South Africa's Apartheid museum is a stark reminder of the abnormality of our past and its continued impact.

those who had been tried and convicted, but required amnesty applications, as well, from those who had not yet been tried and convicted for crimes that had been committed in terms of the prevailing political conflicts, and therefore required immunity from prosecution. In both cases, the process required full disclosure of the offences in question. This process has now run its course.

There is, however, quite another category of offenders and offences that have not yet satisfactorily been dealt with. These are to do with the crimes created by the edifice of apartheid laws, actions which would not be crimes in South Africa today, and which would not have been considered as crimes in any normal society.

The inspiration for this measure came from two constituents who approached me. One wanted a visa to visit his son, who had emigrated. It transpired that this person had been convicted in the Wynberg Magistrate's Court in 1975 under the Immorality Act for having a sexual relationship with a woman of another race, and who, as a result, had been given a suspended prison sentence. The other was a man who applied for a job for which a clean criminal record was a requirement. He had been convicted for breaking curfew regulations imposed under the military rule in the former Transkei. Both these individuals had criminal records.

I was advised by officials in the Department of Justice that the only way that a person can currently expunge his or her criminal record is to apply for a Presidential pardon. This is a cumbersome, lengthy and humiliating process, which should be confined to serious and sensitive matters requiring the President's judgement.

But when one considers the whole gamut of discriminatory laws applicable during apartheid, there must literally be hundreds of thousands of people with criminal records for offences that would not be offences today. These offences include pass law offences and transgressions of the Group Areas Act, the Immigration Act, the Defence Act and many more. Indeed, it is my experience that many people don't even know they have a criminal record until they encounter situations such as those of my constituents.

Naashon Zalk/PictureNET Africa

The social-engineering that created our divided past has still not been entirely undone.

Therefore we have proposed a bill that addresses a real need. It seeks to create a simple mechanism whereby criminal records relating to offences committed under apartheid, but which are not offences in the democratic society in which we live today, can be administratively expunged from the record. In cases where this application is refused, the applicant can appeal to a specially created Appeal Board.

Inevitably, the question will arise as to which offences should qualify to be expunged and which not. We started by trying to list those sections of those acts that created offences which would not be offences today. This proved to be a very complex and time-consuming process: we were not sure whether we had covered

It seeks to create a simple mechanism whereby criminal records relating to offences committed under apartheid, but which are not offences in the democratic society in which we live today, can be administratively expunged from the record

all the ground, and this became even more complex when we started trying to include regulations, decrees and the laws of the former homelands of Transkei, Bophutatswana, Venda and Ciskei (TBVC). This task was also attempted by others: Muriel Horrell's Laws Affecting Race Relations in South Africa and the TRC both tackled it, also imperfectly and incompletely.

Accordingly, we are proposing establishing a simple principle: we wish to expunge the records of those people who were convicted of offences that would not be offences in "an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom" – the formula contained in our constitution. Clearly, an offence involving sex across the colour line would not be an offence in such a society, while murder would. In cases of dispute, or where

Shaun Harris/PictureNET Africa

Just as the edifice of apartheid was destroyed its consequences need to be expunged.

the context of the offence is also relevant to the expunction, an Appeals Board, chaired by a High Court judge, would hear the arguments and make a determination.

Finally, we are not talking here about amnesty or immunity from prosecution for crimes that have not yet been dealt with by the courts. If processes still need to be followed, the law must take its course. We are talking about people who have criminal records for crimes that would not be crimes today, and we are making it possible to expunge the records of those convictions. We believe that it is one further step towards bringing closure to the painful history of apartheid.

What has therefore surprised us has been the vehement reaction by the African National Congress (ANC) and other liberation organisations against this proposal. The TRC itself recommended that government deal with this outstanding matter, but nothing has been forthcoming from that quarter. Yet when we first announced this measure, the chairperson of the ANC's parliamentary caucus fulminated: "This is the ideology of DA [Democratic Alliance] superiority of the white race. Everything they do, you find fault in their argument." Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) MP Motsoko Pheko said of the proposed private member's bill: "That is tantamount to discrimination. We will support this gentleman if he (also) includes former freedom fighters."

We are convinced that so important is this matter that it should not be the stuff of petty point-scoring. We have accordingly sought a meeting with Brigitte Mabandla, the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, to discuss the merits of the proposal. We are wedded to neither the text nor the title of the bill, nor do we have any sense of ownership of the idea. Indeed, we would be perfectly happy if the minister were to introduce this, or a similar measure, as a government bill. But deal with the matter we must. To do so would bring relief to thousands of people who did nothing that would be regarded as remotely wrong in any normal society. It is not right that they carry the stigma of a criminal record for the rest of their lives.

James Selfe is the Federal Chairperson of the Democratic Alliance.

By Robert Mattes, Shaheen Mozaffar and Joel Barkan

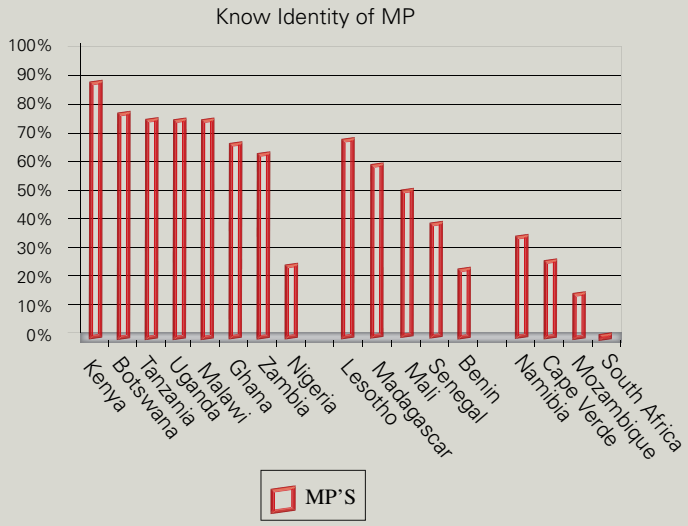
Dumbing the voter down

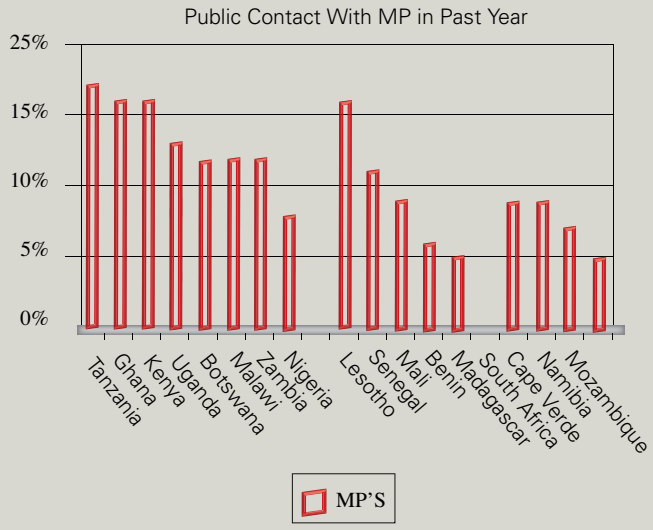
South Africa's proportional representation system seems to have more far-reaching negative consequences than most people suspect

We know that South Africa's form of List Proportional Representation (PR) has had a stultifying impact on Parliament by giving the party bosses inordinate control over elected representatives. But recent research carried out by the African Legislatures Project now provides clear evidence that List PR also has a range of negative consequences for democratic citizenship.

Rules affect political behavior by shaping both politicians and citizens' calculations of costs and benefits, and therefore their incentives and disincentives to act in various ways. But electoral systems are also sources of social learning and conduits of information. South Africa's form of PR, with large regional and national lists, brings these effects together with disastrous effects. Firstly, it reduces citizens' incentive to remain engaged with democratic politics. Secondly, it reorients them toward a less active role as citizens, both through habituation and by removing key cognitive hooks which citizens can use to follow the political process.

Shaun Harris/PictureNET Africa





We base these conclusions on evidence from the latest Afrobarometer surveys, conducted in 18 African countries in 2005. We grouped the more than 25 300 respondents into three types of electoral systems, based not on how seats are awarded to elites, but on the choices offered to voters and the tasks required of them. The first category is Single Member District (SMD) countries, which require voters to elect a single representative to the national legislature, and then judge the extent to which he or she represents the small, geographically defined constituency (Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe). The second category comprises a group of List PR systems that ask voters to choose between large regional or national party-appointed lists of mostly unknown candidates, who are supposed to represent whole provinces or the entire country (Cabo Verde, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa). And thirdly, we have a series of hybrid systems, where voters are asked either simultaneously both to select a single candidate to represent their district and to vote for a party list (Lesotho), or to select multiple members from small lists of candidates to represent their constituencies (Benin, Madagascar, Mali and Senegal).

Reducing incentives to contact MPs

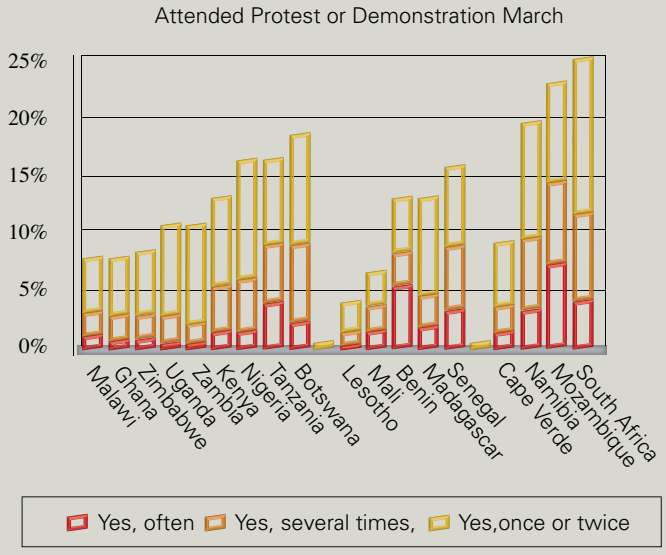
With the List PR system, MPs have strong incentives to please party bosses, and very weak incentives to keep in contact with citizens (thus avoiding any cross-pressures arising from differences between what party bosses and constituents want). Citizens, in turn, have little reason to learn about MPs, or make contact with them.

