**ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION
OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Oral history:
Representing the hidden,
the untold and the veiled

Proceedings of the Fifth and Sixth Annual National
Oral History Conference

East London, Eastern Cape (2008)
&
Cape Town, Western Cape (2009)

Editor
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(Department of Historical Studies, University of Johannesburg)
Sixth Oral History Conference 2009
(Cape Town, Western Cape)

The politics of collecting and curating voices

Foreword

For the past 10 years the Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) has hosted an annual conference on oral history research, funded by the Department of Arts and Culture. This department also funds the publication of the conference proceedings in three volumes, of which this is the second in the series. The first volume was published in April 2013 and contained papers of the 2006 OHASA Conference, held in Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal. The theme of the conference was Culture, Memory and Trauma, and the volume carries the same title.

This, then, is the second volume in this series, and it is entitled Oral History: Representing the Hidden, the Untold and the Veiled. It contains papers delivered at the 2008 and 2009 OHASA conferences. For technical reasons, the 2007 conference papers are not available for publication.

The OHASA conferences rotate through the provinces, and in 2008 it was the turn of the Eastern Cape, which meant that the conference was co-hosted by the Eastern Cape Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture. The theme of the conference was Hidden Voices, Untold Stories and Veiled Memories. The conference was a resounding success and enjoyed great media attention. Many oral historians were in attendance and prominent role-players in the political and academic fields of arts, culture and oral history also participated. Prof Philippe Denis, then chairperson of OHASA, opened the conference, which was held from 7 to 10 October 2008 in the Regent Hotel in East London. The attendees were welcomed by Ms N Abrahams Ntantiso, the MEC of Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture of the Eastern Cape. The keynote address was skilfully delivered by the then Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture, Ms NGW Botha. The guest speaker on the first day was Prof J Peires from the Walter Sisulu University, who spoke on the subject of "Using Oral Traditions in the Writing of History: a Review of the Methodology Evolved out of International Best Practice". On the second day, the guest speaker was Ms Pumla Madiba from the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Culture, Religious and Linguistic Communities, and her paper dealt with the difficult issue of "Orality and the Conservation of Memory". On the final day of the conference, the guest speaker, Prof Lungisile Ntsebeza from the University of Cape Town, delivered a paper on "Land Rights of Rural Women in South Africa: Do They Have a Voice?". Ms Mandy Gilder, acting archivist of the National Archives of South Africa, presented an informative paper on "The UNESCO Heritage", and three students from the Chief Ampie Mayisa High

School, namely D Madida, E Mabuza and M Ntshlintshali, gave a presentation on "Community History Writing: Lessons, Issues and Concerns of Chief Ampie Mayisa High School History Students". The latter testifies to the concern for and dedication towards training learners in the skills of oral history. In this and the following conferences, space was made available for learners who were trained in preparation for the conference and who presented their papers on oral history projects.

During this conference – which was the 5th OHASA Conference – no less than 44 papers were read, of which 6 are published here, based on the availability of the manuscripts.

In 2009, the 6th OHASA Conference was held in the Cape Province from 13 to 16 October at the River Club in Observatory, Cape Town. The theme was The Politics of Collecting and Curating Voices. An array of key-note players in arts and culture were involved in the welcoming ceremony, with the Minister of Arts and Culture, Lulu Xingwana, taking the lead. Also participating was Paul Mashatile, the Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture, Sakkie Jenner, the MEC for Cultural Affairs and Sport in the Western Cape, and Dan Plato, the Executive Mayor of Cape Town. A final word of welcome to the attendees came from Prof Sekhothe Mokgaotsana from the University of Limpopo, who was the then chairperson of OHASA. The guest speaker was Prof Phil Bonner from the History Workshop of the University of the Witwatersrand, a veteran in oral history research in South Africa. Closing reflections were made on the last day by Prof Sean Field from the Centre for Popular Memory at the University of Cape Town.

At this conference, 36 papers were delivered, 11 of which are published here – once again subject to the availability of the manuscripts.

In recent years the number of speakers and attendees at the OHASA conferences has doubled and tripled. The papers published here testify to the fact that oral history in South Africa has come of age and that relevant oral history projects have been established all over the country. It is a milestone in the history of OHASA that these papers can be published. A final word of thanks must go to the Department of Arts and Culture for making this possible financially.

Prof Christina Landman

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**Oral testimonies by former members of the
Azanian National Youth Unity (AZANYU):
The sayable and unsayable in an oral history interview**[1]

Tshepo Moloi
"Local Histories and Present Realities" Programme,
University of the Witwatersrand

Introduction

In this paper I shall reflect on the oral testimonies by former members of AZANYU in Thembisa Township, in the East Rand, South Africa. They provide a rare view to the "hidden histories and untold stories" about the role played by former members of AZANYU in the struggle for liberation in the 1980s and early 1990s. In this paper I will contend that the primary reason for the under-documentation[2] (ie hidden history or untold story) of the role of AZANYU in the struggle against apartheid lies in the reluctance, if not out-right refusal, by the former members of AZANYU to be interviewed about their activities and about their organisation's history. Furthermore, I will demonstrate that the former members of AZANYU who had agreed to be interviewed were themselves not willing to speak about some of the activities they were directly or indirectly involved in. This was especially the case when interviewing those members who, at a later stage, had joined the

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[1]   This paper is drawn from my MA Research Report 'Youth Politics: The Political Role of AZANYU in the Struggle for Liberation: The Case of AZANYU Thembisa Branch, 1980s to 1996. University of the Witwatersrand, 2005.

[2]   A survey of available literature reveals that AZANYU has been largely ignored. What consideration has been given by Tom Lodge 'The Pan Africanist Congress, 1959-1990' in Ian Liebenberg et al. (eds.), *The Long March: The story of the struggle for liberation in South Africa*, (HAUM, Pretoria,1994), p.121; Lodge and Bill Nasson (eds.) *All, Here, and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (South Africa Update Series: Ford Foundation – David Philip, Cape Town, 1991), pp.194-96; Shaun Johnson 'Soldiers of Luthuli' in S. Johnson (ed.) *No Turning Back* (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1989); Jeremy Seekings, *Heroes or Villains? Youth Politics in the 1980s,* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1993); Mark Swilling and Rantete, J. 'Organization and Strategies of major resistance movements in the negotiation era' in Robin Lee and Lawrence Schlemmer (eds.), *Transition to democracy: Policy perspective*, (Oxford University Press, 1991); Ali Hlongwane 'To Independence Now! Tomorrow the United States of Africa: The Story of Zephania Lekoame Mothopeng, 1913-1990', MA Dissertation, (University of the Witwatersrand, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and Education, 2002); Letlapa Mphahlele *Child of this Soil: My Life as a Freedom Fighter* (Kwela Books, Cape Town, 2002, is only as an allusion.

Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) – the Pan Africanist Congress' (PAC) military wing. This is in contrast to the willingness and readiness by former members of Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK or Spear of the Nation) to discuss any matter relating to their involvement in MK and their military activities, as will be shown in the paper. MK was the African National Congress' (ANC) military wing.

Research process

This paper is drawn from my MA research report. It is therefore appropriate to begin by briefly discussing the research process I undertook to gain access to former members of AZANYU. The primary objective of my study was to explore the political role of AZANYU's Thembisa Branch in the struggle against apartheid. Because of the little attention paid to this organisation, I decided that the only avenue open to me to gain sufficient understanding of this organisation was to employ the oral history methodology. Cynthia Kros and Nicole Ulrich write, "Oral history means history that is passed down by word of mouth" (more about this below).[3] I hoped this methodology would enable me to examine the factors that caused some of the young people in Thembisa to join this organisation and, in addition, to explore the role played by AZANYU in the struggle.

I interviewed 12 interviewees, ranging from local AZANYU activists (ie former members of the Thembisa Branch), to former members of the AZANYU National Executive Committee (NEC), a former member of the Pan Africanist Student Organisation (PASO) in Thembisa, former members of the PAC's underground structures in the 1960s and 1970s, and former APLA cadres from Thembisa. The duration of the interviews varied – depending on the interviewee's availability. With some interviewees an interview averaged about six hours (over a period of days); others between an hour and two hours, and one of my interviewee's granted me only a 45-minute interview. All but one of the interviews were tape-recorded. None among my interviewees objected to me using a tape recorder.

I found tape recording the interview very helpful (compared with taking notes by hand) because I could conduct the interview without obstructing its flow by requesting the interviewee to repeat what he (only male interviewees were interviewed) had said because I had missed it. Where

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[3] Kros, C. and Ulrich, N. 'The Truth of Tales: Oral Testimony and Teaching History in Schools', in Philippe Denis and Radikobo Ntsimane (eds.) *Oral History in a Wounded Country: Interactive Interviewing in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu Natal University Press, 2008), p.91.

possible, after an interview I would transcribe the interview and return the transcript to my interviewees to read and comment on. This proved to be helpful in two ways. First, my interviewees felt a sense of involvement in the project and this resulted in them opening up to me and beginning to reveal information, which I do not think they would have otherwise readily discussed with me.

Second, my interviewees, after they had read the interview transcript, assisted me in pointing out and correcting the mistakes in the transcript, particularly where I had mis-spelled names of people and of places. This method further enabled me, after reading the interview transcript, to develop a detailed and specific set of questions for follow-up interviews. When conducting the first interview I asked semi-structured questions, because I intended to gather as much information about my interviewees' life histories as possible. A semi-structured interview is more open than a standardised questionnaire. A few questions (or themes) are prepared in advance in order to steer the interview. The interviewees are allowed to give unrestricted answers.[4] In the follow-up interview I asked structured questions, which dealt with specific issues and events.

In addition I held informal conversations with the local AZANYU activists. This usually took the form of a general discussion about youth politics in the country and influential personalities within their organisation, both locally and nationally. For these discussions I did not use a tape recorder. I would listen and when I got home I would write in my notebook some of the points which I thought were important. I found our informal discussions helpful because my interviewees seemed more relaxed, and thus could easily recall events, names of fellow activists, and some of the clandestine meetings which they held. I would then ask them about some of these issues during our formal interview. Most importantly, it was during our informal conversations that I came into contact with some of the former members of AZANYU in Thembisa. They would meet us in the street discussing the activities of AZANYU in the township when some of the AZANYU local activists walked me to the taxi rank to catch a taxi back home. They would join in the discussion. After the discussion I would request a formal interview with those who I had not interviewed.

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4   Philip Bonner, Cynthia Kros, Peter Lekgoathi, Helen Ludlow, Sello Mathabatha, Katie Mooney, Noor Nieftagodien, Nicole Ulrich, Ian Steenkamp and Wonga Tabata, 'Oral History: A Guide for Educators', pamphlet published by the Mpumalanga Department of Education, 2005. Available from Mpumalanga Department of Education or from the History Workshop, http://web.wits.ac.za/Academic/Humanities/Social Sciences/History Workshop/Training.htm, p.18.

Oral history

According to Peter Lekgoathi, "Oral history is used to describe the method that uses both oral testimony and oral tradition as forms of historical evidence."[5] Oral testimony, Lekgoathi adds, "is defined as eyewitness or first-hand accounts, hearsay or reminiscences about events or situations which are contemporary, that is, which occurred during the lifetime of the informant; these informants tell stories about themselves and the things they have seen and/or done in the past". And oral traditions, on the other hand, he continues, "are messages, stories or narratives that have been transmitted by word of mouth beyond the generation that gave rise to them".[6] To achieve the objective of my study I collected oral testimonies from the former members of AZANYU in Thembisa by conducting life history interviews. W Lawrence Neuman notes, "Researchers who employ the life history type of inter-viewing ask open-ended questions to capture how the person understands his or her own past".[7] A life history interview is usually conducted with one person focusing on his/her individual life history or his\her family history. Often the interviewee will, among other issues, talk about his/her parents, siblings and relatives. The idea is to have a deeper understanding of the individual's life chronologically.[8]

Philipe Denis indicates that there are various reasons why historians use oral history to collect stories. For example, in the United States, Denis found that "the impetus for doing oral history is said to be 'curiosity and a desire to see one's own past preserved'".[9] However, this is not universal. Denis contends that "in a wounded country *such as South Africa,* one does not collect stories merely to satisfy one's curiosity". Instead he argues "in a divided country such as South Africa oral history projects have to pay parti-cular attention to trauma and healing".[10] Furthermore, he notes that Belinda Bozzoli, the author of *Women of Phokeng,* sees oral history "as a means of

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[5]   Lekgoathi, P 'Voices of our past: Oral Testimony and Teaching History', in *Educator's Guide to the UNESCO General History of Africa (for Further Education and Training Curriculum),* ed. J. Bam and C. Dyer (Cape Town, New Africa Education for the Ministry of Education, 2004), p. 41.

[6]   Ibid. See Neuman W. Lawrence, *Social research methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches,* (Boston, Allyn & Bacan, 1997), p. 373.

[8]   See Bonner et al. 'Oral History', pp.15-16.

[9]   Denis, P. 'Oral History in a Wounded Country', in *Orality Literacy and Colonialism in Southern Africa,* Jonathan A. Draper (ed.). (Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 2003), p. 211.

[10]   Ibid. Italics mine.

asking, and perhaps answering, the kinds of questions likely to lead to a fuller understanding of the experience and consciousness of the ordinary working man or woman".[11] And Paul Thompson writes that [oral history] "is a history built around people. It allows heroes not just from the leaders, but from the unknown majority of the people."[12]

Notwithstanding the invaluable contribution made by oral history in helping to uncover or in shedding light on the "hidden or untold" histories, it also has its fair share of limitations as a historical source. One of its limitations is flawed (or selective) memory. John Tosh acknowledges this and warns that "the testimony which can be gleaned from surviving members… of groups, like the memories of most old people about their youth, is often confused as regards specific events and the sequence in which they occurred".[13] There are two reasons for this. First, it could be because of actual loss of memory. Second, it could be because oral sources have deliberately "blocked" (ie do not want to remember) their memory as a result of brutal past experiences.

Furthermore, Luisa Passerini, in *Memory and Totalitarianism,* cautions that some interviewees tended to confuse either names of mass organisations or significant events because of the brutal past they experienced under the Nazi period or Stallinist era. She observes "that people's memories of their own past lives, what they remember and what they forget, are shaped by their own expectations for the future, and also by whether they have children or young people for whom they care and who may outlive them…"[14] In such cases oral sources (or interviewees) may provide an unsuspecting interviewer either with distorted and/or selective information, or information that only glorifies the interviewee. This is because such information would guarantee the interviewee indefinite respect from their offspring.

Another limitation of oral history which is the core subject of this paper relates to the reluctance or refusal by some of the interviewees to speak about certain issues. For instance, former members of AZANYU in Thembisa, especially those who later became members of APLA, were reluctant to

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[11] Ibid., p.208. Bozolli, B., with Mmantho Nkotsoe, *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy, and Migrancy in South Africa, 1900-1983* (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1991).

[12] Thompson, P. 'The Voice of the Past: Oral History', in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London and New York, Routledge, 1998), p.28.

[13] Tosh, J. *The pursuit of history: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the study of modern history* (United Kingdom, Longman Group, 1991), p. 210.

[14] Passerini, L. 'Introduction' in Luisa Passerini (ed.), *Memory and Totalitarianism,* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992), p.12.

discuss their military activities. When probed about their military activities they preferred to speak about APLA's activities in general terms, particularly referring to military activities involving other members of APLA. These military activities in most cases were already in the public domain, either having been reported in the local newspapers or in the PAC's mouthpiece, *Azania Combat*. The classic example is the battle involving George Nyanga, one of the founding members of AZANYU in Thembisa, and the Bophuthatswana Defence Force. Almost all my interviewees told me about this military activity. They remembered: "George Nyanga left the country in 1988 to join APLA in exile. He was killed in 1990 at the Ramamtlabama border … in a gun battle with the BophuthatswanaDefence Force Patrol."[15]

Portelli cautions that "several people are reticent, for instance, when it comes to discussing illegal forms of struggle, such as sabotage".[16] For him "this does not mean that they do not remember them clearly, but that there has been a change in their political opinions, personal circumstances, or in their party's line".[17] Indeed, it was no surprise when some of the former members of AZANYU in Thembisa refused to grant me an interview. For instance, one of the former members of this organisation who later joined APLA in the late 1980s refused on the grounds that "he did not want to relive his past experiences.[18]

Having sketched out the strengths and weaknesses of oral history, the paper will now turn to the oral testimonies provided by former members of the AZANYU Thembisa branch. However, I will first begin by briefly discussing the establishment of AZANYU and its activities.

After the Sharpeville massacre on 21 March, 1960 where 69 people were shot and killed, and scores left injured, when protesting against pass laws, the political mood changed dramatically. African political organisations, the ANC and PAC, were no longer in the mood to continue engaging the National Party (NP) government through peaceful protests; instead they

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[15] Interview with Simon Mashishi conducted by Tshepo Moloi, Thembisa, 12 March 2003; Interview with Mandla Matlala, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, Thembisa, 12 June 2003. This had become public knowledge because it had appeared in the APLA mouth-piece, *Azania Combat*. Abdul S. Bemath Papers (PAC), File 2248 BEMATH, *Azania Combat: Official Organ of APLA,* (University of the Witwatersrand, Historical Papers). George Nyanga's funeral obituary. I am indebted to Bheki Nyandeni for giving me this document. I have it in my possession.

[16] Portelli 'What makes', p.69.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Telephonic conversation with ML. ML later confessed that he could not grant me an interview because he was now working for one of the big Information Technology companies around Johannesburg and therefore did not want to expose himself.

were preparing to confront it militarily. This marked the beginning of the armed struggle.[19] On 8 April, 1960 the government outlawed the ANC and PAC. This forced the two organisations into exile from where they directed their military attacks.

From the outset APLA (the Azanian People's Liberation Army, known as Poqo until 1968),[20] unlike MK, resolved to target the police, the army, white farmers, and even white civilians. Its military activities involved loss of life.[21] The PAC and APLA did not distinguish between "hard and soft" targets. This was later emphasised by Dan Mofokeng, former APLA Commander, now Brigadier in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) when testifying before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Cape Town. He stated, "It would be a fallacy, in the context of white South Africa, to talk about innocent civilians." "Military trained and armed citizens", he continued, "defy the definition of civilians." To conclude, he noted "it is in this context therefore that APLA did not have the burden or problem of the so-called 'soft and hard' targets".[22] To justify APLA's resolution, in 1982 John Nyathi Pokela, the PAC's chairman argued "… to radically change the minds of the settler racists and their supporters the armed struggle must be primarily at the level of mortals".[23] In 1986 APLA's Commander-in-Chief, Johnson Mlambo, reiterated Pokela's words when he ordered his army to "kill soldiers and police". He argued "soldiers and police are the mainstay and pillars of white domination in South Africa … Collaborators are only leaves of the tree of white domination and their

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19 For a detailed account about military resistance, see Lodge *Black Politics Since 1945* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1983), pp.231-55.

20 For a detailed account about the establishment of POQO, see David Martin and Phyllis Johnson.   http://etd.rau.ac.za/thesis/available/etd-08182004-115716/restricted/Final Chapter6.pdf; also see Mathabatha, S. 'The PAC and POQO in Pretoria, 1958-1964', in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa,* Vol.1 (1960-1970), South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), (Zebra Press, 2004), pp.299-318.

21 MK's operations were based on sabotage, which dictated that only symbols of apartheid should be targeted. Explaining this option, Nelson Mandela in 1964 during the Rivonia Treason Trial stated: Sabotage did not involve loss of life, and it offered the best for future race relations. Bitterness would be kept to a minimum and, if the policy bore fruit, democratic government could be a reality ["I am prepared to die", Nelson Mandela's statement from the dock at the opening of the defence case in the Rivonia Trial, Pretoria Supreme Court, 20 April 1964].

22 TRC APLA clash at armed forces hearing Cape Town October 7, 1997. SAPA, http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/media/1997/9710/s971007b.htm.

23 Pheko, M. *Apartheid: The story of the dispossessed people* (London, Marram Books, 1984), p.139.

elimination cannot be an end, but means for opening the way to the tap-root of white apartheid settler domination".[24]

It was against this background that APLA from the 1980s to the early 1990s directed its operations toward the police, army and white farmers.[25] A number of military operations undertaken by APLA, which involved loss of life, have been reported. A PAC publication claimed that in 1986 an APLA unit killed ten policemen in five operations in… Sharpeville.[26] Furthermore, PAC sources also claimed that the assassination of Brigadier Andrew Molope of the Bophuthatswana police and of a Ciskeian consular official were the work of APLA.[27] In 1987 APLA began a programme of "grenade warfare", in which swift attacks with hand grenades became common. On 21 April 1987, APLA soldiers lobbed a grenade over a security fence from a moving vehicle and struck recruits at the Tladi police training camp in Soweto, killing one and injuring 64.[28] A substantial number of these military activities were carried out by former members of AZANYU, not only from Thembisa, but from other areas as well. APLA drew a substantial number of its cadres from AZANYU (more about this below).

AZANYU

The Azanian National Youth Unity was formed – nationally – in 1981. Initially, one of the objectives of forming AZANYU was to "organise the youth and acquaint them with the Africanists' history".[29] To achieve this, AZANYU, among other things, actively participated in the commemoration campaigns such as the Sharpeville massacre, the commemoration of June 16 student uprisings. However, AZANYU's public activities were short lived following the detention of the organisation's leadership by the police in 1982.

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[24]   *Azania Combat: Official Organ of the Azanian People's Liberation Army.* Issue No.2, Quarterly, 1986; Lynda von den Steinen 'APLA in the Front Line States and South Africa', in *From Apartheid to Democracy: Localities and Liberation* (Department of Historical Studies, University of Cape Town, 2007), p.106.

[25]   For accounts of APLA operations, see Mphahlele, L. *Child of this soil: My life as a freedom fighter* (Cape Town, Kwela Books, 2002).

[26]   See Tom Lodge 'Rebellio0m: The Turning of the tide', in Tom Lodge and Bill Nasson (eds.) *All, Here and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s* (South Africa Update Series, Ford Foundation: Cape Town, David Philip, 1991), p.194.

[27]   Ibid., p.195.

[28]   Lynda von den Steinen 'APLA in the Front Line States and South Africa', in *From Apartheid to Democracy: Localities and Liberation* (University of Cape Town, Department of Historical Studies, 2007), p.114.

[29]   *Azanian News: Official Organ of the PAC.* Vol.19, Number 7, July 1983.

Among those detained were Sipho Ngcobo, national general secretary and Carter Seleke, national president, for refusing to testify in the trial against the leader of the Soweto Youth Revolutionary Council (SOYRCO), Khotso Seatlholo and Masabata Loate, AZANYU Soweto branch organiser.[30] This prompted AZANYU to abandon public activities and begin to operate underground, mainly creating links with the exiled PAC and recruiting volunteers for APLA. Nhlanhla Lebea, former member of AZANYU in Soweto, recalls:

> Carter [and others] because they were from prison then they were much orientated towards underground work. [They would] get documents of the PAC; recruit for APLA. They were [receiving] comrades who were coming in … to [carry out] operations; distribute them; get accommodation for them. They were operating underground and that restricted their mass activity. They [opposed anybody who would] come up and say 'let us be overt and operate like a normal political' [organization]'.[31]

This position was nowhere more welcomed than in Thembisa.

AZANYU Thembisa Branch

Thembisa Township, in the East Rand, is about 15 kilometers from Johannesburg and 40-50 kilometres from Soweto, and was established in 1957 as a "model" township for Africans employed in Kempton Park (Industrial area) and its environs, and a considerable number of African families were forcibly removed from Alexandra Township.[32]Over the years the township's population grew substantially to become the largest township in the East Rand – followed by Katlehong.[33] Thembisa, unlike other townships, was relatively quiet in terms of political resistance. For instance, in Alexandra Township in 1957 there was a bus boycott[34]; in Sophiatown resi-

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[30] *Sowetan,* 25 May 1982; *South African Student Press Union*, Vol.3, Number 1, February/March 1982.
[31] Interview with Nhlanhla Lebea , conducted by Tshepo Moloi, Braamfontein, 4 July 2003.
[32] Siyotula, N.G.. 'The Tembisa Rent Boycott' (University of the Witwatersrand, Honours Dissertation, 1989), p.8.
[33] Seekings, J. 'Quiescence and the transition to confrontation in South African townships, 1978-84' (Oxford University, PhD Thesis, 1990), p.160.
[34] For a detailed account about the 1957 Alexandra Township bus boycott, see Lodge *Black Politics,* pp.153-71.

dents, with the support of the ANC, were protesting against the government's decision to forcibly move them to Soweto. There are two main reasons for Thembisa's quiescence from this period until 1976. First, it was a newly established township; residents were more interested in settling down. Second, not long after its establishment the government came down hard on any individual or organisation resisting its laws. However, in 1976 the situation had changed. On 17 June students at Thembisa High School took to the streets in solidarity with the students in Soweto, who had begun their demonstrations against the compulsory use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction on 16 June.[35] In the 1980s students again took to the streets and boycotted classes. This time they were led by the Congress of South African Students (COSAS). It was amid these protests that the AZANYU Thembisa Branch was formed.

Simon Mashishi, one of the founding members of the branch, remembers: "In Thembisa, I remember… there were seven of us who formed AZANYU. It was myself, George Nyanga, Mduduzi Zungu, Thabo Mabelane, Malakia Lenono, Jacob Mathala and Doctor Makwela."[36] From the time AZANYU Thembisa Branch was formed its mission was to recruit youth in the township to be sent outside the country to receive military training to become APLA cadres.[37] The reason was simple: after they had received military training they should return to Azania (South Africa) to fight the "system" with the aim of overthrowing it and be in a position to repossess the usurped land. To achieve their objective, the founding "fathers" of AZANYU in Thembisa used a unit system to recruit members. The latter were expected to each go out and recruit members and form a unit. The identity of members of each unit was only known to the leader. Mashishi explains: "The unit simply was that you go out and recruit three people and you form them into a unit. They are your unit. And they, too, as individuals go out and recruit three more people and they become a unit".[38]

To inspire their recruitees, the founding members of AZANYU led by example. They did not only expect their recruitees to leave the country to receive military training in exile, but they themselves also fled the country into exile to join APLA. Three out of the seven founding members left the

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[35] See Moloi 'Youth Politics', Chapter Three.
[36] Interview with Simon Mashishi, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, Thembisa, 12 March 2003; Interview with Julian Mohlala, Kempton Park, 4 March 2003. Doctor Makwela should not be confused for a medical or academic doctor. Doctor is his name.
[37] This point was also made by Julian Mohlala during our interview.
[38] Interview with Simon Mashishi; interview with Julian Mohlala; See, Moloi 'Youth Politics', p.124.

country into exile to join APLA. The most distinct among these was George Nyanga. It is worth studying his career in detail.

> George Nyanga was born on 20 August, 1967 in Olifantsfontein. He was the fourth child of eight children. He started his primary schooling at Tlamatlama Lower Primary in 1977 and went to Tshepisa Higher Primary in 1981 where he passed his Standard six. Thereafter he went to Malebo High School in Pietersburg where he did Form Two and Three. In 1987 he returned to Tembisa to do his Form Four at Thuto Ke Matla High School. And in 1988 he went to do his Form Five at Bokamoso High School. It was at Bokamoso that he became a leading member of the SRC and an organiser. During this period he was already involved in AZANYU Tembisa Branch as an organiser. In September 1988 he left the country to join the PAC External Mission. He underwent military training in West Africa and became one of the leading members of the APLA Political Commissariat. Nyanga was killed in action on 18 June 1990 in Mafikeng. According to reports he died in a battle between the Bophuthatswana Defence Force Patrol and the APLA cadres at Ramatlabama, 35 kilometres from Mafikeng.[39]

Other former members of AZANYU Thembisa Branch who left the country into exile to receive military training included Prince Phineas Manganyi, Mandla Matlala, Johannes Mahluza and Patrick Maluleke.[40] This demonstrates the determination of the Africanist youth in the township to fight the government militarily. AZANYU's role as a feeder to APLA was not only confined to Thembisa. Tshepo Joseph Lilele, an APLA cadre killed in a gun battle with the South African Police at Bramley, a suburb close to Alexandra Township, was a member of AZANYU in Sharpeville, in the Vaal Triangle.[41]

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[39] University of the Witwatersrand Library and Literary Papers. Abdul, S. Bemath Papers, File A2248 BEMATH (PAC), *Azania Combat: Official Organ of APLA*; George Nyanga's funeral obituary. I am indebted to Bheki Nyandeni for giving me George Nyanga's funeral programme. I have a copy of this programme in my possession.

[40] Interviews with Simon Mashishi; Johannes Mahluza, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, Thembisa, 11 September 2004; Mandla Matlala, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, Thembisa, 12 June 2003.

[41] *Azania Commando: Supplement of AZANIA Combat: Official Organ of the APLA.* Supplement 2, 1987. South African Commission of Inquiry into certain alleged murders, Addenda No.16, Harms. PAC Publications, University of the Witwatersrand Department of Government Publications.

Similarly, Neo Khoza, an APLA cadre from Gugulethu in the Western Cape, was also developed in the AZANYU ranks.[42]

Oral testimonies

Notwithstanding AZANYU Thembisa Branch's unyielding support for APLA, which saw some of its members later joining it, none among my interviewees, particularly the former APLA cadres, was prepared to discuss their activities in APLA. In fact, they were more interested in speaking about how they were recruited into AZANYU, and about how they escaped into exile. Portelli cautions that "an informant may... dwell at length on brief episodes". She argues "dwelling on an episode may be a way of stressing its importance, but also a strategy to distract attention from other more delicate points".[43]

The willingness by former members of AZANYU and APLA to speak about issues not related to their military operations is evident in my interview with Mandla Matlala. Matlala, who later joined APLA, recalls, at length, how he was recruited into AZANYU:

> I was a chess player, playing with a certain guy called David until I met Abbey Pheko. Pheko was challenging guys from Alexandra and Soweto to play chess. It was in 1986 when we also met George [Nyanga], Mduduzi Zungu, Malakia Lenono and Jabu Mdunge through our chess games. George was a chess player. We met them and then we organised to start a team – Tembisa team – to play against other townships, like Alexandra. That's when politics started. We were playing around Jo'burg. Yes, at the Market Theatre. We saw the attitude of the white boys – because they didn't like us. … When they lost a game always they got angry. So … [George and others] were saying 'you see white people always have this tendency to hating the blacks, they forget that this is our country'. I asked them 'why you guys say this is our country except for them?' Then those guys started with the politics of the PAC that says 'the land belongs to the Africans. … I wanted to know more. They gave me reading materials. I read Kwame Nkrumah, Amilcar Cabral, the *Azanian Combat* and

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42   Ibid.
43   Portelli 'What makes', p.69.

the *Azanian Manifesto*. Then I got influenced and found out that I have a role to play in this country for the people.[44]

In a similar vein, Johannes Mahluza, former APLA political commissar, recounts enthusiastically how he was introduced to the politics of the PAC:

> I got to understand the PAC's politics around 1985. I used to attend meetings – school meetings – and asked a lot of questions about what happened in 1976; why our houses are not the same as those of the whites; why are Africans suffering like that but got no answers. [APLA] political commissars identified me and they used to come to me and inform me. But every time they came to me they'll use different names. So I decided not to concentrate on their names and concentrated on the information that they were giving me. I talked to many Africans like Mopholosi Morokong, Jojo; [others] used different names. The talks started with us discussing general things, but we'll end up discussing specific things about politics, like military.[45]

My two interviewees, above, also recounted willingly and readily how they left the country. They seemed to enjoy speaking about this issue. Mahluza, describing his escape route, remarks:

> When I left in the morning of 1989 it was like I was going to work. We slept at a certain house here in Tembisa. I was never briefed about leaving. I decided on my own. It was something that was on my mind. I never liked this thing of throwing stones. I wanted to fight. There were many of us, because there were also some guys from Soweto. So [the following] day we went to Johannesburg. [While] in Johannesburg others decided that they were not leaving anymore. In the end there were only six of us. We stayed in Johannesburg for two or three days at different places. There was an office there in town; I've just forgotten the name of that street. We used to hang out there. Then we left for Botswana. We used taxis. The other guy that we were travelling [with] spoke to the taxi driver and then told

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44   Interview with Mandla Matlala, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, Thembisa, 12 June 2003.
45   Interview with Johannes "Joe" Mahluza; also see, Steinen 'APLA', pp.121-22.

us to get into the taxi and we shouldn't worry about paying – he would pay. We arrived there at night [because] we crossed the Ramatlabama border at 10 o'clock. [To cross into] Botswana we used passports. When we arrived in Botswana they were expecting us; they had been briefed about us. A car came to fetch us to town. The guy [that spoke to the taxi driver] disappeared. We stayed for sometime there in a flat. From Tembisa it was myself and the late Solly – I met him in Johannesburg. We met Mandla Matlala in Dukwe. From Botswana we went to Tanzania and then Uganda to get military training.[46]

Similarly, Matlala recalled how he left the country

… I decided to cross the country and [go] for military training. I stayed in Botswana for two months. Botswana was in transit. We had a refugee camp in Botswana. We had to stay there until our documents had been fixed so that we could cross to Tanzania. In Tanzania we did military training for nine months in Bagamoyo. Then after that we went to Uganda in 1991. We started training again in Uganda in Kabamba. That was a basic training… for eight months. Then we came back [to Tanzania]. I became involved in the organisation's activities like raising funds and studying through correspondence until 1994 when we returned to South Africa.[47]

In contrast, my interviewees were reluctant to speak about their activities in APLA. When probed to speak about these they instead spoke in general terms. Mahluza's testimony points to this limitation. According to him,

In 1987 these Africans (ie members of APLA/PAC) that used to come to me and give me information told me that since we've been knowing you for a while this is the truth: 'we are involved in APLA'. They said they were telling me this because they realized that I'm interested in these things and I can be trusted – I questioned the situation. That's when the operations started. I got my basic military training inside the

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46   Interview with Johannes Mahluza.
47   Interview with Mandla Matlala.

country. The guerrillas trained me on how to use grenades. And at some points we would meet and carry out operations.[48]

I asked Mahluza to relate in detail his personal involvement in these military operations. In his reply he said: "Son of the soil, I have done many things of which some I'm not proud of."[49]

Former members of AZANYU/APLA differ from the former members of MK when it comes to discussing their role and involvement in military activities. The latter speak proudly, without any inhibitions, about their involvement in military activities. In an interview with Hosia Lengosane, a former member of COSAS and the Tsakane Youth Congress (TSAYCO) in the 1980s, he recalled how, after receiving military training inside the country, he participated in 'Operation Zero Hour'. Lengosane recounts:

> You see during that time I was the deputy chairperson of COSAS. So we formed TSAYCO. This was after we had returned from Alexandra Township. Only two of us returned. It was myself and MacMillan Mngomane. We formed structures. Well as we developed we formed other contacts. This was around April. Those were the contacts for internal training. We did that internal training. We were together with Congress Mtshweni. But the main contact here was Mtshweni and Ntombi from Duduzu [Township] – she's a councillor now. It was an underground internal structure. We were trained until around 26 June. So at midnight between the 25th and 26th, which was the Freedom Charter's Day, we went to our contacts to collect hand grenades. We thought they were our comrades but they weren't. It was Joe Mamasela, who was in the Askari structure. Ja, we got the hand grenades. Here in Tsakane it was myself, Frans Nzima, Thokozane Dladla. From KwaThema... it was Jabulane Mahlangu and Vincent Marule, but they died here in Tsakane. In KwaThema it was Mtshweni and Mathibe Modisane. Then in Duduza it was Veli Mazibuko, Titus Mazibuko, John Mlangeni, Oupa Letlatsa, and Ngungunyane. And Mashabane was also there. So we went to the operation. You see we were supposed to carry out that operation at 12 o'clock midnight. That operation was called Zero Hour. We

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48   Interview with Johannes Mahluza.
49   Ibid.

went to Baloyi's house. He was a member of the Special Branch (SB) here in Tsakane. Those in Duduza went to a building which belonged to a certain chap that was a councillor. His name was Kebane. When we arrived at Baloyi's we didn't know that we had booby traps – all of us. We thought they were hand grenades. Immediately at 12 o'clock we pulled the pins, but when we threw the hand-grenades I don't know what happened. After a week I saw myself in the Far East Hospital and I was under police guard.[50]

Although this activity was botched because of the involvement of Joe Mamasela, an Askari, this interview illustrates how readily and willingly members of the ANC are willing to speak about their military activities. Another example is that of Patrick Thibedi, better known as Patrick Chamusso. In an interview with Marepo Lesetja, Thibedi discusses freely his involvement in the bombing of Sasol 2, an oil refinery in Secunda, in 1981.[51] Life history interviews conducted for the South African Democracy Education Trust's (SADET) *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Vol.2,* further demonstrates the willingness by former MK members to speak about their military activities, including those involving killings in some instances.[52]

My interviewees' reluctance to discuss their involvement in APLA military activities could be explained in a number of ways. It might be because of the bad memories this issue evokes or, perhaps, they have not adequately dealt with this issue. Denis argues that inasmuch as the "sharing of memories provides interviewees with an opportunity to deal with unfinished business, memories do not always have a healing effect".[53] Another reason some of my interviewees claimed they were not prepared to discuss this issue in detail was because they had not disclosed their role in APLA to the TRC to qualify for amnesty. Therefore, they felt speaking about

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[50] Interview with Hosia Lengosane, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, Tsakane, 1 August 2004. Joe Mamasela was suspected to be a high level informer within the MK. See Grg Houston and Bernard Magubane 'The ANC's Armed Struggle in the 1970s', in South Africa Democracy Education Trust's (SADET) *Road to Democracy in South Africa* (Pretoria, Unisa Press, 2006), p.506; Also see, AK 2436 State vs JSV Mazibuko and 7 others (1989), Political trials (University of the Witwatersrand, Historical Papers).

[51] Interview with Patrick Thibedi, conducted by Lesetja Marepo, for the SADET Oral History Project, 2002. Patrick Thibedi's story is also told in the movie 'Catch A Fire'.

[52] See *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Vol.2 [1970-1980].* SADET (Pretoria, Unisa Press, 2006), Chapter 9 'The ANC's Armed Struggle in the 1970s'.

