the scientific and entrepreneurial fields will have spread through the population, no longer depending almost entirely on white expertise as it had done until then.

What I have attempted to do in this brief discussion is conceptualize the challenges of the present in the context of scenarios of the future. It is a speculative exercise that cannot offer any accuracy in prediction. Rather, it is intended to stimulate imaginative thinking about the future so that we are not grounded in the problems and frustrations of the present. My intuitions were driven in this direction as I pondered the historic significance of the mandate justice and reconciliation within scenarios of possibly long drawn out historic processes? An effort at anticipation is required if we are to continue to interact and intervene with imagination.

RESPONDENT: ANNIE GAGIANO

A British historian, JGA Pocock, wrote in a recent review — with no intended reference to South Africa — that:

A society which seriously determines, or discovers, that it is a convergence of two cultures needs a history of two cultures; and since history is a product of culture, this means that it needs two histories, the history of two experiences and two ways of looking at history.

In a context such as the opening of this Institute, this immediately raises the question — how reconcilable are such distinct histories?

Studying the programme topics before I had received copies of the papers to which I was asked to respond, it struck me as ironic that the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation had assigned the topic of the aftermath of the South African War (1899-1902) to Breuyn Breitenbach and the subject of the after-effects of the democratic transition of 1994 to Njabulo Ndebele because this seems to resemble the ancient, separating Boer-Black categorisation that still functions in our society.

In a newspaper article on the function and purpose of this Institute, Charles Villa Vicencio drew attention to the increasing compartmentalisation in South African society, with the categories now appearing as (on the one side) “a sense of complacency among the better-off” and (on the other) “a certain cynicism” in “the minds of the poor”. This he ascribed to the effects of “a long and complex history” (2000: 6).

Perhaps it is useful, in order to move away from facile assumptions of social and political reconciliation as something that has already been achieved in our country, to think of another meaning of this term, “reconciliation”, as a matching up, an exercise in accounting. In other words, a process that involves a calling to account, (an) accounting for where we are and what we have (as an accountant would examine rows of figures and amounts of money). This would take us away from the merely ameliorative and soothing, or premature, ideas of reconciliation that waft around in certain spheres of our society. It would involve the hard questions — who has the jobs? who owns the cars? — as well as the complex issues of moral accountability for the past and the future.

Reconciliation is necessarily no once-off “event”, it seems to me, but an ongoing process — and the idea that it is something that has been achieved now will be as dangerous as it is foolish. There may be a flight from the real...
of the true history have been obliterated. We, as black people, could make no appraisal of our own worth; we did not know who or what we were, apart from objects of abuse and exploitation.

In the second quotation, also taken from the collection of autobiographical pieces, A Woman Alone, Head says:

Southern Africa isn’t like the rest of Africa and is never going to be. Here we are going to have to make an extreme effort to find a deep faith to help us to live together.

Together, these two quotations sum up – more eloquently than I could make these points – the basic issues I have wanted to raise in my presentation, and so I end here.

REFERENCES


A sense of history was totally absent in me and it was as if, far back in history, thieves had stolen the land and were so anxious to cover up all traces of the theft that correspondingly, all traces
Transcending a Century of Injustice

Discussion

Unidentified
The Dr Ndebele-Professor Breytenbach exchange illustrates the complex web of relationships that cut across families, tribes, political parties and different histories. How do we reconcile these different things? Maybe it is still too early to try. Timing is a crucial thing when it comes to serious reconciliation. It must be encouraged but it cannot be forced.

Siphiwe Xhapile
I comment as a pastor in Guguletu. I found Dr Ndebele's example of a child and school very interesting because this is what parents in Guguletu are wrestling with. When our children started going to these former white schools we experienced serious problems. Soon they did not want to go to school. Now they do not want to go to school in Guguletu either. We had to check why it was like that. We found that every Friday these children were in detention for not having done homework because their parents are not helping and the parents cannot help. The parents are without the level of education required to assist their children. What do we do? These are issues that we need to look into. Some people think it is enough to get black children into former white schools. Most people think that all is well at these schools. The problems are very serious ones.

I started as a pastor in Guguletu in 1989 and up to now I have only married six couples in that church in congregation of about 2,000. Our young people have no idea of marriage at all. Apartheid divided black families. Most people left the Ciskei to come and work in the Western Cape, left their families in the Eastern Cape and started another family in the Western Cape. This is a lie that most men live with. What do we do? The past continues to haunt the present.

Unidentified
The first comment I would like to make is to Breyten. He says he does not believe that confession can lead to reconciliation. I disagree with him. I think he is wrong. It has made a vast difference to many people. When the perpetrators confessed at the TRC it helped. Some of the people managed to rebury their loved ones through confessions. Confession is probably also helpful to the perpetrator. Being honest with oneself is a helpful thing. We must not give up on perpetrators and victims being able to be reconciled.

This talk about blacks and white Afrikaners must stop. Our kids do not know about colour, don't let us impose our past hang-ups on them.

Truly history does repeat itself. Prof Ndebele gave an example of the model C school and Annie gave an example of Jan Van Riebeeck. Last night my child, in grade 4 in a model C school, showed me something. It was a CV of President Mandela, showing the whole life of President Mandela. I hope generations to come will not do with it what the little girl did with the story of Van Riebeeck. History teaching has its dangers.

Annie Coetze
I would like to say something about being an Afrikaner. It is not necessarily an expression of identity. For me it is an expression of language. That is the important thing. Being an Afrikaner is not (about) being an Afrikaner - it is about a language. We have to keep in mind that one of the obstacles to reconciliation is language. We must accept one another's languages.