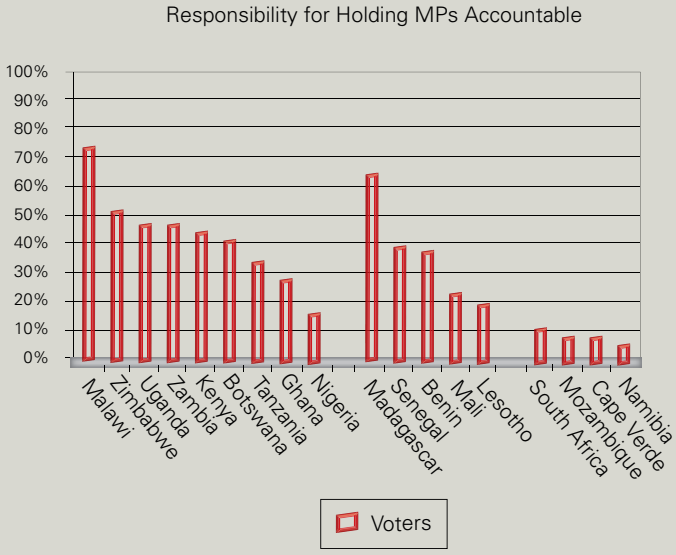
While 60% of people in SMD countries were able to provide Afrobarometer interviewers with the correct name of their MP, the same was true for only 40% of those in hybrid systems and 17% in List PR. With the figure dropping to under 1% in South Africa, we can conclude that Parliament's attempt to create artificial constituencies has totally failed to create any public awareness of who citizens' MPs are supposed to be (see Figure 1).

These patterns correspond with similar, though smaller, differences in actual contact between citizens and their representatives. On average, 13% of citizens living in SMD countries reported having contacted an MP in the previous 12 months, significantly larger than the 9% of those from mixed systems and the 8% of those from large-List PR countries (see Figure 2). Yet the range between the extreme cases is far larger. For example, the contact rate in the three top SMD countries (Tanzania, Ghana and Kenya) is three times as high as South Africa, the worst of the PR countries. The differences would be starker if we categorised Lesotho as an SMD country (where voters still in fact select single member, even though they have now added a separate PR vote for a political party).

People in List PR systems are least likely to report having got together with others to raise a political issue, or attend a community meeting. They are also least likely (also with those living in hybrid countries) to join, and play an active role in, a range of civil-society organisations.

The only area of citizen behaviour where List PR countries led the pack was in attending demonstrations and protest marches. The proportion who had attended a march or demonstration over the previous 12 months (18%, going as high as 25% in South Africa) was about a third higher than in SMD countries (12%), and almost double the 10% in hybrid systems (Figure 3).





Reorienting citizen values

Electoral rules do not only affect utility calculations. By shaping their everyday political experiences, they also (re)shape people's perceptions of their roles as democratic citizens. Responses to other Afrobarometer items show that citizens in List PR systems are the least willing to question leaders, and least likely to think that elected officials should do their – the people's – will rather than follow their own conscience.

Perhaps most telling were the responses to the question: "Who should be responsible for making sure that, once elected, [MPs and local councillors] do their job"? In SMD countries, an average of 44% replied "the voters" (running as high as 74% in Malawi), compared to just 8% in List PR systems, where most people said that this was the job of the President (Figure 4).

We also know that the electoral rules have as much influence on a person's overall commitment to democracy as all individual-level characteristics combined, with List PR rules having a decidedly negative effect.

Limiting information about the political system

Finally, one might argue that citizens in List PR systems should, by definition, have lower awareness of the identity of "their MP", simply because such systems remove any identifiable alignment between small geographic constituencies and a specific MP. But the data show that people living in List PR countries are also least likely to be interested in or talk about politics with friends and neighbours, and least able to identify the correct name of their local councillor or the Deputy President. They are also least likely to know how many terms can be served by the President or Prime Minister, or whether or not their countries have any policies about free education or health care.

This "dumbing down" effect helps explain, beyond naked utility calculations or habituation, why citizens in List PR systems participate at lower rates in democratic citizenship, and have reduced commitments to it. The lack of an identifiable MP removes a key "cognitive hook" that enables citizens, especially in relatively poor societies with low levels of communication infrastructure, to follow politics and learn the basic rules of the political game.

South Africa's List PR electoral system was widely seen as a key concession on the part of the African National Congress that ultimately enticed most political organisations, even those opposed to the final constitutional settlement, to enter the 1994 elections and remain in the electoral arena. But, as has been demonstrated in many new democracies, the compromises adopted to induce a political settlement often become an obstacle to subsequent democratic development. Changing the electoral system is a necessary first step toward addressing much of the rot that is hollowing out South Africa's young democracy.

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In search of the envisaged self

By Thabo Mbeki

An edited excerpt from the lecture delivered by President Thabo Mbeki in Cape Town on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the death of Stephen Bantu Biko, on 12 September 2007

Biko and the Black Consciousness movement made a significant contribution to empower and mobilise minds.

President Thabo Mbeki began his lecture in honour of Black Consciousness leader Stephen Biko by quoting the Walt Whitman poem, A child said, What is the grass?:

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men and women, and the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring taken soon out of their laps.

Declaring his intention to translate these "hints" into the context of our current realities, he paid tribute to the watershed contribution of Biko and the Black Consciousness movement to the liberation struggle at the time of its greatest retreat, following the banning of both the African National Congress and the Pan-Africanist Congress. Biko, he said, articulated the reply to this in the concept that black people should repudiate "all racist ideas and their consequences" so as to liberate the mind of the oppressed through, in Biko's words, "group pride and the determination by the black to rise and attain the envisaged self". However, Mbeki pointed out – and illustrated in several quotations that characterised black people as "naturally inferior", "proud, lazy, treacherous, thievish, hot, and addicted to all kinds of lust", and fit to be "treated as a child and denied the franchise" – that racism has deep and pernicious roots. The attainment of the envisaged self had not yet been fully accomplished.

What follows is an edited version of the conclusion of the President's lecture.

In his well-known book, Decolonising the Mind, the Kenyan novelist and writer, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, describes a stormy debate that once took place at the University of Nairobi about the restructuring of the English Department:

"Three African lecturers and researchers at the University [called for] the abolition of the English Department as then constituted. They questioned the underlying assumption that the English tradition and the emergence of the modern west were the central root of Kenya's and Africa's consciousness and cultural heritage. ... if there is a need for a study of the historic continuity of a single culture, why can't this be African? Why can't African literature be at the centre so that we can view other cultures in relationship to it?"

This of course raises the question – what is African culture? What constitutes an African identity, the opposite of the negative stereotype of ourselves which colonialism and racism presented to the African child?

During our years of liberation, many voices have been raised expressing grave concern at the prevalence of many negative developments in our society. One of these is the incidence of crime and the particular forms some of these crimes assume. These would include the rape of children and women, including the elderly. They would also include murders that suggest the most callous disdain for the value of human life.

Similarly, many have expressed concern at what seems to be an entrenched value system centred on the personal acquisition of wealth at all costs and by all means, including wilful resort to corruption and fraud.

These negative social phenomena and others have suggested that our society has been captured by a rapacious individualism which is corroding our social cohesion, which is repudiating the value and practice of human solidarity, and which totally rejects the fundamental precept of Ubuntu – umntu ngumntu ngabanye!

Biko became famous for his slogan 'black is beautiful'

Is this the kind of society that Steve Biko visualised, that he fought and died for! Surely he did not imagine an "envisaged self" characterised by rapacious and venal individualism!

To reclaim or rediscover the African identity and build a society that is new not only in its political and economic arrangements, but also in terms of the values it upholds, somewhat tentative calls have been made to re-educate our society about the Ubuntu value system.

Can't an African world view be at the centre so that we can view other cultures in relationship to it? Ubuntu, which reminds us that "a person is a person through other people", does not allow for an individualism that overrides the collective interests of a community.

It stands in contra-distinction to the idea that an individual is the be-all and end-all, without, at the same time, positing that an individual is right-less or dispensable in the grand scheme of things.

> But, at the same time, this gigantic death of a man deliberately kept by his captors naked and unwashed, also constituted "an enormous birth"

Ubuntu places a premium on the values of human solidarity, compassion and human dignity. It is a lived philosophy which enables members of the community to achieve higher results through collective efforts.

It is firmly based on recognising the humanity in everyone. It emphasises the importance of knowing oneself and accepting the uniqueness in all of us so as to render meaningless the complexes of inferiority and superiority. Indeed, Ubuntu connects all of humanity irrespective of ethnicity or racial origins.

Clearly, the onset of democracy has opened up space for our indigenous cultures to assert themselves as historical agencies in and of themselves, of course influenced by the imperatives thrown up by current socio-political conditions.

And yet we must admit that we have so far failed to use these historical agencies to infuse into our society the new value system that must replace the value construct that was an attendant part of the socio-economic reality that emerged during and out of the long years of colonialism and apartheid.

In that sense we must admit that we have not as yet accomplished all the tasks that Steve Biko and his comrades set when they called for an uprising against the ideology of racism, which was born in Europe, and the reassertion of our pride and dignity.

In this regard, Steve Biko wrote:

"In rejecting Western values ... we are rejecting those things that are not only foreign to us but that seek to destroy the most cherished of our beliefs – that the corner-stone of society is man himself – not just his welfare, not his material wellbeing but just man himself with all his ramifications. We reject the power-based society of the Westerner that seems to be ever concerned with perfecting their technological know-how while losing out on their spiritual dimension. We believe that in the long run the special contribution to the world by Africa will be in this field of human relationships. ... the great gift still has to come from Africa – giving the world a more human face."

When Steve Biko made this prophecy, he was following in the footsteps of other great giants of our liberation struggle.

In his famous 1906 article, "The Regeneration of Africa", Pixley ka Isaka Seme said: "The regeneration of Africa means that a new and unique civilization is soon to be added to the world. ... Civilization ... resembles a plant, it takes root in the teeming earth, and when the seeds fall in other soils new varieties sprout up. The most essential departure of this new civilization is that it shall be thoroughly spiritual and humanistic – indeed a regeneration moral and eternal!"

In his 1961 Nobel Lecture, entitled "Africa and Freedom", Inkosi Albert Luthuli enlarged on this vision:

"Still licking the scars of past wrongs perpetrated on her, could (Africa) not be magnanimous and practise no revenge? ... should she not see her destiny as being that of making a distinctive contribution to human progress and human relationships with a peculiar new African flavour enriched by the diversity of cultures she enjoys, thus building on the summits of present human achievement an edifice that would be one of the finest tributes to the genius of man? ... a non-racial democracy that shall be a monumental brotherhood, a 'brotherly community' with none discriminated against on grounds of race or colour...

"Africa's qualification for this noble task is incontestable, for her own fight has never been and is not now a fight for conquest of land, for accumulation of wealth or domination of peoples, but for the recognition and preservation of the rights of man and the establishment of a truly free world for a free people."

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The challenging question we must ask ourselves is – have we used the freedom for which Steve Biko sacrificed his life to position our country to contribute to an African civilisation that is "thoroughly spiritual and humanistic – indeed a regeneration moral and eternal!", that will make "a distinctive contribution to human progress and human relationships with a peculiar new African flavour enriched by the diversity of cultures she enjoys, thus building on the summits of present human achievement an edifice that would be one of the finest tributes to the genius of man", that will bestow "the great gift (to humanity of) giving the world a more human face"?

We dare not allow this noble vision handed down to us by these great titans of our struggle to perish. Its translation into reality, first of all in our own country, must surely be the monument we build in memory of a dear son of our people, Stephen Bantu Biko.