[53] Denis 'Oral History', pp.209-212.

this issue might incriminate them. There may be some truth in this, because members of the high command of APLA have repeatedly complained to the TRC about their members being denied amnesty. Dan Mofokeng, former Commander of APLA, testifying before the TRC in Cape Town complained "to date not a single APLA/PAC member has been granted amnesty".[54] But, again, the reluctance to discuss certain issues by former members of AZANYU in Thembisa also demonstrates a lack of trust. I do not think that they trusted me enough to speak to me about some of their military activities, be it those they were directly or indirectly involved in. Maybe it was because they saw me as an "outsider" trying to intrude into their most guarded stories. After all I was not a member of AZANYU, nor had I been a member of APLA. But what was apparent from our informal discussions was that they were apprehensive about how I would present their stories. Some felt that in the past the PAC and APLA's activities have been distorted or incorrectly reported, especially by journalists and political analysts.

Conclusion

The paper has shown the significance of oral history in uncovering "hidden or untold" histories, especially in a country like South Africa where voices of the nonhegemonic classes have been ignored or silenced for a very long time. Through this methodology, histories of different communities, political organisations, and individuals previously marginalised are beginning to surface. On the other hand, the paper also attempted to demonstrate the limitations of oral history. Oral sources, consciously or not, sometimes distort history and sometimes exaggerate their histories. But in some cases, as was my experience with the former members of AZANYU and APLA, interviewees can decide not, or flatly refuse, to speak about certain issues. In a similar vein, they may prefer to speak about other issues. Notwithstanding these limitations, oral history is still, to borrow Monique Marks' description, "a satisfactory source"[55] to uncover "hidden histories or untold stories".

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54   TRC, APLA clash at armed forces hearings, 1997.
55   Marks, M. *Young Warriors: Youth Politics, Identity and Violence in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2001), p.15.

The descendants of Mthimkhulu I

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Preamble

Evidence of Nguni history is based primarily on current documents, archaeological excavations, oral tradition and linguistic studies. From contemporary studies of the Nguni culture, we are able to make many inferences on what used to be an accepted way of life for the Nguni people. This approach is bound to be largely hypothetical.

Many suggestions that the African past was sterile, static and barbaric will hopefully be rejected in view of the examples cited in this paper. The issue of different Nguni societies has always been debated. Writers tend to treat all these societies as one "big" group. It is because of this that the matter has failed to attract researchers, especially in Southern Africa where the study of African history is still regarded with suspicion. Consequently, researchers often turn to more fashionable projects to advance their careers.

One of the tasks of social anthropologists is the systematic investigation of social institutions. For a thorough understanding of Nguni historical developments, one has to turn to their political institutions. In dealing with political systems, therefore, we are dealing with laws or customs on the one hand and conflicts and wars on the other hand.

The researcher concedes that at times in the past, Nguni life was undoubtedly harsh. The horrors of witchcraft and ritual killings; the constraining fear of the spirits of the dead; the observable jealousies of polygamous families; the cramping insistence on the hierarchy of age and traditional seniority; the constant faction fights and intertribal wars; the occasional tyranny of a chief; and uncertainty about the future – all these things did not always make for happiness. Yet, for the average man, life was far from unpleasant as long as things went well. Feasting with his companions or debating with keen interest the finer points of a law suit; taking part in the numerous ceremonies and dances which lent so much colour to his life; listening with pride to the glorification of his chief or himself fondly while reciting the doings of his forefathers; excitedly going out to war or on a hunting expedition; and best of all, coming back to his home at sunset with his beloved cattle lowing all around him; or sitting contentedly round the fire with his food, beer, meat and pipe nearby as some old woman entertains his children with one of the numerous folk tales so abundant among his people – at these times, he might well have felt that it was good to be alive. At heart, he was a peasant farmer who was interested primarily in his domestic con-

cerns and economic welfare. To ignore this fundamental aspect of his life in favour of the many "odd" and picturesque customs and beliefs which separated old Nguni culture from the new culture with new hopes, new fears, new beliefs, new demands and new morals is to arrive at a completely wrong impression of the Nguni man as he really was before the introduction of Western values which brought about new desires and new aspirations. The old became fertile ground for anthropological speculation.

Indeed, regardless of many weaknesses, the body of oral tradition represents, together with archaeology and linguistics, nearly all that the historian of sub-Saharan Africa has to work with in his/her efforts to understand the more remote past. Referring to oral history, Henige (1974:3 & 4) writes: "In African societies where a form of hereditary and centralized government existed, one conception of the duration of the past will almost always be measured in terms of the reigns of the rulers of the state whose reigns are usually seen as representing generations as well."

Indeed, national history determines the form of national genealogy and genealogy can illuminate many aspects of national history that might otherwise remain obscure. Where descent groups mark unity, genealogies are often common expressions of social relationships and control. These reflect relevant social history. For many African peoples, including the Hlubi, genealogies play an important role (Wilson & Thompson 1969:introduction; Peires 1983).

To revere antiquity for its own sake, a new view of the past may be desirable. Sages agree that this necessity may arise from the need to ensure lineage eligibility for higher office or to enhance prestige and the desire to create a priority of settlement.

Despite many changes in cultural aspects, chieftainship has survived in Nguni societies. Chieftainships differ in degrees of seniority. The institution is revered. The use of leopard skin as regalia is still conspicuous. Why should chieftainship be associated with an animal? Of course, animals, birds and snakes are important totems in many African societies. Powerful, fierce and ferocious animals convey an impression of courage and might. It is interesting to reflect that chiefs occupy a special place in the Nguni social structure. They are individuals. But they also represent, in their persons, society itself. They are, in a sense, "the society made concrete". Societies or ethnic groups are often called by the names of chiefs. For instance, the Xhosa were named after Chief Xhosa (a descendant of Chief Mnguni, after whom all Nguni peoples were named); the Gcaleka (Xhosa proper) were named after Chief Gcaleka. It is probably for this reason that pedigrees of royal blood are easily remembered. Also, since the ancestor cult among many peoples of Africa involves the corporate group, it is imperative that the genealogical trees of the group concerned should be maintained. In this sense, traditional religion expresses itself.

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It is understood that the animal pelts are royal insignia and represent essentially the mystical rather than the executive aspects of chieftainship. Although Southern Nguni chiefs play only a small active part in decision making, they possess the quality of *isithunzi* (shadow) – an aura of awfulness, a malevolent charisma that sets them apart from ordinary people. Priest-diviners (*ama-gqirha*) also have *isithunzi*, especially in their frenzy and weird appearance that is coupled with awe-inspiring dramatics. It is interesting, though, to note that the roles of chiefs and those of priest-diviners are never confused. The only exception recorded by Soga (1930:142ff) is that of the Xhosa chief Gcaleka, who actually became a priest-diviner. Soga (1930) and Ncwana (1953) tried to draw royal genealogies of many Nguni societies (including the Hlubi, who are all descendants of Paramount Chief Mthimkhulu I).

Because of the lack of written records by the Hlubi people themselves, many shortcomings occur. Such gaps involve omission of some generations. Also, during the last 60 years, many sages with the true stories have died. Many of the present-day chiefs no longer remember their pedigrees properly. An amusing situation occurred in the course of this research during 2005. The researcher put it to a number of Hlubi tribal authorities that Hlubi paramount chieftainship actually existed in the past. Almost all of them wanted to know the one who was qualified to occupy the office.

Today, the descendants of Mthimkhulu I are found throughout Southern Africa, namely the Republic of South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana and Zimbabwe.

In this paper the researcher attempts to reveal that earlier careful ethnographic descriptions of peoples such as the Mpondo (by Hunter 1936), the Gcaleka or Xhosa proper (by Soga 1930), the Bhaca (by Hammond-Tooke 1949), etc were never followed up in other societies such as the Hlubi, Thembu, Mpondomise, Xesibe, Qwathi, Bomvana, Ntlangwini and Phuthi. Only sporadic papers on specific cultural traits often appeared. It is for reasons such as this that we find a paucity of data on former conditions. Such conditions of pristine Africa still prevail in other forms and they are likely to continue into the twenty-first century. Very often, these are simply regarded by scholars as remnants of culture.

It is the aim of the researcher to present an accurate, reliable and authentic account to both the ordinary reader whose interest is merely to know and to scholarly critics who might be able to point out shortcomings and imperfections. In this way, the study may contribute towards the advancement of anthropological knowledge on the region. It is, however, almost impossible to avoid mistakes entirely or to have every subtlety recorded when the material is so multifarious and, nowadays, particularly puzzling.

Jolobe (1958) tried to trace the original geographical area of the Hlubi before the dispersal of tribes following the wars of Shaka Zulu. All indications are that the Hlubi lived between the upper areas of the Thukela (Tugela) and Mzinyathi (Sundays) Rivers, east of the Lundi (Drakensberg Mountains) in present-day KwaZulu-Natal.

Before the rule of Mthimkhulu I, the name "Hlubi" did not exist. Mthimkhulu I had two senior wives. His first senior wife begat a son called Ncobo and his second senior wife begat a son named Rhadebe. Ncobo was therefore the heir of Mthimkhulu I. Up to the 1980s, some Hlubi sages still related this story. This was before the realisation that oral history should also be recorded for posterity. It is therefore belatedly chronicled.

When he came of age, Ncobo married a princess of the neighbouring Bhele ethnic group. Her father was named Hlubi. In those days, a wife would be called by her father's name. This is still the case among the Ntlangwini people of present-day Umzimkulu and Matatiele. In this case, a girl would be traceable. Ncobo's wife therefore was named Lamahlubi. The present-day Phuthi people of Matatiele use "*labo-*" for "*lama-*". Tsita in Matatiele, an elderly Phuthi woman, responded thus to a question put to her by the researcher: "*inthfo le iyetiwe gulaboSidumo (le nto yenziwe nguMasidumo*" – this thing has been made by Masidumo).

Even today a newly married wife, in addition to her new name, is often also called by her maiden clan name. The following is common:

Maiden clan name	Marital clan name	Married woman's name
Bhele	Phakathi	Mambhele
Dlamini	Dontsa	Madlamini
Xaba	Mpembe	Maxaba
Qwathi	Mthembu	Mamqwathi
Bhukwana	Tshabalala	Mabhukwana
Bhayi	Nkosi	Mabhayi
Qinebe	Mvulane	Maqinebe

Unfortunately, Ncobo was impotent. After his untimely death during a hunting expedition, councillors met and decided to call on Radebe to "raise seed" for his brother. This practice of levirate (*ukungena*), undoubtedly a custom of Jewish origin, was universal among the Nguni (except the Xhosa proper who have always regarded it with horror as incest). Of *ukungena*, Kropf (1915:263) has written: "To marry or carnally know one's late brother's wife". Consequently, Lamahlubi begat Dlomo (an heir of Ncobo).

According to customary prescriptions, Rhadebe – though a biological father – would not claim the children by Ncobo's wives as his; he had his own wives. But Rhadebe claimed to be the biological and rightful father of all the Hlubi people. This led to the split of the ethnic group into hostile factions. The following are the correct descendants of Rhadebe.

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Rhadebe

Ngwane   Zulu

Maqubela   Mashwabada

Mjoli   Sibenya   Ngobizembe

Zide   Lutshaba   Mvelase

Msuthu   Matomela   Ndabazandile

Zulu   Tyhefu   Diba   Ncwana

Mevana & Silo   Nkebeza   Sibenya II   Nkonzo
(at Tsojana-Tsomo)

Goven   Solomzi   Matomela   Nkunka
                             (in Peddie)

Havington   Sitwayi(Mhlahlane-
                                        Tsomo)
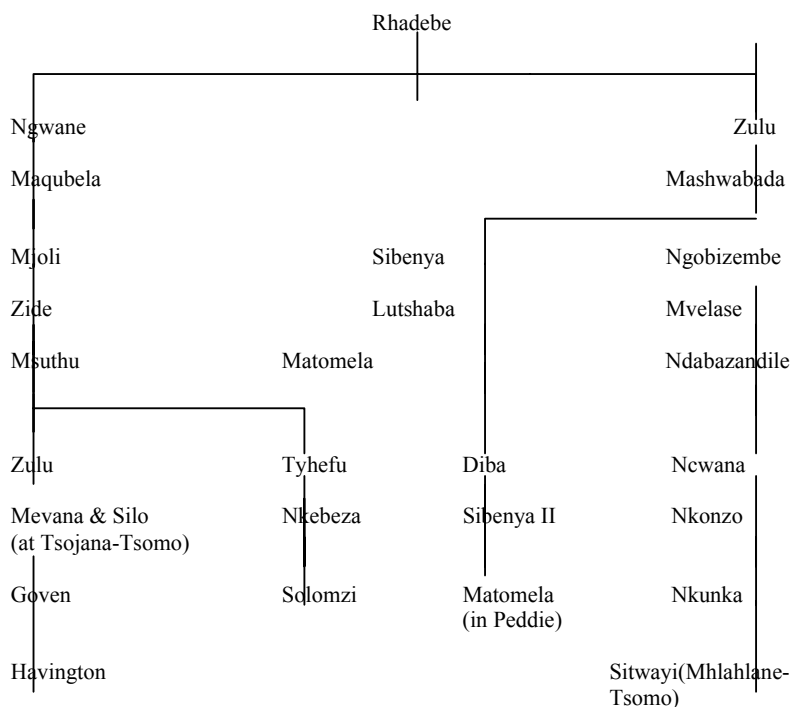
The descendants of Rhadebe were the first to flee when Shaka's wars of extermination and widespread famine (*imfecane*) began. They moved far south until they reached the land of the Xhosa. During the years of migration, they lost everything. They became impoverished and destitute. Some aspects of their culture were affected. They were called the Mfengu, a term which (according to Kropf 1915:235) refers to a homeless wanderer. History reveals that they were given cattle to rear by the Xhosa. It was only in 1835 that they met at Mqwashini in the Peddie District of the present-day Eastern Cape and vowed to be loyal to the government of the day, to be religious and to educate their children. After the cattle-killing episode of 1856/1857 (fulfilling the prophecy of a young girl called Nongqawuse in paramount chief Sarili's domain), vast areas of land were left open as many Xhosa people had perished. In this area, present-day Mfenguland was created (Manona 1973:ms). It comprised the districts of Tsomo, Ngqamakhwe and Gcuwa (Butterworth).

As already stated, Ncobo's heir was Dlomo, who begat Mashiyi. Mashiyi died without having ruled. Dlomo was therefore succeeded by a

grandson, Ntsele (Nasele), son of Mashiyi. Ntsele's elevation to chieftainship was not without concomitant problems. His mother was one of the junior wives of Mashiyi.

After puberty rituals, which lasted for a year in those days, the princes were sent to hunting expeditions and to wars. In all these, Ntsele proved to be courageous, patient, dedicated and above all obedient to whoever had authority over him.

Even today there is a well-known Hlubi story that the aged Chief Dlomo asked the senior princes to fetch him water for smoking from a special fountain. It would, of course, been a disgrace for a man (a prince) to carry a clay pot with water on his head. This was strictly a women's job in this society where the division of labour between the sexes was a peculiar characteristic.

Ngwekazi, the first in line to the chieftainship, declined the old man's request. Manyaza, the second in line, also declined. Jozi, the third in line, also declined. Through the insistence of his mother, Ntsele (one of the junior sons of Mashiyi) fetched the water for the old man. This lasted several days. Of course it was a sacrifice on the part of Ntsele. He became a laughing stock among his peers. Finally, when the successor to the Hlubi chieftainship had to be chosen, Ntsele was chosen.

Many pitfalls occur when the whole issue of succession is based on oral tradition. Traditionally, succession to Hlubi chieftainship has always been from father to the eldest son of the senior wife. But the elevation of Ntsele to chieftainship was based on ability and achievements. Although this was a departure from traditional practice, the nation accepted the decision by the old man Dlomo to bestow the chieftainship on a junior prince.

It was Ntsele (Nasele) who begat the famous Hlubi chief Bhungane. The descendants of Chief Ncobo are therefore as follows:

Heir	**Second House**
Dlomo	Ludwala
↓	↓
Mashiyi	Maluleka
↓	↓
Ntsele/Nasele	Zulu
↓	↓
Bhungane	Mkhuzangwe
	↓
	Manxeba

Manxeba
↓→→→→→→→→→→→→→
↓
Nkonzo   Mxokozeli
↓   ↓
Zakariya   Nyaniso
                     ↓
                    Arthur

(all found in Herschel)
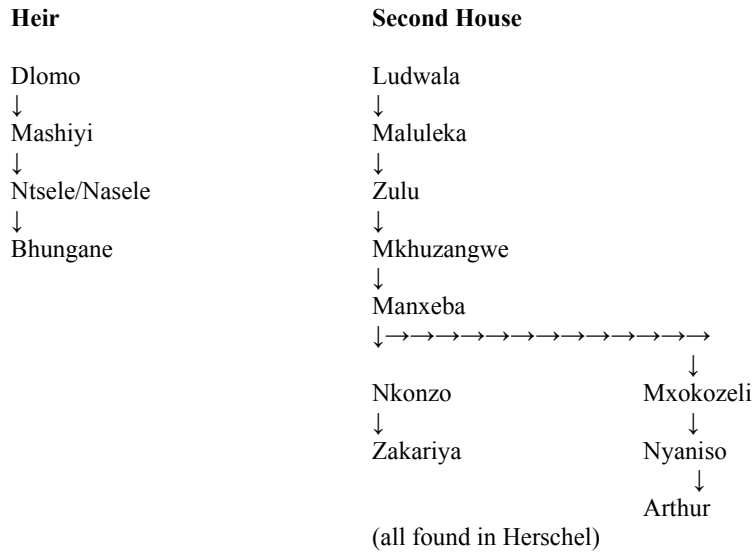
Paramount Chief Bhungane

Bhungane was the son of Nasele/Ntsele. He was associated with livestock, tilling the land and the erection of mud huts in the place of the old beehive huts (*ungquphantsi*). Up to this day, it is common to hear individuals of pure Hlubi stock say "*umkhulu Thixo kodwa awunganga-Bhungane*" (God is great but He can never be equal to Bhungane).

There are even Hlubi songs that are associated with Bhungane's wisdom. The words of one such song are as follows: *Kwakungenje u-Bhungan'esaphila* (it was not like this while Bhungane was still alive). In other words, things are not what they are supposed to be because Bhungane is no longer alive. Furthermore, the statement is critical of Bhungane's successors. It implies that they lack the necessary vision and wisdom of rulers.; they have failed to continue the good work of Bhungane.

It is well known among the Hlubi that Chief Bhungane was killed by lambs in about 1810. The authenticity of this piece of information is debatable. Many sages who were questioned in the course of the study of Hlubi history maintained that he was already ailing. Because he always counted lambs, it is possible that he died of natural causes, such as heart failure. By the time it came to the notice of the people, lambs were merely jumping over his already dead body.

Another version of Bhungane's death, also credible, is that he was killed by a regiment of a neighbouring and hostile ama-Ngwe ethnic group.

The name of this regiment was Lambs (*ama-takane*). Even today, after puberty ceremonies, the young men are given a regimental name. Names like Leopards (*amahlosi*), Crocodiles (*ingwenya*), Lambs (*amatakane*) etc are still common. It requires a thorough investigation to reveal the life of Bhungane.

The senior house of Bhungane

Bhungane married a Swazi princess who brought *iimpelesi* (guards) with her. The guards were from clans such as the Tshabalala, Msimanga, Zengele, Cindi, Mdlulwa and Ndlela (Sibhekuza). Today these clans are part of the Hlubi ethnic conglomerate.

Bhungane's heir was Mthimkhulu II, who was killed by the Ngwane chief Matiwane at the height of Shaka's wars of extermination. Matiwane was fleeing across the Lundi (Drakensberg) Mountains.

Mthimkhulu II had many wives. His senior wife begat Langalibalele, who was released from imprisonment in the castle in Cape Town and confined to a farmhouse in the sandy flats or Cape Flats (where a township was established in 1927 and called KwaLangalibalele, or Kwa-Langa as it is known today). Langalibalele begat Siyephu, who begat Mtunzi (the father of Tatazela). This house never left Natal even at the height of Shaka's debacle. Today they are in Escourt. They are so mixed with people of North Nguni stock that they differ from their fellow Hlubi elsewhere. They are, however, the most senior among the Hlubi.

In his second house Mthimkhulu II begat Duba, who begat Makhiwa, Somcuba and Pondlimpaka. Today these are found in Herschel (the Mehlomakulu's area). The third house of Mthimkhulu II produced Ndun-gunya, Sigebe, Jani and Lwelweni. From the fourth house of Mthimkhulu II came Ludidi, whose heir was Mtengwane (who begat Xhabadiya, father of Jubele [Joubert]). This house is permanently settled at Qhanqu in the Qumbu District of the Eastern Cape.

The fifth house of Mthimkhulu II produced Mhlambiso, who begat Mtongana, Sigonyela and Mtyangisane. These are settled at Mathole in Middledrift (Kwa-Mathole).

The sixth house of Mthimkhulu II produced Luthuli. The offspring of Luthuli are scattered. today some are found along the Inxu River and at Ngxaza in the Lundi District of the Eastern Cape. Magadla is in Matatiele. Descendants of Hlomendlini, who begat Mokhi (father of Victor) are in Herschel. Mgubho's offspring are at Blekana in Herschel and in Matatiele. Thus the senior house of Mthimkhulu consists of:

1.	Langalibalele–Siyephu–Mthunzi–Tatazela (Escourt)
2.	Duba:	Makhiwa
		Somcuba	} Herschel Kwa-Mehlomakhulu
		Pondlimpaka
3.	Ndungunya:	Sigebe-Jani-Lwelweni
4.	Ludidi: Mtengwane–Xhabadiya–Jubele (Joubert): Qumbu district
5.	Mhlambiso:	Mtongana
		Sigonyela	} In Middledrift (e-Xesi)
		Mtyangisane
6.	Luthuli: Magadla
		Hlomendlini – Mokhi –Viktha in Herschel
		Mgubho – Hans at Blekana in Herschel

As can be observed, the senior house of Bhungane is settled over a wide area. It is perhaps for reasons like these that they are not in a position to claim paramount chieftainship. Indeed, they have since got mixed up with other societies. As a result, many of them no longer regard themselves as Hlubi but as Black people.

The second house of Bhungane

Bhungane's heir in the second house was Mpangazitha. This house was directly affected by the Mfecane. Finally, Mpangazitha was killed by Matiwane's Ngwane forces at Lishwana on the Caledon River. His heir (Sidinana) fled and later returned to Matiwane, hoping to be a vassal chief as many Hlubis were then at the mercy of Matiwane. But Matiwane gave orders that Sidinana should be killed immediately.

The historian, Theal (1964:322) reported that it was only in March 1869 (immediately after the conclusion of the Second Treaty of Aliwal North) that the then British governor of the Cape (Sir Phillip Wodehouse) took a number of displaced chiefs with him to Nomansland, east of the Khahlamba (Drakensberg) Mountains. He extended Adam Kok's boundary from Mzimvubu to the Kinirha River. This included the whole of Matatiele. Between the Kinirha and Tina Rivers, he settled Zibi (Zendlela), son of Sidinana and grandson of Mpangazitha with Lebenya, without setting a definite boundary. Between the Tina and Tsitsa (Elands) Rivers he placed Lehana, son of Sikonyela.

Up to this day, descendants of Zibi are in Mt Fletcher. Sidinana's other sons were Ntliziyo and Mqakanya, whose descendants are found near the Ngqwaru Hills in Tembuland.

The heir in the second house of Mpangazitha was Siphambo, who begat Mnari and Nkonzo. Mnari's son was Zwelakhe, who begat Mziwe-themba (the father of Manelisi). His descendants are found at Printsu in Mt

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Fletcher. However, Nkonzo's offspring are still settled at Pelandaba in Herschel. Thus the first two houses of Mpangazitha are:

```
            Sidinana                    Siphambo
  ┌────────────┼────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐
  ↓
  Zibi      Mqakanya     Ntliziyo  Mnari         Nkonzo

  Bushula                          Zwelakhe

  George                           Mziwethemba

  Frank                            Manelisi (Mt Fletcher)

  Sizwe (Mt Fletcher)
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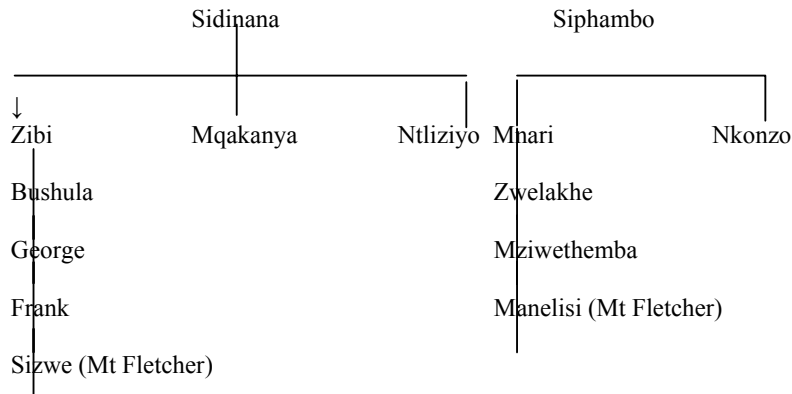
The third house of Mpangazitha produced Mkhatshana, whose descendants are found today at Mthwaku in Ngqamakhwe. These include Mlevu, who begat Magamndela (the father of Konap) who in turn begat Thozamile.

Perhaps the most popularly known, though fourth or junior, house of Mpangazitha is that of Mehlomakhulu. Today the headquarters of Mehlomakhulu is in Herschel. His other descendants are settled permanently in Johannesburg; one group is at Langa in Cape Town and another at Pawuli in Kimberley.

There were seven known wives of Mehlomakhulu. The heir of the senior house was Ntsindantsinda, whose descendants are found today in Mt Frere at Luyengweni on the Kinirha River.

The second house of Mehlomakhulu produced Milani, whose descendants are found at Kubuse and Nxaxa on the Tina River in Qumbu.

Sisusa, who reigns in Herschel, comes from the third house of Mehlomakulu. Ngesimane is heir to the fourth house and Makhobeni to the fifth house. Sakhakude (who begat Mahlungwana) is in the sixth house, while Mgobosana (who begat Mzondeki and Mpiyakhe) is in the seventh house. All these houses have their descendants in Herschel today. The houses of Mehlomakhulu are:

Mehlomakhulu

```
_____
  ↓            ↓        ↓          ↓          ↓           ↓         ↓
Ntssindantsinda  Milani  Sisusa  Ngesimane  Makhobeni  Sakhakude  Mgobosana
                                                          ↓          ↓
(Mt Frere)    (Qumbu) (Herschel)            Mahlungwana   ↓
                                            →→→→→→→→→
                                            ↓              ↓
                                         Mzondeki      Mpiyakhe
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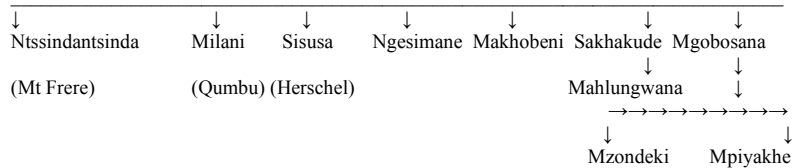
It is clear that the descendants of the first and subsequent houses of Bhungane are found in many parts of present-day South Africa.

In many cases, only the family names remain. For instance, in Humansdorp, George and Port Elizabeth there is the family name Groot-boom. Upon tracing pedigrees of the individuals concerned, the researcher discovered that Grootboom (big tree) actually refers to the descendants of Mthimkhulu (big tree).

The third house of Bhungane

The heir to the third house of Bhungane was Monakali. His son was Zibi, who begat Fuba. These descendants are found at Ngcwazi in Middledrift. It is related that Fuba had three wives. From the first house came Kunka, who begat Kareni (the father of Spencer). These are still at Ngcwazi in Middle-drift in the Eastern Cape.

The second house of Fuba produced Shadrekhi (Shadrack) who, at one stage, taught at the Lovedale Iinstitution. In 1923, he moved from Ngcwazi in Middledrift to the Transvaal as a chief of a heterogeneous people. He died in 1963. Today his descendants are at Khayakhulu in Rustenburg. His son was Sandi, who never ruled and died in 1961. Sandi's son Langa Shadrack Madoda Zibi B.Com (UFH) only recently assumed chieftainship after his return from exile. Since the death of his grandfather in 1963, his grandmother acted as regent for him. The third house of Bhungane is as follows:

```
                          Monakali
                             │
                           Zibi
                             │
                           Fuba
         ┌───────────────────┴───────────────────┐
       Kunka              Ncanywa              Shadrack
                       (Thorha-Engcobo)
         │                                        │
       Kareni                                    Sandi
         │                                        │
       Spencer                              Langa Madoda

     (Middledrift)                           (Rustenburg)
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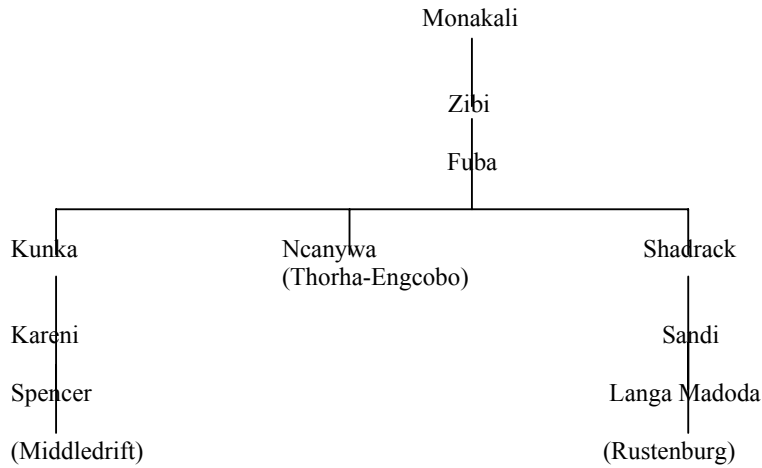
The fourth house of Bhungane

The heir in this house was Zingelwakho, whose heir was Maphaphu. Maphaphu begat Lophu (the father of Mcandi, whose descendants are found at Ngxabangu in Tembuland). The second house of Zingelwakho produced Ndondo, who begat Mbulawa. What happened exactly to other houses of Mbulawa is not clear. However, his heir was Nzimende, who took part of the ethnic group with him to Mbembesi (just outside Bulawayo in present-day Zimbabwe). This occurred in the 1890s. Even today, they still remember their Cape origin. Nzimende left Mbelwana, son of his younger brother. Descendants of Mbelwana are today found in Tsomo in Ndondo's area (kwesika-Ndondo). Bhungane's fourth house is as follows:

```
                        Zingelwakho
         ┌───────────────────┴───────────────────┐
      Maphaphu                              Ndondo
         │                                        │
      Lophu                                    Mbulawa
         │                                        │
         ↓                                →→→→→→→
      Mcandi                            Nzimend  │?   │?
(At Ngxabangu in Tembuland)      (At Mbembesi in Zimbabwe)
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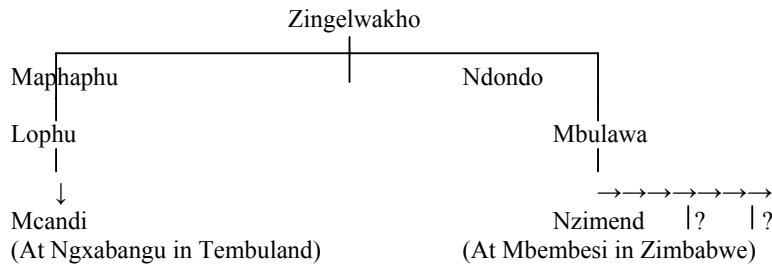
All the above are the direct descendants of Mthimkhulu I. Instances are known where many people or individuals joined the royal houses primarily for protection and they were consequently adopted.

Although the *Mfecane* (famine resultant from forced migrations) early in the nineteenth century led to disintegration and the breaking up of ethnic coalitions, clan names of pure Hlubi stock still remain. The researcher collected many such clan names in Herschel, Peddie, Qumbu, Mt Frere, Mt Fletcher and Matatiele. The following feature prominently in this study:

- Dontsa or Mtungwa
- Hlangebi or Dladla
- Khambule or Jali
- Khambule or Mncube or Mzilankatha
- Khasibe or Dibandlela
- Khesa/Kheswa or Nozulu or Mtsetsana or Mnguni or Mchumane
- Khoza
- Khumalo or Dibandlela or Langa or Vezi or Mdletye
- Maduna or Gubevu or Nokhala or Msuthu or Jiyane
- Masoka
- Mashiyi
- Maya or Radebe
- Mbambo
- Mabetha, Mbongwe, Mbuyisa or Mv'emnyama
- Mkhwane, Sigasa or Mvelase
- Mlambo, Mazibuko or Gumbi
- Msimanga, Nonkosi, Nothabizolo, Nokhuko lomhlanganio or Sizukulwana sika Mashwabada
- Mthembu, Ngoza, Qhudeni, Mvelase or Mkhubukeli
- Mvemve, Gasela or Ndlovu
- Nala, Nzima or Mpembe
- Ndaba
- Ndlela or Sibhekuza esabhekuz'enkundleni kwadadeboyis'em Tambose
- Ndlovu, Malunga, Mhlanga, Mlandu or Ndlovu zidlekhaya ngokuswelumalusi
- Nkala or Mphandana
- Nkomo, Ngubeni or Mpembe
- Nkwali, Mkhwanazi or Maphela
- Phakathi, Nonkosi or Sangotho
- Radebe, Mthimkhulu or Yise wama-hlubi
- Sikhosana, Linda or Mtsi

- Tshabalala, Mtshengu, Ludonga, Mavuso or Swazi
- Tshabangu
- Xaba, Nyambose, Jobe, Gumede or Mthethwa
- Zengele, Thiyane, Zulu or Mahlangabeza

The future of the house of Mthimkhulu

Current factors in Southern Africa (such as urbanisation, industrialisation and detribalisation) have an impact on all the peoples of the region. The researcher has managed to collect genealogical trees of the royal families. In many instances, the peoples of the region no longer recognise kinship beyond the extended family. There are people who use one name for both the clan name and the family name.

Also, in the past polygamy clashed with Christian teaching. Today the situation is further aggravated by the new economic conditions. One wife is an economic burden; with more wives, the burden grows out of proportion.

One may know that one belongs to a royal family, but there are no privileges attached. All have to work for survival. Consequently, with such new factors as labour migration with the concomitant urbanisation, the old systems of wealth and status are breaking down. Even the lowest commoner can now have money with which to purchase certain things. There is more scope for individual enterprise and the attainment of riches.

In the urban situation, royalty is not important. Hence in Escourt, Natal, the most senior house of Mthimkhulu is not afforded any special treatment.

A mini-survey was carried out by the researcher at Luyengweni in the Mt Frere District. The descendants of Mthimkhulu were asked about their origin and arrival at Luyengweni. Many did not know. Only a few royal individuals remembered some of the names mentioned by the researcher. The people did not seem to have knowledge beyond the fourth ascending generation.

Modern demands tend to undermine the traditional political system of Black peoples in general and that of the descendants of Mthimkhulu in particular. In the traditional system, political authority was as a rule hereditary (namely, from father to the eldest son in the Nguni senior house system). Nowadays, it is very common to find people in positions of authority and yet they are not senior representatives of their societies. Very often those who should be in authority are absorbed by the new civil service. One such descendant of Mthimkhulu in the Herschel District told the researcher that his uncle would continue to act as regent for him until he retires from civil service when he reaches the age of 65. Surely, in this sense, hereditary rule (which underlies traditional political organisation) is being undermined.

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The influence of Christianity on the descendants of Mthimkhulu has run so deep that some of the early ministers of religion, teachers, physicians, lawyers, and other professional men and women are known to have graduated from mission schools established in the chiefdoms of the offspring of Mthimkhulu.

Despite the limited powers of chiefs nowadays, the institution of chieftainship is still honoured and respected by the Nguni peoples. The contact situation in Southern Africa has not destroyed fidelity in chieftainship. However, it has made people more critical of the chief's conduct. Descendants of Mthimkhulu are therefore subject to problems. One local inhabitant remarked about a descendant of Mthimkhulu in Mt Fletcher: "(So and so) is a good politician. It would even be better if he was not a chief." The implication here is that some people despise chieftainship.

Through Mthimkhulu, we are able to trace the whole Hlubi society. Since the upheavals that began early in the nineteenth century (namely, the dispersal or forced migration [*mfecane]*, annexation of the various native territories by the colonial authorities, movements in search of living space, intertribal skirmishes, frontier wars, labour migration, urbanisation, etc), it is difficult to find areas that are still exclusively occupied by the Hlubi. Even those who still faithfully regard themselves as groups of pure Hlubi stock, have been in one way or the other infiltrated through marriage and adoption. Indications are that the once powerful ethnic group founded by Mthimkhulu I will continue to diminish until it is finally relegated to history.

Today, it is common to find people with first names that are traditionally Hlubi. These names include the following: Mahlubandile or Andile, Nomahlubi, Mangelengele, Thukela, Nokhala, ManzoThukela, Hlubikazi and Mahlubi. All these are indicative of a past that is slipping away. They are merely remembrances. The original Hlubi traditions can no longer be regarded with any esteem.

However, some traditions still prevail and these are usually a source of inspiration. They often draw the Hlubi people closer together. Notable among these are the male puberty rituals which have survived the test of time. However, the younger generations are beginning to question its authenticity.

Elderly people who may be regarded as custodians of tradition and storytellers or raconteurs have died during the last few decades. Nobody is currently able to explain the significance of traditions. At the same time, all the current talks about a new South Africa with new desires, new aspirations, new hopes, new ambitions, new enterprises and new sorrows, new frustrations, new despairs, new sufferings, etc leave doubts about future adherence to tradition and its ramifications.

Conclusion

This study has been an attempt to learn from the oral traditions of the Hlubi people. <*Author: Correct? Debbie*>It is hoped that historians make use of these inferences. It is clear that oral traditions cannot provide answers to all inquiries; they cannot even be equated with archaeology as a source of information.

It must be noted that this project has by no means covered all the issues involved. Issues that have been raised here demand some urgent attention, especially in the light of the influences that oral history and litera-ture may have on each other in present-day Southern Africa. Also, this attempt has undoubtedly raised some problems for further enquiry and clarification. It is hoped that it will motivate further research in the area of South African oral history.

"No great man lives in vain. The history of the world is but the biography of great men."
(Thomas Carlyle 1841: *The hero as divinity*.)