Karin Chubb
Story-telling can be a vehicle of healing. I'd like Dr Ndebele to elaborate on the effectiveness of story-telling as a means of healing and reconciliation. There are lots of stories that need to be preserved. Children need to hear them as part of the school curriculum.

Responses

Breyten Breytenbach
There is a tension between what we would like to see and what we actually do see. There is an important link between idealism and what we call hope. I personally believe very strongly in the organic necessity of utopia, which is the dream we share - that ideal to which we want to move. That is important, even if we know beforehand that we are never going to get it right. Annie's quote by Bessie Head is important: "Southern Africa isn't like the rest of Africa and is never going to be. Here we are going to have to make an effort to find a deep faith to help us live together." We need to make a special effort to realise our ideals. The effort is almost more important than the success. Perhaps it is the success. The mere fact that we believe in something and that we share it with others must incite us to move towards that goal more effectively. That is essentially what I was trying to share this morning. I am wary of the self-hypnotising effects of moral rectitude.

More specifically about some of the questions that were asked. Obviously given the short time one tends to speak in a shorthand. When I make a broad sweeping statement, does confession lead to reconciliation? I am aware of the tremendous histories of people who have been able to live with that pain because those who perpetrated the crime admitted their culpability. This leads to the point that is important in the healing process, I take your
point that confessing to your crimes has a way of cleaning and cleansing oneself. This can perhaps contribute to some form of reconciliation in the lives of perpetrators and those of their victims.

What I meant to say is that I do not think that it is sufficient to assume in our national process that a confession of crimes is sufficient to bring about reconciliation. I am simply saying more must be done. And I do not mean simply a material level—although that too is obviously important. That is why I am trying to make the essential point that for me the only possible way to move towards nation-building is by mobilising all of our people towards this end by addressing some of the things that make it difficult for people to move forward. This must necessarily include people on all sides of the ideological, social and cultural divides. I think that there was a real chance to do so. It is not too late. There is a moment of adherence, there is a moment of reflection, there is a moment of turning inwards; there is a moment of horror. There is a time for all of these things. We must take account of these moments and mobilise ourselves and all our people around the central issue of eradicating systemic economic, social and cultural injustices. This is what nation-building is all about.

Black and white. Why continue to speak in terms of black and white, I am asked? Is this not the stuff of the past? We are now universal or we speak the same language. I would hope that’s true. That needs to be seen against what I have just said about utopias and reality. We need to hear your statement. Let’s hope we move towards that reality. But I do not think that is reality yet. In fact I know it is not. I do not bother about being an Afrikaner. This is not something that I need to promote—to go to bed with or get up with. In fact, in many parts of the world where I spend most of my time it is of no concern to me or anyone else. It is something I can clothe myself in if and as I chose.

What I tried to do here this morning was consciously to reflect what it feels like to be an Afrikaner in South Africa today. Let me tell you, it is problematic. I try to keep my ear on the ground and listen to those who are Afrikaners. This thing—this problem, is not going to go away because we would rather it was not here. It is not going away because we tell them “look, you guys should realise what you have done, it is better to be quiet and be part of something new”. The fact is this is not the way most Afrikaners feel.

I would like to make a point about story-telling as healing. I quote Derek Wilcox’s famous saying: “my only nation is imagination”. We need to continue to reshape and remake ourselves to the extent that the cleavages in our identity as a nation have not been cleaned up. The cleaning up and healing has only just started. No settlement is ever final. It can be no more than a festering sore if not continually treated with a view to promoting nation-building in all its exclusivity. We must create space for everyone, black, white, Griqua and Khoi, to participate in this exercise for the African Renaissance to become a reality.

We may disagree to an extent that we are reconciled or not. I do not minimise what has been achieved in this regard. It is, I suppose, a tendency to take for granted what we have achieved and not mention all the good that has come about and all of the effort that has been made. What I am saying is, we are still in the danger zone. In fact we may still be in a danger zone of stagnation. Story-telling is about imagining ourselves. That is an art. It needs a lot of dedication. In fact, it probably needs what was in the old days called “permanent revolution”. But who wants that kind of thing? No one wants to live with a permanent revolution. It is too unsettling because it is not normal. People aspire to putting things behind them and living their lives as human beings in a more or less settled environment. Well, I don’t think many people live normal lives these days. We will have to keep imagining and in the process of imagining to return to where I started to make a clear separation between our heart’s desire and simple reality. This tension is the source of so much of our pain and our need for a ritual of reconciliation.

Ntabulo Ndebele

Not too long ago I was asked in New Orleans what audience I have in mind when I am writing. I confessed that I could not answer the question satisfactorily because at the point at which you are writing you do not think of the effect of your work. You write for yourself. The only audience that I am confident of is myself. But once a story or a piece of that artwork is out there, it takes a life of its own. I cannot resist giving just one short example. It is about a meeting a South African dramatist in New York where a story was being dramatised on stage. One episode dealt with the anxieties experienced by a child—about her anxieties of people coming to empty the bucket toilet while she was still relieving herself. What will happen if they come? It was an intriguing revelation to me, because the author is a white South African. Up to that point it never entered my imagination that there were white people who used a bucket toilet. I discovered that we had exactly the same anxieties about what would happen if the people came to empty the bucket while we were still sitting there. I use this as an example of many common examples that are out there that have never been articulated. Stories of this kind can create a common space—a human space. We have to tell more of these kinds of stories. They enable us to discover common humanity if nothing else. They may even make us laugh. I think such opportunities have to be created and that more stories should be told because they are a very important source of common ground.