Steve Biko belonged to a generation that could not be bypassed. As he died only 31 years old, his life's work had just begun. But he left us with the task to translate into our programmes intended to give birth to a new society, the hints about the dead young men and women of his generation, and the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring taken soon out of their laps.

Dr Wendy Orr has written in the *Sunday Independent* that in the Steve Biko file kept at the Headquarters of our Department of Justice, Steve is reported as having said to his killers: "I ask for water to wash myself with and also soap, a washing cloth and a comb. I want to be allowed to buy food. I live on bread only here. Is it compulsory for me to be naked? I am naked since I came here."

These few and simple words, which speak to the most basic human needs, tell everything that needs to be told about why Steve Biko was right to dedicate his life to the defeat of the criminal ideology of racism, to liberate our country from the clutches of racist fanatics to whom the souls of black folk meant nothing.

When he ceased to breathe, in the cruel and callous hands of his torturers, his was what the poet Ben Okri would describe as "a gigantic death". But, at the same time, this gigantic death of a man deliberately kept by his captors naked and unwashed, also constituted "an enormous birth".

And so it is that we must listen carefully to what Ben Okri said in his Mental Flight:

... A sense of the limited time we have
Here on earth to live magnificently
To be as great and happy as we can
To explore our potential to the fullest
And to lose our fear of death
Having gained a greater love
And reverence for life
And its incommensurable golden brevity

So it is with this moment
A gigantic death
And an enormous birth.
In timelessness.

From the gigantic death of Stephen Bantu Biko 30 years ago today, must, in time, arise an enormous birth. Stephen Bantu Biko died, but his vision has not perished.

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Remembering Biko and celebrating Suzman

By Xolela Mangcu

Free, democratic and self-confident nations should be able to honour their heroes and heroines in all of their diversity. This immediately raises a conundrum: given our conflicted history, what criteria shall we use for the bestowal of such honour.

The immediate answer should be those who have done their best to contribute to the development of our constitutional democracy. But what about those who do not believe the advent of democracy was such a good thing in the first place.

Well, there is very little to be done about such individuals and groups. Certainly those who seek to celebrate Hendrik Verwoerd or Eugene Terreblanche cannot be prevented from doing so by law or by social pressure. It is their right to do so as long as such celebration is not in violation of our constitutional order.

Helen Suzman's life was inextricably linked to Biko's

And that is when their actions may be proscribed as going against the letter and spirit of the constitution. As Robert Weissberg puts it: "Unadulterated tolerance is a dangerous illusion.

To embrace all fanciful notions as worthy of political protection can be as subversive of democratic life as permitting zero deviation." But for the most part this is not the challenge that faces us. There is almost universal consensus that apartheid was a bad thing, and its enforcers not deserving of much honour or adulation.

We are faced with a rather different challenge- which is how to honour those who, while not belonging to the liberation movement, played a significant role in the advancement of our freedom. To be sure the problem of recognition exists within the liberation movement itself. Judging by the naming of our landscape and the bestowal of honours you would be forgiven for thinking that the ANC is the only movement that changed the course of events, and that its leaders are the only people who sacrificed for our precious freedom. Hence the absence of any significant homage to people such as Steve Biko and Robert Sobukwe.

This matter gets even more challenging when it comes to people such as Helen Suzman – one of the greatest champions of liberalism in the history of our country. This may perhaps sound odd coming as it does from someone from the black consciousness movement. After all, Suzman and white liberals in general come in for some heavy criticism in Steve Biko's *I Write What I Like*. But Biko was also a friend of Donald Woods, who was at one point just as liberal as Suzman. So how could Biko befriend Donald Woods the very people whose political outlook he was criticizing?

The simple answer is that Biko's criticism of white liberalism was not personal as it was an articulation of a philosophical difference. He demonstrated in a profound way that philosophical difference should never be the basis for enmity.

A few years ago, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Steve Biko's death I invited Helen Suzman to write an article in

Biko and Suzman shared courage as a defining aspect of their public lives.

tribute to Biko. She graciously agreed, demonstrating in her own way that philosophical difference should never be the cause for enmity, and this is particularly the case in a free society. Not long ago I participated in a panel convened by the Helen Suzman Foundation. I argued that even though they lived worlds apart, Biko and Suzman shared what Hannah Arendt calls courage.

In her essay What is Freedom, Arendt recalls Winston Churchill's description of courage as "the first of human qualities, because it is the quality which guarantees all others."

Biko was courageous in a revolutionary sense, to the extent of giving up his own life. But before he gave up his life he wrote about how "fear erodes the soul of black people" but also how fear dehumanized white people: "the tripartite system of fear in this country- that of whites fearing the blacks, blacks fearing whites and the government fearing blacks and wishing to ally fear among whites- makes it difficult to establish rapport between the two segments of the community."

Suzman never allowed the fear in the white community to imprison her. As a sole member of the opposition in parliament she withstood sexist ridicule from members of the ruling Nationalist Party. She visited prisoners such as Nelson Mandela, and fought the good fight for Robert Sobukwe- who was kept on Robben Island by an act of parliament. Suzman exposed the bestiality of the apartheid regime while developing deep personal relationships in ways that transcended politics.

Simply put, she cared. This is how Biko's friend Aelred Stubbs recalls Suzman's role in the fight to get Sobukwe released: "For six years, therefore he endured a solitary confinement which was renewed by Act of Parliament each year, the indomitable Helen Suzman being the only M.P. to register a protest each year."

Arendt described courage as nothing more than the simple act of appearing in public to articulate what one believes: "courage is demanded of us by the very nature of the public realm…it requires courage to leave the protective security of our four walls and enter the public realm, not because of particular dangers which may lie in wait for us, but because we have arrived in a realm where the concern for life has lost its validity. Courage liberates men from their worry about life for the freedom of the world. Courage is indispensable because in politics not life but the world is at stake."

What makes people like Biko and Suzman more concerned about the world is of course the stuff of biography, suffice to say that it is our challenge to ensure an all encompassing comprehensive telling because as Michael Walzer argues it is when minorities are "free to celebrate their histories, remember their dead, and shape (in part) the education of their children, [that] they are more likely to be harmless than when they are unfree." [1]

Conversely, "civil religion is more likely to succeed by accommodating than opposing the multiple identities of the men and women it aims to engage. Its aim after all is not full-time conversion but political socialization".

It is therefore at important benchmark moments such as the anniversary of the death of Steve Biko and Helen Suzman's 90th birthday that we are reminded of the challenge, opportunity and calling to ensure a comprehensive history that embraces all of the narratives with all their complexities and nuances.

Endnotes

1. Michael Walzer "The Civil Society Argument", in Chantal Mouffe (ed) Dimensions of Radical Democracy, Verso, London, 1992, p10

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By Raenette Taljaard

Interview with Modise Phekonyane

Modise Phekonyane is a former Robben Island Prisoner, Robben Island Museum guide and a new Trustee of the Helen Suzman Foundation.

Q: We want to talk to you about some of your recollections and reflections about Helen Suzman and her visits to Robben Island. What is your first recollection of her?

A: I used to do a lot of newspaper clipping surreptitiously while I was still a student. I was in grade 8, but the stuff I was collecting still sends shivers down my spine. I knew Mrs Suzman from that. I used to regard her as a white woman who is talking, but I could not understand who she was, exactly – I expected her to be a white South African and go with the flow. But I got to know that she was speaking a lot of sense. And because of the hate and anger I had towards white society, it confused me – her role confused me, particularly the death of Steve Biko, which was a total blackout, like black smoke in my face, and in my level of rage and anger I had no room for a white person in my life. But just as I arrived on Robben Island, who did I meet?

The system was such that we had to be kept in different sections. The idea was to try to keep those who were informed and knowledgeable apart

Modise Phekonyane's personal journey to freedom is a microcosm of the country's struggle for liberation.

from the young ones and those they considered to know less, that they should not influence us. But I think that was detrimental to the system in itself. First of all, for keeping us together in the same place, irrespective of the fact that we were in different sections. Number two: it just made us wiser, because we had to improvise. We would definitely not steal any warden's money, not a wallet, but a newspaper, and communications became everything. And the mere fact that they kept Mandela and others away from us made us curious. But it was also detrimental in the sense that had they kept Mandela and Sisulu and many other older liberal men among us, they could have had so much positive influence on all of us. These were wonderful human beings. The thrust of topics and discussions on the island were always about black and white, the land and the economy. The Freedom Charter says South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, whatever. The PAC [Pan-Africanist Congress] contention has always been that the land belongs to Africans and Africans were robbed of the land by foreigners, as it was with the black consciousness movement. And so everything and anything evolved around that. For my five years there, that was the point.

> And because of the hate and anger I had towards white society, it confused me – her role confused me

Robben Island was used as a tool and an instrument of psychological destruction and emotional torment. When you left you had to be so scarred emotionally and psychologically that you would serve as a deterrent to those who were outside. It was so intense that your family had to look at you with distaste. I remember my dad – and this is the first time I say it, for the Foundation; I have never ever mentioned this before – my own dad had the tendency, sometimes, to disown me.

The system would have infiltrated your family so much that they would have created doubts in their minds. Remember now, you are a communist. You are a terrorist. You are the exact opposite of what parents wish for their children. My eyes got damaged from the lime quarry. This, again, I have never said to anybody. I went home and I needed spectacles. I really was desperate for spectacles. I came with anger and hatred and bitterness. And I used to say, but no man, Jan van Riebeeck and those guys came from overseas, how the hell do they belong here? It takes a lot to embrace that. I am extreme, I am never

lukewarm about anything. It would take me a long, long time to accept the reality that, after all, we all live here in South Africa. It had to be a personal thing for me to say, now I can understand that you have generations and generations and generations of people. So, genetically or psychologically somewhere, somehow some things will fade.

When I really got to understand the role of Mrs Suzman, it was not intellectual, it was not a mental thing, and it was not a drug I could take to numb my pain. It was a soul-searching thing, and so the impact had to be permanent, so I could understand what you would call white liberal politicians like Mrs Helen Suzman. I could then understand what she must have gone through. As an author I can write about what it would feel like, alone, to face – I mean, you would be spat at as a white South African if you played with blacks, if you walked hand in hand with blacks, if you hugged a black person, even if you sat and ate together. You were an outcast. Your whole family would be treated like outcasts. Now here is this one person who is not throwing stones miles away, who is not in exile, who is not in some foreign country. Who is in the thick of things, in Parliament where these decisions are made to oppress and to kill people. She is right there to say this is wrong, on top of her voice. She had to live with that every day. And she had to deal with it. She is a South African first and foremost, but she is a Jewish woman. That in itself would marginalise her, by virtue of who she was, a Jewish person.

Q: And the National Party used that extensively as well.?

A: Oh, absolutely. And so, I would not believe, necessarily, that initially she had the best of English friends. I would not even for a moment believe that Afrikaners might have said, you know what, maybe she is right. And even for her to come to Robben Island, that was a miracle. You can't say it in any other way. Because I know she did not even expect to be allowed to come.