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Orality, literacy and succession disputes in contemporary Ndzundza and Manala Ndebele Chieftaincies

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Introduction

Over the past decade and a half there has been a steadily growing call in South African scholarship, emanating in particular from official circles, for a complete overhaul or reinterpretation of the country's history from the perspectives of Africans. The assertion that Africans should tell their own stories from their point of view has become part of the common parlance, and this is tied into the idea of 'African solutions for African problems.' This appeal for African voices has been partly informed by the notion that the colonial and/or apartheid archives which largely inform the prevailing perspectives of the country's past are 'contaminated'. However, the call has also partly centred on the misconception that African voices have not been adequately captured (if at all) in official archives. Researchers have thus been exhorted to go into the field and collect oral traditions and historical narratives from our 'living archives' or elderly storytellers – presumed to be authentic – before they take their memories with them to their graves. This view is informed by the assumption that oral accounts and written sources are mutually exclusive. Whereas written accounts are presumed to be distorted since they were mostly written by whites who were outsiders to the societies they were writing about, oral accounts (by local Africans) are often viewed as pristine and untainted by literary texts. If African societies were non-literate oral societies prior to contact with Europeans, the argument goes, then the only way that we can arrive at purer truths about their history is by having recourse to their oral texts.

This paper rejects such a simplistic notion of the oral history methodology. It reflects on the machinations or workings of oral traditions and their relationship to literary accounts within the specific context of the accounts of the first major division and scattering of the Transvaal Ndebele. It seeks to complicate the debate around the relationship between orality and literacy by looking at the oral traditions and written accounts of secession and succession conflicts among the Southern Ndebele's ruling elites since the 1700s. The main argument is that the oral traditions that presently exist on the origins, divisions and establishment of the different Transvaal Ndebele polities in the country show an interesting creative interaction of oral and

written texts. These accounts are derived from the resourceful or ingenious combination of oral texts, the Bible and the official written texts published in the 1930s, publications which in turn owe their origins to local Ndebele oral accounts. The paper starts with some anecdotes about the use of oral tradition as a vehicle for the dissemination of knowledge about history and heritage.

The Ndzundza and Manala ruling lineages' account of the scattering

On the 19th December 2007, I attended the Southern Ndebele's annual commemoration of the 1882–3 War between the Ndzundza and the Boers at eRholweni (Mapochsgrotte), the site of the old Ndzundza capital near present day Roossenekaal (near Lydenburg). Every December in the week before Christmas, the Southern Ndebele under the auspices of the Ndzundza royal family commemorate the King Nyabela Day. The commemoration is in honour of Nyabela, under whose leadership the Ndzundza took refuge in heavily fortified strongholds where they held their ground firmly in what turned out to be their last stand in defence of their political autonomy in the late 19th century (see New Nation and History Workshop 1989:3–5). But the occasion also serves to celebrate all those who perished on the battlefield (men and women, young and old) at the end of the fateful siege, in which they managed to keep the Boer commandos at bay for a very long time. After nearly eight months of warfare the Ndzundza's water supplies were cut off, resulting in massive deaths from thirst and starvation within the caves and their eventual surrender (Delius & Cope 2007). Nyabela, along with 24 other Ndzundza royals, eventually surrendered and they were incarcerated in Pretoria Central Prison. Nyabela was initially sentenced to death, the fate he was supposed to share with his ally Mampuru of the Pedi.[1] . But the sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment, and he was eventually released due to his failing health after serving 15 years. The entire land of the Ndzundza was confiscated to prevent the people from regrouping, and Nyabela's subjects were indentured on the Boers' farms for a period of five to seven years, after which they had no land to return to and were thus forced to remain on white farms as labour tenants under conditions of peonage.

The parallel to the Ndzundza's celebration of heritage among the Manala Ndebele is the King Silamba Annual Commemoration, held roughly in late February or early March at a place called KoMjekejeke near the site of the ruins of the Wallmannsthal mission station (about 20 miles north of Pretoria). Silamba is given credit for providing visionary leadership to the

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[1]   Mampuru was the brother to Sekhukhune, the Pedi paramount chief. Mampuru murdered him in a succession battle and on realising that the Pedi people wanted to apprehend him and kill him, Mampuru fled southwards and sought sanctuary among the Ndzundza royals.

Manala and saving his subjects from certain destruction during the tumul-
tuous years of conflict over land with the Boers, and over the soul with the
German missionaries (BMS) during the late 19th century. After their troubles
with the Boer farmer who took possession of the land on which the Manala
lived, Silamba was instructed by the president of the Boer Republic to seek
refuge at Wallmannsthal mission, which had in any case been established on
the Manala's ancestral land. But not long after he relocated there, Silamba
was embroiled in bitter conflicts with the missionaries over the preconditions
for settlement, namely that: (a) Silamba would not prohibit any of his sub-
jects from attending church services; (b) he made annual tax payments (in the
form of grain); and finally, (c) Silamba and his people would obey the laws
of the Boer Republic. Silamba is venerated for resisting these requirements in
trying to retain some degree of autonomy from foreign rule and acculturation.

These yearly celebrations had their origins in 1970 at the height of
ethnic nationalist agitation, when the Southern Ndebele were looking for a
'usable past'. They identified these events as critical symbols, usable pasts,
around which to forge Ndebele identity in their struggle for the ethnic home-
land or bantustan of KwaNdebele. It was very interesting for me to attend
both commemorations as an observer grappling with issues related to the
relationship between history and heritage. At eRholweni, I had the privilege
of interviewing two Ndzundza royal expert storytellers, namely *Kosi* Chillies
Mahlangu (*imbongi* or praise singer), and Elias Mandla Mahlangu, about the
significance of the day, but also most importantly about the subject of this
paper, which is the origins and splintering of the Ndebele across the
Transvaal, dating back to the 1700s. Chillies Mahlangu had a very interesting
story to tell, and in his own words:

> We find that the Ndebele and the Zulu were part of one nation,
> the Nguni nation. There were the Amantungwa and Amathonga
> groups in KwaZulu. Then conflict erupted between the two
> groups the Amantungwa and Amathonga. The Amantungwa
> were defeated and they fled with Ndebele from the Amathonga
> until they arrived at the mountains of Nondulwane, which in
> the white man's language is called Heidelberg. That's where
> they settled and Ndebele became the ruler. Ndebele gave birth
> to Mtungwa, who ruled after him at the same place. Mtungwa
> gave birth to Mkhalangana, who took over as the chief after
> him in the same area. Mkhalangana gave birth to Mjonono.
> Mjonono too ruled in the same area of the mountains of
> Nondulwane. After Mjonono that's where we find the line of
> Musi. Musi ruled. Musi is the ruler who gave birth to
> Ndzundza and Manala. Musi had several other sons besides
> these two.

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… Musi's sons were Manala, Ndzundza, Skhosana, Mhwaduba, Dlomo, Gegana (Kekana) and Sibasa. They were six – although I have not put them in their proper sequence. And then during his reign Musi ruled first from Nondulwani and then relocated to Randfontein, Emhlangeni (the place of reeds). Then when he arrived there, Mhlanga was also in existence and he also ruled from that area. Then they (Ndebele) moved from there – let me just put it in short – they relocated to KwaMnyamane, that is Bon Accord (northwest of Pretoria). By that time the chief Musi was already too old. He told his son Manala that the following day at such and such a time he should come to his house so that he (Musi) could pass to him the rod/staff of chieftainship.

We then find that the two, Manala and Ndzundza, were half-brothers – they had different mothers but shared the same father. Manala came from the great house and Ndzundza was born from the junior house; he was the first-born from the junior house. Ndzundza's mother – she was still alive whereas Manala's mother had already died by then – secretly whispered to Ndzundza: 'Tomorrow you must go to your father so that he can give you the staff of chieftainship.'

The following day Ndzundza went to his father and said to Musi: 'Father, I have come.' Musi asked him: 'Who are you?' – He could not see as he had turned blind in old age. He said: 'I am Hlungwane.' Hlungwane was Ndzundza's other name. Musi said: 'I don't want you here, I need your brother Manala!'

Ndzundza then went back to his mother and said: 'My father chased me away and said that he wanted to see Manala.' His mother said: 'But why did you tell him you were not Manala but Hlungwane?' Then they came up with another plan so that Ndzundza should go back to see Musi.

The difference between the two was that Manala was hairy all over his body. Ndzundza said: 'My father will feel that I am not Manala when he touches me.' Then the old woman (Ndzundza's mother) took the skin of an animal and dressed Ndzundza in it. Thereafter he went back and said: 'Father, I have come.' Musi answered: 'Why is it that I'm so unconvinced? Are you sure that you are not Hlungwane?' He said,

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'No, I'm Manala.' When he (Musi) touched him he was confident that it was Manala because he felt how hairy he was.

Musi then gave him the rod made of the horn of *ibhejani* [type of wild game?] and *iskurwani* [a calabash] that has no lid. These are the key paraphernalia of chieftainship. And he gave him six *nomrhali* [no translation] of *inyathi* [wildebeest]. These are the things that are central to chieftainship. Ndzundza then left and assembled the men of the chiefdom and informed them that he had taken over the chieftaincy. Thereafter they celebrated and danced and it was all pleasant.

Meanwhile Manala arrived at the chief's house at the specified time and said: 'Father, I have arrived as you ordered.' Musi replied: 'How can you say that you have arrived? Your brother has usurped the chieftaincy.' Manala was extremely upset and he called all the men to the assembly and informed them that his father took the chieftaincy and gave it to Ndzundza. The men replied: 'What do you expect us to do because it's your own father who has messed up everything? Can you see that?'

Then there were those who favoured Ndzundza on this side and those who followed Manala on the other side. Then Ndzundza ran away with his followers until they reached this area [meaning Roossenekal] …

After they fled Manala instructed his followers to go after them in order to retrieve the horn of *ibhejani* and the calabash that had no lid. Then the men prepared *is'gume*, a type of dried food that was used as provisions for the road, and followed Ndzundza. They pursued them until they caught up with them at Masongololo. Then the battle ensued; it went on until the Manala ran out of their food provisions. Then they decided to return home and the chief asked them: 'Have you brought back the things that I sent you to go and fetch?' They said: 'No, we ran out of *is'gume*. He said sharply: 'Prepare some more provisions and go back and pursue them!'

It was then that the Manala found the Ndzundza around the mountain of Qhoni near Loskop Dam [present-day Groblersdal area]. Upon arrival at Loskop Dam the Ndzundza found that the river uBhalule or Olifants River was flooded [and so they couldn't cross to the other side]. While they were still on the

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other side (western side) they saw the Manala regiments fast approaching hot on their heels.

… A woman of the Msiza clan of Mrholosi said: 'Give me the skin of *indila/indrila* [species of wild game].' They gave it to her and she tried to wear it but it proved to be too small. Then she said: 'Bring me another one.' She tied them together and took another one and sat on it saying: 'Those [referring to the Manala] are your peers [same age grade]. They will kill you and you will kill them.' The Manala regiments soon arrived and the battle resumed.

The Mrholosi (a section of the Southern Ndebele) assisted the Ndzundza. The battle raged on and it proved to be indecisive until the Mrholosi intervened and brokered a peace deal. The Ndzundza gave a young woman as a wife to the Manala chief so that she would give birth to the future chief (of the Manala). Similarly the Manala gave a young woman to the Ndzundza chief who would give birth to the heir of the Ndzundza throne [a shrewd way of ensuring cooperation through blood bonds]. That is why the *izibingo* [praise-singers of the rulers] of the Manala say: 'The young woman we did not marry with cattle but we married her with a bundle of magic performances'.

That's how the Ndzundza split off from the Manala. Manala said, 'You Ndzundza, you will occupy the eastern side of the Olifants River and I will occupy the western side.' Ndzundza then departed from that spot with his followers and established his chiefdom at a place called KwaMgagadla. Manala took his followers back until he eventually settled at KoNomjekejeke.

The oral tradition told above is related in nearly the same words among the Manala as well as among the Kekana chiefdoms (Northern Ndebele sections that share the same origins as the Southern Ndebele). In December 2003 I collected the same tradition from Gojela Peter Kekana at Mokopane, and he put it thus:

The first leader of the Ndebele was Mhlanga who led them out of Natal. Mhlanga's son, Musi, took over after his death. Musi had several sons born from his numerous wives. Among his children were Manala, Ndzundza, Mthombeni, Hwaduba, and Dlomo. Before the old man Musi died he was already blind and he called upon his son and successor to the throne, Manala, and

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said, 'My son, I would like you to go game-hunting and bring me game meat out of which you should make a dish such as I am fond of.' Meanwhile Ndzundza's mother was snooping from the other side of the wall. Then she went and murmured to her son, 'Ndzundza, listen carefully. The old man is dying and he wants the meat of a wild animal to be cooked for him in order to bless his son Manala to take over as the chief. Don't you want the chieftainship? You must take over the throne, my son.'

After Manala had gone hunting, Ndzundza's mother instructed Ndzundza to go into the livestock pen and slaughter a sheep. Ndzundza was a bit hesitant because Manala's arms were quite hairy, unlike his, and the old man would notice if he touched him. 'So, what am I going to do about this?' he asked. His mother replied, 'No, don't worry about that. We will apply the blood from the sheep to your arms and stick the wool from the sheep to your arms and your body. You will feel like Manala. You must do it in that way'.

When Manala returned from hunting they had already prepared the meat dish and given it to the old man. But earlier the old man had already expressed his scepticism and said, 'Well, my son, I can feel that your body is that of Manala, but this voice is not that of Manala. I'm doubtful. Anyway, I bless you with my hands but you should know that you will fight with your brother over this chieftainship'. Indeed when Manala returned he found that the old man had already blessed Ndzundza. That is how the succession battle started between Manala and Ndzundza. Ndzundza fled towards the northeast and among his followers were Mthombeni, the founder of the Kekana [Zebediela] Ndebele. Manala remained behind in the Pretoria area and his brother M'hwaduba sided with him and established their chiefdom nearby.

This story has clearly been told for many generations, and its resemblance to the Bible story of Isaac and his two sons who fought over seniority and inheritance is striking and unmistakable. In essence, Genesis 27:1–41 tells that Isaac had become blind in his old age. As he was approaching the end of his life, he called on Esau, his elder son, and instructed him to go out hunting and bring him some venison or game meat. Esau was supposed to prepare a tasty dish that he (Isaac) liked, so that he could eat it and bless Esau before he died. And so Esau went off hunting.

Meanwhile, Rebekah (Isaac's wife) had overheard the instructions and, being partial to Jacob, who was her son, she told him to go to the herd and slaughter two well-fed kids of a goat so that she could prepare the tasty dish for Isaac. The idea was to trick Isaac into blessing Jacob instead of his brother Esau. But Jacob was worried that his father would recognise that he was not Esau because Esau was 'an hairy man.' Rebekah took Esau's clothes from the house and put them on Jacob, and she put the skins of the goat's kids on his hands and on the hairless part of his neck. She then instructed him to take the dish and the bread that she had made to Isaac.

When Jacob arrived in Isaac's tent, he pretended that he was Esau and asked his father to sit down and eat some of his venison. Isaac was suspicious that he had been too quick in finding the game, and he asked him to come near so that he could feel that he was really his son Esau. After feeling him he said: 'The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.' And so he blessed Jacob thinking that he was Esau.

Just after Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, Esau came back from hunting. After preparing his dish he went to his father so that he could get the blessings. At that moment Isaac realised that he had been deceived by his younger son Jacob. But there was nothing Isaac could do for Esau, as he had already appointed Jacob as the master over him and all his brothers as his servants. Thus began the animosity and the split between the two brothers.

Anyone familiar with the Bible story will notice almost immediately significant similarities between the Ndebele's oral tradition and the account in the Bible: a blind father who is about to die wants to pass his inheritance and seniority to the heir, that is the eldest son; he instructs the son to go hunting and to prepare venison; the wife eavesdrops and informs the younger son – her favourite son (in the Bible), and Ndzundza's mother and junior wife in the Ndebele tradition where polygamy was practised – to usurp his brother's position. In other words, they are sons from different mothers in the Ndebele case. In both stories one notices the similarities in the hairiness of the eldest son; the slaughter of a young goat (sometimes a sheep, depending on who is narrating the story); the dressing of the hairless arms and/or back of the junior son with the goat skin, to make him feel like his hairy brother; the blind father who is initially suspicious but is eventually persuaded; the elder son who returns from the hunt only to find his younger brother has usurped his position; and the fight that ensues between the two brothers. The list of comparisons is endless.

Despite these similarities, however, Dr NJ van Warmelo, chief ethno-logist in the Native Affairs Department's Ethnological Section (the division of government in charge of all matters related to the administration and control of African societies in the country) from 1930 until his retirement in 1969, has serious misgivings about the suggestion that this oral tradition may have been influenced by, or derived from, the Bible story. Van Warmelo was

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sensitised to this story while he was conducting fieldwork research among the Manala Ndebele that lived in the area around the Berlin Mission station of Wallmannsthal (20 miles northeast of Pretoria) in 1929. He also noted Fourie's similar observations among the Ndebele of Fene Mahlangu, a section of the Ndzundza Ndebele, in the early 1920s. Van Warmelo was reluctant to attribute the apparent similarities to the influence of missionary work in the Transvaal in the late 19th century. In his own words:

> Of the present generation … it is those who have most been in contact with missionaries that do not know of the stratagem by which Ndzundza deceived his father. This was told me by the informant who was the best acquainted with tribal tradition, but who knew nothing of Biblical history. The same is said by Fourie of his informants who were old men and complete heathens. Add to this the fact that the amaNala and the amaNdzundza have both been separated for so many generations. If therefore part of the tale is derived from foreign sources, it is by no means a recent importation among the Ndebele of the Transvaal (USADNA 1930: 60).

Instead of ascribing the similarities in the oral accounts to the possible influence of the teachings of the German missionaries on local Ndebele traditions, Van Warmelo concluded that this was mere coincidence. He was convinced that this story (he refers to it as a tale) existed long before the Ndebele came into contact with the European missionaries and the Bible. There is no question that the first major split of the Ndebele in the Transvaal took place as a result of a tussle over succession between Manala and Nzunza, and that the other brothers tended to take sides, some with the usurper and others remaining loyal to Manala as the heir. But the details about how the split manifested itself need not be taken literally, or at face value.

It is noteworthy that both sections of the Southern Ndebele tell the tradition in the same way, using similar images. This speaks volumes about the fluidity of boundaries between the two groups. However difficult it may be to establish the exact routes through which the Bible story travelled, it is nonetheless reasonable to surmise that the Ndzundza may have been the first to appropriate the story in acknowledgment of the fact that their founder, Ndzundza, probably did something profoundly wrong, that is, usurping the position that did not rightfully belong to him – in the same way that Jacob knew that he had wronged his brother by stealing his inheritance, and had to atone by going into exile. Similarly, Ndzundza and his followers went into 'exile' where they established an autonomous chieftaincy.

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It is very likely that the Manala or even Ndzundza storytellers appropriated the Bible story to make sense of their own oral traditions, having lived around the mission of Wallmannsthal or other Christian neighbourhoods for many generations and possibly having been exposed to missionary teachings. It is also possible that the appropriation may have been intended to make Ndebele oral tradition more appealing to a Christianised community, a way of buying legitimacy among them. Seen in this light, it is not strange that the same story could have proved popular in the two conflicting chieftaincies.

Just like Van Warmelo, most Ndebele storytellers take the similarities between the oral tradition and the Bible story for granted, as a matter of coincidence, or as something that doesn't warrant careful investigation. They assume that the story as it stands is an authentic or truthful reflection of what really happened, what really caused the initial split in the chieftaincy. They often deny the influence of foreign elements, particularly Christianity, on their way of life. A critical feature of Ndebele ideology is traditionalism and cultural conservatism, pride in the tenacity of the Ndebele and their resistance to foreign influence; the implication is that they wouldn't have easily incorporated the Bible story into their oral traditions, as they supposedly steadfastly resisted Christian conversion. But as this paper will show, this is far from the truth.

In any case, the written accounts of the first break-up of Musi's chiefdom at KwaMnyamane (Bon Accord), just north of Pretoria, into several chiefdoms have been derived from oral traditions. Transmitted by word of mouth from generation to generation, these traditions have been fairly well preserved. This is evident in the way that the informants – highly regarded in their communities as expert storytellers – across the separate Ndebele communities tell fairly similar stories about the first major secession of the Ndebele, caused by the succession battle between the Manala and the Ndzundza, stories which have quite clearly absorbed foreign elements. Oral traditions are dynamic, fluid and malleable; they are not inflexible or cast in stone. They have an enormous capacity to absorb or appropriate foreign ele-ments and to be influenced by the contexts in which they are being narrated, while remaining fairly true to the original story. In the next section I explore some of the ways in which the Biblical account may have filtered through into the oral traditions.

The Berlin mission station, conversion and Silamba's subjects

One of the untold stories, veiled memories, or hidden voices of the Southern Ndebele's past that have taken cover under the thick underbrush of German gothic script (a script most South African researchers cannot decipher) is

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about their encounter with Christianity. After their defeat of Mzilikazi in 1837, the Boers claimed the whole of the Transvaal by right of conquest and set about dividing the land amongst themselves, including land inhabited by Africans. By the 1870s autonomous African polities throughout the country were facing enormous pressure and the Transvaal Ndebele equally suffered major loss of land and political and social destabilisation. Emboldened by the presence of the British, the Boers in the Transvaal began to put enormous pressure on Africans, demanding rent, taxes and labour and sometimes even expelling them from their ancestral lands. The latter was certainly the experience of the Manala Ndebele under Silamba. This community was situated close to Wallmannsthal on the land belonging to a Boer farmer. Silamba's headman Nchaope and his people actually shared a boundary with the Berlin mission station. Because of the rising tension between the Ndebele and this landowner, who no longer wanted the people on his land, Silamba went to Pretoria for a meeting with the Boer Republic's president. There he was advised to move from the farm and relocate to Wallmannsthal, where Reverend Knothe of the Berlin Lutheran mission station (BMS, established in 1866) would accept him and other groups including the Bapo, Mankopane and Mabhoko with open arms, hoping to 'work among them as missionaries' (BMS 1, 2, 1874: 128-134).

In September 1873, Silamba and his people, including over 300 men, moved onto the grounds of the mission station of Wallmannsthal with the understanding, inter alia, that the chief would not prevent his subjects from going to church services; that the people occupying the land would pay tax in the form of the produce from the land; and that the people taking refuge on the mission station would obey the laws of the government (BMB 1, 2, 1874 *ibid*). However the number of churchgoers did not increase as envisaged, and out of frustration the missionary blamed Silamba for secretly urging his people not to attend church services 'because he wanted his people to remain pagans' (*ibid*). However, a small number of Silamba's subjects did attend church. The BMS sources (which should be taken with a pinch of salt, like all other sources of evidence) allude to Kakapeng, a 'member of Silamba's tribe' (most probably a commoner), who lived close to the mission station's buildings. Kakapeng's devotion to the Word was demonstrated in his becoming a catechist. Missionary archives also provide evidence of a woman who used to chasten her child for going to school and who declared that nothing would bring her into church even if she were dragged by ropes. But eventually she did come to church out of her own volition and even talked about baptism. If these missionary descriptions are to be taken as a reflection (albeit a partial one) of what was taking place on the ground, then they contradict the widely held view that the Ndebele totally rejected Christianity. I contend that the presence of individuals such as Kakapeng made it possible

for Biblical stories to be filtered in an imaginative way into the oral tradition of the Ndebele.

In short, the German missionaries may have failed dismally in their efforts at wholesale conversion of the Ndebele communities in the Transvaal region, but they did succeed in converting a few individuals who may have gone on to serve as vectors through which Biblical accounts entered the realm of royal oral tradition. The missionaries thus succeeded unintentionally in influencing the nature and content of the Ndebele elites' oral tradition, to the extent that the account of the first critical secession of the Ndebele in the Transvaal is an adaptation of the Biblical story. This appropriation, however, does not make the oral tradition less reliable. It is not so much the factuality or the accuracy of the facts about the Ndebele's secession that matter as the reasons and context for the appropriation of written accounts. The core of the story has remained unchanged; the major split within the polity occurred between Manala and Ndzundza. But the context and the manner in which it has been told changed.

Conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn from this. The first is that the urgent call for a total reinterpretation of the history of South Africa from the pers- pectives of Africans is undoubtedly a legitimate one and oral history is pivotal to this process. But oral history doesn't have to be a binary opposite of written accounts. However 'contaminated' the official colonial and/or apartheid archives might be, if used carefully they can prove to be very useful in terms of unearthing African voices. This leads to the second point, which is that some of the oral historians (i.e. our elderly storytellers) who are extolled as our 'living archives', whose supposed authentic accounts we are often urged to collect before they take them with to their graves, are usually the most avid readers, decipherers and collectors of archival material. We should thus debunk the rather crude assumption that oral accounts and written sources are mutually exclusive, that the former are pristine and untainted by literary texts. The answer to how we uncover the 'hidden voices, untold stories and veiled memories' of African societies, especially prior to and including the period after contact with literate Europeans, lies neither here nor there, but in our creative engagement and interrogation of all the sources at our disposal, including oral accounts. It is only by doing this that we can begin to realise the extent to which the oral and the written accounts are interdependent, as the accounts of the Ndebele's succession disputes suggest.

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The role of *letsema* in community struggles: past and present

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Introduction

Many of our youth refer to *mogodisano wa bomme* (mother's society) or *stokvel sa bontate* (father's stokvel) without knowing the origin of these practices. There is always a story behind every action in life, and it is important for one to know and understand the origin of some practices in order for one to be able to appreciate them. That is why Seelye (1994:149) states that:

> Understanding other cultures is frequently a matter of life or death. In the best of times, knowledge of another culture is tantamount to moving out of a dark dank corner of the cave into greater illumination.

The rural setting

What is **letsema** (communal work)?

Ilima/letsema refers to a group of people who work towards a common goal. Traditionally, in rural villages, the king's fields were the first to be ploughed and the whole village would gather in order to do this – these workers were called *letsema*. The women helped with the preparation of food and home-made beer, which was the workers' remuneration. After the king's fields have been ploughed, families, friends or neighbours would then divide themselves into smaller groups and plough each other's field. It was expected that the owner of the field should be the one working harder than the rest of the group. Hence the saying, "*letsema le thata ka mong wa lona*" meaning, "employees can do well if the employer practically leads them". Another idiom that is associated with *letsema* is one that says, "*mabogo dinku a thebana*", literally meaning "hands are like sheep, they help each other", i.e. people should help each other under all circumstances.

   Ilima/letsema is related to the concept of ubuntu/botho; a concept that motivates communities to strive towards nation building and integrity. This is deduced, evidently, from the abovementioned expressions (idioms) that encourage productivity and highlights the importance of teamwork in generating well-being and wealth. Songs were usually sung while the work was being done, to encourage and motivate the workers, and as a distraction

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so as to make the work feel lighter. Thus, the singing helped to speed up the completion of the task. Songs that would be sung will go like this:

Hee! Tomolang, tomolong, tomolang ka diatla (X2)
[You pull out, pull out, and pull with your hands (X2)]
Hee! Borra sepodisi ntwa ka diatla (X2)
[Men, we are fighting burweed with our hands (X2)]
Hee! Bagaetsho! Sepodisi ntwa ka diatla
[My fellow men! We are fighting burweed with our hands (X2)

First fruits ceremony

Before any of the produce harvested can be consumed, everybody in the village had to take the fresh harvest to the king/chief. The whole village would participate in this ceremony. The king would then announce that the crop was ready and that people could now start eating the produce. This ceremony is called the feast of the first fruit. In isiZulu it is called *ukweshwama*, *ukuluma* in isiNdebele and *go loma ngwaga* in Sotho.

This is a symbol of respect from the community to the king, because there is a belief that this will ensure that the whole village will have a good harvest the following year. On the other hand, should someone harvest and cook any produce from his/her farm without the king's knowledge, it is regarded as disrespectful and this action, it was believed, might bring drought and famine to the village.

Tutu (1996:9) gives a three-pronged definition of ubuntu/botho. According to him:

1. ubuntu/botho means the essence of being human. You know when it is there, and you know when it is absent.
2. It speaks about humaneness, gentleness, hospitality, putting yourself out on behalf of others, being vulnerable; it embraces compassion and toughness. It recognises that any humanity is bound up with yours.
3. It means not nursing grudges, but a willingness to accept others as they are and being thankful for them. It excludes grasping competitiveness, harsh aggressiveness, being concerned for oneself, abrasiveness. In short, ubuntu/botho is an African philosophy of life.

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Time-tested philosophies and cultures of the African people are preserved in different ways. We saw how *ilima/letsema* was practiced in the past in the rural areas. In the following paragraphs this cultural practice will be explored further to see how it has been adapted and interpreted to suit a new urban environment.

Letsema and death

Death and burial

There is a saying used among the old people, "*matlhaku go šwa mabapi*" literally meaning "when one hedge catches fire, it affects those neighbouring it", i.e. if you find yourself in a difficult situation, it also affects those around you.

This is also applicable when there is a death in a family. In the rural and urban areas, when a neighbour has passed away, the neighbours, whether they live in the same street or in the near surroundings, are responsible for assisting the bereaved family. One of the first tasks is to take out unnecessary furniture – according to custom a woman whose husband has passed away must sleep on a mattress on the floor: a bed is a luxury and she does not need it as she is in mourning. The neighbours are also responsible for preparing and serving refreshments to those who come to pay their condolences. This is another form of *letsema* that is still practiced in both the rural and the urban areas today.

On the day of the funeral, all the men in the neighbourhood are expected to help with the slaughtering of the cow in preparation for the reception after the burial ceremony, while the women would be busy pre-paring the vegetables and cooking food for about 400 or more people. *Diphiri* are men of the village who wake up at dawn to dig the grave. In the Nguni culture (even today), graves are sometimes dug during the night (i.e. immediately after midnight). The *diphiri* will prepare and cook the meat, while the women will cook porridge and brew liquor. Everybody in the village would lend a hand. Everybody in the neighbourhood would attend the funeral, except if they have to go to work or have other commitments. If someone does not go to the funeral, the community might hold it against that particular person. There are some people in the community who hold "an invisible register" and the community might not help that particular person when he/she has to arrange a funeral or a wedding. The neighbours or members of the community would assist in the same way when it comes to weddings and parties (Ramagoshi 2007:7).

During and on the day of the funeral, a book will be circulated in which the neighbours would record their condolences – a cash amount is added which is given to the family. Later the bereaved family is able to use

the money to pay part of the funeral costs. Today the condolences money is steadily being replaced by a *"wie sien ons"* or "after tears party", that is, the party that is held after the funeral. The practice of spending condolence money on liquor is, however, to be questioned in the light of the needs of the community.

The mine industry setting

The Readers Digest 374, cited by Masoga (1999:1), states that:

> The separation legislature incarcerated black people in their tribal groups and in the process also divided them, thereby rendering them ineffective in a collective sense.

Bantustans such as Lebowa, Gazankulu, Bophuthatswana, Venda, Kwa-Zulu, and KwaNdebele emerged as a result of policies of segregated development instigated by the apartheid regime of the time. Many of the African folk depended on subsistence farming for their livelihood, but they could no longer survive on it because some of the areas they were moved to were not conducive to farming. Therefore, many of the men had to leave their homes to look for work in the mining industries. At the mines the different ethnic groups had to mix. At times, faction fights would erupt. But, they all experienced hard labour and abnormal working hours. When the work became unbearable, the men would sing:

SHOSHOLOZA
Shosholoza, shosholoza, kulez intaba (x2)
[Push, push in those mountains (x2)]
Isitimela sibuya eSouth Africa
(The train is coming from South Africa)
Wen uyabaleka, wen uyabaleka,
(You are running away, you are running away)
Kulezointaba
(In those mountains)
Isitimela sibuya eSouth Africa
(The train is coming from South Africa)

This was a form of *letsema* in the mining industries. The work became lighter and it was enjoyed and completed on time. Today *Shosholoza* is a national song that is sung at rugby matches. It seems to have lost its meaning of unity and doing things together.

Paul Simon, a U.S. Senator, cited by Seelye (1994:vii), once said:

> Knowledge of the world's languages and cultures is more vital than ever. In order to compete in the global community, we must be able to communicate effectively and to appreciate, understand, and be able to work in the framework of other cultures.

It is important that next time we sing or hear *Shosholoza* being sung, to reflect on its deeper meaning.

The township/urban setting

Many mine workers who became *makgolwa* (people who never wanted to go back to the rural areas nor wanted to be associated with their original villages) decided to settle in the nearby townships. Again, the meagre wages they earned, coupled with the unfriendly and uncompromising township life, led to these communities banding together through *letsema,* which started resurfacing in another adapted form called *stokvels, masakhane, megodisano, society* or *gazi* – an urban type of communal cultivation in the form of social clubs. The continuity of *letsema* (as depicted in trans-cultural modernity) in urban communities is a mechanism for them to try to cope with the struggles and hardships of urbanisation that have been acculturated. "Acculturation", according to Cardo (1980:15), is a form of cultural or behavioural assimilation, that is, a process which entails the changing of a minority's cultural patterns to those of the dominant or host society. For Zanden (1966:298), however, the customs of a given cultural group are acculturated through intercultural transmission (diffusion of elements of one cultural group into another). It is the latter view of acculturation that has transpired in the different settings that have been given expression to *letsema*.

The *stokvel* (social clubs)

Social clubs are held with the aim of:

• saving a small fraction of one's monthly income
• spending one's income fruitfully
• helping each other cope financially

The standard of living in the urban areas is very high. *Stokvels* cater for the different needs of men and women. Normally, the women's society or *mogodisano* is held separately from the men's.

● Women

Mostly, women's concerns are about their households – being able to provide for their families by putting food on the table, paying school fees and providing financial and other assistance at parties, weddings and funerals. Their social club can be of the following nature:

• buying each other basic necessities on a monthly basis, e.g. groceries, hand towels, utensils for parties as well as for the house.
• saving a certain percentage of the monthly contributions for funerals – the rest can be used to make ends meet.

Their contributions are usually small. For example, a group of 12 ladies, who will each be the beneficiary in a month that they choose, might decide to contribute R200 each. The R200 might be divided in the following manner:

• R100 will go to the savings account – two signatures are needed for withdrawal.
• R70 will be for things needed in the *mogodisano* like folding tables, tableclothes, serving dishes, dish clothes, etc. The tableclothes must be the same length and colour so that on the day of a wedding or funeral, the tables are uniform. There is no storage problem as each member stores their equipments at their homes.
• R30 will be for catering – the hostess of the month will use it to buy drinks and cookies.

● Men

The aim of men's *stokvels* or *gazis* is to accumulate enough funds to cover the whole cost of a funeral or a wedding. The money might also be used for a deposit on a car, to contribute to a deposit for a house or even to pay the bond. The men might contribute any amount from R1 000 to R10 000 depending on how much a person earns or can afford. The wife will usually help the husband host the *stokvels* or *gazis* by cooking meals, while also using the opportunity to raise funds by charging between R100 and R500 for a plate of food. The members of the *stokvels* are encouraged to invite friends to come and support the initiative.

In recent years, the banks have started giving special packages for these urban *matsema* (plural form of *letsema*) to the point where they run marketing strategies during the urban *matsema*'s monthly gathering.

The latest form of urban *matsema* in Burgersfort, east of Limpopo

Lebilo/lebili or *go tšhofana*

- *Lebilo* for women

Lebilo/lebili or *go tšhofana* is a new form of *letsema* that is practiced around the Burgersfort area, east of Limpopo. There are between 8 – 10 members and each member contributes a specific grocery item monthly. The members discuss and agree on who should buy which item.

The wheel will start rotating in intervals of once month after the first person has been given her groceries. The minimum number of people within the *lebili* is preferably six as each member will then receive groceries on two occasions per annum. The *lebili*, like any other organisation, have a constitution, one which has been certified by the police. The women choose the brands of the groceries and meet at the shops to collect and give the groceries. This is an advantage because no preparation of food or beverages is needed. The groceries are grouped in the following manner:

Group 1
10 kg cake flour
10 kg sugar
10 kg rice
1 pk minestrone soup
1 *l* dishwashing liquid

Group 2
5 *l* cooking oil
1 kg tea
500 g margarine

Group 3
10 rolls of toilet paper
20 blocks of bath soaps
10 tubes of toothpaste

Group 4
6 bottles of concentrate juices
12 tins of canned beef
12 tins of canned fish

Group 5
2 kg x 6 washing powder
2 *l* x 6 fabric softer
1 *l* x 6 house hold disinfectant
1 *l* toilet cleaner

Group 6 (the recipient of the groceries)
1 *l* foam bath
1 *l* x 6 fresh milk cartons.

● *Lebilo* for men

Each member is instructed to purchase either a case of beer such as Savannas, Black Label, Castle Light or a case of assorted soft drinks.

● *Lebili* for weddings

Only men participate in this *lebilo*. For example, ten men (friends) may agree to support the one who is getting married by donating R5 000 each. This money will help with the hiring of tents, chairs and tables, gas stoves and the sound system at the wedding reception. The 10 friends will then also be the best men or *diseteroii* at the wedding. This is new and exciting because in the African culture, you do not limit wedding invitations to a hundred or two hundred guests. If one invites 10 people, each invited person can bring his or her own group in a minibus to the wedding. No one will ask to see the invitation or check whether their names appear on the guest list. The more the merrier.

Suggestions of *letsema* for the white communities

I heard from some of my white students that in the white community, it is expected from a young couple not to get married until they have purchased a flat or are financially able to rent one. My suggestion is that, the couple that is getting married should band together with a steady group of friends (5 – 10 friends); to start their own pre-marriage *letsema*. They could agree to give an amount of at least R1 000 a month to ensure that the couple who is getting married can buy furniture for the flat. After the couple is married, the next couple that is to be married can be helped in a similar way. After all the *letsema* members of the group are happily married, then they can help each other buy cars or houses. The same applies with wedding celebrations, where the groom is responsible for the drinks at the wedding, for example. The *lebilo* type of *letsema* can come into action – *kutlwano ke maatla*. (unity is strength).

Relevance to the corporate world

The *stokvels* are positive concepts in the corporate world too. It could be encouraged by management in order to alleviate financial problems experienced by workers. Management could, for instance, assist a social

group in investing their money wisely. This could be a solution for management's problem of having to assist their employees when they suffer financial difficulties.

There are people who call themselves *matšhonisa* (one who makes you bankrupt) who take advantage of co-workers with financial problems and lend money to them at incredibly high interest rates. Managers could use these *matšhonisa* to assist them in alleviating their co-workers' financial problems without exploiting them unfairly. People are being exploited daily by businesses that provide cash loans at an inflated interest rate. These businesses have mushroomed and can be found on almost every corner in our cities. This concept is based on the *matšhonisa* idea of charging interest at more than twice the rate of banks. Some of these businesses demand that their customers give them their bank cards and credit cards and they keep these until the loan is paid up. Most of these businesses are not registered and are, in fact, illegal.

Conclusion

Stokvels or social clubs (*megodisano*) are created with the aim of helping each other to make ends meet. The other aim is to recreate and instil communal living as seen in the rural areas into the townships. It also helps people by giving them the opportunity to get to know each other better and to foster healthy social living.

Bagaetsho: Kgetsi ya tsie e kgonwa ke go pataganelwa.

(The bag of locusts can only be handled by carrying it together, i.e. a large task can only be mastered if people work together.)

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Oral history:
The challenges of education

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Introduction

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa provides a basis for curriculum transformation in South Africa. The first version of Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was introduced in 1997. In C2005 much emphasis was placed on Science, Mathematics and Technology. History was regarded as a less important subject and was combined with Geography into the Human and Social Sciences Learning Area.

The History and Archaeology Panel was established in 2000 after a report by the Working Group on Values, Education and Democracy was presented to the then Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal. In their report the History and Archaeology Panel pointed out how History can contribute to the formation of values in the curriculum. The panel's inputs included that History

- encourages civic responsibility and critical thinking, which are key values in a democratic society
- contextualises weighty issues and encourages constructive debate on them in an informed manner, through carefully weighing and evaluating evidence and reading a range of viewpoints
- fosters the invaluable mental power of discriminating judgement
- is important in the construction of identity
- enables us to listen to formerly subjugated voices and redress the invisibility of the formerly marginalised
- encourages us to examine in concrete terms, through rich examples of narratives of real-life situations, the challenging nature of truth provides a critically important perspective on the pathways to economic development and economic growth
- is a vital ingredient in promoting democratic values and a significant instrument for desegregating society due to its crucial role of strengthening memory in society (Ministry of Education 2000b:9 & 10).

Following this report, History was put back in the Revised New Curriculum Statement Grades R- –9 (RNCS), which replaced the C2005 after its implementation met with a number of challenges. The National Curriculum Statement Grades 10–12 (NCS) replaced the old curriculum (referred to as NATED 550). These curriculum innovations replaced the traditional syllabus approach with the outcomes-based education (OBE) approach (Du Plessis, Conley & Du Plessis 2007:52). The new curriculum replaced prescribed learning with a social constructivist learning theory (Mda & Mothata 2000:26). This meant that the curriculum has to take into account the learners' social backgrounds and that new knowledge should to a large extent be constructed by the learners.

The relevance of oral history to the curriculum

One of the principles of the NCS is "[v]aluing indigenous knowledge systems" (Department of Education 2003). What do we mean by indigenous knowledge systems (IKS)? "Indigenous knowledge systems in the South African context refer to a body of knowledge embedded in African philosophical thinking and social practices that have evolved over thousands of years" (Department of Education 2003:4). The NATED 550 curriculum only valued Western knowledge systems.

This principle of the NCS to value indigenous knowledge systems, together with the values of History in the curriculum, place high demands on teachers. Educators have the responsibility of empowering learners with skills which will enable them to recover knowledge that has been subjugated and voices that have been marginalised by the old curriculum. This can be done through oral history.

Oral history deals with memories and the life experiences of ordinary people. It helps them to record their life stories, which might have been lost, and their "… feelings, attitudes and the way of life that have been deliberately hidden from the man in the street by previous (sic) governments" (Mngqolo 2003:123). Oral history methodology cuts across the two bands of schooling: the General Education and Training (GET) band and the Further Education and Training (FET) band. In the foundation phase of the GET, for example, the learners are expected to have knowledge about their families. For this phase, the NCS emphasises storytelling and questioning skills when doing family history. One of the learning outcomes for History is historical enquiry. Learners in the FET band are required to engage with issues about indigenous knowledge systems. They have to complete a task on oral history.

The challenges

The most commonly used oral history activity for learners in the foundation phase is compiling a family tree. This activity has unintended consequences for teachers, parents and learners. Some parents find that they have to reveal their "sexual history" to their children, which can be very unpleasant. Problems that teachers have to deal with in this activity include parents writing notes to tell the teacher that they are not ready to assist their children with the topic. Some learners reported that when they asked their parents to assist them with their homework, their parents complained of illness. This activity, teachers reported, can have psychological effects on the learners. It affects the self-esteem of some learners in a negative way and other learners who were usually active in class suddenly became withdrawn. Causes of these problems include that some learners have single parents, some are orphaned and others are from broken families. The age of learners in this phase is another factor.

Despite all the initiatives to promote oral history, little is done in the field of education to advance them in practice. Teaching History is still not interesting. Teachers generally lack skills in applying the new approaches to teaching History. They have not been empowered in oral history methodology. Oral history requires teachers and learners to be producers of knowledge. Many teachers are not used to do this; they are comfortable with transmitting knowledge and struggle to come up with topics on local history. This is mainly because the system of educating current History teachers was dominated by the narrative approach and no "fresh minds" have been produced to join in the teaching of History since 1996. Educators who were interviewed were unaware of the structures that had been set up to promote oral history (including the Oral History Association of South Africa [OHASA] and this conference). The innovations of these structures have not cascaded down to the classrooms. Because of this ignorance, many teachers are unaware of the breadth of history and its presentation forms. It seems that these structures have left the Department of Education and History teachers behind.

The local municipal libraries in East London and Mdantsane do not have resources on both oral history methodology and local history. This leaves teachers stuck on what to give learners for oral history research. Teachers at five out of the seven schools in the study asked the learners to conduct research on the 1983 Bus Boycott. The reason why they gave them this topic is because copies of an article on this boycott are available in the libraries and the teachers remember this event. The teachers at two schools asked the learners to do research about a statue in Duncan Village which commemorates the 1985 massacre. They gave the learners this local history

research topic because the statue was in the newspapers at the time. All the learners used the pictures of the vandalized statue in their homework. This is a challenge for those who are tasked with the responsibility of supplying our libraries with literature to supply more literature on oral history methodology and local history.

History has always been a low-status subject. It has been used in schools as the dumping ground for underachievers. The emphasis on Science, Mathematics and Technology in C2005 seems to have done more harm to the subject. Some schools into longer offer History as a subject. Statistics have shown a steady decline in senior certificates candidates who do History. This low status of History makes school principals who are not involved in teaching the subject reluctant to purchase literature and instruments which can be useful in teaching oral history.

Conclusion

There is a need for educating History teachers. This can be done through in-service training. Universities also have a role to play in upgrading the skills of History teachers. They can introduce a programme on NQF level 7 to empower teachers with skills in oral history methodology. Partnerships should be formed between the local municipalities, the Department of Education and the Department of Arts and Culture to ensure that literature on oral history methodology and local history is made available in the municipal libraries. There is a need to popularise the organisations that are responsible for the promotion of oral history so that the schools can share in their resources and experiences. Local organisations that are involved in oral history and heritage, like the Mdantsane Women's Oral History Project need to assist schools in establishing school oral history projects (SOHPs). Members of such organisations and individual community members can help by adopting SOHPs. The SOHPs need to be officially launched to create awareness about the importance of oral history. Representatives from the relevant government departments and organisations should be present during such occasions to give them a high profile.

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Memories of Fietas from the late 50s to the 70s.
What was the suburb of Vrededorp like during this period and how did the people relate to one another?

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Introduction

The proposed title of the essay and the research problem is: Memories of Vrededorp from the late 50s to the 70s. How did the people of Vrededorp experience their community? The study aims at examining the lives of the ordinary citizens of Vrededorp closely. This is an aspect of history that had been placed aside for decades and the research sheds some light on their history. The following areas will be analysed and assessed during the research: Fietas: Time and History; Sweet Memories on Fietas; The Other Side; Life Behind Poverty in a Multicultural and Segregated Environment.

The purpose of research is to study the social history of Vrededorp from the late 50s to the 70s. The study intends to document peoples' memories of childhood in Fietas and investigate whether external forces such as race, culture, religion and poverty had an effect on the upbringing of the people of Vrededorp who were interviewed.

In the research the individuals will be the main focus and not the state. The research focuses on the personal upbringing of people who grew up in Vrededorp in the 50s to the 70s; and will, furthermore, contribute immensely to the existing literature about Vrededorp and its inhabitants, because there is limited literature on the social history of Vrededorp and even less on the people of colour who grew up in the area.

In this research the following methods were used based on their necessity:

a)   review of secondary sources
b)   oral interviews of individuals who lived in Fietas
        during from the 50s to the 70s.
c)   journal and internet sources

Secondary sources for this research were a few relevant studies done on Fietas and historical works published on Vrededorp and the adjacent suburbs which provided background information on the history of Johannesburg, apartheid policies and the history of South Africa. Such sources are useful in understanding the nature of the creation of suburbs in Johannesburg and the effect of government policies on them. Some of the sources were collected

from the local government library, the Johannesburg City Library and the University of Johannesburg library.

The researcher relied on both primary and secondary sources for the research.

Four individuals were interviewed; three ex-residents and one non resident of Vrededorp, Mr. Jooste, who was raised in Vrededorp during the 60s and the 70s His memories of Vrededorp will be most essential to the research. My Jooste focused more on the positive aspects of growing up in Vrededorp though he agreed that times were hard and the level of poverty was very high. According to him, growing up in Vrededorp was most memorable. He also spoke about the cooperative racial relationship between people of the different race groups. Mr Pedro was born and raised in Bez valley, but he visited his grandmother in Vrededorp on a weekly basis and regarded Vrededorp as his second home. He also agreed that life in Vrededorp was hard and people dealt with poverty on a daily basis. He went on to state how poverty led to substance and alcohol abuse in Vrededorp.

After interviewing Mr Jooste and Mr Pedro I found it difficult to get more people to interview, firstly because some people were unwilling to be interviewed; secondly I lacked information on individuals who could be interviewed. Finally, through the process of asking around, I had the pleasure of interviewing two women from Westbury. They both stayed in Vrededorp from the 50s to the 70s. They are Ms Irene Hilda Rouelph and Mrs Zubeida Dunn. Both of them lived in the area allocated to the people of colour, Pageview. Mrs Zubeiba Dunn was born in Fordsburg and moved to Vrededorp when she was very young. She spoke more about the differences between today's generation and her generation, but, at the same time, she gave sufficient information about life in Vrededorp.

Ms Irene Hilda Rouelph was born in Alexandra Township. She lived with relatives in Sophiatown before moving to Vrededorp as a teenager, because commuting from Sophiatown to her high school in Vrededorp proved to be stressful. They were happy to be interviewed and wanted their history told and had previously felt that their history was abandoned. It gave me the opportunity to rectify the misconception.

The researcher focused on the 50s to the 70s because there are limited sources on the early period .Such interviews will be resourceful for the research and contribute immensely to the social history of Vrededorp.

Journals and Internet Sources were used to obtain information on Vrededorp. Such sources are usually a compilation of the lives and customs of the people of Fietas.

Fietas time and history

Fietas was the name given to the multi-cultural neighbourhood of working class whites, Malays, Indians and Coloureds. Among many other jobs, they also worked as boot factory workers, cab drivers, builders, painters, railway workers and washerwomen. Fietas was situated north west of Fordsburg and was about two miles from the centre of Johannesburg, and was divided into two communities; Pageview and Vrededorp.[1]

Fietas was created during a period when the number of people seeking employment and accommodation in the goldfields had reached its height. At the turn of the century many people were attracted to the city simply due to the possibility of getting employment in Johannesburg which was rapidly developing into a location of urban capitalist development. Gold was discovered on the land and the prospects of sharing in the wealth and earning a decent salary were great and people from different cultures and locations streamed into Johannesburg. On 13 December 1893, the Executive Council of the South African Republic granted stands to poor Afrikaners who petitioned for land in the area[2] to accommodate and control the influx of the population. Indians, Cape Malays and Cape Coloureds came to Johannesburg as shopkeepers, itinerant hawkers, hotel workers, artisans and labourers. At first they settled mostly in Ferreira's camp and in Burgersdorp. The living conditions there had been intolerable to them and at that point the religious leaders petitioned to President Paul Kruger for a new area where they could develop spiritually away from the worldly desires of drinking, prostitution and so forth In 1894 the site opposite Vrededorp, then called the Malay location, was laid down for non whites.[3] The allocation of a fixed land for non whites, where they could be checked up easily by the municipality, was a way for the government to control their movement into the city and make sure they were in Johannesburg legally.

The location of Pageview and Vrededorp lied in a circle of two miles radius of the city hall. It was chosen because it gave easy and rapid access to the industrial townships south and south west of the city and was strategically close to the Braamfontein businesses and office zone.[4]

The vicinity for non whites became known as the Malay location as the inhabitants were predominantly Cape Malay and Cape Coloureds. In 1896 part of the Malay location and Vrededorp was cleared when an accidental explosion destroyed 1500 homes. The blast occurred during shunting operations on a western spur near the Johannesburg station when railway

[1]   C, Van Wyk: <u>Now Listen Here, The Life and Times of Bill Jardine</u>. p 16.
[2]   N, Carrim: <u>Fietas A Social History of Pageview: 1948 – 1988.</u> p 6.
[3]   <u>A city Divided</u>. p 120.
[4]   City Engineers Department: <u>Vrededorp, Pageview: A Study for Rehabilitation, Renewal & Proposals for the Transformation of an Environment.</u> p 10.

wagons containing 55 tons of explosives exploded. In reorganising their lives many of the homeless victims merely moved into the adjacent, undamaged areas of Fietas; thereby creating considerably more racial intermingling than the boundaries on the original designs created on the allocation of space for the people of Fietas.[5]

In 1904, the Malay Location became more inhabited when Asians– mostly Indians, Africans and Cape Coloureds from the Coolie location were evacuated, because they were affected by bubonic plague. They occupied the land that was originally designated to the coloured population. From then onwards the Malay location became home to the people of the Coolie location. In 1943, the name, Malay location changed to Pageview.[6]

The problem with the location was that over time it became a potential slum area. First of all, the government had not made plans for the people affected by the explosion in 1896 and the former inhabitants of the Coolie location to be moved to other accommodation after their temporary stay in Pageview. With the passage of time their numbers increased, their stands increased and they became fixed to the place. Secondly, because Fietas was an area for poor people, it was neglected by the government.

Vrededorp gradually became a matter for public concern and was classified as one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Johannesburg. The municipal officers had intended to proceed with a slum clearance agenda and had intentions to improve the standard of public health when the Health Committee advocated that Fietas be declared an unsanitary area to be expropriated, demolished and redeveloped according to plans that were already at hand. But, looking at the planning proposal at hand, they realised that they would have to create a new location which required the building of a new power station, municipal market, schools, a police station, community centre and other public amenities, and they were not ready to cover the expenses.[7]

Proposals for the removal and resettlement of the Pageview's Indians, Coloureds and Cape Malays became a lively party political issue among whites from the 1930s onwards, the inhabitants of Vrededorp were tired of the living conditions opposite their location and they petitioned to the government for a change. When the national party came into power in 1948 they wasted no time in creating the legal and bureaucratic machinery to undertake such relocations.[8]

Although the inhabitants of the entire suburb affectionaly referred to the suburb as Fietas, there was racial and cultural division between the

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[5] K, Beavon: <u>Johannesburg the Making and Shaping of the City</u>. p 75.
[6] K, Beavon: <u>Johannesburg the Making and Shaping of the City</u>. p 190.
[7] J, Beall, O, Crankshaw & S, Parnell: <u>Victims, Villains and Fixers, The Urban Environment and Johannesburg's Poor</u>. p 834.
[8] City Engineers Department: <u>Vrededorp, Pageview: A Study for Rehabilitation, Renewal & Proposals for the Transformation of an Environment</u>. p 9.

people. An author on the history of Fietas said the following about the relationship between the different race groups in Fietas; "in those good old, bad old days, the coloured community lived together, ate together, played together. But ironically, they referred to each other as coloureds and Malays – as if they were from different races rather than different faiths". [9]

Fietas was made up of 24 streets, running parallel to each one another. First street was near the north western hills and 24th street was down in the south western valley .White inhabitants mostly Afrikaners stuck to their location which was from 1st to 10th street, the coloureds and Malays lived in the section from 11th to 23rd street, there was also a major division between the portion north of 17th street, occupied almost entirely by Indian families and the Wild Side south of 17th street. The southern side of Fietas was more cosmopolitan, and home to a mixture of all race groups; Blacks, Cape Malay, Coloured and a minority of Indian people.

The majority of families in the northern section were leaseholders of the properties they resided. On the Wild Side the leaseholders did not reside in their houses but rented them out to people and spent little if anything on the maintenance of their properties. It was commonly known that people tended not to take care of properties that did not belong to them, all those factors also made Fietas a candidate for slum clearance. The majority of Africans preferred to stay in the section from 24th to 27th street.[10]

Sweet memories of Fietas: religion and goodwill

Even though the people of Fietas were poor and most of them had little to live on, they thrived on respectability. Their attachment to respectability could be noted in their commitment to religion, education and law and order; all those factors were often seen as the heart of respectable identity. It was important to them to portray an image different from the stereotypical representation attached to underprivileged people.

The religions that dominated Fietas were Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and the Tamil. The majority of the inhabitants of Vrededorp spoke Afrikaans and only a small percentage were English speaking. It was to be expected that the religion they felt most affiliated with was Christianity, the majority of the community belonged to Afrikaans churches; with a majority of the Afrikaans speaking people nominally Anglican .

The church was especially a prominent body that helped the Vrededorp society in times of need. People were always happy to worship, give financial support and were concerned about the wellbeing of the church.[11] In

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9   C, Van Wyk: Now Listen Here, The Life and Times of Bill Jardine. p 53.
10   K, Beavon: Johannesburg the Making and Shaping of the City. p 191.
11   City Engineers Department: Vrededorp, Pageview: A Study for Rehabilitation, Renewal & Proposals for the Transformation of an Environment. p 21.

reminiscing about life in Fietas, an author said the following about his congregation in Fietas, "the Dutch Reformed Church was a huge, imposing stone structure in the middle of 13th street. Rows of frosted windows in blue, green, yellow and red filtered sunshine into the pews and onto the altar in the early morning when the sun was sill rising, glancing off the faces of the worshippers in the gallery above'.[12] Religion was more than a process; it was a sacred ritual that had to be acknowledged every single day of their lives.

Church attendance was not the only way in which they came in contact with religion. Schooling was almost influenced by mission work. Birth, marriages and death provided ongoing points of interaction between faith and the wider population, whether they were habitual church goers or indifferent to the mission work. When interviewed, one of the interviewees said the following about the work of the churches in Vrededorp "the people were very poor and the church would help you know they provide food for the people".[13]

Mr Manuel Pedro, one of my interviewees also confirmed that the church was a source that provided in the needs of the community. He visited his grandmother in Vrededorp during weekends and holidays. His grand-mother was one of the community members who baked for the church and, in return, she was paid for her services so that she could also provide for her family. There were a host of spiritual and temporal means by which the people of Vrededorp were drawn towards membership of the churhes.

Islam was the most prominent religion among the Indians, coloured and the Cape coloureds. During this period the people of Fietas were very conscious of their religion and practising their religion was very important to them. Young and old were very punctual in their prayers and regularly per-formed Islamic duties. On this point one interviewee stated that: "there was so much respect for the dean (religion) in those days you know. We used to hold Qur'an with respect, kissing it when opening and closing it, but it was all part of our tradition then, it was part of our culture. Today it is not like that". Religious schools were also scattered around Fietas and reflected the seriousness in which people viewed their religion. In fact being schooled in religion was more important that being schooled in a secular institute.[14]

The Malay expression of Islam was different from the Indian expres-sion thereof. To an extent both groups had their own mosques and followed their own customs. For example, the mosque in 23rd street was known as the Malay mosque and the one in 15th street was known as the Indian mosque. One interviewee from an academic source said the following about the nature of Islam in Fietas: "The 23rd street mosque was known as the Malay mosque and the 15th street mosque as the Indian mosque. The Malay on our street

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[12]   C, Van Wyk: Now Listen Here, The Life and Times of Bill Jardine. p 19.
[13]   Interview: Mr Jooste.
[14]   N, Carrim: Fietas A Social History of Pageview: 1948 – 1988. p60 – 61.

(11th street) would rather go to the 23rd street mosque than go to the 15th mosque, even if they had to pass the 15th street mosque on their way. The Indians would do the same. That's just the way it was".[15]

It was not that people disliked one another; they only preferred associating with a culture and religion that they were used to. There was no negativity surrounding their preferences. To most residents and ex residents of Fietas, Muslims and non Muslims, the 15th street and the 23rd street mosques were landmarks of Fietas. Both mosques still exist today and represent one of the most momentous aspects of Fietas.

In Fietas during the celebration of *Eid*, the Islamic day of celebration and festivities after the Ramadan fasting, the same atmosphere of happiness and sharing prevailed as with other festivals: "when Eid came we gave samoosas and biscuits to all our neighbours, our Hindu neighbours, our coloured neighbours and everybody participated in the festivities".[16]

Although the people of Fietas were religious they did not discriminate against other religions, they celebrated the different religions with one another and shared religious celebrations with their neighbours. Everybody participated in *Eid* and the Hindu festival, Divali which marked it as a memorable and special day for the entire neighbourhood. Ms Irene Dunn, one of the interviewees, said the following about the issue: "during the month of Ramadan when it's the Muslim's Christmas then we also celebrate together with them. When its Christmas then they celebrate with us. Most of my friends were Muslims and Indians because we grew up together".[17] Christmas day was just as special as any other religious celebrations; it was an official holiday nationwide which made Christmas even more festive.

Most vivid in peoples' memories were the New Year's celebrations. It connected everyone more directly than the other religious celebrations primarily because they were entering a new year which meant the same to everyone, irrespective of their religious affiliations. New Year's celebrations were grandiose occasions (fiestas) that took weeks of planning and organising. Marches were coordinated through all the streets.[18]

Religious celebrations drew people to the city centre and it was also a time when the people of Vrededorp and Pageview came together to celebrate the events and shared the festivities. Fortitude of collectivity was essential to the survival of the inhabitants of Vrededorp. One aspect the interviewees agreed on was that the spirit of togetherness and helpfulness which is not as strong as it used to be. Religion was central to the inhabitants of Vrededorp. Years after the destruction all the interviewees still speak fondly of the days

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[15] N, Carrim: <u>Fietas A Social History of Pageview: 1948 – 1988.</u> p60.
[16] Interview : Dr E, Jassat in <u>Fietas A Social History of Pageview: 1948 – 1988.</u> by N, Carrim. p60.
[17] Interview: Ms Irene Hilda Rouelph.
[18] N, Carrim: <u>Fietas A Social History of Pageview: 1948 – 1988.</u> p64.

and nights of fulfilment despite their poverty, they were the most privileged people in the country, black or white.

Apart from the fact that the people celebrated religious celebrations together there were also other ways in which they helped one another. It was a particularly strong business community and the cluster of Indian owned shops appealed to clientele of white shoppers across the Witwatersrand. They also served in the specific needs of the community. A white ex resident of Vrededorp, Mr Jooste said the following about the ways in which the Indians helped the community: "The Indians were very nice to us, they would give us food or we would do little things and they would pay us. They helped us a lot with buying food on credit, buying clothes on credit; they did a lot for the poor people that much I can tell.[19] It was quite hard to decide which side to choose because on the one hand they had the government making promises and on the other hand the people who they were suppose to hate were the ones that offered more help … honestly, honestly the Indian community used to help us a lot".[20]

The Indian community of Pageview was the lifeline to so many inhabitants of Vrededorp; they gave out goods on credit and did not pressurise customers on debt payment, because they understood how poor they were. The people of Vrededorp appreciated this gesture. Though there were still reports of prejudice, the neighbourly affection discouraged racism in many ways and racist acts were avoided. Like the majority of communities in South Africa, the people of Vrededorp avoided situations that would require quarrels and in many cases they just stayed away from the location of Pageview.

When interviewed about their life in Pageview, many successful Indian businessmen spoke nostalgically of the poor conditions in which they grew up in Vrededorp. One respondent recalled life in Vrededorp: "you never had to worry about your children. If you were hungry, you would pop into the nearest house and there would be a plate waiting for you. That type of social harmony you won't find anywhere in the world. In Vrededorp there was genuine love although there was no comfort".

When interviewing the ex residents of Fietas one aspect they all commented on was the spirit of sharing that developed among the inhabitants of Fietas; all the people interviewed could recall several instances where they were helped out of tight situations by members of their community. The harshness of their circumstances created a bond that brought the people together.[21]

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[19] Interviwee: Mr Mauel Pedro.
[20] Interview: Mr Manuel Pedro.
[21] S.K, Househnecht & J. G, Pankhurst: <u>Family, Religion and Social Change in Diverse Societies</u>. p 224.

Fietas: negative aspects and difficult life

Fietas is remembered as lovely neighbourhood where people loved one another, but at the same time it had its drawbacks. The way Fietas was constructed turned the neighbourhood into a place of backyards and alley-ways criminals in many instances used to escape from the police. Many people lived in backyards as tenants, for example, blacks who were employed as domestic workers who did laundry work. Many of those families were particularly poor, black and white; had come to Johannesburg in their droves hoping they could make their fortunes in the city or at least gain steady employment in the city, but they were living in poverty in Fietas.

Poor living conditions associated with contaminated water, inadequate or no sanitation facilities, a lack of services such as electricity, and the constant threat of flooding, landslides or industrial pollution, particularly in the appalling overcrowded areas exposed the poor to severe environmental health risks and their lifestyle was to the detriment of the adjacent neighbourhoods.

In Fietas, the cottages comprised two rooms and a kitchen. Eight to ten people lived in one cottage. There were four cottages per stand and only one toilet outside for the four cottages there was no bathroom in the cottages so the basin in the kitchen was in many instances used as a bathroom. People waited in long queues to use the toilet outside the cottage. Very few people had the privilege of owing refrigerators and all the cottages had coal stoves; very few had electric stoves.[22]

In the 1920s Johannesburg was swamped with new immigrants, In the absence of alternative accommodation for the settlers, the slum population of Johannesburg, and especially the population of Fietas expanded after World War 2. At the same time rent profiteering flourished exacerbated by the harsh living conditions in the yards. There was a wide spread anxiety about health, crime, labour productivity and political instability on the part of the people of Fietas Poor whites, especially those who wanted something to be done about their living conditions. Although majority of whites lived in Vrededorp, a negligible number lived in Pageview and they did not like the living condi-tions they were placed in.[23]

All the people interviewed confirmed that there was a communal unity in Fietas, but at the same time the people tended to interact with people from their own culture, race and religion. Some inhabitants isolated themselves to avoid rejection and prejudice. One interviewee was forthright on the topic: "yes we use to mix with the whities we use to be friends with them but not friends friends as the people now, we never really bothered with them

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[22] N, Carrim: <u>Fietas A Social History of Pageview: 1948 – 1988.</u> p 24.
[23] N, Carrim: <u>Fietas A Social History of Pageview: 1948 – 1988.</u> p 24.

because they didn't bother with us, the whites stayed in other streets, we were from 14th street, we just say hi hi … we see one another when we go to the shops but otherwise we didn't bother with them".[24]

An ex resident of Vrededorp also confirmed that the people of Pageview never bothered to go to Vrededorp; the only time the individuals of Vrededorp interacted with them was during the week at the market, because the people of Pageview specifically the Indians were business-oriented and supplied the people of Fietas with goods and commodities.

While the people of Fietas "interacted" with one another it would be incorrect to conclude that racism was not present in the area. The racial restrictions that were applied to public transport, platforms, toilets, benches, restaurants, ticket counters, waiting rooms, staircases, beaches bridges and other facilities helped to enhance racial consciousness and racial conceit so people could not deny that they did not fully comprehend what was happening in the outside world.[25] On this point one interviewee who was born in 1962 noted that up until 1990 there were still public amenities that had the signs "white only" written on them. They encountered such discriminative labels on a daily basis and were encouraged by the apartheid government to discriminate towards people of other races.

Under normal circumstances whites were supposed to have better living conditions than the blacks and coloureds, because the South African government at that point catered only for whites, but because of their poverty the whites were also marginalised and in some instances forgotten by the government,[26] as one of the people we spoke to noted; "The only time we received attention or saw any traces of the government was when there was time for election. They need our vote so they would come by with their representatives. Bring food and provisions and distributed them to people. Compete for votes. When election time was over, they are gone".[27] The general view of the majority of inhabitants of Vrededorp was that Vrededorp was a place for impoverished Afrikaans speaking people who felt rejected and marginalised. They wanted something to be done about the absence of effective urban governance. They wanted the government to ensure employment, shelter, infrastructure and services for the people of Vrededorp.[28]

Large scale removals, frequently targeted at people of colour took place in all the major towns from the mid 1930s on the basis of the 1934 Slums Act. Slum clearances removed people from neighbourhoods shared by

24 Interview: Ms Irene Hilda Rouelph.
25 D, Smith: The Apartheid City and Beyond, Urbanisation and Social Change in South Afrcsa. p 178.
26 S, Parnell: Race, Power and Urban Control: Johannesburg's Inner City Slum – Yards, 1910 – 1923. p 633.
27 Interview: Mr Jooste.
28 S, Parnell: Victims, Villains and Fixers, The Urban Environment and Johannesburg's Poor. p 835.

mixed race groups to racially segregated public housing. From the mid 1930s, proposals for the removal and resettlement of Pageview's Indian and coloured population became a lively party political issue among whites.

When the National party came into power in 1948 no time was lost in creating the legal and bureaucratic machinery to undertake such relocations. They placed the clearance of the inhabitants of Pageview high on their agenda; partly because of the demands from the white electorate in neighbouring Vrededorp and partly because they saw it as an opportunity to include the Pageview clearance in their plans for the clearance of all non whites from the western suburbs of Johannesburg .South Africa was already a very segregated country before 1948. However, apartheid made segregation more discriminatory towards non whites.[29]

With the increasing level of poverty, people became pimps, elicit liquor sellers, bottle collectors, and cab drivers and did other odd jobs; some even turned to a criminal lifestyle and became robbers, petty thieves, burglars, gangsters and many more. There was an increase in prostitution in the older and poorer working class quarters around the city and Fietas was no exception. The slum underground thrived on illicit gold dealing, prostitution and theft, but most lucrative of all was the forbidden activity of illegal brewing and selling of alcohol. The consequences of such occupations and way of life were that the crime rate increased.

During the depression a significant number of working women in Fordsburg, Vrededorp turned to casual sex liaisons in order to supplement their insufficient salaries[30] and in many instances it gave way to a full time career of prostitution that carried on for decades until they were forcibly removed .One of the people said the following about Vrededorp: "we grew up there in the poor area in Vrededorp… it was a very poor place, very poor till today, money wasn't much then, many people did things for money then".[31] Another interviewee had this to say, "most people had to make soup to make money … it was a poor poor area".[32] Like the other people I talked to she concluded that the poor lifestyle was an aspect of Fietas that she never wanted to return to even though the people in the community helped one another in times of need and helped one another not to feel the extent of their poverty; which, according to her, was the negative characteristic of Fietas.

There was a community centre that helped the poor and made provision for them, but the community centre also required substantial financial assistance. People donated food and money to the church so that they could provide in the needs of the less privileged, but it was not enough

[29] K, Beavon: Johannesburg: the Making and Shaping of the City. p 192.
[30] C, Van Onselen: Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886 - 1914, 1 New Babylon. p 32.
[31] Interview: Mr Jooste.
[32] Interview: Ms Irene Hilda Rouelph.

to rid the neighbourhood of poverty and crime: "People really helped each other, for example if someone didn't have bread another person would provide it...The older people use to smoke dagga and things like that and drink alcohol; there was a high crime rate but not as high as that of today".[33]

Statistics showed that the western areas of Johannesburg from 1930 – 1962 were plagued with violent crime, assault, robbery, rape and murder. The South African Police at that point struggled to curb the violence which led to some inhabitants trying to curb the increase in crime themselves. Community policing initiatives came to the foreground from the late 1920s until all the residents were forcibly removed from the districts in the late 1960s.

The western areas of Johannesburg were never particularly safe areas to live in due to different reasons and from the 1930s onwards the situation worsened. The crime, alcohol abuse and violence all form part of what was essentially a working class community response to the problem of having to live with the highly repressive, politically enforced systems of inequalities in South Africa.[34]

Severe restrictions constrained the economic activity of all South Africans who were not white. Blacks were barred from many occupations and the limited trading that was allowed was restricted to specific areas. Due to the fact that they were poor and looking for effective means of accumulating wealth, they turned to alternative ways of earning more money such as the illegal brewing of alcohol.

One of the Interviewees, Ms Irene Dunn made these statements on the nature of illegal alcohol brewing in Fietas: "they use to make the Barberton and others made Nkomboti, which was the African beer. They sue to make lots of alcohol then when the police come. If I stay in 18th street then I give a sign...go tell everybody clean up the police are around, then they would throw up the beer. They use to drink yes they use to drink".[35] Liquor was not to be sold to any black person which was part of the reason why they resorted to illegal brewing. Slum areas of the western suburbs like Fietas had a high level of illegal brewing; the brewers had white, coloured and black customers. The flourishing black market was a major area of contact between Africans and whites in slums.

It is important to note that the prohibition era that swept through America and the rest of European nations during the early decades of the 20th century also influenced South Africa. The history behind prohibition is as follows, In America and the rest of Europe women and children consumed huge amounts of rum, cider, whiskey and beer to celebrate election days,

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[33] Interview: Mr Manuel Pedro.
[34] D, Goodhew: The People's Police – Force: Communal Policing Initiatives in the Western Areas of Johannesburg, circa 1930 – 62. p 447.
[35] Interview: Ms Irene Hilda Rouelph.

births, ministerial ordinations and many more events, to enhance strength, reduce fatigue, ward off diseases, for barn raising ,.

Alcohol was a valued part of their culture; its consumption was most common among the working class. For many people the sight and smell of alcohol, prostitution and crime conjured up to the anti-alcohol conditioning they learned about in church and school.[36]

The dangers of immorality and disorder threatened the composition of societies across Europe. Something had to be done about it. It was at this point that women and men, churches and community organisations took a stand to fight the disorder in the society and maintain social discipline. They believed that using political and religious monopoly to eliminate the legal manufacturing and selling of alcohol would solve the major social and economic problems of the American Society. They turned to the state for regulations. Form the early 1900s there were strong prohibitionist fighting against alcohol sales and they continued to spread that initiative across the globe.[37]

Being a country that was previously colonised by two great European nations, the Dutch and the British, South Africa was also caught up in the wave of prohibition and its prohibition laws were only lifted in 1963. Many people objected to the selling of alcohol and liquor consumption, because men, black or white, were allegedly unable to control their sexual desires when inebriated. Apart from this, they also believed that drinking provoked men to commit crime, personal violence and retinue of gamblers, pimps and prostitutes. Consequently, any form of brewing that occurred in South Africa before 1963 was illegal.

Before the prohibition laws were removed anti crime drives in the slum yards had been conducted under the guise of sanitary inspections during which the confiscation and prosecution for elicit offences and elicit selling of alcohol was the major objective. The loudest opposition to liquor came from the police and those responsible for crime prevention. Limited policing powers and prevalence of brewing meant that unusual measures were adopted in the fight to prevent brewing.[38]

The lifting of the prohibition laws had negative consequences, there was an increase in the consumption and production of alcohol, even though people produced alcohol during the banning of alcohol sales, there was the constant fear that they could get caught and they were still cautious of their means of production and alcohol sale was at equilibrium. However, because

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[36] M. J, Heale: Twentieth Century America, Politics and Power in the United States 1900 – 2000. p 66.

[37] G, Levine & C, Reinarman: From Prohibition to Regulation: Lessons from Alcohol Policy for Drug Policy. p 463.

[38] S, Parnell: Race, Power and Urban Control: Johannesburg's Inner City Slum – Yards, 1910 – 1923. p 634.

the prohibition laws were lifted people abused alcohol, specifically the poor working class inhabitants of Johannesburg, including Fietas .There was an increase in the consumption of alcohol and domestic violence in Fietas.[39]

Goodbye Fietas

The consequences of the Group Areas Act and Forced Removals

Pageview was among the first of the non–white areas to be declared a white zone and scheduled for immediate clearance under the Group Areas Act. "What they did not know was that that would really affect the severely poor people of Vrededorp they were trying to help, we really relied on the provisions made to us by the Indian community, and they were very nice to us, nicer than the government".[40]

Soon after coming to power in 1948 the National Party placed the clearance of Indians from Pageview high on its agenda of racial engineering for Johannesburg. The new government showed from the start that it intended to check and eliminate the trends towards inter racial integration and created legislation to effect the change. The theme was white supremacy; the nationalist party wanted the Pass Laws, Bantu Education Act, Immorality Act, Population Registration Act, Separate Amenities Act, the migrant labour system and the Bantustan systems to be part of the legislation. The Group Areas Act of 1950 empowered the government to proclaim residential and business areas for particular race groups and areas in town for the ownership of particular race groups, the Act was applied to the provision of amenities for entertainment and access to pleasure resorts like parks and beaches.[41]

As the government went ahead with the implementation of this policy, the Group Areas Act underwent important revisions from 1952 to 1977 to further strengthen its implementation. Under a Native Resettlement Act of 1954, the government moved the African residents of the western suburbs of Johannesburg to a new area called Meadowlands, Orlando West, and Orlando East, which collectively became known as Soweto. Sophiatown was rezoned for whites and renamed Triomf in 1956 and the southern part of the district was set aside for coloured ownership and occupation in 1957, they were moved to Noordgesig, Bosmont, Albertsville and Coronationville.

The removals were carried out on the basis of the amended Groups Areas Act of 1957 which intended to impose control over inter racial property transactions and inter racial changes in occupation of land. The

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[39] S, Parnell: <u>Race, Power and Urban Control: Johannesburg's Inner City Slum – Yards, 1910 – 1923</u>. p 634.

[40] Interviwee: Mr Mauel Pedro.

[41] N, Carrim: <u>Fietas A Social History of Pageview: 1948 – 1988.</u> p 88.

removals were carried out with the precision of a military operation and left over a thousand residents of Johannesburg homeless.

Black South Africans were completely denied ownership rights in South Africa. Their townships were constantly scrutinised and administered by the local agencies of the central state. The inhabitants of Fietas protested against the forced removals, blacks for example tried to resist removal through civic groups or the ANC, but the government was determined to keep its promises to the white electorate. Although they organised protests and campaigned their eviction, the bustling neighbourhood of Fietas had come to an end.[42]

By the late 50s Pageview was under threat of being cleared for occupation by whites because of the Populations Act and the Groups Area Act of 1950. White Coloured, Asian and Black people could only to occupy properties that were restricted to members of their race and district they were assigned to live in.