But when she came, they made us clean the yard thoroughly, to present the picture of a clean place. They wouldn't want us to go to work. People like her would be told, oh, we are merely keeping them constructively busy. They pushed a whole lot of us beyond a fence into the soccer and rugby fields, and locked the gates. And we could only see her walk past. And it was a criminal offence, to shout and speak to her. So I and other young men, we decided, to hell, and we were running along the fence, "Mrs Suzman, Mrs Suzman!". And I remember how she tried to look and wave, and how the security forces shielded her away.

But her presence meant wonders. The government wanted us to be forgotten. Our names had to be forgotten by the society. Our names would not be mentioned in the society, nor quoted or mentioned in any media or publications. The [effect of the] international community, through Amnesty International and the Red Cross, and the coming of Mrs Helen Suzman, was so profound.

If you take dried leaves and make a circle and burn them, and take a cockroach or insect or a worm, and put it in the middle, it goes this way, there is fire, it goes that way, there is fire, so it is trapped. And you take a stick, and you do not have to put it directly next to the insect or cockroach or worm, you just have to put it there. By itself it would decide, I am safe here, and climb up the stick. And you would lift the stick and put it outside the circle. [That's what] the emotional, the heart connection, the feeling of hope, does – the psychological breakthrough that oh, my God, somebody knows about us. Somebody takes notice. So my life means something after all. And that is how profoundly it affected me. I saw her on two occasions, but it meant that much.

To me, leadership goes beyond black leadership, it goes beyond Chinese leadership, Greek or Xhosa or Zulu or Tswana. Leadership goes to the very fabric that makes us human beings, that makes us South Africans. Through actions like that, it was demonstrated that we deserve each other after all. They say a decision not made is a decision made. A decision not to do something is a decision. But she made a decision, that put her life, and probably her whole family or clan or lineage, in danger, and she still made the decision.

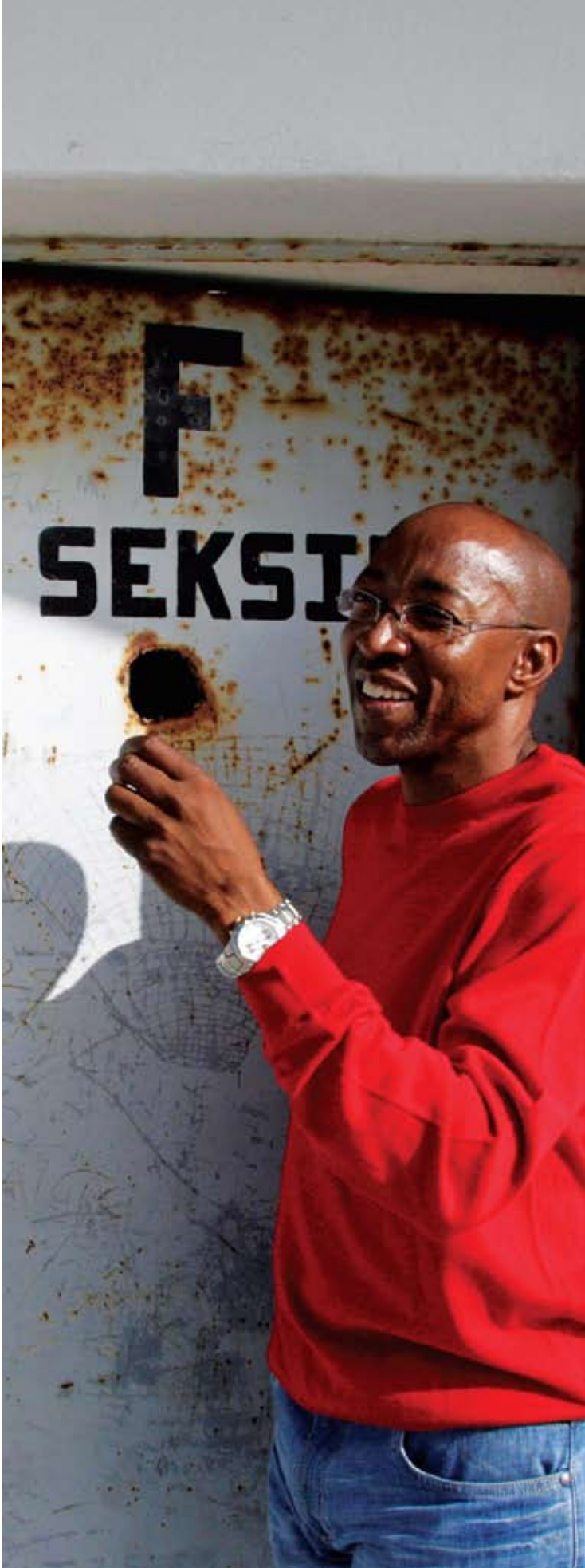
Q Absolutely. Were prison conditions changed dramatically after she visited? Were there changes that you could see in the way in which the environment functioned before or after she arrived on the island?

A: From the early '60s, right up to mid-late '70s, prisoners slept on one hard mat on cement, with three blankets. I have arthritis. Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki – many, many unknown old guys I lived with in prison had cold problems. Because of her fight, and the Red Cross, one extra mat and one blanket were added. And she still fought. And ultimately beds were bought by the Red Cross for us. She fought for food. And sometimes when she comes, they improve things, when she goes, back to square one. But her coming meant so much. A lot of changes took place because of Helen Suzman.

Q: She has turned 90 this week. What do you think is the most important value out of her life and her experience, in making the choices that you have referred to? What is that value that both current and future generations of South Africans need to pick up from her example? And she does not stand in isolation, she was part of a very specific generation of leaders. But what value do you pick out of her life?

A: When you asked me to come and do this interview, I refused to premeditate my speech, because my whole life I have enjoyed speaking from the heart. So I refused to think what I would be saying about Mrs Helen Suzman. And so, what I want to say is that I cannot justifiably compare Mrs Helen Suzman to Steve Biko's legacy. I cannot do that with Nelson Mandela or Walter Sisulu. But as a woman, as a human being, Mrs Helen Suzman is in a class of her own. You can't confine her to the box. Do you understand? You can't say her struggle was a Jewish struggle. You can't say her struggle was a woman's struggle. You can't say her struggle was a white South African woman struggle. Her struggle was a struggle for the freedom of humanity. Helen Suzman – I think she is a mother. She is just a woman. She is intellectual, she is educated, but she has a personality that you cannot lay a finger on and say,

Modise outside F Seksie where he was incarcerated as a young man for a number of years.



Helen Suzman is like this. But she had the guts, she had the principles and beliefs, and she stood by them and she was willing to die to see humanity equally free. What would the future generation take from this? It is to go beyond ourselves. This is a lesson I have learned over the years, and it is hard. You actually learn to train your mind and to let your soul form.

I would say I have drawn my strength, my wisdom, from role models. Role models are not superimposed. You first have to realise their presence, their existence. You identify them and you associate with their ideals. And, to me, Mrs Helen Suzman is one of those people that has gone beyond the colour of my skin, beyond my culture, beyond my religion, beyond my gender. A person who has made such an impact on my life that I can unashamedly say, from hate and anger and bitterness, she has made me a better person. Because she made a contribution. When you take a colour dye and sprinkle just a little into a glass of water… it expands. A pinch of salt in food makes a hell of a difference.

> Freedom was about human value, value for life. And that is what she stood for

Mrs Helen Suzman's voice is a legacy on its own. She never thrived on the opinions of others, but she thrived on what she believed was right. She has always had integrity; she has always had a moral intelligence and dignity. The woman has always been so clean, so beautiful, so delicate. Everything about her speaks volumes.

And I know that on her 90th birthday, she is still just an amazingly highly spirited being who would never settle for less than the best. I know she believes in education, I know she believes in equal opportunities. I know she believes that everybody has the intellect to do things. Young people should realise that. To seek the approval of others by taking drugs, to seek the approval of others by making a baby, to seek the approval of others by stealing or robbing or killing, by proving your point by raping, it is not worth it. It is not what life is about. The struggle for 40 years and more by Suzman, by many other people who died, was not about these things. Freedom was about human value, value for life. And that is what she stood for. That is what she still believes and that is the legacy, through the Foundation – that we become better people and make life worth living for all of us.

A fear of favour or prejudice

By Patrick Laurence

Frene Ginwala begins her inquiry into Vusi Pikoli's fitness to hold office under the scrutiny of those who hope that she will demonstrate her independence under potentially difficult circumstances

The appointment of African National Congress (ANC) stalwart Frene Ginwala to head the inquiry to determine the fitness of the National Director of Public Prosecutions, Vusi Pikoli, to hold his important office is almost as controversial as President Thabo Mbeki's suspension of Pikoli in the first place.

The controversy over Ginwala's appointment relates to her status as a senior and loyal member of the ANC, and the fear that it will prevent her from exercising an independent assessment that is fair to Pikoli, whose suspended status is an unequivocal indication that he has lost the confidence of Mbeki.

For that reason, opposition leaders, from Helen Zille of the Democratic Alliance to Kallie Kriel of Afriforum, have publicly declared that the inquiry should have been conducted by a respected judicial figure without political ties or obligations. A related reason for concern over Mbeki's selection of Ginwala is the conviction that the suspension of Pikoli is a national and constitutional question of profound importance to all South Africans, and not a party-political matter confined to the ANC.

The sequence of events is relevant to the issues at stake: Pikoli was suspended by Mbeki on 23 September, within a fortnight of the Directorate of Special Operations, aka the Scorpions, obtaining warrants to arrest the National Commissioner of Police, Jackie Selebi, and to search his home and office in relation to the accusations against him of corruption, fraud, racketeering and defeating the ends of justice.

The chronological nexus between Pikoli's suspension and the pending arrest of Selebi invite the deduction that Mbeki intervened to protect Selebi, a powerful ally

Suspended National Director of Public Prosecutions Adv. Vusi Pikoli's suspension is being probed by former Speaker Frene Ginwala prior to Parliament deciding whether to uphold the suspension or not in accordance with the National Prosecuting Authority Act.

of his, in the interests of his quest to secure re-election as ANC president. If the deduction is correct, it opens Mbeki to the charge of interfering with the constitutionally enshrined independence of the National Director of Prosecutions to exercise the power conferred on him "without fear, favour or prejudice".

What is at stake is not merely whether Pikoli is fit to fulfil the functions assigned to his office but – as important, or, perhaps, even more important – whether Mbeki has abused his power as President and contravened the separation–of-powers principle that is integral to South Africa's post-apartheid constitutional democracy. Seen from that perspective, the appointment of Ginwala seems singularly inappropriate, her palpable intelligence and legal degree notwithstanding.

The consternation at Ginwala's appointment is accentuated by her record when she was National Assembly Speaker during the ANC's politically contentious decision to spend billions of rands on the purchase of weapons. She is alleged to have intervened on behalf of the executive to curtail a multilateral inquiry, initiated by the parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Accounts, into accusations that that arms deal – as the strategic defence package was popularly known – was contaminated by corruption.