According to the Group Areas Act, inhabitants had to sell their properties to the government who, in turn, would rehabilitate the area for the new inhabitants. Fietas was at this point declared a white area. One of the interviewees, Ms Irene Dunn, who was questioned on the matter, replied as follows: "We were all very sad when we had to leave, very sad but that time we couldn't fight against the government we couldn't say no when the Boer said we had to move, and then we had to move. It really broke us, all I can say is we wish we could get Fietas back again and be a happy family like we use to".[43]

From 1957 onwards the people of Pageview were given eviction orders. 1976 major removals in Pageview began. By 1977 security forces accompanied by other departmental officials and dogs forcibly removed traders from their shops in Pageview, they were forced to relocate to the oriental plaza .To many the main drawback of staying in Vrededorp was the close proximity of other races.[44]

To every person of colour living in South Africa, the Group Areas Act was a major blow. Indian trade across South Africa and Fietas was not spared from the pain. Hundreds of Indian traders were moved from central shopping areas to their own districts. One of the people interviewed, an academic source, said the following about the consequences for his family: "it breaks my heart to go through the central of Standerton (a thriving town he lived in before the forced removals) now. My people used to run that". By the early 1970s, 5078 Indian traders were barred from occupying their existing

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[42]   T.R.H, Davenport: <u>South Africa, A Modern History</u>. p 539.
[43]   Interview: Ms Irene Hilda Rouelph.
[44]   South African History Timelines: <u>Fietas Pageview, Johannesburg.</u>

premises in terms of the Groups Areas Act. Only 1277 were resettled in business centres subsidised by the government.[45]

The Oriental Plaza in Fordsburg was created by the government as a segregated shopping centre for Indian traders. Realising that the 170 Pageview shops could not survive if forced to move to Lenasia, the local authorities agreed to create an Indian business centre. From 1974 onwards the authorities forcibly relocated the merchants who had previously traded in the flourishing ethnic districts of Pageview's 14th street and elsewhere in the city. Although some of the traders from the more marginal and less attractive sites in Pageview were prepared to move, the successful 14th street traders, who owned their properties, were particularly reluctant to do so.[46] Many of them refused to close their shops in Pageview, extensions were granted until June 1976.

The people who had the necessary resources obtained temporary injunctions against eviction and continued to make recourse to the courts, which in several significant instances, gave decisions that enabled residents to stay in Pageview. Others were unsuccessful in their attempts to fight government and were advised to take heed of the eviction notices. In the end the government still had to resort to physical action to eject them some of them from Fietas.

The basis of their opposition other than the injustice of being moved was that they would be tenants in the plaza and storage space would be expensive. Their margin for bargaining on prices would shrink, there were restrictions on what could be sold in each shop and with it their profits and possibly their power to continue attracting customers from across the central Witwatersrand. Their relocation devastated their friends and customers in Pageview; they had lived together for decades and all of a sudden everything was taken from them. The move also affected the inhabitants of Vrededorp who had relied on the hospitality of the Indians from Pageview for decades. Some residents of Vrededorp went as far as coming together to form a group, that was known as the Urban Tenants to fight the eviction, but they lost the battle.[47]

Some of the first evicted families remembered being unceremoniously loaded on trucks with all their belongings and driven to a patch of field south west of the city where they were dumped with their possessions on a heap. They spent the next few days without any shelter. Only later did the city council build the first of the matchbox houses in which they lived.[48]

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[45] S.K, Househnecht & J. G, Pankhurst: <u>Family, Religion and Social Change in Diverse Societies</u>. p 212.

[46] K, Beavon: <u>Johannesburg the Making and Shaping of the City</u>. p 193.

[47] K, Beavon: <u>Johannesburg the Making and Shaping of the City</u>. p 193.

[48] C, Van Wyk: <u>Now Listen Here, The Life and Times of Bill Jardine</u>. p 76.

The bitterness that came with the forced removals made it impossible for those who had built some form of relationship among members of other races to stay in touch, firstly they were being relocated to separate areas; secondly, they were prohibited by the government to continue such interactions and thirdly many of them felt betrayed by the members of the Vrededorp community. Many inhabitants of Pageview felt that they had helped poor Afrikaners in times of need. Now that the situation required the Afrikaners to return the favour, they did nothing about it. Not all members of the community of Vrededorp rejected the forced removals, some were happy about the changes going on.

Conclusion

The suburb of Fietas during the period of the 50s to the 70s was filled with life, vibrancy and decay. There was always a sense of foreboding from the day Fietas was created, the reason for that was that the people always felt like they were living on an edge, firstly because they were poor and were made conscious of the fact that every meal they ate could be the last. The people of Fietas were shunned and rejected by a government that either discriminated against people of other races, or was just not concerned about the well-being of the poor. During the process of interviewing the people and researching the topic, it was noted that about the majority of them remembered how poor the Fietas neighbourhood was. Surely, they enjoyed life there, but at the same time, it was also difficult for them to ignore the bad conditions that surrounded them. Although many of their responses to the questions contradicted one another and although they chose not to remember certain aspects of their past, it was their story to tell. Fietas will always remain a part of their lives.

In doing this research, the researcher gave the people of Fietas the opportunity to share their own stories and let the people of South Africa know what life was like for them. It was a history of survival, love, hate, hope and forgiveness

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Sixth Oral History Conference 2009

(Cape Town, Western Cape)

The politics of collecting and curating voices

The problem of language in the explication and interpretation of oral history

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My presentation today focuses on the Zulu praise poetry for Zulu kings. Zulus are renowned for their warrior history. Crafted around the warrior history is the art of praise poetry for heroes, particularly for kings. What distinguished the king's praise poem were the lengthy-historical accounts of the reign of the king, his character and his vision. Maphumulo and Thwala, (1989;28) describe praise poetry for the Zulus as the reflection of the history of the Zulu nation from its formation and growth.

But a closer scrutiny of the Zulu praise lyrics reveals that they were not just a reflection of history of the formation of the Zulu nation and the events which characterised the reigns of a particular king. Praise lyrics are not, like tales, handed down in free style; they have fixed texts which are handed down unchanged from generation to generation (Van Jaarsveld, 1990:18).

Prominent in the crafting of Zulu kings' praise poetry was the usage of symbols, metaphors and similes. But one needs to have insight into the Zulu cultural expression in order to fully appreciate the meaning contained in those symbols, metaphors and similes. Caution must be taken though by any reader of the Zulu kings' poetry that meaning can be classified as both esoteric and exoteric.

A good example for both the exoteric and esoteric meaning of the kings' praise poetry is found in the closer examination of the section in King Shaka's praise poetry which reads as follows:

> *Ulusiba gojela ngalaphaya kweNkandla,*
> *Lugojela, njalo ludl'amadoda.*
> *Indlondlo yakithi kwaNobamba,*
> *Indlondl'ehamb'ibang'amacala.*
> (Nyembezi, 1958;22).

> (The feather that swallowed beyond Nkandla
> It swallows as it eats men
> Old-Mamba from Nobamba
> Old-Mamba that goes around causing trouble)

An exoteric meaning of the above section could be that Shaka was like a feared snake (mamba) that goes around killing men. Many people today know King Shaka as a merciless tyrant who senselessly killed his own

people. But looking at the above section from the esoteric view, one is exposed to the heart of the Zulu religious belief system and iconography.

I believe many people today regard the Zulu people as the most violent among the people of South Africa. This could be the result of two things, such as, the work of those people who deliberately misinform and distort information about the Zulus because they are jealous of the achievements and the contribution by the Zulu people in the advancement of the history of African society, or a result of mere ignorance and a lack of positive information disseminated by the Zulus (themselves) about themselves.

I personally don't want to believe that there could be anyone out there who can set out to distort the information about other fellow countrymen. Instead I want to believe that there is a lack of relevant information regarding what Zulu people are and today, ladies and gentlemen, I am here to try to provide (through analysis of the praise poetry) a glimpse into the Zulu world view.

Firstly one might ask why I decided to use only Shaka's and Dingane's praise poetry out of so many Zulu kings in the history of the Zulus. The reason is twofold: that is, the time factor and the prominence of the two kings in South African history. The death of Shaka on 24 September is today celebrated as the heritage holiday and 16 December, which was the day of the Battle of Blood River (used to be Dingaan's Day) is now a day of reconciliation.

But today is not about singing praises to these two great kings, instead today is about using their praise poems with the aim of highlighting the esoteric interpretation of the symbolic usage contained in praise poetry by the Zulu bards. The aim is also to demonstrate that Africans were not just a primitive society interested only in chasing one another around for the sake of raiding the cattle and women to fulfill their savage appetites and quench their lustful thirst for sex. Africans were a sophisticated people like any other society in the world.

Now let us closely examine the meaning contained in the symbolism used in the above section from King Shaka's praise poem. King Shaka is referred to as both *Usiba* (feather) and *Indlondlo* (old black mamba). The Zulus refer to the old black Mamba as *Indlondlo* because of the belief that when the mamba gets really old it develops a feather on its head (just above/between) its eyes.

The old mamba is regarded as a symbol of the presence of the ancestral wisdom and authority. It is always associated with the diviners and healing. It is the most feared snake and the longest in the land of the Zulus. It is also believed that, when threatened, it rises tall, almost to the height of a human being. It is these characteristics that give the black mamba its status within the Zulu belief system.

And looking at King Shaka's portrait one is confronted by similar characteristics in terms of appearance. Shaka was tall with a feather on his forehead just between/above the eyes. Shaka is also regarded as one of the military geniuses Africa has produced. He is always portrayed as a man gifted with enormous wisdom obtainable only from the ancestors.

The position of the feather also requires further and closer examination, using parallels that could be drawn from other African and world cultures or religions. The Egyptian parallel to the Zulu old black mamba is the cobra known as *Uraeus,* always seen graphically coiled on the forehead of the royal crown worn by the pharaohs and queens.

But before digging further into the symbolism used in Shaka's praise poetry, let us take a short glimpse at King Dingane's praise poem with the aim of establishing the links and relationships in symbols and the symbolism found in both poems. In Dingane's praise poem there is a section that goes as follows:

> *Isizib'esis'Mavivane, Dingane,*
> *Isizi'esinzonzo, sinzonzobele,*
> *Siminzis'umunt'eth'yageza,*
> *Waze washona nangesicoco,*
> *Ngob'uCoco yena ngimbonile,*
> *Obephuma lapha kwaSodlabela;*
> *Ungama yena wasemaPhisen'angavuma*
> (Nyembezi, 1958;46).

> The deep pool at Mavivane, Dingane
> A pool that drowned a person having a bath
> He sunk through his head-ring
> But uCoco was from KwaSodlabela homestead
> Even Ngama from Maphiseni homestead can testify.

On the surface the section from King Dingane's praise poem refers to the incident always cited as the act by Dingane drowning his brother Mhlangana under the instruction of his aunt, Mkabayi. But looking closer at the words towards the end of the section, it becomes clear that the bard is trying to reveal something else about what really happened on that day. The twist occurs when the bard uses the word for the head ring as the name of a person who came from Sondlabela homestead. The bard also draws on the name of Ngama from Maphisa as a witness of something crucial.

The key symbolism in Dingane's praise poem is the usage of a deep pool. In African tradition a pool is synonymous with the womb. Water is associated with birth and the continuation of living as the symbolism reflected in Ukuthomba and Umthombo (the well). King Dingane was per-

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ceived as the giver of life to a people who had suffered and died under the "brutal" rein of King Shaka. King Dingane's reign was seen as a new beginning by the Zulu nation.

But there is a contrast in the section cited above, in a sense that the very object referred to as the symbolic (*isiziba*/womb) representation of the beginning of a new life is also used to end life. It is believed that King Dingane was distasteful of opposition. In fact, Dingane assassinated a lot of people including his own brothers to secure his reign. Some people regard King Dingane as more brutal when compared with King Shaka.

As cited earlier on in the paper, the positioning of the feather on King Shaka's forehead is of great importance. Black, (2008;79) compares the Egyptian's (crown) *Uraeus* snake to the third eye of enlightenment, or the eye of Siva. Black also regards the third eye as a representation of the pineal gland. Black, (2008;79) on the pineal gland and the third eye states:

> A fourth century BC Greek anatomist described it as 'the sphincter which regulates the flow of thought.

And Schwaller de Lubicz, (1961;151) states:

> And then Ra took the Eye and placed it on his brow in the likeness of a serpent. Since then, the solar eye governs the entire world because this serpent became the symbol of Ra's puissance … By this fact, the Eye of Ra which this ***neter*** bears on his brow becomes the radiating Eye, the divine Word. It thus becomes the ***uraeus***, the third eye of the King's forehead, powerful protector and destroyer of Ra's enemies.

According to the hermetic tradition, as promulgated by Seydel, (1996), the area between the two eyebrows (on the face of the human being), is the zone for the Cosmic Law's second principle – that of 'Correspondences'. The principle of correspondences states that 'as above so below'; everything has its opposite.

The association of the serpent and knowledge can be found in many other religious expressions of the world. The biblical story of creation in the Garden of Eden is a typical example. The story of Exodus in the bible is centered on the power of the rod of God carried by Moses. The first encounter of Moses with God was marked by the transformation of a staff in Moses's hand into a serpent.

Phillips, (2002:224) cites the story of Moses's burial at the place referred to as Beth-Peor, as recorded in the book of Jasher and Deuteronomy. Using both the Hebrew and Akkadian (ancient Babylonian) languages in deciphering the meanings contained in the two words, Phillips concludes

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that: *Beth* means a house, while *Peor* means a snake. And next to Beth-Peor is a structure referred to as the Snake Monument.

There is also a close association of the serpent and the water or pools. The Zulu diviners regard the deep pools as the seat of the great serpents which, during the process towards becoming a fully qualified diviner, one needs to go and fetch.

In the Sumerian version of the story of creation in the Garden of Eden, God EN.Ki, meaning 'Lord of Earth', is also known as E.A, meaning 'He Whose House is Water'; EN.KI is regarded as the one who played an instrumental role in the creation of man (Alford,1996:129). Therefore the Sumerian story helps to explain who the serpent was that spoke to Eve in the Garden of Eden. The Hebrew word for the Biblical Serpent is "***nahash***" and it comes from the root NHSH which means "to find things out, to solve secrets" (Alford, 1996:275). Alford, (1996:275) further claims that:

> The connection of the serpent symbol with the Enkiite gods lies in the African lands.

The quotation from Carpiceci's Art and History of Egypt, (1994:5) states:

> As time passed, the Nile gradually evolved into its present form, *a gigantic serpent* that began in the heart of African and wound its way, for thousands of kilometres along the Red Sea, until it found an outlet in the Mediterranean.

Alford, (1996:276) also adds that another writer (whose name is not mentioned) stated:

> … seen from the air, it looks like a gigantic snake, lazily slinking northwards to the cool Mediterranean.

Therefore the Zulus' association of the serpent and the wisdom from the ancestral world was in line with other cultures of the world which regarded the serpent as the symbol of the presence of wisdom from the higher forces and the giver of life. Bushby, (2003:238) states:

> … serpents were used as emblems of the intelligence of God.

The serpent also was later to become an emblem of medical associations around the world, for example, in 1910 the American Medical Association adopted the Aesculapius – wooden staff entwined with a single snake standing on its tail – as its insignia, and the British and French armies, World Health Organization, US Air Force Medical Service and other groups the

world over also used the single-snaked staff to identify their medical professions (Alford, 1996:239).

The feather on King Shaka's forehead is symbolic of the presence of the wisdom, power and authority of the gods and ancestors vested on him. King Shaka as the creator of the Zulu nation is seen as the embodiment of the highest intelligence of the Deities and such a notion is confirmed through the reference of King Shaka to the thunderstorm, mountain that surpasses other mountains, and the consuming wild fire.

King Dingane's referral with the pools and water suggests feminine characteristics he was associated with and the giver of life to the dying nation. The word "*Embozamo*" comes from the root "*Mbo*" which literally means shut or absolute darkness. From the oral history of the Bantu speaking people of Southern Africa, we find the legend which claims that the people came or originated from the place called *eMbo*.

Although Mbozamo is a small stream flowing pass Dukuza (Shaka's) royal palace, when it was crossed by Dingane, the pools of Mbozamo went dry. Dry pools symbolise lifelessness in the land of the Zulus. Mbozamo is supposed to be a dark river containing very dark pools associated with the beginning of a life.

In the Zulu cultural belief, a small stream that flows is associated with the menses of a girl. In IsiZulu a stream is sometimes referred to as *Umthombo*. The puberty stage of a girl is referred to as *Ukuthomba* and the girl is referred to as *Intombi*. The first menses of the Zulu girl is viewed as similar to the two twilights, which are before sunrise and after sunset. This is because the skies are red at those two moments and are similar to the blood of the menses of the girl (Ngubane, 1977).

The blood is symbolic of both the beginning of a life (birth) and the end of it (death). The manner in which the bard dwells on the incident of King Dingane's crossing the Mbozamo stream raises suspicions of something serious happening between the king and a girl who was on her menses. The death that followed afterwards shocked both Manqondo and Phampatha.

From the two praise poems cited above, it begins to surface that the two kings embody the two characteristics of God as perceived by the ancient Zulus. The Zulus perceived God as omnipresent; ruling the skies and the rivers. The skies/mountains represented the male principle while the rivers/earth represented the female principle. To the Zulus, God was both male and female. "*As God above, so was God below*"; God the creator and God the destroyer.

As a young boy I was told that when I see the rainbow, I must try to ascertain which river is it drinking from. This simple means, the rainbow is associated with the rivers or pools. And I was also told that where the rainbow drinks, there is a snake. In IsiZulu, the rainbow is called *Uthingo LweNkosazane* (rod of the Princess). The Princess of the sky is called

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UNomkhubulwane. Although the skies are associated with the male principle, *UNomkhubulwane* is the female of the sky, regarded as the naked twin to *UMvelingqangi.*

In the bible the rod of Moses is sometimes presented as a serpent capable of causing havoc, suffering and at the same time bringing about life and liberation, (Phillips, 2002:229). Central to the story of Khotso, the famous herbalist from Lusikisiki, is the "ability" to control *Inkanyamba* (serpentine cyclone/snake in the sky) and his association with *Umamlambo* (potent serpent in the river/pools), (Wood, 2007;43). *Inkanyamba* is associated with a destructive cyclone as it moves in search of its partner in the pools. This notion further illustrates an old tradition by Africans of (symbolic) associating sex/fertility with the mating of the sky and the pools through fish eagles, *Inkanyambas* and the rainbows.

All symbolism cited above represents both destruction/death and life. They represent the fertility and sexuality of nature and the universe respectively. They are the manifestation of the duality of life that recognised both the living and the dead as one unit comprising two different poles (evolution and involution or "as above so as below").

The reigns and lives of the two kings as recorded in their praise poems illustrate the conceptual perception of Cosmic Law by Zulus.

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"Too vulgar and socially embarrassing, yet exceptionally and temporally acceptable": Songs performed in the rituals of passage to womanhood in rural KwaZulu-Natal

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Introduction

The Zulu people are generally very respectful in terms of behaviour and utterances. However, there would be instances where and when this respect is compromised and suspended for the general good of educating or correcting particular trends of behaviour in society. This paper seeks to highlight this element with the songs performed at the rituals of passage where young girls mature to womanhood. These songs are too vulgar in nature and could not be performed from this platform. When they are performed, they are acceptable and no one seeks to interrupt or stop their performances. Almost everyone in the audience of elderly people would clap or sing along, perhaps in appreciation of the old tradition or the importance of the message.

Methodology

One would visit some of the rituals, record these songs and also access whatever there is and analyse them in terms of the messages they express. One would also translate these songs because the paper will be written in English.

The songs and the rituals

In the Zulu nation there are some rituals that are performed at different stages of females and males. This paper, however, only looks at female rituals. There are basically two major rituals for girls in the Zulu culture. Such rituals are performed when the girl reaches puberty and when she is thanked for staying a virgin until a stage where she has freedom to choose a man or to get married. The first one is called *umhlonyana* and the second one, *umemulo*.

Umhlonyana

When a girls reaches puberty she would inform the elders and then she is put into a house (a rondavel), where she is advised by elders on how to take care of herself and remain a virgin until she is ripe and ready to be married. The importance of remaining a virgin is emphasised.

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While she is kept in the house, her peers will keep her company and during that time they will sing songs that are suitable for the occasion.

When the Zulu beer is well fermented, a goat is slaughtered for the girl and then the next day she goes out with her peers to sing and dance on the dancing site. It sometimes happens that a cow is slaughtered, but normally it is a goat that is used for performing the ritual.

Most of the songs sung on this day are songs that emphasise good behavior and discourage bad behaviour and these songs are vulgar and frank .

Umemulo

When the girl becomes matured or is about to get married, the head of the family decides that it is time to perform the ritual of *Umemulo*. The goat will be slaughtered on the day she enters the hut. The goat is for reporting to the ancestors that the girl has grown up and the ritual would be performed. The blessings and protection of the ancestors are requested.

While kept in the hut, the girl is properly advised on how to be a good woman. Her peers will sing and rehearse the dance moves for the big day. The father slaughters a cow and the beer is brewed prior to the occasion. .

The songs

Ncamisile Makhambeni (MaGumede) observes that:

> "Society and its problems form the basis of the author's inspiration. In his work the writer expresses views of life as well as experiences of the society in which he lives" (Makhambeni 1988:4).

The same thing can be said about the songs that are going to be quoted in this section. These songs respond to the challenges and problems faced by the society and seek to give solutions and guidance for a better society. Only a few of the songs that are sung during *umhlonyana* and *umemulo* and during the Reed Dance Festival (Umhlanga) will be given here.

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Song No.	Zulu Version	Translated	Comments
1	Emzimbeni wam… Angiyazi lento Angiyazi ngempel' uma Ukhisi angiwazi khona Yin leyo? angiwaz ngempel' uma Ukulala angikwazi Kona yin leyo Angikwazi ngempel uma	In my body … I don't know this thing I really don't know this I don't know a kiss What is that? I don't know it, I swear by my mother Having sex I don't know it, What is it? I don't know it, I swear by my mother.	This girl pretends that she does not know what a kiss and sex are. It is ironic that she swears by her mother even though she is lying. A mother is only sworn by when one is telling the truth.
2	Uyangala ngempela na ? Amagwegwana Awuvule amathanga ngibone Ngibone amagwegwana	Are you really dumping me You crooked legs Open your thighs	
3	yangibulal' inkumbulo yendoda "hha"hha" Telephone silindel' utelephone Telephone,telephone silindel utelephone	I miss sleeping with a man "ha" "ha" (laughter) We are waiting for the telephone Telephone, we are waiting for the telephone	This girl misses sex 'cos the man is far away. Note that "we" means others as well.
4	Mahle amathanga ntombi Awuphenduke ubheke lena Mahle amathanga ntombi Mahle,awu mahle amathanga Ntombi awuphenduke ubheke lena	Your thighs are beautiful girl Turn around and face that side Your thighs are beautiful girl They are so beautiful Turn around and face that side	This comes from an old tradition of *ukushikila*. The boys would ask the girls to turn around and show their thighs.
5	Umgebe,umgebe walala nomgebe We ndoda, o, walala nomgebe wendoda Umgebe, umgebe walala	This is an old and sexually useless man, You slept with an old and sexually useless man.	In the Zulu culture it is not allowed to talk openly about the failings of a man in bed. You only discuss this with the female

	nomgebe wendoda		elders of the family and a solution is reached.
6	Le ngane yakho iyafeba. Ibhanqa amadoda azogwazana. Amadoda. Ebanga isifebe, isifebe unondindwa Umalala epayipini,muvuleleni ibhaybheli Khona ezoya esontweni eyofuna amadoda. Azikho iziyalo la izalwa khona. Azikho iziyalo la izalwa khona. Ithi ifika emthangaleni ikhumule idilozi ililahle phansi "Faka phakathi 2bhobho igema" Azikho iziyalo la izalwa khona.	This child of yours is a bitch She loves many men simultaneously These men will stab one another Fighting over this bitch The useless whore, open the Bible for her, So she will go to church to look for men there There are no good teachings at home There are no good teachings at home When she arrives in a place unseen She throws down her underwear "Put it inside, it costs 20 cents" There are no good teachings at home	This song criticizes a girl who has many men. Ironically it says that she must be given a bible so that she can go to church and search for men there.
7	Intomb enjani lena Elala nosibari wayo Isoka likadadewabo Bayibambile izolo Lokuthi sbari sbari Kanti ulala naye Lokuthi sbari sbari Kanti ulala naye Ngoba ulala naye Yini ungavele umqome Ngoba ulala naye Yini ungavel' umqome	What type of a girl is this She sleeps with her sister's man Her sister's man She was caught yesterday You always say it is your brother-in-law, whereas you sleep with him You always say it is your brother-in-law, whereas you sleep with him Because you sleep with him Why don't you love him openly? Because you sleep with him Why don't you love him openly	In Zulu culture men are allowed to take many women as their wives. This is why the girl that sleeps with her brother-in-law is encouraged to openly fall in love with him.
8	Uban' owashay' ucingo	Who made a call?	This song is about a

	Wuw' owashay' ucingo Wathi kugul' umntanami Kanti ukhumbul' umthondo Nguwe owashay' ucingo	It's who that made a call Saying my child is sick Whereas you were missing my penis It's you who made a call.	woman who missed sleeping with her man and she lied that a child was sick so that the man could return home.
9	Ubusuku bayizol angilalanga Angilalanga x4 Ubusuku bayizolo Bekuwubumishimishi Ubumoshomosho Angilalanga x5	Last night I didn't sleep I didn't sleep Last night It was hot in bed It was really hot I didn't sleep	This song is about steamy sexual intercourse enjoyed by the woman.
10	Wema kaNomthandazo x2 Awukhulul' uNomthandazo x2 Awu ungjayvela kamnandi entathakusa wangjayvela kamnandi	You mother of Nomthandazo Release Nomthandazo She sexually moves for me nicely In the dawn She sexually moves for me nicely	Nomthandazo visits her boyfriend without her parents' permission and gives him hot sex. The man asks the mother to release her to visit him with their permission
11	Wematshitshi qomani Ayiyek iprivacy Le ntomb aylalanga Ingane kababa Sebeyidla ngomnyama ingane kababa	You so-called virgins choose your men, Don't hide your love affairs This girl didn't sleep at night The child of my father Is being fucked during the dark hours.	This song encourages girls to openly fall in love with those they love. It laments about a girl that visits a man at night without her parents' consent and has stolen sex.

Conclusion

There are so many songs that are vulgar and frank in Zulu culture. They are passed from one generation to another and new ones are still being created. There is no copyright attached to these songs because they are created for the community to criticise and mould the community in a way that is correct.

These songs are performed only during special occasions and are enjoyed by everyone; even those that should be touched by them.

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On being a patient listener:
Oral evidence and the historical experience of hospital patients

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Look up the word 'patient' in the index of almost any hospital history and you are likely to be disappointed. At best, you may find an entry reading 'patient – numbers'. In other words, where they appear in hospital histories, they only appear as statistics, in a passive, non-speaking role. In the memorable words of one medical historian, "Patients loom small in medical history."[1] Given that patients are the very *raison d'être* for hospitals, this situation is rather paradoxical.

The reasons for this blind spot – though "spot" is hardly an accurate term to describe the majority of any hospital's daily population – stem largely from the character of the two key parameters of historical inquiry: authors and sources. Given the predominance of doctors among authors of medical history until quite recently, it is not surprising that the history of patients (as opposed to patient histories which doctors take every day) does not have deep roots in medical historiography. "After all", quipped Roy Porter, "it was what the doctor did to, and for, the sick that counted; the patient was just the raw material, the unwitting bearer of a disease or lesion. After all, no one ever suggested that historians of sculpture should concentrate on slabs of marble."[2] At most, the only patients who were of some interest to such historians were famous people. Thus, the *Oxford Companion to Medicine* published in 1995 (and republished in 2001) contains one substantive entry under 'patient', viz: "Patients, Notable (Illness of the Famous)".[3] Ironically, the author was Roy Porter.

Shifting this perspective from history conceived, literally, from above the bed to a history as seen from the bed up, requires a fundamental change of mindset to one which recognises the experience of patients in all its many-sided facets as a valid and integral part of medical history. Viewed from this angle, aspects like the condition, perceptions, attitudes, behaviour, expectations, experiences and relationships of people as patients emerge as central objects of historical inquiry. So conceived, hospital patients in particular cease to be a mass of, "passive, speechless, rather vague ciphers" and turn instead into historical actors in their own right. By such a change of lens the power of medical history to make sense of the past is only enhanced.

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[1]   F.B. Smith, *The People's Health 1830-1910* (Croom Helm, London, 1979), p. 9.
[2]   R. Porter (ed.), *Patients and practitioners - Lay Perceptions of Medicine in Pre-industrial Society* (Cambridge, CUP, 1985*)*, p. 2.
[3]   *Oxford Companion to Medicine* (Oxford, OUP, 1995), pp. 733-5.

The other obstacle to writing patient-centred history, a dearth of sources, is best when dealt with by lateral exploration and thinking and an ability to read sources against the dominant grain. In the instance of hospital patients, though exceeded by sources reflecting the viewpoints of doctors, nurses and administrators, sources illuminating the patient experience from within do exist; if one looks widely and imaginatively.

A basic starting point for this is the statistics collected by hospitals about patients from late in the 19th Century. In the 20th Century, as hospitals became increasingly accountable to government for their expenditure, funders and donors or private companies, so these have bulked larger and larger until they seemed at times to have become almost the sole measure of a hospital's operations, along with its finances.

It might be thought that these would be richly complemented by that other official hospital source focusing on patients, individuals' case records to produce a rounded picture of patients' experience. However, as I discovered when writing a history of Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town, such records of long-deceased patients have frequently been destroyed or, if they have not, access to them is often barred for up to 100 years on bio-ethical and legal grounds. Moreover, even if these barriers can be circumvented, it becomes apparent that, although the focus is exclusively on the patient, the lens through which she or he is viewed is usually narrowly clinical, concerned mainly with their physical state and controlled by a doctor or a nurse. Thus, as I found after reading 1120 pages of one long-term patient's record, although there is no lack of information about his daily temperature and blood pressure, his intake of liquids, solids and drugs, the composition of his urine and stools, variations in his heartbeat as recorded by an ECG and the condition of his lungs as shown on X-rays, his own words appeared just once, when he told a nurse, "I'm feeling better today."

In this frustrating situation for a historian eager to capture the hospital patient experience from the latter's own perspective, the only alternative is to turn to the expression of this via patients' letters to the press or to hospital authorities, patient opinion surveys conducted by the hospital and oral evidence collected from the patients themselves or their next-of-kin.

All of these have the potential to allow the historian to hear patients' voices more directly and thereby to give their experiences and perspectives greater account in hospital histories. With the benefit of these, hospital histories can take on a very different look. As David Rosner pointed out, "A historian who considers the experience of patients…is less likely to view the history of the hospital as one of steady progress".[4]

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[4] D. Rosner, *A Once Charitable Enterprise: Hospitals and Health Care in Brooklyn and New York, 1885-1915* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 2004), p. 6.

Yet, it would be naive to believe that these first-hand sources come without difficulties and shortcomings of their own. In this paper I wish to examine five of these relating to oral testimony by patients so that hospital historians may be alert to them before setting off to collect such testimony, and try to reduce or offset their negative effects.

The first issues facing the oral historian of the patient experience are who to interview and where to conduct the interview. Given that large general hospitals like Groote Schuur admit thousands of in-patients annually and see tens of thousands out-patients every year,[5] it might seem as if the number of possible interviewees is huge. However, hospital authorities are usually unwilling to allow patients currently in their wards and clinics to be interviewed and so the historian has to seek former patients, a group difficult to identify except by making an appeal in the press or with the assistance of lists provided by the hospital itself from records kept for follow-up purposes, subsequent attendances at its outpatients' clinics or possible re-admission. In the case of the Groote Schuur History Project, both approaches were used, but only a selection of the latter was interviewed to ensure that we did not miss the experiences of patients unlikely to respond in written form to a press appeal because of their illiteracy, infirmity, diffidence or indifference. Even here strategic choices had to be made to avoid being swamped. The chief selection criteria employed were age, race, gender, ailment and length of contact with Groote Schuur, as we sought to tap as wide a variety of patient experiences over as long a period as possible. Our thinking was that the recollections of those who had used the hospital longest would better indicate to us changes over time in medical treatment, service and staff attitudes to patients. Given that Groote Schuur opened in 1938 – for example, before apartheid or antibiotics – the magnitude of changes in the succeeding 70 years was vast.

Careful selection had to be made as to where to conduct interviews with former patients. For some, a hospital environment (Groote Schuur had provided the project with an office) was distinctly off-putting, triggering unhappy memories of illness, fear, pain, vulnerability and patienthood. For them, their home, with its familiarity, security and its sense of being in control, was the only possible venue for such an interview. For others, however, the hospital conjured up memories of camaraderie, pain-relief and friendships, particularly with nursing staff, and they readily agreed to come up to Groote Schuur to be interviewed, some taking advantage of this occasion to visit acquaintances of the staff, attend an out-patients' clinic or collect repeat medication from the hospital dispensary at the same time. Clearly location matters, having the ability to make or mar an interview.

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[5]   For instance, in the 1970s and 1980s Groote Schuur admitted 40-60,000 in-patients p.a. and was attended by at least double that number of out-patients every year.

That we chose many of the interviewees from Groote Schuur's list of former patients still attending its out-patient clinics brought with it an unforeseen effect, that their perceptions of their experience at the hospital were unreservedly positive. Their sunny view stemmed from the fact that, not only had the hospital been responsible for relieving their symptoms in the first place, but also that, in many cases, it was the only means to keep these from recurring and compromising their quality of life. In some dire cases it even represented the difference between life and death or at least between mobility and immobility: "I wouldn't be where I am without them. I would be in a wheelchair if it wasn't for them", declared a woman with rheumatoid arthritis: "Even if a hundred people on the [out-patient] floor scream at me, I don't mind because I'm getting that medicine, that treatment." About the hospital she would hear no word of criticism. Fellow-patients who complained bitterly about poor service she dismissed as not listening properly to the explanations and instructions that they were given. They were "unkind people" who made "endless complaints about nothing", she insisted.[6]

Another interviewee whose rose-tinted view of Groote Schuur owed much to her successful treatment there for rheumatic fever, the beneficial effect on her health of the advice she received from its staff on being discharged to pursue an active lifestyle, and the safe, gentle delivery of her firstborn in its maternity ward was equally upbeat about every aspect of hospital life. She believed that, "Groote Schuur gave me the best as far as my health was concerned…. [I] respected them for the help they gave me and telling me what I should do for my future…. I will never forget that….The way they respect me, I respect them." Predictably perhaps, she denied that, as a 'coloured' patient, she had ever been at the receiving end of any racial discrimination at Groote Schuur.[7]

For such patients, their view of Groote Schuur was decisively coloured by the positive outcome of their time within its walls. A woman who owed her life to the quick, expert treatment she had received in its trauma unit: "put my hat down [doff my cap]' to Groote Schuur. I will talk about Groote Schuur's trauma section wherever I'll go."[8] Another patient discounted the blood and gore in this unit, declaring that the fact that his broken wrist was efficiently X-rayed, reset and put into plaster in double quick time "gave me further cause to reflect [on] how fortunate people are to have a world class institution in Cape Town."[9]

6   Interview with Mrs LG, 8 June 2006.
7   Interview with Mrs CJ, 12 May 2006.
8   Quoted in A. Digby and H. Phillips, *At the Heart of Healing: Groote Schuur Hospital 1938-2008* (Jacana Media, Auckland Park, 2008), p. 157.
9   Quoted in Digby and Phillips, p. 156.

At the other end of the spectrum are those interviewees for whom treatment at a hospital had been unsuccessful, bringing little relief from their symptoms or even worsening their condition. This failure overshadowed their experience of the hospital entirely and they had no good word to say about it. For instance, depressed by the Groote Schuur Lung Clinic's inability to cure her lung disease and by the death of a caring specialist who had befriended her, a middle-aged white interviewee slated the black hospital staff as hostile to her on racial grounds: "There was this whole animosity thing because I was a whitey … They were very discriminatory to me, very rude to me, very personal, sometimes putting me at the back of the line….My time has come to an end at Groote Schuur."[10]

Equally harsh were the opinions of some families of patients whose lives Groote Schuur had not been able to save and whom I had gingerly approached for their version of their late relation's experience. The family of a three-times heart transplant patient who survived for less than two years felt that he had not been given adequate emotional and psychological support by the hospital's staff and so had suffered great mental anguish which had eroded his will to live,[11] while the daughter of a patient who died of a heart attack while awaiting surgery attributed this to his long wait in the Casualty Department, a doctor whom she judged to be incompetent and nurses who were, in her opinion, uncaring: "I will always be sorry that I never took him to a private hospital where he would have been helped more quickly", she fulminated.[12] Just as gratitude looms largest in the memories of those patients whose condition a hospital has ameliorated, so do the aggravation of a condition or death have the potential to blight entirely the memories of those less fortunate. Let the interviewer not forget this.

Accounts of patients' experiences can be clouded by their kinsfolk in another important way too; and the oral historian should recognise this. Where former patients are old or weak, a well-meaning family member often seeks to speak on their behalf to spare them the effort. In effect, this can produce a situation in which a scond-hand account replaces a first-hand account. Two of the interviews which I conducted illustrate this clearly. In the first, the robust wife of a stroke patient spoke for her husband who struggled to get in a word edgewise. She there by turned the interview onto herself; initially as the interpreter of her spouse's views and quite soon into her own story as a stroke victim's wife piloting him through the hospital. Her closing words in an interview increasingly filled with the pronoun ~I' summed up how far she had hijacked the interview with her husband": "I live my days at Groote Schuur."

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[10]   Interview with Mrs GvdBB, 28 March 2006.
[11]   Interview with Mrs LN and Mrs HH, 27 January 2007.
[12]   Quoted in Digby and Phillips, p. 156.

In the second interview, an overdutiful son answered all the questions directed at his aged mother so as to prevent her being tired. The fact that he asked her to confirm what he had said (which she invariably did with a muttered "yes" or nod) did not really make up for his dominance of the interview. In the end it was difficult ot know whose name to write down as the interviewee.