In his political memoir After the Party, Andrew Feinstein, who headed the ANC study group in the public accounts committee, charges that Ginwala actively intervened to undermine a census in the committee to initiate a multi-institutional inquiry into the arms deal, which would have included a special investigation unit headed by Willem Heath, who was then still a judge. Feinstein avers that she did so at the bequest of Mbeki, who served as chairman of the special cabinet committee that oversaw the procurement of sophisticated (and expensive) weapons for the South African National Defence Force. The then Chairman of the parliamentary committee, Gavin Woods, concurs with Feinstein.

The terms of reference under which the Ginwala Commission will operate in determining whether or not Pikoli is a fit and proper person are essentially twofold. They require the commission to:

- appraise whether, in exercising his discretion to prosecute offenders, Pikoli "had sufficient regard to the nature and extent

Former Speaker Frene Ginwala confronts a key credibility test and has potentially been handed a poisoned chalice.

of the threat posed by organised crime to the national security of the republic"; and

- assess whether, in taking decisions to "grant immunity from prosecution or enter into plea-bargaining arrangements" with people suspected of involvement in organised crime, he had sufficient regard for the "national security interests of the republic".

The formal language of the terms of reference almost certainly relate one way or another to national police chief Selebi: the first encompasses the decision to arrest him, while the second incorporates the offer of immunity to alleged leaders of the South African mafia in return for their willingness to give evidence for the state in the anticipated trial of Selebi.

Neither action is unlawful: the prosecuting authority operates under the legal maxim that nobody is above the law; plea-bargaining in which immunity is offered in return for evidence which is adjudged by the court to be honest and unreserved is common practice in most societies in which the rule of law pertains.

The debate about whether or not Ginwala should have been appointed, as well as whether she should have heeded exhortations to recuse herself, should take cognisance of an interesting and perhaps significant point: time has moved on

Professor Pierre de Vos, of the University of the Western Cape, argues that the terms of reference empower Ginwala to question individual decisions by the National Director of Public Prosecutions in contravention of the constitutional injunction that he should exercise his prosecutorial powers "without fear, favour or prejudice".

Prefacing his argument with the qualifying clause "if correct", De Vos states: "It would suggest that our president has failed to respect the constitution in order to achieve an impermissible or even illegal objective." Another inference is drawn from the President's actions by De Vos. He reckons that Mbeki believes that "some constitutional and legal rules do not apply to him as long as he can cite 'national security' concerns".

The interpretation offered by De Vos should be read in conjunction with a statement issued by the Johannesburg Bar Council. Reflecting on events arising from the suspension of Pikoli, that statement urges the government to "demonstrate, clearly and unambiguously, that the independence of the judiciary is respected and protected and that the prosecuting authority can indeed exercise its functions without fear, favour or prejudice". While the language is restrained, the sense of urgency with which the Bar Council views the situation is unmistakable.

The debate about whether or not Ginwala should have been appointed, as well as whether she should have heeded exhortations to recuse herself, should take cognisance of an interesting and perhaps significant point: time has moved on. The Ginwala of today may not be a replica of the Ginwala who was accused of intervening on the side of the executive against a parliamentary committee when, as the Speaker of the National Assembly, she should have defended the autonomy of a parliamentary committee with her considerable intellect and forceful personality.

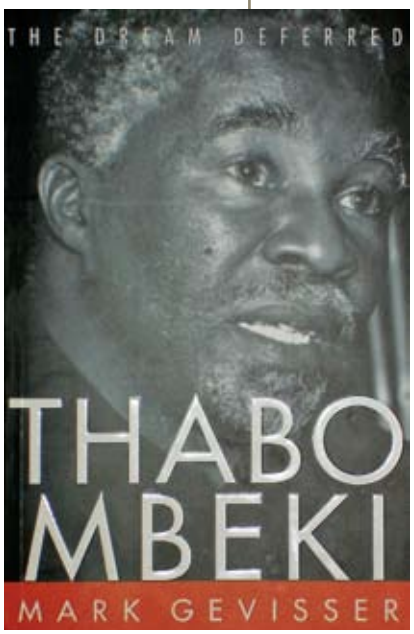
Since 2000 Ginwala has suffered a rebuff at the hands of Mbeki: he did not reappoint her as Speaker in 2004, opting instead for Baleka Mbete. His decision is thought to have been influenced by Ginwala's determination to hold to account those parliamentarians – most whom were ANC representatives – implicated in the dishonest abuse of parliamentary travel allowances and, in contrast, Mbete's inclination to favour a more lenient, forgiving policy.

Another factor needs to be considered. Mbeki is not as powerful today as he was seven years ago. Unless he succeeds in his bid to be re-elected as ANC President at the ANC's national conference, he will be seen as a lame-duck national President for his remaining two years in office.

These considerations apart, if, hypothetically, Ginwala justifies the fears and suspicions of those who see her as an Mbeki auxiliary by finding that Pikoli is not fit to be reinstated as head of the national prosecuting authority, there is a fair chance Pikoli will fight on by taking his case to the Constitutional Court. In that event he will plead his case before a panel of judges over whom Mbeki has no control, and Pikoli, having lost a battle, might emerge as the winner of the campaign.

In which case, Ginwala, a proud woman, will end with proverbial mud on her face and the prospect of an undignified exit from the political and legal arena.

Taking all these factors into account, Ginwala may put her reputation as an independent thinker ahead of her political loyalties and take account of the evidence without "fear, favour or prejudice". It is in her – and South Africa's – best interests to do so.



The dream interrogated

Author Mark Gevisser faced some probing questions after the lecture that launched his biography of the President, Thabo Mbeki: The Dream Deferred, at the University of the Witwatersrand on 12 November 2007

The panel discussion that followed Mark Gevisser's lecture was convened by Prof Deborah Posel, Director of WISER, who was also a panellist, and chaired by Eleanor Sisulu, Media and Advocacy Manager of the Johannesburg office of the Zimbabwe Crisis Coalition. The other panel members were *Mail & Guardian* editor Ferial Haffajee; former Presidential spokesperson Bheki Khumalo; Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Cape Town; and Dr Xolela Mangcu, Visiting Fellow at the Public Intellectual Life Project and Resident Equity Scholar at Wits.

MS HAFFAJEE: Mark, a while ago you wrote an article exploring our very odd South African way of moving between elation and despair. I've detected a similar approach in our national analysis of the President. There's no middle ground. Do you think he's at all responsible for this himself, or is he just reflective of a nation that's struggling to find its happy medium? And can Thabo Mbeki claim to be a feminist, given that the face of Aids in South Africa is female?

MR KHUMALO: When I went to the President's Office in 2001, many, many people said, don't go there. The President is going to treat you with typical aloofness, he will not listen to you, he will totally disregard your advice, he will not even return your calls. But, having worked for him at least for five and a half years, I think the opposite happened. He took

me seriously. This image of him as a centraliser and someone who doesn't tolerate dissent, I didn't see it once. That this image gets portrayed worries me, and I think that Mark has done a very good job in dealing with some of the issues he has raised.

Mark, were you forced to do some kind of self-censorship, whether by the ANC or the Presidency, or by the security agencies?

The sense of depth in this work makes me wonder if we shouldn't call it a psycho-biography. One of the most interesting things for me is that it resonates with the stories of many, many, many black people in this country. One wonders how many dreams have been deferred, and how some of the unfinished business plays out in the public sphere. What does it mean for us that we are dealing with people in leadership who have dreams deferred, or unfinished business from the past that causes a disconnect in their lives?

And, as the biographer, is there a danger that you over-identify with your subject? What led you to pursue this story with so much zeal?

DR MANGCU: In 1957 C Wright Mills wrote in a wonderful little book called *The Sociological Imagination* about what he called the promise of biography. It had three elements: a biography is basically the relationship between history, society and the individual, and the historical push and shove among them. He left out a fourth element: politics. How much do we attribute to historical causality, to psychological upbringing, and how much do we hold individuals accountable for their actions? My first question, therefore, is: what is the variable that turns other individuals with the same experience as Thabo Mbeki in the other direction?

The second question is, why should we be implicated in a leader's search for identity? The search for identity cannot deal with contradiction, with discontinuity, because it in many ways seeks certainty. The problem is, when you bring certainty into the political domain, it leads to particular behaviours by the leader, one of which may be an inability to deal with plurality. At some point we have to engage with the political questions. The political choices that leaders make cannot be explained by biography exclusively.

PROF POSEL: I think the work is not about reducing the psychological to a kind of consequence of the social, you're just as interested in looking at how a man such as Mbeki, with his own personal psycho-biography, imprints himself on the social and makes a difference. So my questions are situated at that nexus of the social and the psychological, and they concern Mbeki's masculinity. And I'd like to frame them in relation to one of the principal themes of your lecture tonight, that of disconnection, which I imagine bears very directly and complexly on Mbeki's sense of himself as a man and the ways that this orients his political practice. However, for all Mbeki's disconnection, he's not a man who has no moorings, no loyalties or obligations, no preferential networks or linkages.

How do these trajectories of disconnection and connection come together in fashioning the man, specifically in his gender identity? My second question is, do you see the imprints of a

© Falcon Photography

Author Mark Gevisser's long-awaited biography of President Thabo Mbeki has caused a stir on the "eve" of the ANC's Polokwane Conference and was launched shortly before a massive dissent against him in party structures.

personal politics of gender in, for example, Mbeki's Aids denialism?

MARK GEVISSER: I'm not going to attempt to answer these challenging questions in great detail because I think they are open questions that require dialogue and discussion.

Was there ever any editorial interference and any self-censorship? There's a lot in the media and in the intellectual world about a role that Thabo Mbeki plays, stifling intellectual independence. I mean what I say in the introduction: he absolutely respected and condoned my intellectual independence. No one in the Presidency ever, even in a devious way, tried to figure out what I was going to say or how, or how they would do damage control.

In terms of my relationship with my subject, I'm a journalist. I will go as deep as my subject allows me to go. A lack of boundaries is an occupational hazard.

One of the things I really respect about Thabo Mbeki is that he set up the boundaries. Even though he was willing to talk to me for hours and hours and hours, he was not willing to break bread with me. He didn't pull out the Scotch. He didn't pour out his heart. My framework is a psychoanalytic one, but that's not my only framework. I agree with Xolela about biography being at the intersection of all those dynamics, and I think my biography acts out that understanding.

I use psychoanalytic terminology metaphorically, as an author, not as a mental health professional, and I hope I haven't crossed that line. Thabo Mbeki is not a damaged or wounded or needy person, or just a person trying to understand himself.

And in terms of my unconscious, Pumla, I wondered, am I looking for a father figure? No. I have a father, and I have a very resolved relationship with him. Was it some kind of reckoning? Yes, I think it was, and it will take me a while to figure out what that reckoning was. But it's certainly about being a white South African and about what this country and this history means for me. And about, perhaps, exploring my identity as a South African by looking at another life and another family. I come from a Jewish intellectual, trading, upwardly mobile, ambitious family, and Thabo Mbeki comes from a similar family. The only thing that's different is the word "Jewish". Perhaps there was a sort of identification with an entrepreneurial class, with people who are outsiders and trying to be outsiders and insiders, and how one balances that.

Ferial asked whether I think Mbeki is responsible for the duality around him. I think to an extent he is, perhaps because every single one of us is a bundle of contradictions, murderous and loving, mean and generous. I think that he hasn't managed to put his whole self into the public domain, and that a lot of that is because of his shyness, and also because of ideology.

He grew up in a family and in a tradition that had no time for that kind of self-exploration and self-description, and therefore I don't think Mbeki knows how to do it. Nelson Mandela knew how to do it in an extraordinary way and because of that, we judge his successor quite harshly. Mbeki's way is a very different way, and I think he has suffered for that in that dualism.

In terms of the economic dualism, there's an inherent contradiction and division in the African National Congress. I don't believe that anybody leading South Africa through the transition would have been able to keep unity between the left and the middle ground.

On masculinity and feminism, I'm struck when I look at Thabo Mbeki as a freedom fighter by what an atypical male he was. When Mbeki was at university he would often stay over at his

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friends, the Goodings, and Meg Pahad, who at that point wasn't with [her husband] Essop, lived in the living room. And they'd all say, Thabo, why don't you stay over, and he would sleep in the chair in the same room as Meg.

And then along comes Essop Pahad and he is outraged. And the way Meg explains it is that Pahad was coming from a typical understanding of a South African revolutionary, which is, "Hey, if you can make a move you do." It's a kind of over-masculinisation common to male warriors. Meg told me that Thabo Mbeki wasn't like that. He did not throw his masculinity around. And that's one of the reasons he was something of an outsider. He wasn't in the bush, he wasn't carrying the AK. He knew how to use a gun but it wasn't primary to his identity.

In other words, there's almost something feminine about Thabo Mbeki the freedom fighter, and yet there's something very masculine about Thabo Mbeki the President. I suppose the way I would answer that is through a line from [poet] Langston Hughes that I quoted earlier: "There's a certain amount of impotence in a dream deferred." And Thabo Mbeki himself used the word "disempowerment" to describe what it was like coming into power, and not being able to do what he thought he should be able to do, and what he wanted to do, and what he was elected to do.

There is some masculinisation that compensates for that. We might see that in his rather extraordinary and unexpected embrace of the arms deal or in a rhetoric that he began to employ that he never used before he became Deputy President, particularly in his fight with the left. When he was a freedom fighter; his favourite line, somebody told me, was, "We'll talk about it." He hated conflict. Does the man we see in 2007 strike you as a man who hates conflict?

You asked specifically about Aids. I do not believe Thabo Mbeki is an Aids denialist. Thabo Mbeki is an Aids dissident. He does not deny that there's an epidemic, but he asks questions, about the severity of the epidemic; about whether HIV causes Aids, which causes the epidemic; and consequently, about whether ARVs [anti-retrovirals] are thus the correct way to deal with the epidemic.

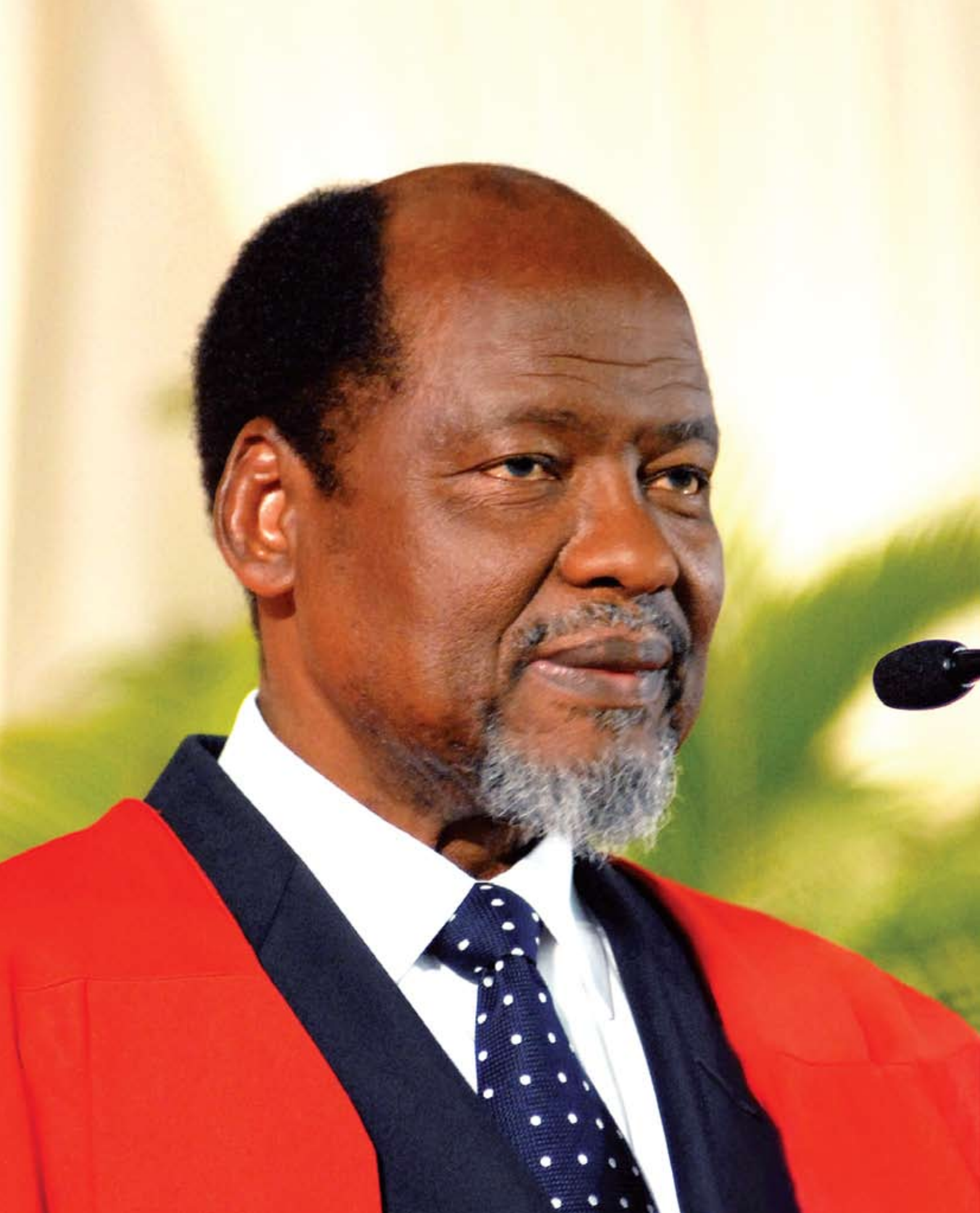
There's no question he takes the accusation that black men cannot control their sexuality personally. This isn't my psycho-biography, this is his speech at Fort Hare. He has found a strand in the scientific medical discourse which he believes pathologises black male sexuality. I can't go too far in speculating why he takes it as a personal affront or an affront on behalf of all black men when Charlene Smith writes that rape is endemic in African society. Perhaps endemic implies a pathology that we are all victims of, and maybe if she'd said it's a serious problem rather than endemic he would have responded differently. But maybe this is all semantic, because there's something going on in his head that I don't know about and can't know about because there are certain places I can't go.

Finally, Xolela, you make some really important points, and I think that on the whole I disagree with your reading that I see Mbeki as a victim of his history. I don't see him that way at all, and if that's the way it came across in the presentation or in the book then I've failed. I see him as an agent, and as a profound agent. And I really do believe he should be called to account for his inability to overcome his personal history where it affects public policy, as in the case of Aids.

I don't believe that, as his biographer, my job is to sit on his shoulder and try to see the world the way he sees it, to understand the world the way he sees it and the way he interprets his history. And I do think that there are repercussions for us in the way he interprets his history.

I believe we would not have had the African Renaissance and everything that came out of it if it weren't for his personal need to reconnect with his past. We might have had something else.

Thabo Mbeki: *The Dream Deferred* is published by Jonathan Ball.



The real cost of Africa's wars

An edited excerpt from the Albert John Luthuli Memorial Lecture delivered by Joaquim Chissano, former President of the Republic of Mozambique and Chairperson of the Africa Forum, in Durban on 27 October 2007

I started participating in discussions about Albert Luthuli's policies of non-violent struggle as a means of bringing about change in society after he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1960. His detractors condemned his policy of non-violent struggle against apartheid, which is what earned him the prestigious prize.

Luthuli was violently killed. And other people who were with him fighting peacefully for justice in South Africa suffered from the oppressors' violence. After a thorough analysis of the prevailing conditions in the country, the ANC decided to combine non-violence with violent action.

Former Mozambican President Joaquim Alberto Chissano delivered the annual Albert Luthuli lecture at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Could we say that Albert Luthuli is wrong? I would say no. His actions brought to the surface the brutality of the regime and the need of violent pressure on apartheid to bring about change and to win world support for the struggle. It is therefore appropriate to celebrate his life. We shall remember him as a great leader. I am humbled to be part of these celebrations.

The topic of this year's Memorial Lecture is "Conflict prevention, management and resolution, and transformation of societies in Africa". This is a very important subject to Africa today. We all know the prevalence of conflicts in Africa and their impact on the efforts that are being deployed at national, sub-regional and regional levels towards socio-economic transformation and development.

We also know that we must prevent, manage and resolve conflicts, because this is the only way to promote peace. Without peace there cannot be development, and without development we cannot transform societies.

Sometimes conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution are separated as entities that are different in terms of methodology and processes in negotiations. Our experience in Mozambique shows that it is not advisable to separate them. In fact they should not be considered as separate concepts or processes.

For our purposes, conflicts may be defined as the pursuit of incompatible goals between groups. It is possible to distinguish between social conflicts and political conflicts. At this level I would like to warn that some of the assumptions about the root causes of conflicts, particularly in Africa, need thorough interrogation. While it is generally accepted that understanding and addressing the root causes of conflicts is essential to successful and durable solutions, we need to be careful about focusing on causal relations, which are sometimes difficult to establish.

For example, the assumption that less developed and less industrialised countries tend to have a higher propensity to conflict than developed industrialised countries simply does not hold, particularly since it suggests that most of the conflicts in Africa are a result of underdevelopment and poverty. For instance, the conflict in Mozambique was caused by neither underdevelopment nor poverty. It was simply incompatibility of perceptions and goals.

It is regrettable that our continent has become synonymous with conflict; conflicts that are increasingly violent and prolonged. The impact of conflict is immense and devastating, creating a need for a capacity to stop violence, and major interventions towards attending to humanitarian needs. The conflicts result in destruction of infrastructure and, in most cases, leave landmines that for years make it impossible for large areas of land to be used productively; exacerbate ethnic cleavages that ultimately undermine state formation and regional security; create millions of refugees and internally displaced people; and reduce capital and foreign direct investment.