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The oral historian also needs to be alert to the possibility that former patients might use an interview about their hospital experiences to overturn the powerlessness they may have felt when in a hospital bed, at the mercy of or utterly dependent on doctors, nurses, other medical staff and even cleaners. Episodes might thus be re-told in ways in which power relations are reversed by the teller, presenting the patient as having initiative and authority. The following account by a former patient may well fit into this category. A man who was admitted to Groote Schuur after a heart attack related in an interview years after the event that, when the student radiographer responsible for X-raying him struggled to take the required images as her teacher breathed down her neck, he had re-assured her, "Even if it takes till tomorrow night [to get it right], go ahead …. If you get it right now, you can help quite a couple of patients like me."[14] That he was black and she white and that this incident took place in the era of apartheid only adds to the scale of the inversion of the usual power relations which the anecdote reveals.

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[13] Interview with Mr EA and Mrs FA, 13 June 2006.
[14] Interview with Mr MGK, 18 May 2006.

Like all interviews, therefore, those conducted with sometime hospital patients are significantly moulded and affected by the current circumstances of the interviewee. However, as suggested above, that the interviewee is or was a patient adds additional plasticity to their testimony, rendering it acutely liable to the influence of their physical state when they were discharged, the location of the interview, and in whose company the interview took place. Let the oral historian of the patient experience in hospitals be aware of these powerful additional influences on what they are told.

Yet, none of these caveats should detract from the unique insights and perspectives which such oral testimony can provide for the hospital historian, fleshing out bare statistics and case records qualitatively, extending the compass of such history significantly and even re-shaping how such history is conceived fundamentally. Recognising the radical implications of such a perspective, one of the few proponents of patient-centred history observes, "If … patients' behavior becomes properly the object of medical-historical research, then the patients themselves automatically win recognition as responsible agents."[15]

To provide a concrete sense of how oral evidence from patients – for all its difficulties – can enrich and extend hospital history, I close with extracts from three interviews. They illuminate whole aspects of this history which would otherwise have remained hidden. All reveal the patient in the unaccustomed role of agent and not merely as the passive subject of action by others.

Illustrating the camaraderie and sense of community which could grow up among patients in a ward, one long-time patient recalled with pleasure how all the patients who could sat down to their daily meals at a long table in the middle of their Nightingale-style ward: "It was like a family having lunch together, interacting with each other without the interference of nurses or doctors", she remembered. The sense of comradeship which this fostered was best exemplified for her by the applause from her fellow-patients when she walked unaided for the first time after her operation.[16]

A second example of a patient gaining authority and initiative – this time officially – comes from an interview with a patient with rheumatoid arthritis who became a 'patient partner' to others with the disease. This involved learning more about the condition and then using the knowledge and her experience of it to help others with this ailment to cope. This unique combination of knowledge and experience also allowed her to assist in teaching medical students how to handle such patients, how to listen to them and how to show empathy: "I found this all very satisfying", she admitted: "It helps me a lot to understand my condition and to cope, also my family."[17]

[15]   Wolff, 'Perspectives on Patients' History', p. 218.
[16]   Interview with Miss HSLC, 1 June 2006.
[17]   Interview with Mrs DB, 14 June 2006.

The third anecdote from a patient's testimony relates to the role of humour and banter as patients sought to cope with their condition and their boredom. On the night of 29 September 1969 an earthquake rocked the Boland, the shock of which was felt at Groote Schuur too. As the hospital building shook, a young nurse on night duty leapt onto the interviewee's bed in terror, "Haai, nursie, you musn't jump into my bed", he shouted out to the delight of his fellow-patients, "matron will see you."[18]

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[18]   Interview with Mr EA, 13 June 2006.

Artefacts of memory:
from the classroom through the archive to public spaces

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Introduction

In 2007, the South African History Archive (SAHA) in partnership with the *Sunday Times*, embarked on an oral history and memorial project with schools located in three provincial towns in South Africa – Polokwane, Kroonstad and Bethal. This project has taken teachers and learners on a six-month journey, using oral history, to construct their local pasts. The learners have been given a chance to "talk their histories together" both inside and outside of the classroom and have come to understand heritage as a vehicle for healing and reconciliation. The end point of the project involved selecting one story from each of the three towns to create people-friendly memorials. The three new memorials form part of the *Sunday Times* Centenary Story-telling Memorial Trail across the country.[1]

It is the SAHA team's strong belief that by sharing their stories and working on the memorials, the learners have had an opportunity to create new channels for reconciliation and understanding in their communities.

Background to the people and the consultative process

On the ground the schools received face-to-face support from the SAHA team members: Thapelo Pelo (co-ordinator), Tshepo Moloi (oral historian researcher), Patricia Watson and Diane Favis (materials writers), and the reference group: Piers Pigou, Lauren Segal, Cynthia Kros, Phil Bonner and Noor Nieftagodien. In each of the towns a local reference group was set-up, comprised of community members responsible for guiding the learners' oral history projects. The educators' classroom practice, assessment tools and challenges informed the development of the oral history guide titled, *Meeting history face-to-face* and accompanying DVD.[2] The guide was trialled with a group of educators and subject advisors from the Free State province, and further adapted to better support history educators' delivery of the learning outcomes, as well as to support them to participate in the Department of

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[1] For an account of the,*Sunday Times* Centenary Storytelling Memorial Trail readers are referred to Cynthia Kros' article , 'Prompting reflections: an account of the Sunday Times Heritage Project from the perspective of an insider historian', in KRONOS Southern African Histories 34 November 2008 pp159-180.

[2] The guide can be downloaded from the SAHA website, 1 October 2009 http://www.saha.org.za/publications.htm

Education's Nkosi Albert Luthuli Annual Oral History Competition. The competition is in line with the curriculum statement for history, which emphasises oral history as a redress measure. It is intended to encourage learners to develop an understanding of, not only the broad outlines of South African history, but also the richness of the histories of local communities, and to develop communication and research skills[3].

The schools selected to participate in this project were deliberately chosen because they were located in different areas in each of the three towns to ensure the diverse racial and geographical spread of Grade 10 and 11 learners. The history educators at the different schools were then encouraged to reach-out to one another, so as to bring their learners together to participate in an inter-school oral history exchange afternoon. This collaboration was more or less effective, depending on the varied challenges faced by schools in the towns concerned.

Race, class and technology in Limpopo

In Polokwane, Kgaiso Secondary School in Seshego township partnered with Capricorn High in Polokwane. This partnership threatened to come unstuck as the Kgaiso Secondary School history educator was frequently absent and formal history tuition suffered as a result. However, the support of the SAHA project field workers inspired a small group of tenacious Grade 10 learners to remain committed to doing their oral history project despite their hard-pressed circumstances. This group certainly gave a contemporary nuance to the popular resistance slogan from Robben Island: "Each one, teach one." They were resource strapped and reliant on their shared intellectual acumen or what Lave[4] refers to as "distributed cognition"; and their willingness to learn in the Vygotskian[5] sense of social engagement and semiotic adaptation informed by trial and error and in relation to their own zones of proximal development.

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[3]   For more details on the Albert Luthuli Oral History Competition go to www.education.gov.za or contact the Directorate of Race and Values, National Department of Education (012) 312 5080.

[4]   Lave, J. 1988. *Cognition in practice: mind, mathematics and culture in everyday life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[5]   In *Mind and society: the development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (1978) Vygotsky privileges the role of social interaction, arguing that it is socially mediated action that generates meaning, and stating that "all higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals" (1978:57). He uses the notion of zones of proximal development (ZPD) to illustrate the cognitive move from the familiar to the unfamiliar, explaining that the cognitive level at which students are capable of functioning at with assistance today can be transformed into the level at which they can function at independently tomorrow. Thus, for Vygotsky, learning is the internalisation of processes that occur initially through social and semiotic mediation.

In contrast, and through empathy with their less fortunate neighbouring peers, the Capricorn High School learners recognised that they were privileged to have a very dedicated history educator, Mrs Peasnell,[6] who guided learning through a structured unit of work with explicit assessment criteria. Thus, while the quality of teaching and learning in these two schools were worlds apart, the learners from both schools inspired one another's curiosity to find out about their local past.

The Kgaiso Secondary School learners enjoyed collecting oral histories about the world-renowned author and educator, Professor Es'Kia Mphahlele, who lived in the nearby town, Lebowakgomo. The learners must have been of the last people to interview the professor before his death on 27 October 2008. They chose to interview three people who knew the professor during the course of his life: a teacher, an advocate and a colleague, and found that all three of the informants shared a deep respect for Professor Mphahlele and viewed him as a mentor, father and great inspiration. For the group, their best interview undoubtedly was with Professor Mphahlele himself, where they experienced a sense of connection and affirmation.

> The most interesting thing for me about this project was interviewing Professor Es'kia Mphahlele. He was very open and talked a lot about his childhood and how he got into teaching. I liked every moment I shared with him. All that I can say is that he is a very good and honest man. He doesn't judge a book by its cover and he didn't judge us because we are young. (Dimakatso Maleka, Kgaiso Secondary School, Seshego, Polokwane, 2007.)

On reflection, the learners were also able to identify some of their challenges. They said that they felt in awe of the people that they interviewed and that this sometimes meant the conversations went in directions they had not planned or expected, resulting in some anxiety about whether or not they were getting the information that they needed for their project. Another difficulty they experienced was having to listen attentively and take notes at the same time (as they did not have access to recording equipment). They found that if one person led the interview, then it was easier for the other group members to focus on writing down the conversation more accurately.

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[6] Mrs Peasnell was the provincial winner of the 2006 Best Educator Grade 12, HG and SG award. This award is given to the history educator who gets the best results in history in the province. The SAHA team was able to draw on some of the assessment tools that Peasnell had developed to inform the design of the oral history project portfolio, as well as the Heritage project worksheet. For copies of these assessment rubrics consult pages 35 to 42 of *Meeting history face-to-face*.

The group also found that they were able to improve their record of the interview if they took the time to discuss the notes soon after the interview.

Another highlight of the group's learning journey was their taxi ride to the University of Limpopo, where the librarian gave them access to the library's reserved collection of Es'kia Mphahlele's works. The resources were in good condition, but the learners were somewhat overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information at their disposal. This is expressed in the hyperbolic remark:

> One book we found with biographical detail about Es'kia Mphahlele was over a thousand pages long! We had to skim-read it to collect as much detail as we could in the few hours that we had there. I found that the reading helped me to write-up the interview. (Mamodike Shwana, Kgaiso Secondary School, 2008.)

The Capricorn High School learners explored the history of their school and made a DVD, while other groups interviewed members of the Polokwane community about their experiences before and after the first democratic elections in 1994. The learners who investigated the history of their school were a racially mixed group of fifteen-year-olds, who were born in 1993, a year before the first democratic elections in South Africa, and they, therefore, had not experienced apartheid education first hand. They found out about apartheid through Capricorn High School's own history, as it was a whites-only high school steeped in the cultural practices of Afrikaner nationalisms, as expressed through the world view of Christian National Education[7] that promoted white superiority. Their access to the history of the school was facilitated through interviews with retired principals, teachers and alumni, as well as the school's copious records such as the principals' diaries, scrap books of newspaper clippings and copies of the school year books that had been stored in the archive section of the school's own library. The group said that they found the principals' daily entries in the diaries very useful as it gave them a sense of what Capricorn High School must have been like in the olden days and how it had transformed into a non-racial school under democracy. In particular the learners' drew our attention to the photographs in the hallway that showed the shift in learner population over time; from all white to racially mixed classes and sports teams post the first democratic elections in 1994. The learners were able to capture the oral history interviews via their cellphones and present their project in a portfolio of work that included a DVD. Access to these communication technologies, including the internet, certainly put this school's projects in a league of their own. It

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[7]   Pam Christie,1985. *The right to learn.* Johannesburg: Sached Trust and Raven Press.

highlighted the economic inequalities within public education and pointed to the digital divide between age-mates and schools that are only a few kilometres apart.[8]

While all things are never presumed to be equal, Mrs Peasnell nonetheless encourages other educators to pursue inter-school oral history project presentations for the following reason:

> When you ask the learners to do an oral history presentation you find they become more motivated to do their best, because they do not want to lose face in front of their peers… I am so proud of the learners, even the weakest learners made a big effort to live up to their full potential. This research project made history come alive for them.

The collaboration between the learners in both of these schools will, in all likelihood, be rekindled in years to come as they may well find themselves seated at the beautiful mosaic table and chairs under the trees outside of the University of Limpopo's library. This installation commemorates the life and work of Es'kia Mphahlele and invites all scholars to read, read and read some more!

Race, resistance and sorrow in Bethal

Bethal is a town that is still beleaguered by apartheid's past, in so far as many of its inhabitants struggle to overcome their racially determined identities: where blacks and whites still regard each other, at best, as estranged and, at worse, as enemies.[9] This insight was brought home to the SAHA team when it tried to find a historically white school to collaborate with Mzinoni Secondary School, an all-black township school. The local majority-white high school told the SAHA team that it did not teach history.

The school was apparently able to let history "die a natural death" when Curriculum 2005 created the human and social sciences learning area, which merged history and geography together in what has been referred to as

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[8] Reference to the digital divide frequently refers to disparities in wealth and technological access between people in the political North and South; or in more recent times it refers to the widening generation gap between those who are more or less technologically savvy depending on their age and acumen to easily adapt and use increasingly sophisticated applications. However, in this project the digital divide was between South inhabitants in the same age group, highlighting that economic resources are crucially tied to technological access and concomitant electronic literacies that enable learning and knowledge production in the classroom.

[9] The racial divisions of apartheid's past were similarly articulated by Belinda Bezzoli in 'Public ritual and private transition' where she critiques the emphasis in the TRC hearings on reconciliation at times at the expense of individual accounts of apartheid violence.

a "bland broth that did justice to neither subject".[10] In this context the revision to Curriculum 2005 under the second Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, of the African National Congress, has done little to resuscitate history teaching in this school. The absence of history in the school may, in part, be responsible for why there is a lack of reconciliation in the town and little evidence of democratic values being given lived expression, with few exceptions.

Mzinoni Secondary School's Grade 11 learners were supported to participate in this oral history project by a local reference group, which included some of the SAHA's team members, a municipal ward counsellor, representatives of the school governing body and elderly members of the community and the history teacher. The reference group successfully helped to focus what stories the learners could investigate and it directed learners to community members who were themselves "walking libraries", with personal records of life under apartheid. According to the educator, Eddie Nkosi, his learners did not set foot in the local library as he was sure that it did not have any resources relevant to the learners' projects; instead he arranged for Mr Isaac Makhamisa Nhlapo, a community elder, to visit the classroom and share his briefcase of records containing old court proceedings, newspaper clippings and family albums. The learners showed a lot of interest in the family album that depicted photographs of neglected black children who stayed home alone while their mothers tended to the needs of white children in their capacity as domestic workers. In this under-resourced context oral testimonies and personal memories, documents and artefacts became elevated above all other sources of historical evidence simply due to the paucity of the latter.

In particular, the learners were so deeply moved by the story of the disappearance of Nokuthula Simelane[11] that they decided to interview her mother and to also find the names and stories of other people who had disappeared over the last 50 years from the potato farms, while other groups pursued stories about the notorious prisons in Bethal.

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[10] Cynthia Kros and Nicole Ulrich, "The Truth of Tales: Oral Testimony and Teaching History in Schools', in *Oral history in a wounded country: interactive interviewing in South Africa*. Eds Philippe Denis and Radikobo Ntsimane (2008: 89) Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

[11] In 1983, Nokuthula Simelane, an operative from *Umkhonto we Sizwe (*MK), the armed wing of the ANC, disappeared just before her graduation ceremony when she was only 22 years old. Her story came before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but the policemen responsible for her abduction gave contradictory evidence. What was clear, however, was that she was brutally tortured and killed by the security police. Nokuthula's family is one of hundreds of families in this country who are still searching for the story of their loved ones. In the 1950s, many African men disappeared on Bethal's potato farms, where they were used as convict labour. Their only "crime" was to be in a place without the right pass. Their stories remain untold, their names often forgotten. Families and communities live in hope that the truth will emerge.

Nokuthula Simelane's mother lives within walking distance of Mzinoni Secondary School and she was willing to allow her memories to unfold as she recounted the stories behind a photograph of her daughter, a graduation certificate (received in absentia from the University of Swaziland) and a simple dress that cloyed unyieldingly to a coat hanger.

> It's difficult not knowing what happened to my child, and not getting the answers at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission… This is the dress I bought for Nokuthula's graduation. You can see she was a slight girl… She never got to wear the dress … it was just the other day when I took the price tag off. I have told my children that when I die they must put this dress in the grave with me… (Mrs Simelane, Bethal, 2008.)

The learners rose to the occasion as novice oral historians by being able to hold the painful memories of Ma Simelane with the greatest of respect, allowing her tears to flow in gentle silence. They told us that next time they do an oral history interview they would be sure to take a roll of toilet paper with them. This they thought might be even more important than recording equipment! The learners' experience foregrounds that it is good practice to ask people about their special objects, keepsakes and artefacts, as these viscerally awaken their emotions and memories of the past. Furthermore, we concur with Sean Field's position on the ethical imperative of explicit guidance regarding emotions:

> …learners are aware that interviewing can evoke powerful emotions, but they are uncertain how to approach the feelings expressed by interviewees and how to respond to their own emotions. As trainers we have an ethical responsibility to take these concerns seriously and to try to do more to equip researchers to face these particular challenges of oral history. [12]

However, we question whether the strategy of emotional containment, on the part of the interviewer, should be recommended, because this suggests the selective bottling of emotional responses. If informants' memories tickle our sense of humour, we laugh without question; why then should we not allow our own tears to flow when we identify with informants' painful memories? We would assert that the capacity to work with our full range of emotions is indeed a strength, and plays a key part in what it means to communicate

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[12] Sean Field, 'What can I Do When the Interviewee cries? Oral History Strategies for Containment and Regeneration', in *Oral History in a wounded country: interactive interviewing in South Africa*. Eds Philippe Denis and Radikobo Ntsimane (2008: 144) Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

affectively, as well as to show intellectual interest, in informants' memories of the past.

The commemoration of Nokuthula Simelane in the form of a *Sunday Times* memorial was subject to much discussion and debate. Initially the artist commissioned to design this memorial was so moved by the account of the graduation dress, that he envisioned a large-sized dress made-up of handmade tiles with the names of others who had disappeared in Bethal. This creative treatment recalls the artwork by Judith Mason titled *The Blue Dress* exhibited along the wall of the Great African steps at the Constitution Court, which commemorates the torture and murder of a woman at the hands of the apartheid security policy.

However, Ma Simelane was repulsed by the thought of having to walk in her own town and to be confronted by a representation of a dress. She, like her neighbours, also feared that such a representation would provoke the white community and run the risk of the memorial being vandalised. The *Sunday Times'* artist was encouraged to return to the drawing board and to imagine a memorial that could build reconciliation – we needed a memorial that would help survivors to heal like, for example, a bench in the park next to the town hall where people could quietly reflect on their memories of lost loved ones. In this way the community's interests were taken into account in the process of negotiating how the stories would become memorialised as a tribute to their shared pasts. It was important that the symbolic recognition of the memories of the victims of apartheid were appropriate and sensitive enough to possibly "disburden their families from their sense of obligation to keep the memory alive and allow them to move on. This is essential if symbolic reparations are to provide recognition to victims not only as victims but also as citizens and as rights holders more generally".[13]

Race, ruptures and reconciliation in Kroonstad

The identification of two schools that were willing to collaborate in a sharing of oral history projects was most easily achieved in Kroonstad, where Faith Mashiya and her learners from Bodibeng Secondary School partnered with Giesela Strydom and her learners from Brentpark Secondary School.

The learners from Bodibeng, in the Moakeng township, found out that their school was one of the first secondary schools for black learners in the whole country, and was the first black high school to offer a matric (Grade 12) class to African students. Another group of learners found out that some of their neighbours, had marched with 20 000 other women to the Union Buildings on 9 August 1956 to resist the pass-laws.

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[13]   'Reparations', an unpublished draft paper commissioned by the International Centre for Transitional Justice (author unknown), (2007:4).

The Brentpark learners investigated the history of their township and found out that it was the first coloured township established in the Free State. Some of the oral accounts recalled the forced removals of coloured people from Old Cairo to Brentpark; the memories of Marti Feltman, who started the Anne Phillips Crèche; and the experiences of coloured soldiers during World War Two.

Initially both the educators and learners felt uneasy about undertaking oral history projects, and sceptical of their own abilities to do research. They expressed these reservations as follows:

> It was difficult for me to use a tape recorder because it was the first time I used that machine. I had to practise using the recorder. (Rolihahla Nelson Mvundle, Bodibeng Secondary School, Kroonstad.)

> Some people are scared of tape recorders and they don't like to be recorded. We had to be prepared to just take notes. (Mninga Menge, Bodibeng Secondary School, Kroonstad.)

> We were disappointed when the informant postponed our appointment, when we arrived he said, 'I'm too busy today…' We had to be man enough to come back the next day! (Liphoko Matshidiso, Bodibeng Secondary, Kroonstad, 2008.)

The project took learners out of school and into the public library where they developed their critical literacy skills by learning to read the silences in the archive:

> The archive [in Kroonstad] was not that ordered, and most of the newspaper articles were about white people. We only found three stories about coloured people. One article was about the concert Mrs Feldman organised at the Anne Phillips Crèche in 1969; the other reported that Brentpark won a competition as the most beautiful coloured township in 1988; and we also found an aerial photograph of Brentpark – the first Coloured township in the Free State. (Anthony van Wyk, Brent Part High School, Kroonstad, 2008.)

> It is important that archives do not destroy the bad parts of the past, they must keep all the information, the good and the bad. They must also put the archive where it will be easy for the public to get to. What I found [at our local library in Kroonstad] was not what I needed. I only found information based on

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white people… and their personal lives and not the bad things they did to black people… (Mosia Calvin, Bodibeng Secondary School, Kroonstad, 2008.)

On reflection of the project their anxieties and uncertainties about this learning journey had transformed into a sense of achievement:

This project was really exciting! At first I had my doubts about Grade 10s being able to it, but then I decided to 'take the bull by the horns' and I thought: 'What is there to lose?' I went into the classroom and said: 'Listen guys, this is going to happen and we are going to make a success of it.' It was very hard work and it took a lot of effort, but I got a lot of satisfaction out of this project. (Mrs Gisela Strydom, educator at Brent Park High School, Brent Park, Kroonstad, 2008.)

I learnt to communicate, ask questions, interview. At the beginning of this project, I was quite scared and very shy. At the end of the project, I see it was not too difficult for me. I want to do more interviews. When you find out about history and culture, it makes you have a sense of pride. (Rosheeda van der Ross, Brent Park High School, Kroonstad, 2008.)

The inter-school oral history project-sharing afternoon was full of intellectual exuberance. The learners found themselves caught in a fierce debate over whether or not we could believe their oral informants. In particular, the learners from Bodibeng questioned the Brentpark learners on their finding that, contrary to popular assumption, some of the residents of Old Cairo had welcomed the "forced" removal to Brentpark – the informants saw the move as offering them the prospect of a better life.

It was exchanges of this kind that brought history to life and supported Professor Phil Bonner's view that:

The best that we can do is to open up discussion among young people about our separate but linked pasts. Only then will we gain recognition of each other. We cannot let our children retreat into insulated tribal histories. Reconciliation has to be a face-to-face thing. We have to get away from a situation where we are ashamed of our past. We shouldn't be apologising. We should just be talking. Not just amongst black and white learners but amongst learners of all colours.

The culmination of the partnership between Bodibeng and Brentpark Secondary schools was the creation of a mosaic commemorating Bodibeng's founding principal, Mr Reginald Cingo, for being the pioneer of black high school education and for leaving us with the school motto *Possumus* (we can). This motto is captured in the mosaic in three of our official languages.

Mrs Strydom took this motto to heart and in the year following the completion of the SAHA's classroom oral history project, she independently repeated the project with her 2009 Grade 10 learners, using the *Meeting history face-to-face: guide to oral history* concept, which we had all collaboratively developed. She also submitted her own pedagogic portfolio and a Grade 10 learner's, Aletta Dlamini, oral history project about the un-sung struggle hero, Mr Michael Jordan, to the 2009 Nkosi Albert Luthuli Oral History competition. Mrs Strydom won first place in the educator category and Aletta Dlamini won third place in the learner category. They were further rewarded for their achievements by being invited by the Depart-ment of Education to represent South Africa at the J8 Summit (Junior 8 Summit) in Italy in June 2009, where they joined educators and youth from 14 other countries to discuss global concerns such as climate change and poverty in Africa.

Another positive outcome of this project is that the Department of Education has entered into an agreement with the SAHA to archive the school oral history project competition entries. We can look forward to a virtual exhibition of best practice in classroom oral history collection in 2010.

In conclusion, this collaborative intervention has exceeded our expectations, the partnership between the SAHA and the *Sunday Times* has realised a very real opportunity for educators and learners to engage in an innovative project with oral history at its core and memorials and a learning guide as the outcomes. There is little doubt that, despite the different conditions of possibility afforded to individuals due to their racial, economic or cultural identities, all of the learners gained access to a new method and language with which to explore their pasts. They also developed their communication skills and ability to think more critically about heritage, archives and enactments of memory as a vehicle for healing and recon-ciliation. The learning journey from the classroom, through the archive, to public spaces has stimulated history teaching and learning, brought a new archive to light and opened up many other avenues for oral history research in local towns.

Words cast in stone:
building on a community museum methodology

Michael Ondaatje

The past is still, for us, a place that is not safely settled.

The District Six Museum recently held an internal oral history seminar to step back and evaluate how far we have come in terms of our oral history practice, as well as to understand the challenges and contestations that have marked our understanding of how this practice is shared in the Museum. Lauded as an exemplar of giving voice to the voiceless, of being a community museum in which local stories and authentic voices may be heard, we have become wary of the trusted clichés and uncritical approaches to oral history that have emerged as attempts to cobble a representative South African story. At the same time, we are tasked with a mission statement that speaks to bringing to the fore the voices of those people who experienced forced removals, allowing these narratives to become part of that South African story. At the heart of the internal seminar lay the question about 'what makes our oral history practice different' to those of other museums, non-profit organisations and projects based at universities. This question is embedded within an attempt to present a more critical approach to oral history – as practiced within the museum, and as experienced outside its spaces.

The District Six memory project had its beginnings in a range of settings: civic, activist, academic and institutional contexts. The story of the removal drew a number of people together who embraced oral history – not only as a means to work with the memory of District Six, but also as a means to mobilise it as part of the restitution process; to extract meaning and sense around the impact of the forced removal; to open up the city's narrative to include new, critical voices. An understanding of these varied contexts from which oral history practice emerged is important – it sets the tone for

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our practice as a multi-faceted approach, one which is enriched by the experiences of those who embrace and challenge its limitations.

Today, the museum exists in a different context from those origin moments at the *Hands Off District Six* conference in 1989. Outwardly, the moment of transition from a memory project to that of a museum institution is marked by the exhibitionary moments of *Streets* (1994) and *Digging Deeper* (2000). Inwardly, this evolution has not been a fluid - and our oral history practice has reflected new project circumstances, the influx of staff and changing funding and political environments. What has remained at the core of the museum's ethos – is a collaborative approach to meaning-making. The extent to which the museum claims ownership of this meaning is challenged and accepted by those who become part of our work. Whether through exhibitionary, educational work and public programming, oral history practice shape-shifts, yet retains a core focus on mobilising change and critical understanding of our past.

Memory and voice

The coming-of-age of oral history practice in the Museum is not a process that culminates in wisdom or 'correct' methods for story-telling. Rather it refers to an increasingly robust discussion of the challenges of conducting oral histories and research that is collaborative. Our research relationships are not characterised by the writing up of histories solely for consumption within a museum context. Defined by collaboration and contestation between both the storyteller and listener-interviewer, a form of public history emerges that is collaborative and nuanced. In this public history, the notion of history-from below, of giving voice to the voiceless and what constitutes 'voice' itself is constantly under the spotlight. In its own practice the museum has had to understand and be explicit about:

- our understanding of how the voice of the interviewee can be mediated within a project through methods of transcription, aesthetic practice, different forms of research as well as different approaches to educational work;
- understanding what our own voice is in terms of mediating this process and how this is not absent from the stories we tell. Our orientation towards memory as

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an active force which is able to affirm ownership of the city and develop critical understanding of its spaces is central here;

- the ability to discern how memory is a response to/subject to the context in which it is shared – and that the act of sharing/storytelling is a response to a *relationship* with an interviewer/institution. The relationship with ex-residents, project participants and other communities of interest, though held by the project research space – extends to all aspects of our public programming. Sustaining relationships with people therefore depends on an active engagement with people beyond 'research';
- acknowledging the degrees to which collaborative approaches in the organisation are in themselves contested, and that forging a shared body of practice is challenging

The above framing questions are not new to oral historians. In different institutional contexts, oral history has become representative of an antidote - able to restore (and reconcile) divergent pasts – to make corporeal a representative South African identity. Within a museum context - where the term museum to a large degree still lends itself to notions of truth and veracity - the acts of mediation and collaboration that lead to the *representation* of history need be held in productive and visible tension. Without this tension, history- and meaning- making revert to the domain of the omniscient author/curator/researcher and lends itself to forms of nationalism that are uncritical and unbending.

For the Museum, the productive tensions of oral history have been explicit and hidden to varying degrees. The exhibitionary processes for *Digging Deeper*, our permanent exhibition, were largely the result of eight years of interim exhibitions and interactions with District Six ex-residents. As ex-residents and curators who were working in the Buitenkant Street church at the time recall – the acts of remembrance enacted in the space were largely spontaneous, albeit stimulated by the photographs, artefacts and the recognition of places and streets. The collection of these remembrances with a tape recorder marks one of the first systematic attempts by the museum itself to capture ex-resident memories of District Six. In conjunction with artistic interventions such as the name-cloth and the street map - ex-residents were encouraged to inscribe themselves into history and the District Six story.

Today, the ex-resident community remains an inherent part of the museum's life, but while the impetus to visit the museum was more marked

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in the early 1990s, post -2000 our work has involved ex-residents and other communities affected by forced removals in a more project-oriented way. We have had to contend with a protracted land restitution process, the conflation of the museum's memory work with this process and the hidden trauma of forging new communities upon return. In working with ex-residents and their memory of the forced removal, the Museum needs to ask a number of questions in relation to its oral history practice:

- how do District Sixers choose to make sense of their memory of the removal – and how do we provide a supportive context in which this can happen?
- how are we able to deal with traumatic memory (of removal and return) in a way that doesn't discount, but which moves beyond the 'instinct' of listening? Different project orientations and needs are healthy for a critical oral history methodology, but a shared understanding of this way of working is needed.
- how do we engage with a returning community that has aged – and whose memory of District Six is now contingent on physiological processes. To what extent do we 'enskill' ourselves to develop an oral history practice that exists outside the interviewer/interviewee context, and accommodates these processes?
- how do we develop spaces where storytelling is shared and not necessarily recorded, and which contributes to an oral historical tradition of District Six?

All these questions are to be mediated by a critical awareness that oral accounts of District Six as told in the Museum's spaces are not purely oral accounts of the history of the area. These accounts are mediated (for ex-residents) by their own literate worlds (newspapers etc.) and performances (musicals, theatre etc). Likewise in the Museum - the voices that come to represent a District Six memory - do so through the process of selection and transformation into visual/textual form. This is strongly mediated by our own disciplinary leanings.

Museum subjectivities

What then are the Museum's subjectivities around an oral history practice? What marks it as a unique practice – and is there a large difference in the techniques used in actual interview situations? While many of the interviewing techniques used by the Museum oral historians could be

regarded as standard, many of the differences lie in the processes before and after actual interviews.

In the Museum there are many purposes to oral histories. On a very basic level, new information is generated. This includes factual accounts as well as new perspectives on known situations which add textured layers to previously documented knowledge. In our practice, the interview is generally and enriching experience for the narrator:

- The person often feels validated and valued by his or her life story having proved to add value;
- It often serves as a reflective sense-making mechanism which, in requiring the narrator to impose a coherence onto a possible jumble of events having occurred over many years;
- It is a way to build organisational ownership from contributors

Under the correct circumstances the narrator will experience this as a healing and restorative process – although one must never assume that this will be the case; there is no automatic one-to-one correlation between storytelling and healing. For the listener-interviewer the interview provides perspective on old situations, and contributes towards a system of processing and making links with what has gone before. For an organisation which regards itself as a 'learning organisation' this is crucial, and listener-interviewers are em-powered to make this impact.

In essence our practice is about developing storytelling and providing a space for multiple narratives. The danger of creating a singular, frozen narrative (despite layering in a range of perspectives) is always present. A more focused approach in creating spaces for dialogue and conversation is needed. An increasing recognition and emphasis on the aurality of voice, together with the critical analysis and interpretation of stories, has become integral to our memory methodology.

Oral history and community development:
Exploring a community history approach

Derek du Bruyn
National Museum, Bloemfontein

Introduction

The 84-year-old Mr Dikgang Mortimer Selebano is one of the longest living residents of Bloemfontein's Batho Township. He came with his parents and sister to Bloemfontein in 1928 when he was two years old. In those days most of Bloemfontein's black residents lived in Waaihoek, the Free State capital's first so-called black location. But Waaihoek was actually a racially mixed area because coloureds and poor whites also lived there. During the 1920s Bloemfontein's black population increased substantially and Waaihoek became overcrowded. Waaihoek also grew closer to Bloemfontein's white area. The white residents objected and the municipality decided to establish a new township east of the Cape Town–Johannesburg railway line. Waaihoek was to be demolished and, in terms of racial segregation regulations, all black people had to move to the new township called Batho. The coloured people were also moved to their separate area (called Ashbury, today Heidedal) and the poor whites could stay in the area that was reclaimed for whites only. By 1941, the last black-owned houses in Waaihoek were demolished and the area became known as Oranjesig.

What happened to Mr Selebano and his family? They also had to move to Batho to become part of a new, but uprooted, community. Listening to his story,[1] one is struck by memories characterised by the painful experiences of removal and loss and the challenge of getting established again in a new community. Today Mr Selebano still lives in Batho – a place which holds for him both happy and sad memories. Why is Mr Selebano's story important? Today there are many people like Mr Selebano who are living in Batho and their stories are at the same time similar and different. These stories are not only crucial for understanding the history of communities like Batho, Ashbury and Oranjesig, but also South Africa's history. The individual lives of these people relate to the larger events and forces that shaped South African society. Today we listen to their stories and try to make sense of what happened in the past and in the process, we try to understand why South African society is a fragmented, complex society. Their stories also help us to understand why many of Batho's present social problems are rooted in the past. Even more so, their testimonies help us to understand why

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[1]   Interview: Dikgang Selebano, Batho resident, Bloemfontein, 30 June 2008.

Mr Selebano and many of his peers have outlived some of their children and even grandchildren.

For oral historians to arrive at possible answers to the questions we ask, we need to look at history from a different, less conventional angle. It is necessary to develop and explore a broader perspective (namely a community perspective) and more specifically a community history perspective. And maybe oral historians need to take it further by linking the community history perspective and approach to the idea of community development. In other words, oral historians need to ask: How may the insights we gain from inter-views with Mr Selebano and his peers be used to regenerate and develop deprived communities like Batho? The answer to this question not only lies in rethinking the traditional role of oral historians in a developing country like South Africa, but also in reassessing our approach.

Community history for the oral historian

Until fairly recently, most traditional historians have shown little or no interest in the lives of people like Mr Selebano. These so-called ordinary citizens are the people who seldom become the focus of conventional historical research projects. They rarely attract the media's attention and, for various reasons, escape the scrutiny of historians. This situation, however, is changing. A new generation of historians, sometimes referred to as the community historians, has emerged and they have made the life histories of the under-classes the focus of their study. This is also happening in South Africa where, for mostly political and academic reasons, the stories of the common people were largely ignored during the colonial and apartheid eras.

Among the changes that are taking place in the methodology and approach to studying history is a growing appreciation of the micro-history approach as opposed to the traditional macro-history approach. Whereas macro-history focuses mostly on the people who wield/ed power, micro-history focuses on the powerless. In this context community history (which is essentially micro-history) may be defined as the life stories, traditions, customs and experiences of the individual members of a community as an identifiable geographical entity. The sum total of the life stories of these individuals make up a community's history. Because of the direct relation-ship between community history and national history, one may argue that community history serves as a microcosm of a nation's history. Research has shown that trends in political attitudes and thoughts at the national level usually start at the community level.

There are a number of ways an oral historian can research a com-munity's history and each approach largely depends not only on the research focus and objectives, but also on the available sources. The importance of oral evidence as a source for community history research cannot be under-

estimated. Much of what is considered community history lives in people's memories. Community history is predominantly orally communicated history, especially in the African context. Therefore, a crucial aspect of the community history approach is the use of oral history as a research methodology and oral testimonies as a source of information. Because history is essentially not that which happened but that which is told about what happened, oral testimonies are in many cases the primary source for community history research. Oral sources are also valued for the unique perspective they provide on a community's past. While written sources tell what happened, oral sources tell how people felt about what happened, how they reacted to it and how it affected their lives.

Despite the undisputed importance of oral testimonies, however, oral historians need to look beyond them. Too often is a community perceived as a self-contained unit of people who share mostly the same experiences, ideas and values. And too often is oral evidence seen as the only source of information about a community's past. A community is in fact a diverse, dynamic and evolving entity, and sources other than oral testimonies also need to be consulted if the ultimate goal is a balanced and scientific account of its history. Sources other than oral testimonies include not only the more conventional and accessible archival records, newspapers and photographs, but also less accessible and relatively unlikely sources such as personal documents, maps and plans, objects, buildings, ruins and even the historic landscape. These sources are not always consulted by oral historians, but they all provide traces of a community's past. At closer scrutiny, the oral historian will find that in many cases these diverse sources are connected and in some cases they may confirm oral evidence. Together, these sources contribute to creating a more complete picture of the past. Written documents and other sources should at least provide the background against which orally communicated history may be understood or, in the case of the landscape and buildings, the physical context within which it may be understood.