To illustrate this, let me show you the dramatically negative impact of the violent conflict in Mozambique during the period from 1976 to 1992:

- one million lives lost;
- 200 000 orphans or children separated from their families;
- 500 000 children killed;
- more than 500 000 children who witnessed the killings of their relatives;
- 10 000 people killed by landmines and a bigger number of people maimed by these deadly weapons;
- 1,7 million refugees in neighbouring countries;
- 4 million internally displaced peoples.

Besides this human tragedy, we witnessed the widespread

destruction of key socio-economic infrastructure. In effect, more than two thirds of schools and rural health centres were destroyed. Thousands of roads severely damaged, more than 30 main bridges destroyed, as well as about a thousand kilometres of railways. Power stations, power transmission lines, game reserves and parks, as well as four out of the six sugar factories and plantations, were also destroyed. The whole rural commercial network was either destroyed or paralysed, as well as tea estates, cotton farms and processing plants, and fuel depots. Industrial activity, including mining, was either paralysed or severely slowed down.

All these resulted in an economic paralysis, with the development process in the country, which was moving forward from 1975 to 1981, starting to move backwards. National unity was shaken, economic dependency on the outside world increased, external debt grew immensely, and the shortage of food and consequent malnutrition were alarming.

In order to reverse this situation it was imperative to find ways to put an end to the conflict, which could have been prevented in 1975 or 76, had the racist leaders in South Africa and Rhodesia heard or understood the voices of peace and reason.

Today the world has learned a lot. The sense of existence of a common interest is building. The sense of humanism is growing and spreading within and outside Africa. The sense of global solidarity to save humanity was clearly noticeable in the cases of September 11, Katrina, floods in Mozambique and the United Kingdom, and the tsunami in South East Asia, pointing to a new consciousness in that regard. The spirit of arrogance is being exposed and weakening; solidarity, whether continental, south-south or north-south, is gaining strength.

The prevention, management and resolution of conflicts have more and more chances to succeed. The dividends of peace in Mozambique can be seen in the GDP growth rate, which, on average, between 1994 and 2006, has been about 8%.

Our continent has experienced at least three genocides in the past decade: in Rwanda, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and in Darfur. There are over 9 million registered refugees throughout the world, the majority of which are in Africa, while the continent is also host to an estimated 15–17 million internally displaced people.

Between 1990 and 2005, 23 African nations have been involved in conflict. A study by Oxfam International shows that those 15 years of continuous conflicts have cost African nations $284 billion in GDP, representing an annual loss of 15%. African Oxfam, IANSA [International Action Network on Small Arms] and Safer World calculated what these countries' GDP would have been if there had been no conflict. For example, during Guinea-Bissau's conflict in 1998/99, the projected growth rate without conflict would have been 5,24%, whereas the actual growth rate was minus 10,15%.

The report, Africa Missing Billions,[1] also found that African nations that experienced conflict, when compared to peaceful countries, had on average 50% more infant deaths, 15% more malnourished people, reduced life expectancy by five years, increased adult illiteracy by 20%, 12,4% less food per person, and 2,5 fewer doctors per patient than other nations. GDP per capita is reduced by 63 per cent.

> It is regrettable that our continent has become synonymous with conflict; conflicts that are increasingly violent and prolonged

Sometimes we do not link or reflect on the costs of a conflict in that way. The indirect costs of conflicts can result in opportunities lost, diversion of resources, trauma to the peoples affected. The conflicts do not only affect the countries involved, but they also have spill-over effects for the neighbouring countries. Therefore there is a need to prevent the costs and destruction through a set of conflict-prevention mechanisms.

Conflict prevention, in this context, and according to the AU [African Union] and NEPAD [New Partnership for Africa's Development], must be understood as diplomatic, military, and development actions intended to prevent disputes from arising between parties, prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts, and limit the spread of latter when they occur.

To prevent conflicts, and reconcile and harmonise societies, requires co-ordinated initiatives and clear understanding of what we stand to lose as conflicting countries and societies, and what we stand to gain as countries and society in peace and reconciliation. Reconciliation is looking for the right relationship, a mutual understanding of the way to overcome the causes of conflicts. It is a crucial element for lasting peace and security, which are the basis of development and progress. That is why we need to put in place mechanisms to secure peace in our continent.

To celebrate the life of Chief Luthuli is to commit ourselves to the pursuit of the peaceful objectives that will bring about development of our continent. It is to learn to solve our problems through dialogue and consensus. It is to resist the temptation of using violence to resolve our differences. It is to unite for the development and progress of our continent.

What one bullet costs

Joaquim Chissano related the following story told in Africa's Missing Billions to illustrate the unimagined cost of conflict:

"Dr Walter Odhiambo, a surgeon from Kenya, tells the story of a 17-year-old Congolese boy whose jaw was shattered by a bullet. The son of a diamond prospector, rebel soldiers who thought he had diamonds shot him. It took him one year to raise the money from friends and family to have it treated. During this time, he kept his disfigured mouth covered. He travelled 3,000km to Nairobi for the operation to insert a steel plate into his jaw, which took nine hours and cost $6,000."[2]

The cost of the operation, Chissano pointed out, is equivalent to a year of primary education for 100 children, or full immunisations for 250 children, or 1,5 years of education for a medical student.

Joaquim Alberto Chissano is the former President of Mozambique and the first recipient of the Mo Ebrahim Prize for African Leadership.

Endnotes

1. www.oxfam.org/en/files/bp107_africas_missing_billions_0710.pdf.
2. Ibid.

Albert John Lutuli

Groutville Mission,
P/bag P.O Groutville.
5th May, 1963

Dear Mrs. Suzman

I take this opportunity to address my deep appreciation and admiration for your heroic and lone stand against a most reactionary Parliament, the Parliament of the Republic of the Union of South Africa. I most heartedly congratulate you for your untiring efforts in a situation that would frustrate and benumb many.

In moments of creeping frustration and tiredness, please pick courage and strength in the fact, that thousands of South Africans, especially among the oppressed section, thank God for producing Helen, for her manly stand against injustice, regardless of consequences.

For ever remember, you are a bright star in a dark chamber, where lights of liberty or what is left, are going out one by one.

The appreciation covers your contribution since you started Parliament as member of the Progressive Party, This meritorious record has been climaxed by your fittingly uncompromising stand in the rape of democracy by Parliament in the debate that made law, which was one of the most diabolic bills ever to come before Parliament.

Not only ourselves – your contemporaries, but also posterity will hold you in high esteem.

Yours very truly
A. J. Lutuli

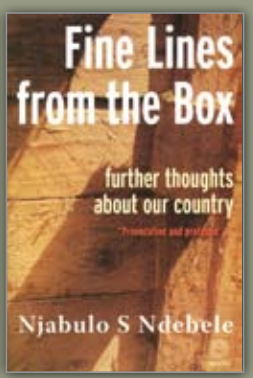
FOCUS BOOK CORNER

Executive Outcomes: Against all Odds

by Eeben Barlow

Galagi Books: ISBN 978 1 919854 19 9

Executive Outcomes is the model on which all Private Military Companies (PMCs) operating in Iraq and Afghanistan are based. Founded by author Eeben Barlow in the early 1990s he originally offered courses in intelligence to South Africa's Special Forces and security work to De Beers' diamond industry, this work rapidly expanded to operations in Angola and Sierra Leone.



Fine Lines from the Box: further thoughts about our country

by Njabulo S Ndebele

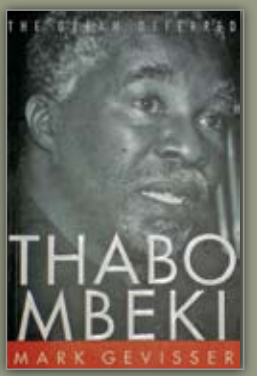
This book traces a journey of the mind and an ongoing exercise of reading and writing by one of South Africa's most incisive commentators. Taken from Njabulo Ndebele's earlier *Rediscovering the Ordinary,* this collection challenges, entreats, cajoles and prods one into understanding a range of issues – the loss of innocence in achieving a 'new South Africa, the President and the Aids question and many others

White Power & the Rise and Fall of the National Party

by Christi van der Westhuizen

Zebra Press: ISBN 978 1 77007 305 0

In 2005-6, almost a hundred years after the founding of the National Party, the unthinkable happened: the once mighty party of apartheid collapsed into the African National Congress, its sworn enemy for nearly a century. This and other topics are addressed in *White Power & the rise and fall of the National Party.*



The Dream Deferred: Thabo Mbeki by Mark Gevisser

Jonathan Ball Publishers:
ISBN 978 1 86842 301 5

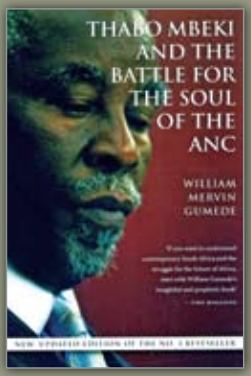
What happens to a dream deferred? This question, from one of President Thabo Mbeki's favourite poems by Langston Hughes, provides the thread for this magisterial new biography. In the long shadow of Nelson Mandela, Mbeki has attempted to forge an identity for himself as the symbol of modern Africa. And yet, as he prepares to leave office in 2009, his legacy remains intensely contested.

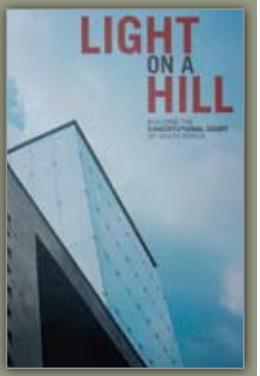
Thabo Mbeki and the Battle for the Soul of the ANC

by William Mervin Gumede

Zebra Press: ISBN 978 1 77007 099 8

As a spokesman for a country, a continent and the developing world, Thabo Mbeki plays a crucial role in world politics, but to many people he is an enigma. Is this simply because he is a secretive man, or are there complicated political factors at play? Who is the real Mbeki?





Light on a Hill – Building the Constitutional Court of South Africa

edited by Bronwyn

David Krut Publishing:
ISBN 978 0 9584860 7 1

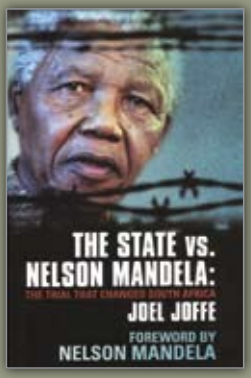
This book celebrates the most important building of South Africa's new democracy. The unifying theme of this building is the traditional form of participatory and transparent justice under a tree, represented in vigorous and creative modern architectural language.

The State vs. Nelson Mandela: the trial that changed South Africa

by Joel Joffe

Oneworld Book:
ISBN 978 1 85168 500 4

"A remarkable piece of contemporary historical writing that will serve as one of the most reliable sources for understanding what happened at that trial and how we came to democracy triumph in South Africa" – Nelson Mandela

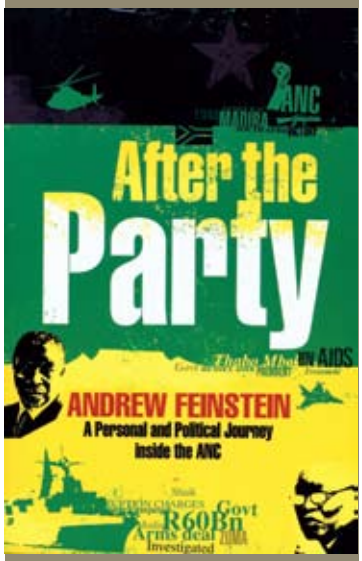


Postcards from Soweto

by Mokone Molete

Jacana: ISBN 978 1 77009 369 0

Both laconic and true to life, these remembered and half-remembered stories from 'back in the day', with Soweto as the focus, are a delight. Whether you were there, or ever wondered what it was like, these pages will transport you there. Take the journey with Mokone Molete – it's not all sweet, but it's true. Mostly.



Andrew Feinstein
After the Party – a Personal and Political Journey inside the ANC

Andrew Feinstein joined the ANC in the 1980s, and was an ANC MP for more than seven years. A growing unease about the inner workings of the party culminated in his resignation when his attempts to investigate allegations of corruption in the notorious multibillion-rand arms deal were blocked. He now lives in London, where he is a consultant, writer and lecturer on a variety of issues of public importance.

Jonathan Ball 2007. ISBN 978 1 86842 262 3.

By: Michael Cardo

This insider's account of how the African National Congress (ANC) quashed Parliament's investigation of the R44-billion arms deal illuminates one of the darker recesses of our contemporary political history.

In this way, it adds to a recent spate of political non-fiction, such as former ANC MP Pregs Govender's memoir, Padraig O'Malley's biography of Mac Maharaj.

These works show how the subordination of Parliament to the executive, the over-concentration of power in the office of the State President, the use of state institutions to settle political scores, the entrenchment of networks of patronage and corruption, and the intolerance of dissent have all served to dilute the quality of democracy in the past ten years.

Like Pregs Govender, his erstwhile colleague on the ANC backbenches in Parliament, Feinstein was appalled by his party's "tragic obfuscation" of the HIV/Aids pandemic. He ascribes this to President Thabo Mbeki's persistent denialism, his failure to assert moral leadership, and an "autocratic style" that encouraged kowtowing by colleagues while thousands of South Africans died in the absence of access to antiretrovirals. Feinstein devotes a fascinating chapter to the subject.

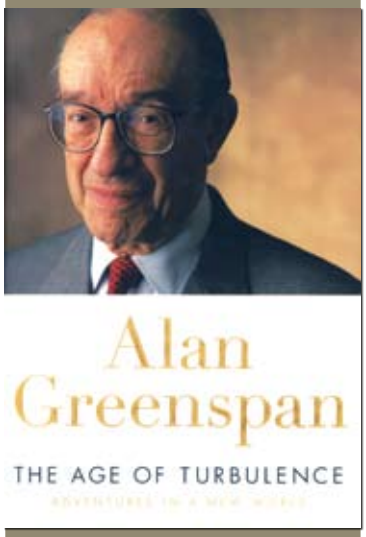
But it was the ruling party's handling of the investigation into the arms deal that really shook Feinstein's faith in the ANC, and that ultimately led to his resignation from Parliament in 2001. He identifies that year as a "moral turning point in the life of the ANC" and the "watershed from which the [ANC's] humility, accountability and integrity began to be replaced by arrogance, aloofness and a gradual diminution of its values".

As chair of the ANC study group on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (Scopa), Feinstein spearheaded efforts to interrogate irregularities identified by the Auditor-General in his original report on the procurement of arms and weapons. Initially encouraged by the Speaker of Parliament, his path was soon blocked by direct interference from members of the executive and the Presidency, and by a backtracking Speaker. They were eager to protect party officials who had benefited from the deal, and the party itself, whose 1999 election campaign was allegedly funded by kickbacks from winning contractors. Feinstein catalogues the cover-up, and the events leading to his resignation, in careful detail.

Despite his unhappy exit from the ANC, Feinstein believes that it is still possible to "re-energise and re-democratise the political process in a manner that places morality at its centre", by foregrounding transparency and accountability.

Globally, this would require full disclosure of sources of party funding and a stricter regulatory environment for corporations involved in the arms, pharmaceutical, gambling and mineral-extraction industries. Locally, it would require the adoption of a mixed constituency/proportional representation system to loosen the grip of party bosses over MPs, thereby strengthening parliamentary oversight, and a clearer separation between party and state.

"To move forward", he writes, "requires someone unsullied by the past few years.



Alan Greenspan
Age of Turbulence

Alan Greenspan was born in 1926. From 1974 to 1977 he served as Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers under President Gerald Ford. In 1987 President Ronald Reagan appointed him Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, a position he held until his retirement in 2006. *The Age of Turbulence* is Greenspan's story about the extraordinary years he has experienced and the individuals who have made an impression on him.

ISBN 978-0-713-99982-2. Penguin Books

By Lerato Tsebe

Greenspan's memoirs come at an important time in the global economy. The possible asset bubble which is showing ominous signs in the housing market after the sub prime mortgage crisis and the specter of history repeating itself, given Greenspan's experience with the dotcom bubble is of paramount importance. Key questions about possible imbalances in the US economy have been given additional credence by the growing credit crunch.

These are certainly some of the most interesting features of the historical narrative of the book – how the Dotcom bubble burst and how - during 9/11 and its aftermath – Greenspan and others kept stability in the financial arena through a combination of his leadership and the resilience of the US economy.

The global economy is vastly more flexible, open, resilient and fast-changing than ever before and therefore a source of great opportunity and great risk as evidenced by the recent and current turmoil in global capital markets.

Alan Greenspan's memoirs are remarkable in their time-frame: he outlasted US Presidents from Nixon to George W Bush prior to his retirement and British Prime Ministers from Thatcher to Blair – latterly acting as adviser to then Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown.

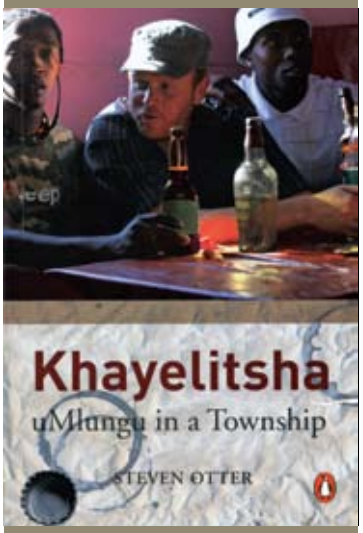
Age of turbulence is a stirring tracing of the contours of this personal journey and the journey of the evolution and growth of the global market. This memoir comes from a man who was in the control room of the global economy's engine room – the US economy – for most of this journey and therefore offers a bird's-eye view from this vantage point into many of the defining economic moments of our era.

The most captivating stylistic feature of the book is how Greenspan, a man famous for cryptic 'Fed speak' has produced such a vivid and grippingly written memoir. This is a tome that not only deals with narrative it strays into the profound. As the Financial Times aptly put it: "[But] at times he touches on the profound, asking why, for all capitalism' material success, we have not been able to rediscover the 19th century's optimism that free markets and free societies will bring a broad measure of human progress."

Greenspan's book draws attention to the fact that the Federal Open Market Committee's (FOMC) discretion is granted by statute and can be withdrawn by statute – an interesting juxtaposition from a South African perspective where the Reserve Bank enjoys key constitutional protection of its independence buttressed as it is by a policy of inflation targeting.

Ironically, one of the greatest post-Greenspan period challenges will be for the Fed to assist in convincing those who continue to put their faith in the US $ as a reserve currency that it is safe whilst the Euro may slowly and steadily steal a march on the greenback. The second key challenge – which is near universal for central bankers – confronting Greenspan's successor Bernanke is to weigh inflation against the risk of recession.

This memoir is a testimony to a remarkable man.



Steven Otter – Khayelitsha, uMlungu in a Township

Unlike authors who have tried to understand township culture by peering into it from a comfortable position on a soapbox, Steven Otter has written from the perspective of someone who has lived in Khayelitsha and experienced its dynamic and diverse life.

Harper Collins 2007. ISBN 978-06-114778-4. Pocket Books 2007

By Lerato Tsebe

Steven Otter spent years living in Khayelitsha in various back rooms and shacks with people he sometimes barely knew, eating 'smileys' and playing a regular round of pool with local thugs and friends. *Khayelitsha*, uMlungu *in a Township* is the unlikely story of a man who challenges himself in, perhaps, trying to understand the dynamics of living in a township, and who in the end walks away with a deeper sense of brotherhood, and of the community that resides there.

The interesting thing about Otter's education in township life is that it was not acquired through academic research, it is not a well-thought-out equation that has been tried and tested, it is an actual experience. The book is written by a man who put himself in an environment where he knew he would be perceived as an enemy.

When Otter moves to Khayelitsha it is not only a journey of self-discovery, but a venture into the heart of class and racial issues in South Africa, into the point where failed service delivery, crime, unemployment and HIV/Aids intersect. This experience of seeing the point of intersection, of being able to translate the meaning of these things, not from text books, but from what his own senses tell him, is what allows the book to avoid becoming another casualty of the purely academic standpoint on township culture.

As the book unfolds, one begins to realise that what Otter has done is discover a certain psychology in township culture. And this is, perhaps, the book's most plausible aspect. In terms of this psychology, class distinctions cannot be designated as a conclusion that would be applicable in middle-class suburbia, rather, it begins to undress the reasons behind why certain elements characterise Khayelitsha so well. These reasons are afforded him via the relationships that he forms with some rather ominous characters, with whom he forges a brotherhood. These men provide him with an education and understanding of kasi life, of looking beyond the chaos, and of finding a community of people who share much more in common with him and millions of other suburban South Africans than he could have expected.

At times the book becomes a bit mundane, as the writer fails to capture the energy exuded by the conflicting dynamics of living in a township.

You cannot, however, dispute that Otter's testimony is raw, and has opened the door to a side of South Africa that is far too often shunned.

What Otter has accomplished is to begin to understand why Khayelitsha is so much more than just a dysfunctional township; it is a community that functions in its own way. And with an ever-broadening socio-economic divide in this country, one is witnessing an influx of white people into township areas. Perhaps it is here that the racialised connotation of townships will be overcome, and a broader light will be shed on the urgency of adequate social delivery and poverty alleviation, two of the most pertinent characteristics that dominate townships throughout this country. And the deracialisation of township life may also provide a more permanently open door to allow those who live in the proverbial leafy suburbs to be captivated by the energy and life of these communities.