Considering the above argument, a holistic, integrated and inclusive approach to community history is preferred because it views a community in its broadest sense and consults all available historical sources. It also appears that a holistic (and above all, a critical and questioning) approach prevents a trivial, one-dimensional view of a community's past. It avoids a "trip-down-memory-lane" approach and instead focuses on the community's challenges, especially those that are rooted in the past. In this regard, we may be referred to issues such as crime, gangsterism, poverty, prostitution and alcoholism. Furthermore, the holistic community history approach (hereafter called the holistic approach) not only complements the oral history technique, but may also be used by oral historians to enhance orally communicated history. Researching and writing a community's history is essentially a process of integrating diverse sources of evidence, and shaping and molding it into a

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historically accurate version of the past. Ultimately, the holistic approach is a dynamic and problem-centred approach that promises to achieve more than merely collecting life histories and historical anecdotes.

The Batho Community History Project

Drawing on the strengths of the holistic approach, the National Museum in Bloemfontein launched a project to record, research and write the history of Batho (Bloemfontein's oldest existing historically black township). This project, named the Batho Community History Project (hereafter called the Batho Project), is essentially an oral history project, but it follows the holistic approach. To realise the ideal of researching and recording Batho's vanishing history, the Batho Project was launched in 2007 with the following main objectives:

- to record, research and write the history of Batho
- to investigate the potential of oral history as a tool for community development and empowerment

It was decided to implement the Batho Project in phases because it is crucial to follow a systematic approach to researching, collecting and writing a community's history. For the purpose of this discussion, phases 1 and 3 (which are crucial for the holistic approach) will be discussed. The first phase involved a survey of the available and accessible historical records on Batho. Knowledge of existing records not only creates the context within which the oral historian will operate, but also allows for a more critical, problem-oriented approach to community history. An informed oral historian will be able to ask relevant questions not only about the past but also about the present. For example, the Batho Project is aimed at investigating the problem of crime and gangsterism in Batho by asking residents how they personally experienced the problem during their lives. Their testimonies, specifically those that deal with the activities of the so-called *tsotsis*[2], shed light on both the historical dimension as well as the present manifestations of the problem.[3]

A crucial phase of the Batho Project is phase 3, which focuses on conducting oral history interviews with selected candidates. By using a standard interview guide, both present and previous residents of Batho above the age of 75 years are interviewed on the political, social and cultural history of Batho. While there is a clear focus on collecting information and

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[2] A Xhosa word describing a young black person who commits crime, usually as a gang member.
[3] Interviews: Motlalekgomo Lesufi, Bloemfontein, 10 March 2008; Peter Melamu, Bloemfontein, 19 March 2008; Rabokanana Ketela, Bloemfontein, 4 July 2008; Sebuilwe Dibe, Bloemfontein, 14 April 2009.

perspectives needed for the writing of Batho's history, social issues that usually feature in community development projects are also addressed by means of a separate questionnaire designed specifically for this purpose. Simple and straightforward questions are posed, for example:

- What are the biggest problems facing Batho today?
- What should be done to improve Batho?
- Would you say Batho is a place with a rich history?
- Which site or building in Batho has special meaning for you?

The questionnaire complements the formal interview and the information obtained may interest both historians and development workers. The Batho Project is thus primarily interested in the past, but it also explores people's perceptions of the present and future.

The oral historian and development

In a recent article published in the *South African Historical Journal*, oral historian Sean Field asks a crucial question: "Should oral historians move beyond pure research foci and make pragmatic contributions to development, 'healing' and the reconstruction of communities?"[4] This question is particularly relevant for oral historians working in a developing country like South Africa. In recent years oral history and development has become a subject of investigation, and research has led to the concept of "applied oral testimony". In practice it means that the information received in partnership with interviewees can become a development tool in the hands of oral historians and development workers. It also means that the inclusion of oral history and testimonies in the development debate can help to make this debate more inclusive. With the help of oral historians, development workers may be encouraged to become more responsive to people's needs and more accountable for their actions.

Based on our experience of the Batho Project, we believe that the holistic approach will enable oral historians to effectively contribute to the development debate. The problem-oriented, questioning approach followed in the Batho Project helps to understand why contemporary problems and issues are rooted in the past. Some of the typical questions development workers ask are: Who are the people of this community? What are their basic needs? How do they perceive their problems? What interventions are needed? Following the holistic approach, oral historians may add another dimension by asking questions that deal with other aspects of the community's past: Where do the people of this community come from? Were they forcibly

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4   Field 2008:170.

removed? Why was the community originally established? What is the history of the social problems challenging this community? What are the "official" and "popular" histories of this community and how do these differ? How do the members of this community perceive their history?

The answers to these and other questions may provide the necessary background information and perspective development workers need to make informed decisions and formulate effective development policies. Development workers increasingly acknowledge that a community's reality should not be viewed in terms of hard facts only, because that reality also consists of personal experiences of the past and present. Herein lies the strength of the holistic approach, because it focuses not only on historical facts but also on the human side of history. It is not only about what actually happened, but also how people feel about what happened and think and believe what happened. In South Africa, with its traumatic past, people's experiences of the past may be a key to understanding the challenges communities like Batho face today.

Development takes place on different levels and seemingly insignificant gestures may produce positive results that are not always of a high profile nature. The progress made with the Batho Project during the past two-and-a-half years – a short time in development terms – is encouraging. The Batho community responded positively to this initiative and it is hoped that over the long term, this project will in some way contribute to the regenerating and developing of Batho – whether on a personal level or on a broader community level. The following suggestions, which are based on our experience of the Batho Project, may be helpful:

- Development should be seen as part of a planned and properly resourced community history project.
- As the project progresses, there must be visible end-products in the form of banners, brochures and user-friendly publications.
- Use community-based organisations and interest groups as vehicles for networking and to create community awareness.
- Oral historians must co-operate and not compete with development and community workers.
- Liaise with the local and district municipalities' development offices and other development agencies.
- Set long-term goals and make long-term commitments.
- Focus on developing community members' historical identity: emphasise the importance of their personal history, which should be seen as an integral part of their community's history.
- Listen carefully.

Conclusion

All people are a product of their past. Listening to community members' oral testimonies one becomes increasingly aware of this and also of how the past and perceptions of the past continue to inform people's present and future actions. Therefore, oral historians who are recording and researching a community's history have a responsibility to share the stories and information they collect with a wider audience that should include not only the community itself but also development, community and even social workers. Furthermore, oral historians also have a responsibility to ensure that the information they disseminate is balanced and therefore they have to consider all available sources on a community's history. The ultimate ideal is to obtain a holistic view of a community's past. In doing so, oral historians will not only contribute to the writing of balanced histories of local communities but may also become active role players in community development projects. Listening to the views and experiences of people like Mr Selebano, oral historians may help him and his peers to understand and act on the challenges they face as a community. The Batho Project aims to do just that.

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Insider, outsider:
negotiating the researcher's position

Mxolisi Mchunu
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Introduction

It is becoming gradually more important for oral historians or researchers from any field of study, be it social or behavioural sciences, to expound their personal motivation for their research, especially those using qualitative methodologies that require reflexivity.[1] As a factor of expounding their role in the field interaction, these researchers frequently position themselves as either 'insiders' or 'outsiders' to their research domain.[2] This article emanates from my PhD research in which I explore history of political violence in KwaShange, Vulindlela district and its effects on the memories of survivors (1987–2008). One of my chapters details my autobiographical narrative, where I discuss my personal experiences of the political violence as a child and my family's community membership of KwaShange in the 1980s–1990s, and I elucidate my motivation for the study. In this article I clarify my position as a researcher and the role I occupy as such in regard to my PhD research, including the personal experiences that led me to consider myself to be neither 'inside' nor 'outside' my particular research domain. In this, I am building on the argument I made in the article *Are rural communities open sources of knowledge?* published in Denis and Ntsimane, *Oral history in a wounded country: interactive interviewing in South Africa,* as well as a personal interview I had with Ben Carton in 2004 meant for the same publication.[3] Therein, I explore the ways in which my experience 'in the middle' influenced my choice of research topic, the scope of my study, access to informants, collection and analysis of data, and the maintenance of research obstinacy. After these deliberations I now argue that they in-

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[1] Creswell, JW. *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approach.* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994). See also Crotty, M, *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and perspective in the research process.* (New South Wales, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1998); Etherington, K. *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher: Using ourselves in Research.* (London: Jessica Kingley, 2004); and Patton, MQ. *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (3rd ed). (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002). See also Carton, B and Vis, L. Doing Oral History, in Denis, P and Ntsimane, R, *Oral History in a Wounded Country: Interactive Interviewing in South Africa.* (University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008) p. 53.

[2] Bonner, A and Tolhurst, G. Insider-outsider perspectives of participant observation. *Nurse Researcher*, 9(4):7–19. (2002)

[3] Carton, B and Vis, L. (2008). Doing oral history, in Denis, P and Ntsimane, R, *Oral history in a wounded country: interactive interviewing in South Africa.* Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

sider/outsider dichotomy is simplistic, and the distinction is unlikely to adequately capture the role of all researchers. Instead, the role of the researcher is better conceptualised as a continuum, rather than an either/or dichotomy. My role, reflected in all my writings and more specifically in terms of my PhD fieldwork, is neither an insider-researcher nor outsider-researcher. This has maximised the advantages of each while minimising the potential for disadvantages, and meant that I was able to benefit from both in my study of traumatic experiences, both my own and those recalled by my interviewees. I have also found that the conscious process of debating my own insider/outsider position, with all its nuances and complexities, has enabled me to better understand myself as a researcher and how important this is to the caution needed for the qualitative research I have chosen as my main methodology.

Insider/outsider: the dichotomy

The dichotomy of the insider and the outsider is relevant to this study, particularly because of the centrality I have given to my own autobio-graphical account of the trauma I experienced as a child as a result of the Midlands violence of the 1980s–90s. Equally, it is important to my inter-action, empathy, knowledge and interpretation of the biographical narratives of my interviewees. I set out to prove the supposition that the violence did indeed have traumatic after-effects, and certainly in my own and my family members' cases, the insider/outsider continuum has served my study well. This concept of insider/outsider has also influenced how knowledge of poli-tical violence has been and is being transmitted in community memory, in ways that can be described as Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) (which emphasises that people should record their own stories because they know better than people 'who do not own the story'). Consequently, a description of the experiences of political violence in Vulindlela might best begin with a discussion of the concept of insider/outsider and the position of myself as researcher and where I locate myself within the continuum between the two or take an either/or position.

The usefulness of the distinctions of insider and outsider in this study depends in part on the extent to which one can clearly define 'being a mem-ber of the community' and 'not being a member of the community'[4], in other words, how clearly one can define 'insider' and 'outsider' in this community context.

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[4] Mchunu, M. (2008). Are rural communities open sources of knowledge? in Denis, P and Ntsimane R, *Oral history in a wounded country: interactive interviewing in South Africa.* Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press p 130.

What does it mean to be an insider or an outsider to a particular group under study? Can women study men? Whites study Blacks? Xhosa study Zulu? Can a younger generation study an older generation? Or indeed, the reverse of any of these scenarios? Moreover, can the present self reflect on the past self and its position and/or its changing stance within this insider/outsider continuum or between its dichotomies? Early discussions in anthropology and sociology of insider/outsider status assumed that the researcher was *either* an insider or an outsider. This typical paradigm, which has been adopted by some scholars, consists of the 'outsider' writer who has 'inside' information about a group of people he or she is studying. Within this research paradigm, the researcher locates him/herself in the following ways: he/she writes to a readership who has no 'inside' knowledge; obtains 'inside' knowledge from the people who are, of course, 'insiders' to the experience under study; and invests in him/herself the authority to write about the people being studied partly by claiming 'outsider objectiveness', for it is assumed by these supposedly objective researchers that those studied do not possess sufficient objectivity regarding their specific reasons for doing things in a specific way. Further, the researcher may even believe that his/her knowledge gives him/her the right to a kind of authority or power over the people or tradition that he/she is studying.[5]

More recent discussions of insider/outsider status have unveiled the complexity inherent in either status and have acknowledged that the boundaries between the two positions are not all that clearly delineated.[6] In the real world of information collection, there is a degree of slippage and fluidity between these two statuses. Critical and feminist theory, postmodernism, multiculturalism, participatory and action research are now re-framing our understanding of insider/outsider issues. In particular, reconstruing insider/outsider status in terms of positionality, power and knowledge construction allows us to explore the dynamics of researching within or across cultures. The notion of the totally impartial 'outsider objective observer' is thereby refuted, for in this more nuanced understanding even the 'outsider' takes on some of the 'insider' status and certainly has his/her influence upon the research field dynamic.

Drawing from my research experiences, I will explore insider/outsider issues in terms of my positionality, power and knowledge and the posture that my experience reflects a combination of insider/outsider status. Even though differentiations between 'insider' and 'outsider' in the humanities/social sciences have in many cases been influenced by particular political

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[5] Said, EW. (1991). Identity, authority, and freedom: the potentate and the traveler. *Transition* 54:15–22.

[6] My personal interview with Carton, B and Vis, L. 9 July 2004, and personal communication with Oscar Zondi, one of the custodians of history of *impi yamakhanda*, March 2005.

and cultural agendas, and have in recent years come under increasing scrutiny from scholars who feel sidelined by IKS, it is important to the present study to evolve some kind of concept of membership to the community under study. Usually, insider-researchers are those who choose to study a group to which they belong, while outsider-researchers do not belong to the group under study. It is common for researchers using qualitative methodologies to study a group, organisation or culture they belong to, and in doing so, they begin the research process as an insider.[7] Insider-researchers are often intimately engaged with their research domains, and, unlike outside-researchers, could rarely be described as those who 'parachute into people's lives … and then vanish'[8] as Oscar Zondi confirmed Gerrard's description during my own research with the Bhambatha project in 2004. As I explained to Zondi, it is often despite the researcher's best intentions that 'parachuting' occurs, for it reflects the demands of academic pressures. Drew referred to these researchers as 'seagulls': 'a "seagull" is a researcher or consultant who flies into a community; craps all over everything then leaves the community to tidy up the mess.'[9] Despite the diametrically opposed pressures of academia and the commitment to community engagement, in my article mentioned above I gave examples of university-based research projects where the researchers were sensitive to the communities they were studying.

Bonner and Tolhurst outline three key advantages of being an insider to the research domain: a superior understanding of the group's culture; the ability to interact naturally with the group and its members; and a previously established, and therefore greater, relational intimacy with the group[10]. Indeed, some insider-researchers choose to conceptualise themselves as co-investigators, co-learners, facilitators or advocates, rather than researchers; this is typically an effort to minimise the power differential between themselves and those participating in their research.[11] However, each of these

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[7]   Bonner, A and Tolhurst, G. (2002). Insider-outsider perspectives of participant observation. *Nursing Researcher* 9(4):7–19. See also Hewitt-Taylor, J. (2002). Insider knowledge: issues in insider research. *Nursing Standard* 16(46):33–35.

[8]   Gerrard, N. (1995). Some painful experiences of a white feminist therapist doing research with women of colour, in Adleman, J (ed.) *Racism in the lives of women.* Harrington Park Press, pp. 55–64.

[9]   Drew, N. (2006). The seagull imperative. *Australian Community Psychologist* 18(1):40–41.

[10]   Bonner, A and Tolhurst, G. (2002). Insider-outsider perspectives of participant observation. *Nursing Researcher* 9(4):7–19.

[11]   Magwaza, T, Sithole, P and Seleti, Y. (2006). *Freedom sown in the blood*. Ditlou. See also DeLyser, D. (2001). "Do you really live here?" Thoughts on insider research. *The Geographical Review* 441–453; Farnworth, EB. (1996). Reflexivity and qualitative family research: insider's perspectives on bereaving the loss of a child, in MB Sussman and JF Gilgin (eds), *The methods and methodologies of qualitative family research.* New York: Haworth Press pp. 399–415; Harklau, L and Norwood, R. (2005). Negotiating researcher roles in ethnographic program evolution: a post-modern lens. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 36:278 –288.

advantages is related to a disadvantage. For example, greater familiarity can lead to a loss of 'objectivity', particularly in terms of inadvertently making erroneous assumptions based on the researcher's prior knowledge and/or experience.[12]

The concept of insider/outsider presents a number of problems in the context of writing about respective people's experiences of political violence.

> What may not be acknowledged or even recognized is that the writer, the act of researching, the act of writing about the research and the resultant writings, all operate within a larger cultural and political context in which the writer and his or her readers become the 'real insiders' to the single hierarchically superior culture, with the people being researched forever relegated to being 'outsiders' to that superior culture.[13]

Another problem with this type of paradigm is that it treats the peoples and cultures being studied as objects, which have little interaction with the rest of the world or with the writer. As Clifford has pointed out, such peoples, cultures or traditions are then subordinated to the 'hierarchically superior culture' and so relinquish their rightful place in the study.[14] The weaknesses of this kind of writing, possible strategies in which these can be overcome and related issues are discussed in *Writing cultures.*[15]

Having dealt with my own story as a child survivor of the political violence that took place in Vulindlela, KwaShange in my PhD thesis, the question this article poses is: can I then claim to be an insider or an outsider? What does it mean to be an 'insider' and what does it mean to be an 'outsider' in my own case? As I come from an academic environment, have an identity outside of KwaShange, and am using this theoretical discourse of 'insider/outsider', then in this sense I am presumably an 'outsider' to the community I am studying. This also because I am no longer the child I once was during the 1980s–90s violence:

> The fact remains however that today's narrator is not the same person as the one who took part in the distant events which he

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[12] Mchunu, M. (2001).Personal communication with Ben Carton and Louis. See also Delyser, D. (1996): "Do you really live here?" Thoughts on insider research. *The Geographical Review* 441–453.

[13] Clifford, J. (1986). Partial truths, in J Clifford and GE Marcus (eds). *Writing cultures. the poetics and politics of ethnography.* Berkeley: University of California 51–76.

[14] Ibid, pp 10–18.

[15] Clifford, J and Marcus, GE (eds). (1986). *Writing cultures: the poetics and politics of ethnography.* Berkeley: University of California.

or she now relating. Nor is age the only difference. There may
have been changes in personal subjective consciousness as well
as in social standing and economic condition, which may
induce modifications, affecting at least the judgement of events
and the 'colouring' of the story. For instance, several people
are reticent when it comes to describing forms of struggle
approaching sabotage. This does not mean that they don't
remember them clearly, but that there has been a change in
their political opinions in the line of their party, whereby
actions considered legitimate and even normal or necessary in
the past are today viewed as unacceptable and are literally cast
out … If the interview is conducted skilfully and its purposes
are clear to the informant, it is not impossible for him or her to
make a distinction between present self and past self, and to
objectify the past other than now.[16]

As researchers, we cannot be outside society, and thus activities such as
'science' or 'objective research' are striated with procedures for minimising
the presence of the researcher in the research product. My recognition of this
dilemma is integral to the questions about my own position in relation to my
target group. When I as researcher enter the field as an insider, or one whose
biography (gender, race, class, sexual orientation and so on) gives me a
'lived' familiarity with the researched community and such tacit knowledge
informs my research interpretation or output, I am no doubt in a different
position to one who enters the research field as an outsider, or one who does
not have an intimate knowledge of the researched community, and conse-
quently my research interpretation is affected accordingly. This article
describes the research issues that arise and the various strategies researchers
have used to manage them. The argument then shifts to query the social
boundaries implicit in the construction of research insiders and outsiders.
Reflecting on my previous research, which explored my role as an 'insider
researcher' and 'outsider researcher' on two projects I was involved in (my
Masters' research, where I studied my community of KwaShange, and the
Bhambatha project where I studied a community that I was not part of[17]), the
paper shows that researchers are rarely either merely insiders or merely
outsiders. Rather, research is constructed in a relationship with many others.[18]

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16 Portelli, A. (1981). The peculiarities of oral history. *History Workshop Journal* 12(1):96–
    107.
17 Mchunu, M. (2008). Are rural communities open sources of knowledge? in Denis, P and
    Ntsimane, R, *Oral history in a wounded country: interactive interviewing in South Africa.*
    Durban*:* University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.
18 Magwaza, T, Seleti, Y & Sithole, P. (2006). *Freedom sown in blood: memories of the Impi
    Yamakhanda, An Indigenous Knowledge System Perspective.* Ditlou.

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The interaction of individual biography and social location shapes the research relationship in complex ways which undercut the common-sense translation of historical familiarity into epistemological privilege.

Using dialectical critique to manage tension between objective detachment and subjective immersion

It is possible to find a balance between objective detachment and subjective immersion, especially when questions and interpretations are freely shared within researcher-participant interaction. Dialectical critique is a specific strategy used in this study that has been helpful in finding a balance between two seemingly opposite concepts and which can deepen inquiry by consideration of counterpoints.

     A preliminary reflexive approach might be framed thus: How can I prepare for the field by being suitably dispassionate (with an eye on the big picture of what this event might mean), and at the same time genuinely empathetic (so that I can approach the task with a level of subjective knowing)? It is also true that when sensitive feelings and memories are evoked for participants, researchers should be willing and able to establish whatever conditions are needed to remedy the situation.[19] In these circumstances, subjective knowing is evoked to convey compassion and also to facilitate meaning.

     Taking these points into account in regard to my own experience as a researcher invoking the insider end of the insider/outsider continuum, how can I be sensitive to knowing when to disclose my own views and experiences and when to keep them aside? Conversely, accessing subjective knowledge and being quick to self-reflect during data collection might also tend to inhibit participant disclosure and provoke prompt agreement, rather than the respondent seeking explanation of his/her personal reality.[20] It is helpful, then, to remember that research and therapy are not the same and that, on balance, the participant is the one who has the primary role in revealing honest and meaningful information.[21] Pitman argued that an insider's familiarity can provide an 'illusion of sameness', with potentially disastrous results. In an interview with *Ilanga*, I admitted to a research mistake I once made:

19   Mchunu, M. (2008). Are rural communities open sources of knowledge? in Denis, P and Ntsimane R, *Oral History in a Wounded Country: Interactive Interviewing in South Africa.* Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

20   Morse, JM. (1994). Designing funded qualitative research, in NK Denzin & YS Lincoln (eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. pp. 220–235.

21   Gerrish, K. (1997). Being a 'marginal native': dilemmas of the participant observer. *Nurse Researcher* 5(1):25–34. See also Hewitt-Taylor, J. (2002). Insider knowledge: issues in insider research. *Nursing Standard* 16(46):33–35.

In conducting insider research with survivors of violence who were young at the time the violence started, I once made a mistake and talked openly with the informant in the presence of her friends giving detailed explanation about the research project, which 'outed' the woman to her friends. I realised I had uncritically assumed that the informants were also open about their experiences.[22]

In addition, insider-researchers are often confronted with methodological and ethical issues that are largely irrelevant to outsider researchers. Insiders often struggle to balance their insider role (e.g. nurse, psychologist and activist) with their other role of researcher.[23] Taking on the role of the researcher often acts as a barrier that separates the insider from those in the setting they are researching. In her geographical research on a gold-mining ghost town, DeLyser wrote that she always volunteered to clean the public toilets in an effort to remain accepted by those she was researching[24], while Gerrish, who studied nurses' perceptions of district nursing, said that she offered to make coffee and wash dishes in order to become accepted in the setting. Doing this, however, created another tension concerning the balance between the development of rapport with the participants and the maintenance of the distance required to make sense of the data[25]. In my own research on the Bhambatha project, we offered to clean the local school and we would attend funerals in order to be accepted in the community. But this meant huge sacrifices in time that should have been spent in data collection. Rapport with local community members then needed to be balanced against the exigencies of the project's deadlines and funding.

Insider researchers often report the difficulties they encountered in collecting data, especially via interviews, for two reasons. Firstly, the insider researcher might find that his/her reflections on the potentially personal nature of the data can result in a difficulty in focusing on the interview process. Secondly, the process of interviewing can be complicated by the assumption among participants that the researcher already knows the answers, by fact of his/her being an insider. DeLyser stated that probing for information which the informants knew she already knew sometimes ap-

22   Mchunu, M. (2009). Interview with *Ilanga* Newspaper, February.
23   DeLyser, D. (2001). "Do you really live here?" Thoughts on insider research. *The Geographical Review* 441–453; Gerrish, K. (1997). Being a 'marginal native': dilemmas of the participant observer. *Nurse Researcher, 5*(1), 25 –34; Kanuha, VK. (2000). "Being" native versus "going native": conducting social work research as an insider. *Social Work* 45:439–447.
24   DeLyser, D. (2001). "Do you really live here?" Thoughts on insider research. *The Geographical Review* 441 –453.
25   Gerrish, K. (1997). Being a 'marginal native': dilemmas of the participant observer. *Nurse Researcher* 5(1):25–34.

peared to aggravate them. Initially, I did not realise the familiarity was a potential problem – it was only when I read the interview transcripts that I realised how much of the interactions between myself and the informants (my brothers) had gone unsaid. In my interviews, meaning was communicated via a shared understanding of vague comments, innuendoes and incomplete sentences and descriptions.[26] Gerrish, DeLyser and Kanuha described engaging in numerous techniques to overcome these problems.[27] However, rather than applying 'one-size-fits-all', these techniques varied according to the research context and researcher's strengths and weaknesses.

A further difficulty often encountered by insider-researchers relates to ethical codes. Ethical issues might arise, and need to be dealt with, on an individual and daily basis. Although ethical principles of privacy, confidentiality, informed consent and non-malfeasance are able to guide researchers, there is often a lack of guidelines on how these principles play out in community-based applied research.

Indigenous knowledge holds the view of '*izindaba zomndeni azixoxwa kwabangaphandle*' meaning that African ethics or '*ezomndeni azingenwa*' decree that one should not do anything to provoke tension between family or community members. This prescription goes counter to 'knowledge for knowledge's sake', which is the basis of objective scientific enquiry, and makes it hard for an insider researcher to assess his/her best response. The distinction between insider and outsider positions corresponds to contrasting positions concerning the theory of knowledge, with epistemologies and perspectives such as constructionism, feminism, critical theory and post-modernism being especially appropriate to the conduct of insider research. These epistemologies and perspectives are more likely to mean that researchers views their research process and products as 'co-constructions' between themselves and their research participants. Further, they will regard the research participants as active 'informants' in the research and will attempt to give 'voice' to the informants within the research domain.[28] As such, these perspectives allow the researcher to conduct research 'with' rather than 'on' their group or domain of interest, which contrasts starkly with outsider research perspectives. As the above review demonstrates, there are

26   Mchunu, M. (2009). Personal communication with group of PhD students from UKZN. February.

27   DeLyser, D. (2001). "Do you really live here?" Thoughts on insider research. *The Geographical Review* 441–453; Gerrish, K. (1997). Being a 'marginal native': dilemmas of the participant observer. *Nurse Researcher* 5(1):25–34; Kanuha, VK. (2000). "Being" native versus "going native": conducting social work research as an insider. *Social Work* 45:439–447.

28   Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: meaning and perspective in the research process*. St Leonards, New South Wales, Australia: Allen & Unwin; Denzin, NK. (1972). The research act, in Lincoln, YS & Guba, EG.(1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

strengths and limitations to both insider and outsider research. Indeed, my research experience has taught me that the research partnership between an insider and an outsider would balance the advantages of both positions, while minimising the disadvantages of each.

My role as researcher in terms of my thesis

I will here discuss the role I played in my research, including the personal experiences that led me to consider myself neither inside nor outside the experience I was studying, and demonstrate how my shifting focus and attempt to retain an aware and overall position 'in the middle' as it were, influenced my choice of research topic, the scope of my study, access to informants, the collection and analysis of data, and the maintenance of research rigour.

In undertaking the research, I acknowledge that my personal experiences influenced my decision to research the experience of political violence; I also acknowledge that my experiences influenced the way I chose to research this topic. For some researchers, the motivation for their choice of topic results from a combination of experiences and moments[29]. For me, it began in the very early hours of the 11th February 2006. I was interviewed by Ben Carton for the Sinomlando Centre. Thinking back to it, this was the first time I noticed how important this subject – political violence in Kwa-Zulu-Natal – is to me. I felt extremely uncomfortable being selected to be interviewed and felt that others in my family or community should have been acknowledged by being interviewed before I was. After all I was but a child at the time, certainly affected by the violence but yet not suffering as much as those around me, nor was I a perpetrator and nor did I then know much of the causes or details of the civil war. It is for this reason that I consider myself neither an insider nor an outsider to the experience I researched. Having said that, however, it was my own and my mother's experiences, some of which I describe in my PhD thesis, that actually influenced my decision to research the topic. Moreover, my lack of understanding of what I had lived through as a child, my longing for my earlier more secure life and my traumatic grieving for those lost friends and relations really motivated my research. I embarked on the initial stages of thesis development in 2006. In the following section, I discuss the ensuing development of the study.

My position as neither an 'insider' nor an 'outsider' to my research domain has proved to be both a help and a hindrance in collecting data. Generally, it is thought that the recruitment of informants can be potentially difficult when the researcher does not occupy the position of an 'insider', largely because the researcher must first establish trust and rapport with the

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[29] White, K. (2000). *Maintaining meaning in life: the central challenge for palliative care practice*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia.

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group. However, unlike other outsider researchers, I did not struggle to recruit the informants. I concluded that as a result of being 'silenced' by those around them, the informants were keen to 'voice' their experiences to someone who was willing to listen to them, even if I did not share aspects of these experiences. My position as an 'outsider' was far more apparent in my attempts to recruit and interview the main perpetrators of violence. These interviews were more formal, shorter, and I was rarely offered refreshments. In addition, I experienced an acute case of 'gatekeeping' by the relative of one of the people I was keen to interview. The gatekeeper first asked me to clarify why I wanted to interview his father, and then requested that I talk to him first; later he wanted to know the questions I was going to ask. When I told him, he informed me that the questions were 'not very good' and so he decided to answer the questions himself, rather than allow access to his 'warlord' father. Insider researchers have a tendency to rely primarily on informants with whom they are familiar and feel most comfortable. However, I knew only a few of the survivor informants and had previously met three of the perpetrators. My familiarity with the survivor informants affected the interview with one of them. Although I did not ask her to do so, she referred to me in the third person, as though I was another person rather than someone she knew who also happened to be interviewing her. Upon revisiting the transcript and tape, I became aware of the go-between or right-hand man's 'artificial officiousness.'[30]

While the survivor informants were keen to know why I was interested in the research topic, the perpetrators appeared disinterested in my motivations for my research. Some of the latter seemed to assume I was an outsider, as they said things that I do not believe they would say to someone they knew was a part of the community. For instance, when I broached the subject of cannibalism and *muthi* which I knew as an 'insider' was integral to the war, they became defensive and angered by what they appeared to see as an outsider's ghoulish or sensationalistic curiosity. My supposed curiosity was in fact motivated by insider knowledge of the importance of 'doctoring' or *ukuqinisa amabutho* – they thought that I had no right to such profound insider information. This picture indicates that a supposed community member is in fact an outsider with regard to certain kinds of information, because in fact I am neither the right age nor am I an indigenous qualified *inyanga*, and it is considered culturally taboo to discuss this with non-participants in the initial contact. On reflection, this was no surprise to me because I had experienced a similar attitude from Bhambatha Zondi's line of *inyanga*, Mr Mzila, who refused to even entertain questions.

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[30]　Kanuha, VK. (2000). "Being" native versus "going native": conducting social work research as an insider. *Social Work* 45:439–447.

Our multiple identities, in terms of demographic characteristics and our role in the research, readily impact upon data collection, in terms of what is 'seen' and 'unseen' and what is considered 'important' and 'unimportant'.[31] When I interviewed some men in KwaShange for my Master's research at the time of the interviews, I believe my age at the time had the greatest influence. This became particularly apparent when I wanted to explore with the bereaved informants the effect of their losses on their intimate relationships. The literature refers to the effect that bereavement, and particularly the death of a child, has on spousal/marital relationships in terms of their physical and emotional intimacy. I felt uncomfortable probing the bereaved informants with specific questions about their intimate relationships and loss. I might have felt better able to do so had I been an 'outsider' to their experiences. Yet, even without specific questions, I was able to access detailed information about their relationships and loved ones they lost.

> Insider-researchers are sometimes criticized for being advocates rather than 'real' or 'legitimate' researchers. Kanuha wrote that "for each of the ways that being an insider researcher enhances the depth and breadth of understanding to a population that may not be accessible to a non-native scientist, questions about objectivity, reflexivity, and authenticity of a research project are raised." It might be argued that removing oneself from the research context might reduce these criticisms. However, it is naïve to think that (a) minimal exposure to the research context would automatically reduce or eliminate bias, and (b) from a constructionist point of view, bias can ever be truly eliminated.[32]

Indeed, being 'in the middle' made me more aware of dangers of either stance and constantly question the community dynamics and values apropos the research questions, because I was not an 'insider' or an 'outsider'.

My discomfort as a researcher

How would I describe my experiences in terms of my study area as indicative of my middle-ground position between insider and outsider? Firstly, I am not the same person I was in 1987 when I was 10 years old, although I feel tremendous sympathy for this younger self; this could be described as being

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[31]   Langhout, RD. (2006). Where am I? Locating myself and its implications for collaborative research. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 37:267–274.

[32]   Kanuha, VK. (2000). "Being" native versus "going native": conducting social work research as an insider. *Social Work* 45:439–447.

at the 'insider' end of this hypothesised continuum. At the same time I am not fully an outsider, because even though my greater maturity and the knowledge I gained subsequently could shift me to an 'outsider' position (which is arguably more objective), in fact to this day a particular experience or event can spark a reaction relating directly to the trauma of my childhood experiences, pushing me back to the insider position. This said, being conscious of the dichotomy of the insider-outsider position means that I have to constantly monitor my reactions and observe my responses, in order to achieve the ideal position in the middle. This process itself is not an easy one; I find myself seriously stressed as a researcher.

The fact is that in terms of being an outsider I have to constantly police myself to retain 'objectivity' as an academic and ensure that I do not get 'swallowed up' by the memories of past pain – either mine or my informants'. My insider status also informs my interaction with my informants; thus I find that I know when not to pursue issues such as profound trauma, or that I am sworn to secrecy on matters such as who is responsible for killing who during the violence (an act for which they may not have been charged). At a far more profound level than the experience of an outsider researcher is the experience by an insider such as myself when many of the informants are relatives and neighbours. Only an insider would experience one of my overriding feelings, namely my longing for the community life that pre-dated the civil war, remembering friends who are no longer there and happy moments like my father's *isicathamiya* group. In the present, there are more serious consequences than this nostalgia that I and many others experience. For example, one informant who was jailed in 1988 has never been able to get employment and his wife is extremely bitter and angry. There are other instances where I let my identification with the community perhaps override my search for objectivity. I challenged David Ntombela, as the instigator of the 1990s violence, to apologise in the *Natal Witness*; he had just retired from the legislature in Pietermaritzburg as IFP leader, saying he could go to heaven with a clean conscience knowing that he had stolen no money. This so angered me that I challenged him. My family called me to a meeting and told me that I was endangering the entire community by my action and that I had been placed on an IFP hit list because of my bad timing (this took place before the 2009 general election). This is something that could only have happened to an insider, as an outsider would probably not have such intense invested feelings which could result in endangering the lives of the family and community. The particular aunt and uncle concerned had moved from an IFP area to Imbali during the violence because they were alleged ANC informers, and it had taken time for them to rebuild their lives. My aunt's advice was: 'you must learn to keep the truth within you, the truth kills these days' (in other words, you die if you tell the truth). I felt sorry that they were still afraid of this 'warlord' who had caused them heartache. The

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new, 'objective' me believes that I have a constitutional right to freedom of expression because I have studied.

My insider cultural value system prescribes that '*izindaba zomndeni azikhulunywa kubantu bangaphande*' (one does not divulge or discuss family issues with an outsider). This affected me because I knew of a then-UDF informant who had served a jail sentence because his brother had used his gun in attacking IFP youth at the time of the violence. Although I knew the story as well as the resulting family tension, I could not pursue this line of inquiry because of the cultural injunction stated above.

How did my insider status as a child influence my autobiographical accounts?

Not only were there aspects that I found so painful that I actually blocked them from my memory, I felt that I was betraying my family by even mentioning how angry I was toward my mother for not explaining to me when I was a child what was going on. I also find it extremely difficult to divulge the current alcoholism one of my brothers, which derives from having been a boy soldier during the unrest. I cannot even ask him about his experiences. My family still fear what he might have gone through which resulted in his ruined life. I feel that I am violating his privacy and his right to remain anonymous, even though I do not think he is in a position to discuss his past experiences.

The more I think about my topic the more traumatised I am, and I feel that this applies to my informants as well. I resent that we did not get therapy. Although I have taken an academic stand to position myself in the middle, between insider and outsider, this is proof it is indeed a fluid continuum and it varies. I actually question myself when I contemplate these issues: I am more of an insider than I thought, and yet my taking a stand against David Ntombela might mean that his actions make me so angry because I am so involved as an insider, or I may be exercising my right to objective academic freedom. I can see that this is a valid question, for which I do not have an answer.

In retrospect, I know that this research has caused me so much trauma that my wife even has to wake me up from terrible nightmares. I have a strong desire to die, caused by recalling the painful memories sparked by undertaking the study, and I sometimes ask myself if I should be placing my informants in a position of being re-wounded in my interviews. I also think that had I not done the research I might be still enquiring what it was all about and I would perhaps be a very different person. I do sometimes wish I had not started the study.

But having said this I know that it has to be said, not only for myself but for all those who experienced it. Philippe Denis received an e-mail from

the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action (PACSA) asking him to do some work on the KwaShange violence. I suspect that this is because the community knows that I am doing this study and my interviews have made many people wish to tell their stories. I myself attended a 'memory and healing' workshop in 2004 and feel that there will never be enough therapy for the experience of trauma. There cannot be closure; these experiences will no doubt recur until one passes on. Perhaps this is something one must accept in terms of therapy as well.

I experience serious conflict in this insider-outsider dynamic; not only is it fluid and constantly changing, but I am constantly conflicted about what my response should be, especially in terms of people like Ntombela – the warlord.

Practising and teaching oral history in school

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Introduction

History has always been a very important area in the development of South Africa and this was visible especially after 1994, with the election of a democratic government which symbolised a new era in the history of South Africa. This era was regarded as a new beginning for many South Africans as it was marked by critical political, social and economic transformation which was to ensure equality, equity and fairness. Within all this transformation, education was central to the initial development of South African society and the existing system of education was revamped to ensure that all citizens have equal access to education and their different and diverse educational needs are provided for.

The introduction of the new Curriculum 2005 and Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) was one initiative by the newly elected government to instil a new but radical education system which was regarded as the hub of South Africa's development as a fast-growing country and a powerhouse for Africa. Curriculum 2005 and OBE did not proceed without problems and challenges, with regards to their implementation and the wide gap that existed and still exists between policy and actual practice in schools. Some teachers, education managers and parents resisted this change in education and to date there are still some issues around the implementation and success of this approach in South Africa. Nevertheless, the systems were put into place after 1994 and that meant educators, principals and parents were expected to assist with the actual implementation at school level.

This paper investigates the extent to which the new curriculum (Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) covers or encourages the practice of oral history in schools. It is also important to highlight the origin of Curriculum 2005 and OBE as a starting point for the paper and to take a closer look at what is actually happening in South African schools. The paper is based on the hypothesis that oral history can be used to assist in dealing with social problems, and to instil some sense of morality, in our schools only if we know how. This simply means defining oral history in the context of school or classroom practice and devising ways in which teachers can use oral history to the advantage of the country as a whole. Talking about social problems in schools means we have to look at the issues of morality and values in schools, especially with the growing violence that has been so much publicised and is becoming more dangerous for both teachers and learners.

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Therefore, this paper will also look at the ethical concerns involved when collecting oral history and how these ethics can be translated into real-life lessons that can help to minimise, if not entirely eliminate, the social ills in our schools. I then ask: is this possible with oral history?

Role and significance of oral history in schools

Oral history (not only written history) should be seen as one of the most critical subjects in South African schools because of the powerful meaning it can have for learners and teachers. We first need to understand what oral history is to be able to appreciate its importance in the classroom.

Oral history is some form of oral historiography that is defined as the study of the recent past by means of life histories or personal recollections, where informants speak about their own experiences (Henige 1982:2). Oral history collects information from people who have first-hand experience of a certain situation which is relevant to the present and recognises the need for those experiences to be known. This means people responsible for collecting oral history and using it as a data collection methodology must be well-equipped and knowledgeable about the methods of collecting histories or narratives orally; such people are known as 'oral historians'. This term is used to include anyone who seeks to learn about the past by word of mouth, whether it is the most recent or the remote past. Learners must know these facts and teachers have a duty to instil these skills at an early age.

In addition to presenting the facts about oral history, teachers need to highlight the value of the subject-matter in their classrooms. One important fact about oral history that makes it unique is that it allows individuals to learn about the perspectives of others who might not otherwise appear in historical records (Walbert & Shawver 2002:1). Oral history cannot be written, because the core of the subject is that it is communicated orally. Written texts are limiting and might omit important information that can only be made clear when communicated orally. People who give data orally are not necessarily literate, but have valuable information that is crucial and probably not found in any written texts. Oral history can be complemented by technology, which nowadays plays an important role in the lives of many. While learners can be encouraged to tape-record the data collected, they can also be encouraged to video-tape the proceedings, capturing expressions, body language and other matters that might be of importance to the data being collected. Of course, not every school or every learner in South Africa will have access to this technology, but for those who do it could be an added advantage. As Walbert and Shawver (2002) emphasise, oral history allows one to compensate for the digital age. Here they refer to enhanced communication through the use of telephone, e-mail and other web-based

methods that, according to them, have largely replaced valuable written records.

Oral history is unique in that it does not only focus on one kind of information. With oral history one can pick up useful information through observing and learning of the hopes, feelings, aspirations, disappointments, family and very touching personal experiences of the people being interviewed (Walbert & Shawver 2002). This can refer back to the Truth and Reconciliations Commission interviews, which were conducted in South Africa after 1994 to get the true picture of what happened in the apartheid era and amnesty to those responsible if they told the truth and apologised to the people affected by their cruel actions. As Dunlap-Smith (1999) writes, the significance of recording on video the 'oral history' of South Africa's apartheid leaders was nothing less than preserving the vigour of those who brought freedom to their people. At the hearings we observed different reactions which were not necessarily positive from South Africans and especially from people who were directly involved in the Commission interviews. This shows the depth of oral history and the valuable contribution it can make to our communities.

Taking an oral history, like any other interview, allows interviewers to ask questions they are interested in. Unlike reading about a certain event in history, you can actually go to the people who were involved that event and get first-hand accounts of what happened. With oral history the interviews are focused on specific information, and interviewees are normally open and provide information that would not otherwise be available as written material. People being interviewed are given a chance to tell their stories in their own words. Academic texts use the words and understanding of the writer, but oral history takes the direct words of those who provide information. This translates into the powerful interaction that occurs between the interviewer and the interviewee.

Learners must know these facts so they can see the value of doing oral history; its importance in the lives of people they might touch; and the powerful nature of communication when using oral history to collect data. Learners must be made aware that oral history is not just a conversation but a way of getting insight and information on an important event or feelings about that event.

Doing oral history in schools

Learners normally view history as a boring subject because of its association with being forced to remember dates, people, events and chronological happenings. Oral history is different because it is not only about remembering these things but going out and getting information from people who were involved in those events. Learners are involved not only by reading and

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understanding written texts but by examining documents, letters, diaries, photographs, maps and folk songs to get closer to the people to be interviewed (Gatto 2006). Learners must be personally involved in collecting information about their families and communities. In this way they can connect with their families, who can provide information that might not have been known otherwise, and finally understand themselves.

Conducting oral history interviews offers learners an opportunity to reach out to older generations and get first-hand insight into events that really happened. There are important aspects of conducting oral history interviews that should be communicated to learners.

- Because oral history is focused on specific happenings and events, learners need to know exactly what they want to find out more about. Therefore, identifying a topic before collecting data is crucial at a very early stage of doing research on a particular event in history.
- Learners need to know who they are going to interview. There are people who might have information about a certain event because they were there and they were part of it. You do not want to interview someone who was told about the event and was not part of it. The information that such a person provides might not be as reliable as if it was provided by someone who was part of the event being investigated.
- Learners need to decide what instruments are needed to conduct the oral history interview. Instruments such as a tape recorder and video recorder might be used to ensure that all information provided is captured and nothing is omitted in the process of taking notes on the interview. Recordings can therefore be used in addition to note-taking to complement the recorded information.
- Learners should be made aware of the ethical measures that need to be taken into consideration when conducting the oral history interviews. Examples are asking for permission to conduct the interviews, acquiring informed consent from those interviewed and making sure you adhere to the ethical principles of conducting oral history interviews. These ethical principles will be explained later in the paper.

These points are crucial in the smooth collection of oral histories and ensuring the information is reliable. This does not mean oral history does not have its own limitations and is totally reliable, but the interviewer has the responsibility to ensure that the information he/she is collecting is checked in collaboration with other sources.

Ethical issues in collecting histories orally and how they can be communicated in schools

It is obviously important that ethics play a very crucial role in collecting, teaching and the general practice of oral history by learners, oral history practitioners and oral history teachers. Generally, being ethical makes a big difference in the lives of many people and makes the process easy to handle because all the cards are on the table from the beginning. O'Hare (2004) emphasises this by stating that anyone who conducts an oral history interview should be conscious of ethics regardless of whether or not they are bound to an institutional policy. Ethics should be a norm in oral history interviewing and should not be compromised in any way. Different Oral History Associations have their own views on these ethics and make them public so they can be followed and practised by oral historians, teachers, students and other people who might be interested in conducting oral history interviews.

In 2007 the Oral History Association of South Africa adopted an outline of guidelines on an ethical code of conduct when conducting oral history interviews. This outline has five sections: when planning an oral history project; before conducting the interview; during the interview; when processing the interview; and on completion of the project (Oral History Association of South Africa 2007).

Outline of a code of ethics for oral history practitioners in South Africa
(Adopted at the OHASA 3rd Annual General Meeting in Polokwane on 24 October 2007)

When planning an oral history project

1. Considering any possible harm that the interview process may cause to the interviewee's feelings or reputation or his/her community
2. Acquiring sufficient technical knowledge to conduct an interview of the best possible standard
3. Obtaining the best possible knowledge on the culture and habits of the interviewee and his/her community

Before the interview

4. Following a culturally-appropriate protocol when approaching the interviewee and requesting an interview
5. Informing the interviewee of the purpose for which the interview is to be carried out and ensuring that he or she has understood this
6. Agreeing on the place, time and circumstances of the interview

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7. Agreeing on whether or not the interview should remain confidential and on where and how the interview material will be stored and disseminated. This should be done in writing (release form) or verbally with a record on tape

8. Agreeing on how the interviewee will benefit from the interview (e.g. receiving a copy of the tape and transcript/a community celebration), and ensuring that the interviewee has no false expectations.

During the interview

9. Respecting the interviewee's style of personal interaction (language, posture, dress, eye contact, etc.)

10. Being gender-sensitive

11. Dealing appropriately with painful and emotional issues

12. Verifying that the interviewee remains comfortable with the interview process and, when necessary, granting him/her the right to withdraw

When processing the interview

13. Ensuring that the interview is transcribed, indexed, catalogued and made available as agreed with the interviewee

14. Ensuring that all possible measures are taken to preserve the interview material

15. Informing the interviewee of any change regarding the storage or dissemination of the interview

16. Verifying that no part of the interview has a defamatory content

On completion of the project

17. Reporting back to the interviewee or his/her community and giving them a copy of the recording, if an undertaking to do so has been given

18. Acknowledging the contribution of the interviewee and his/her community in any form of subsequent publication

19. (*Where applicable*) Sharing with the interviewee or his/her community any form of financial benefit which may accrue to the interviewer

The American Oral History Association issued *Pamphlet Number 3* on Oral History Evaluations Guidelines, in which it explains the ethical responsibilities of interviewees, the public and the profession of oral historiography. It also provides detailed guidelines on preparing for the interview, selection and orientation of topics and participants. It also focuses on the relationships, techniques and skills which must be acquired by the oral historians when conducting interviews.

A very interesting part of this pamphlet which is in line with the discussion in this paper is the guideline for educators and students who want to engage in oral history interviews.

Has the educator:

- Become familiar with the general guidelines and conveyed their substance and importance to the students?
- Ensured that each student is properly prepared before going into the community to conduct oral history interviews?
- Become knowledgeable of the literature, techniques, and processes of oral history, so that the best possible instruction can be presented to the student?
- Worked with other professionals and organisations to provide the best oral history experience for the student?
- Considered that the project may merit preservation and worked with other professionals and repositories to preserve and disseminate these collected materials?
- Shown willingness to share her/his expertise with other educators, associations and organisations?

Has the student:

- Become thoroughly familiar with the techniques and processes of oral history interviewing and the development of research using oral history interviews?
- Explained to the interviewee the purpose of the interview and how it will be used?
- Treated the interviewee with respect?
- Signed a receipt for and returned any materials borrowed from the interviewee?
- Obtained a signed legal release for the interview? Get signed informed concern forms from the interviewee.
- Kept his/her word about oral or written promises made to the interviewees?
- Given proper credit (oral or written) when using oral testimony and material used in context?

All these ethical considerations are not only important in conducting oral interviews but can also play a very important role in instilling ethical and moral behaviour in learners in South African schools. The issues of respect for adults and being honest in getting and providing information do not only relate to doing research, but can also be translated into everyday behaviour. It

is very important to keep your word when making promises. All these ethical issues should start at home, be instilled by educators in the classroom and practised in everyday life.

Educational policies that promote and advocate oral history practice in South African schools

This section is aimed at looking at the educational policies that are used to promote oral history in schools. I will refer to the RNCS as an instrument to enhance the practice and teaching of oral history in the classroom. The curriculum advocates that the teacher becomes a facilitator, being thus not at the centre of the lesson but providing information to the learners. Learners are expected to be critical thinkers and contribute to their education through exploring, adventuring, being able to solve problems and making decisions with the assistance of the teachers who act as guardians of learning.

Learners are encouraged to acquire knowledge and learning through society, by talking to and interacting with other people on different levels to develop and enrich their minds. Most importantly, they gather stories and experiences and should be able to present them practically in different types of presentation as envisaged in the new RNCS, specifically in the Arts and Culture learning area. Schools are expected to incorporate this part of their extramural activities as well, as an element of development and recognition of all the cultures within the school environment. This reflects active participation in education through the use of oral history. What learners learn can be understood and explained in reality to present the past. With oral history, students are challenged to talk to people, ask questions and critically think about and analyse what has been narrated to them.

According to the new RNCS, learners are expected to develop their potential in drama, visual arts, dance and music. The focus is on creating and interpreting arts, history of the arts, culture and heritage, individual and group participation, communication and expression. The core purpose of this learning area is to develop learners into creative individuals. The level of communication and expression is enhanced and instilled in individual learners. This is the main purpose of oral history in schools; to develop individuals who can go to different communities and be able to express themselves fluently, present themselves well and understand what they are talking about. Learners are to be made aware that cultures are not static; they have histories and contexts and they change, especially when they are in contact with other cultures (DoE 2005:24). The mere fact that cultures change and they are different in the context of South Africa as a diverse country makes doing oral history even more interesting, because of the excitement of revealing the unknown and discovering the new.

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In addition to the Arts and Culture learning area, there is another critical learning area that promotes and advocates the use of oral history in schools: that is, the Social Sciences. This learning area focuses on relationships between people and between people and their environment. It focuses on enquiry, knowledge and understanding and interpreting issues within history and geography as individual subjects in schools. The learning area aims to contribute to the development of informed, critical and responsible citizens who are able to participate constructively in a culturally diverse and changing society (DoE 2005:23). This directly relates to the core aim of oral history in schools – to make learners into responsible ethical citizens. The point that oral history promotes good human relationships because of the direct communication between interviewer and interviewee cannot be over-emphasised.

It then becomes obvious that the South African education system aims at developing learners into good oral historians who can think for themselves and look critically at issues of importance, not only to themselves but to the development of the country at large. Oral history is about involving communities and understanding underlying situations that might contribute to the growth of South Africa as a developing country.

Conclusion

The paper explained the role that oral history plays in South African schools, with emphasis on the responsibilities of teachers in the classrooms and in developing learners into well-respected oral history practitioners. The paper also highlighted the importance of ethical and moral behaviour in oral history practice; this should not be limited to the classroom and to the interview process, but should also apply to the everyday life of individual learners. This behaviour must be conveyed by teachers, parents and the community so as to encourage good behaviour in students. The RNCS was consulted to see the extent to which oral history is endorsed and practised in the classrooms.

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Memories of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle among people from Bulilimamangwe District in the southwestern parts of Zimbabwe

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Introduction

The harsh and brutal colonial rule in Rhodesia, and its unpopular agrarian policies, only served to heighten ethnic differences between the Ndebele and the Kalanga in Bulilimamangwe District. The imposition of Ndebele chiefs and the demotion of Kalanga chiefs in Bulilimamangwe under the notorious Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 left Kalanga–Ndebele relations strained. By the time when the liberation struggle broke out in the 1970s, there were clearly distinguished ethnic groups in the district: the Kalanga and the Ndebele. However, the Kalanga and the Ndebele – sick of their marginalisation and loss of land to the minority white people – united to oust the regime and to reassert their independence. This period marked a drastic shift from a radical Kalanga ethnic identity that had been shaped during the 1950s and 1960s to the adoption of a political identity which was neither Ndebele nor Kalanga in orientation.

In this paper I debunk the common debate that put ethnicity at the centre of the struggle by taking into account the memories of people from Bulilimamangwe District. The ethnicity debate fails to capture the broader perspective of ordinary people who fought during the war by placing too much emphasis on the leadership. I thus seek to show that the people of Zimbabwe were preoccupied with the elimination of injustices and that while there were ethnic differences at leadership level, these differences did not override the common factor of political unity as the oppressed people. Moreover, testimonies of people from Bulilimamangwe District show that ethnicity was not an issue during the war as all the people came together under the common aim of ousting the oppressor. However, I do not dismiss the fact that ethnic differences might have shaped the politics of the war. In this paper I therefore elaborate on how and why identities can shift over time, and the complexity of these identities. Above all, my aim is to give a refreshing view of the struggle in Bulilimamangwe by showing that ethnicity was not an overarching issue during the liberation struggle. I draw examples from the experiences of the Kalanga liberation fighters who joined the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and from oral testimonies of ordinary people who remember the war in Bulilimamangwe District. These people remember the war of liberation in Bulilimamangwe as a unifying agent which brought a political identity that shaped the course of the war.

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Identity discourse and the memories of the liberation war from the ordinary people's perspectives

Generally, it is accepted that when one speaks of ZAPU cadres who fought for the liberation of Zimbabwe, the names of the leaders feature prominently in the discourse. Some of the names that are often mentioned are Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo, Jason Ziyaphapha Moyo, George Silundika and George Nyandoro. While the party's leadership was drawn mostly from the Kalanga ethnic group, the party was viewed as a Ndebele party because of the regional perception of Matabeleland. This was also because most of the party's members came from the Matabeleland region. Nationalism gave the people of Matabeleland a political rather than ethnic consciousness and a sense of commonality (Rasmussen 1976). During this period the African people, despairing of having their land grievances redressed, soon began to organise political parties with the intention to remove the settler government. The Kalanga of Bulilimamangwe also joined in this mass nationalism under ZAPU, which was led by Joshua Nkomo. The party recruited its cadres from all over the Matabeleland region, to such an extent that the people viewed it as a Ndebele-oriented party. Ranger and Ncube (1995:122) concur with the above and postulates that the Kalanga had to profess a Ndebele identity and participate in nationalist activities as Ndebele because ZAPU was seen as a Ndebele party. During this period the Kalanga also took an active role in the nationalist activities. However, studies have concentrated on Ndebele ethnicity, especially during the period of the liberation struggle. Yet this identity was neither Ndebele nor Kalanga. Other small groups such as the Venda and Tonga also participated in the struggle under ZAPU.

Moreover, Ranger and Ncube (1995:123) argue that the late Joshua Nkomo (who was born Kalanga) wanted to preserve Kalanga ethnic values but at the same time became a keen Ndebele nationalist who not only practiced Ndebele cultural customs but also sought to revive them. However, they contradict themselves by arguing that leaders like Joshua Nkomo simultaneously revived Kalanga cultural nationalism and Ndebele political nationalism. They seem to confuse political identity with ethnic identity. Msindo has done a lot of work on ethnicity and nationalism, and argues that ethnicity went hand in hand with nationalism rather than being opposed to it (2004:161). In his thesis, Msindo (2004:161) further argues that the Kalanga sought accommodation among the "nationalists" and the official identity of being Ndebele, but still clung to traditional Kalanga ethnic identity. From the above, it seems that the Kalanga continued to observe their identity even during the war of liberation and scholars have mistaken them joining the Ndebele-dominated political party for identification with the Ndebele ethnic group. During this period, ethnic identities were to some extent muted in favour of political identity. Political identity was fostered among these

people, especially in what was termed *Pungwes* (meetings that took place at night during which the people were given political orientation). Radio Zimbabwe, which broadcasted from Mozambique, also served to instil a form of political unity among the citizens of Zimbabwe. It was because they had to fight a common enemy that the Kalanga fought side by side with the Ndebele in order to gain back their land from the white people (Interview with Fikile Sibanda 2008).

It is not my intention in this paper to pretend that there were no ethnic tensions during the struggle, especially in the camps in Zambia. A number of scholars have written and overemphasised the ethnic differences that took shape during the liberation struggle within the leadership of ZAPU. These irreconcilable differences were among the reasons that led to the breaking up of the party which was dominated by the Kalanga and Ndebele. Ethnic conflict occurred again in Zambia in the 1970s and led to the second split of ZAPU in exile. According to Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2007:281), the conflict was ethnic-induced and was between Ndebele/Kalanga-speaking politicians (such as Jason Moyo, Edward Ndlovu and George Silundika) and their Shona-speaking counterparts (such as James Chikerema and George Nyandoro). In addition to the above, there were ethnic rifts between the Ndebele and the Kalanga. An example was the Mthimkhulu faction which was in fact a Ndebele clique who wanted to occupy key positions within the party. The Kalanga group comprised Jason Moyo, Joshua Nkomo and George Silundika. However, it would be reductionist to use this example to conclude that there were serious ethnic fights in ZAPU during the struggle. These differences and disputes were confined to the leaders and the general soldiers were not involved in them. These ethnic tendencies were also witnessed among the intellectuals and when individuals were promoted within the party. For example: During the war in Zambia, Kalanga intellectuals had so strong a grip on educational provision that it was said that one stood no chance of a scholarship if he/she belonged to the Ndebele ethnic group (Ranger 1989:169). Joshua Nkomo thus assumed a lot of identities. In Bulawayo (an urban city dominated by Ndebele speakers), he was Ndebele; in Kezi (his home area), he was Kalanga; and in the then Southern Rhodesia, he was a nationalist (Ranger 1999).

Scholars such as Nyathi have, without thorough scrutiny, accepted the ethnic debate as an important factor that shaped the liberation struggle. According to Nyathi (2004:104), the Kalanga lost their ethnic identity during the liberation and adopted a Ndebele identity. Again, this is rather reductionist and fails to account for the consultations (by both the Kalanga and Ndebele) with Kalanga cults such as the Njelele and Manyangwa during the war. Nyathi contradicts himself by postulating that young Kalanga men and women joined the struggle to show the Ndebele hardliners that they were just as courageous and determined to free themselves from oppression. This is too

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simplistic because if this was their inspiration to join the struggle, the Kalanga would have fought against the Ndebele without waiting for the struggle to prove it. The Native Land Husbandry Act did much to generate racial tension and political agitation during the 1950s and 1960s, to such an extent that ethnic differences among the African people in Southern Rhodesia were buried in order to fight their common enemy – oppression. However, it would be a distortion of history to argue that the Kalanga adopted a Ndebele identity during the period. Undoubtedly ZAPU had its stronghold in Matabeleland South in terms of its recruitment drive. It was no coincidence that the Kalanga from this district joined ZAPU. However, ZANU's stronghold was in the Shona-speaking communities. The drive to join ZAPU was not based on ethnic lines, but the Kalanga took advantage of their proximity to Botswana to establish military bases such as Dukwe (interview with Enoch Knox Moyo 2012). When interviewed in 2011, Saul Gwakuba Ndlovu concurred with this and argued that Kalanga people dominated ZAPU because it was easy for them to cross the border into Botswana and then go to Zambia. Therefore, the geographic proximity of the Kalanga to the Botswana border played a role in influencing the Kalanga to join ZAPU. Had ZANU also operated in the area, perhaps the people from this district would have joined the party.

The Native Land Husbandry Act is often cited as the reason why most people from this district joined the struggle for the liberation of the country. Elders from Bulilimamangwe are said to have started conducting meetings soon after the introduction of the Act in the district. In these meetings, they argued against the colonial segregation and the loss of their land to the white people (Interview with Aleck Mposo Moyo 2012). Nkomo is remembered as a liberator who told people to fight for their land. He is purported to have told the people to refuse the money and cry out for land from the white men (Interview with Headman Baleni Dube 2012). While a number of people from this area actively joined the struggle, many remained at home and participated in other ways. According to oral testimonies from the people, the struggle penetrated into the area around 1977 and 1978. Central in the debate about the struggle are the memories of the people on how the war was fought. These memories are about the combatants and the people, their relations with each other and – perhaps – some of their everyday interactions. These stories show their perceptions of how the war transformed their lives and the manner in which they adapted to particular war situations.

The ZAPU guerrillas who operated in the area are remembered to have been of mixed ethnicity. Thus, more than anything else, this diluted the growing ethnic tensions that had haunted the area (especially during the NLHA and the period of colonial community development). The people thus treated the guerrillas (who were known as *amalwa ecatsha* – guerrillas) well. Ethnicity was buried under the goal of freedom and it is not surprising that

the Kalanga, who had developed a sort of hatred towards their Ndebele counterparts, soon buried their differences for the sake of the liberation of the country. The villagers cooperated with the guerrillas, who were from various diametric backgrounds. People from the Muke area remember that the comrades who operated in their area were Shona speaking and that they cooperated with these people by giving them food and shelter (Interview with Jeremiah Dube 2012). The guerrillas consulted other mediums and traditional healers. In particular, they cultivated a warm relationship with the Manyang-wa cult, which saved and hid the guerrillas from the Rhodesian Forces. Young men and women also assisted the guerrillas by giving them information about the Rhodesian Forces. They were well known as *Chimbwidos* and *Mujibhas*. However, while there was cooperation between the villagers and the liberation fighters, the people also remember the trauma and suffering they experienced during the struggle.

Suffice to say that the guerrillas had a tendency to rape young women. There are many children from the district who are the products of these rela-tions. The mothers of these children are bitter and argue that although the guerrillas are hero worshipped and praised in the history books, some people experienced trauma because of their activities. In the same vein, the people of the district suffered when they misled the guerrillas or gave them the wrong information. Some people were killed during the war by both the Rhodesian soldiers and by the guerrillas (Interview with Qedisani Ndiweni 2010). Villagers were compelled by the Rhodesian Forces to give them information about the whereabouts of the guerrillas. One could be killed for simple having said that he/she did not see them (Interview with Qedisani Ndiweni 2010). People from Bulilimamangwe also noted that the Rhodesian Forces did not burn their homes but instructed the African soldiers who accompanied them to do so. This could have been the strategy of white soldiers to follow a divide and rule principle towards the African people. As a result of the harassment, people ended up giving false information – which also had dire consequences. Therefore, there is a discourse that the war of liberation was a traumatic event that took the lives of many people and destroyed many families. The guerrillas did much harm to the very people they claimed to liberate. In the same vein, these people were also harassed by the "enemy" (the Rhodesian Forces). While ethnic disputes erupted among the leaders of ZAPU and ZANU, ethnicity was not an issue among the ordinary people (especially the peasants of Bulilimamangwe).

Embedded in the war memories of the Bulilimamangwe people is the discourse about "sell-outs" who were popularly known as *Abathengisi.* These were the people who were thought to have given information on the where-abouts of guerrillas to the Rhodesian Forces. The consequences for those deemed sell-outs were dire. Many people became trapped in-between the Rhodesian Forces and the guerrillas, giving false information and accusing

their fellow neighbours of being sell-outs. "Selling out" people to either the guerrillas or the Rhodesian Forces became a survival tactic. Suffice to say that this strategy of selling each other people was not confined to a particular ethnic group, for example a Ndebele could sell out other Ndebele people in as much as Kalanga people could sell out each other. If anything, the strategy of selling out one's tribe members reflected the social relations and tensions that were prevalent in society at time which got expressed during the war. The selling-out strategy also signified hatred towards others in choosing to eliminate one's enemies simply by accusing them of being sell-outs and handing them over to the guerrillas. Because some people were intimidated by the presence of both the guerrillas and the Rhodesian Forces, they ended up giving false information about their neighbours. In the end, the villagers were victims of both the guerrillas and the Rhodesian Forces. Usually those who were found guilty by the Rhodesian Forces were arrested and imprisoned at Khami Prison for not less than six months.

Traditional authorities also found themselves in a difficult position during the liberation struggle. On one hand, they were compelled to support the Rhodesian Front as they were agents of the government; on the other hand, they were accused by the guerrillas of supporting the suppressive rule of the colonial regime. Their position was further exacerbated by the deliberate attempt of the colonial regime to empower them as tribal authorities during the period of Community Development. During this period, traditional authorities had their judiciary authority over land restored and this was followed by an increase of allowances to the chiefs. For example, the African Affairs Act of 1966 gave chiefs new punitive powers, including powers to arrest, as government-paid messengers (Raftopoulos 1997:59). With all these provisions, chiefs were left with no choice but to dance to the tune of the colonialists. As the waves of nationalism spread throughout the country and the war intensified, traditional authorities had to shift their loyalty to the guerrillas. Yet the guerrillas generally assumed that the chiefs were working hand in hand with the "oppressors". For example, Headman Mrapelo Masendu Dube was killed in 1975 after the guerrillas accused him of being a sell-out (Interview with Chief Sindalizwe Masendu Dube 2012). Chief Gambu Sithole was also killed by the guerrillas for collaborating with the white government. However, some chiefs (such as Madlambuzi and Hobodo) whose chieftainships had been abolished by the colonial regime gained favours from the guerrillas and strongly supported the guerrillas. The guerrillas were accommodated by Chief Madlambuzi who had made his homestead a political base where villagers received political orientation by the guerrillas (Interview with Nconyiwe Ncube 2012). It was because of his support of the guerrillas that the Rhodesian Forces sought to kill him and he ran away and sought refuge in Botswana. People from the area thus

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remember these events and how some of their leaders became victims of the war.

"We fought for the liberation of Zimbabwe": Memories of selected ZAPU cadres from Bulilimamangwe

The experiences and narratives of the ordinary soldiers during the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe are hardly ever presented. This section highlights the war experiences and contributions of a few cadres from Bulilimamangwe District who fought in the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), the military wing of ZAPU, during the liberation struggle. What is striking about the war memories of these former military men is that they insist that tribalism or ethnicity did not play a significant role during their operations in Zambia and when they were deployed in the country in the late 1970s (interview with Charles Phuthi 2012). While the leaders might have had some disputes that were ethnically motivated, the ordinary soldiers treated each other as one with only one goal of liberating Zimbabwe from white minority rule. Nkomo was viewed first and foremost as a political leader who was neither Ndebele nor Kalanga. The party consisted of people from various ethnic groups, such as Shona, Kalanga, Ndebele and Tonga. Drawing from the oral testimonies of the ex-combatants, it seems they did not place much emphasis on ethnic differences – at least during the struggle.

ZAPU also operated in Bulilimamangwe District and usually their recruitment was done at village level, while other soldiers were taken from the boarding schools such as those of the Embakwe and Empandeni Missions. According to the ex-combatants, most of them were not forcibly conscripted but joined the struggle willingly as they had seen their parents suffering at the hands of the white people. Therefore, some had run away from school without the knowledge of their parents and had crossed over to Botswana where they were flown to Zambia to join the struggle. While there had been ethnic tensions between the Ndebele and Kalanga, these differences were buried at least during the struggle. Political identity seemed to be an ideal identity during the 1970s. The Kalanga and Ndebele cooperated with each other, especially when it came to convincing the youth to join in the struggle. For example, Aleck Mposa Moyo (a Kalanga man) became very influential and was tasked with the recruitment of the youth in the Muke area. However, the elders also encouraged their sons to join the struggle to fight for the liberation of Zimbabwe.

While in Zambia (ZAPU operated in Zambia), the combatants were sent in platoons to receive training either in Russia or Angola. The ethnic factor was not a deciding factor for selection for training. The cadres were sent for training after taking into consideration the time of their arrival in Zambia. It was done on a "first come, first serve" basis. Promotion to a

position within ZAPU was done solely on the basis of one's expertise (Interview with Samanisi Nleya 2012). When these ZAPU cadres were deployed in the country in the late 1970s, some worked in Bulilimamangwe and others operated in the Shona-speaking areas of the country. Shona-speaking cadres also operated in Bulilimamangwe and were well received by the peasants, who cooperated with them and fed them as if they were their own sons and daughters. They were not inspired to join ZAPU because of any ethnic affiliation but rather by a common goal of obtaining freedom from the oppressors; they were a united people from various backgrounds under one political identity. While a lot has been written about the leaders of ZAPU, little is known about the ordinary soldiers who did not occupy leadership positions within the party. Their own experiences and memories during the struggle serves strengthen the view that ethnicity was not an issue during the struggle (at least at a lower level within ZIPRA).

Conclusion

A focus on the experiences of the people of Bulilimamangwe District during the liberation war reveals how identities can shift within groups of people. The ethnic debate, rather than the political debate, of the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe is often emphasised. However, the political atmosphere of the late 1960s and the oppression of the black people united the Zimbabweans from various ethnic groups to fight for independence regardless of their ethnic affiliation. The people from Bulilimamangwe District also took part in the struggle and were united in that they were traumatised by both the Rhodesian Forces and guerrillas. They shared a political, rather than an ethnic, identity. There is therefore a danger in viewing the liberation war through an ethnic lens as one might run into the danger of imposing a shared Ndebele ethnic identity on these people that never existed, at least in Bulilimamangwe District.

During the war the Kalanga people adopted a political identity and shared the same brutalities with people of various diametrical ethnic groups, such as the Ndebele, Shona and Tonga peoples. Their memories thus show the flexibility and fluidity of identities that can shift within a geographic space. Above all, the war gave the people from the district a political identity that brought together the Ndebele and Kalanga peoples in the fight for the liberation of not only Bulilimamangwe District but Zimbabwe.

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The role of women in the liberation struggle in the greater Midlands area

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It has been about 16 years since the dawn of democracy in South Africa and about 14 years since the end of violent conflict that engulfed KwaZulu-Natal as early as 1983 (Cherry, 2007:44). One of the legacies of this conflict has been an attempt among academics to study its nature and the impact it continues to have on the communities of KwaZulu-Natal today. A vast amount of research literature looking at the various aspects, as well as the nature and the causes of this conflict in many parts of KwaZulu-Natal is available. However, this material is limited and efforts to uncover further hidden aspects of this conflict are ongoing, as there is no doubt that there is still a lot that remains to be uncovered. This was illustrated at the recent conference organised by Msunduzi/Voortrekker Museum on the history of this violence. The vast majority of the papers at the conference spoke about the tragedy of this conflict and how it changed the lives of so many people. Some of the accounts given ranged from academic studies to those that were perhaps more personal, and maybe these were the most touching. However, one aspect of the conflict that has remained relatively untouched is that of the involvement of women during the years of intense political violence and throughout the struggle period. What is important in looking into this issue is how women responded to the political situation of the time. Perhaps an important question that one can raise is whether women played a role during this time or whether they simple kept quiet? Here I want to give a fresh look at the role played by women during these volatile years. The need to look at the issue of women is important for several reasons, which I detail below. Some of these reasons are also highlighted in several works which I have reviewed.

Distortions in history and the need to correct

Conventional history has failed to consider the role of women in historical events – a bias which has been a product of the oppression of women throughout history (Malinga, 1996:2). Women's lives were and still are much more complex than is suggested by texts focusing on their historically insignificant identities (Malinga, 1996:7). And yet, in all the vast literature of the uprising of the mid-1980s, there is scarcely a word written about the role played by women in this decisive period of the struggle (Cherry, 2007:282). This is one of the most pertinent problems relating to the issue of docu-

menting womens' experiences. And finding any literature on such a subject, specifically on Pietermaritzburg, is even harder. Seekings (2005) is one author who has acknowledged this fact. He records in his review of literature written about conflicts in South Africa a very interesting fact that, in approximately 500 works done on the subject of violent conflict, only about ten addressed the issue of women's participation in politics (Seekings, 2005). This basically means that the subject of women in relation to their role in conflict has rarely been considered by those interested in the subject of violent conflict. Most academics and journalists have used "gender-blind categories" to describe township protest: terms such as "the people", "youth", "community" and "masses" (Cherry, 2007:282). Hassim (2003:49) also notes that, "Besides Ineke van Kessel's book, in the literature on the civic movement of the 1980s there is no discussion… of women's role in the civics or of women's organisations in alliance with the civics". There is a great need for "gender corrective" history and the reinsertion of women's role in the political struggle (Cherry, 2007:283). However, Cherry (2007:283) also contends that such a project needs to go beyond simply putting women into the existing histories, asserting their strength as mothers, their courage as fighters, and their sensitivity as political leaders, but that we also need to look critically at how women participated in the struggle. The "gender-blind" accounts of these struggles reflect not only on their authors, but on the way in which the participants often assumed that "the struggle" itself was "gender-blind" and so consistently blurred distinctions between women's struggles, community struggles and the national liberation struggle (Cherry, 2007:283).

The problematic analysis of the voice of women in history

This chapter takes departure from traditional history that is written without due regard to gender biases. The voice of women in society and therefore their history has been undermined by gender stereotype. Gender modelling of behaviour is very common in KwaZulu-Natal; and was indeed, prevalent during the time of intense political violence. A lot of literature often represents the role of women as victims Malinga (1996:2). The danger with character modeling is that it assumes that the other behaviour does not exist. This also ignores differences between people based on race, culture, religious beliefs etc. This act of character modeling is found to be 'dismembering women', a common behaviour in the South African literature of the post-apartheid period aimed mainly at remembering the nation. It is not for me in this chapter to make an assumption that women think alike or to highlight any difference that they may have to men. But my objective is to give women the space to tell their own history, to tell how they see themselves in history and how they understand their role in it. The very nature of the struggle and political conflict in KwaZulu-Natal Pietermaritzburg is very complex and

cannot be explained in a single paper such as this. The violation of human rights in Pietermaritzburg on its own is well documented in the history literature. However, what is missing and hoped to be emphasised in this paper is the voice of women in the midst of this. And the emphasis being placed on the "how" women responded to this rather than "what" women did.

Methodological issues

I have relied heavily on interviews collected from women in Pietermaritzburg to write this section. The majority of these interviews come from a number of oral history interviews that have been collected around the area of Pietermaritzburg on women and their participation in the struggle against apartheid. However, the main interviews which have been very useful in writing this chapter come from an oral history project of the KwaZulu-Natal Archives called 'women in the struggle' and others from the Alan Paton Centre. Oral history represents an almost new movement in the quest to reinterpret the past not only in South Africa, but also in the world. In South Africa this is characterised by an increasing wave of interest in oral history research aimed primarily at re-interpreting the past and to give new meaning to existing knowledge. This movement is represented by the involvement of a wide range of participants including NGOs, government and also individual academics. To make assumptions based on this wave has certain positive consequences. The positive consequence of this methodology is the value it places on the subjective knowledge – truth-validity of information as told by the informants over an objective knowledge – which can be defined as truth-validity of information as assessed by an outsider. The other gain is the therapeutic value it has on the informants (Denis 2008:06). But of course caution needs to be employed when approaching information from this angle. This methodology does not completely remove the need to consult outside sources for further truth-validity of information.

The avenues for women's participation in Pietermaritzburg

Here I look at the response of women to a repressive state, political violence and gender oppression. How did gender as a general societal phenomenon, especially in KwaZulu-Natal, help or undermine women's response to the state's repression, political violence and gender oppression? Pietermaritzburg women's participation was important in the liberation struggle not only for justice, but also in the broader liberation struggle. The vast majority of women's organisations spiralled in Pietermaritzburg to champion women's voices in the face of apartheid, and this proves the significant role that women played in the fight against apartheid and oppression.

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In Pietermaritzburg many women became affiliated to women's organisations which helped them to organise and speak with one voice. These organisations are a good place to begin with an analysis of women's participation in this area. Below I look at major women's groups in Pieter-maritzburg that women name as having had an important role in organising women's participation in broader politics. The growth of women organisations, especially in the 1980s in Pietermaritzburg, is not just a coincidence, but also an indication that women needed some form of independent representation where their voices could be heard. In the following paragraphs I discuss five women's organisations that were very prominent in organising and gathering women together since the beginning of the 20th century in the province of which Pietermaritzburg was the capital city.

The National Council of Women

The National Council of Women (NCW) is one of the oldest women's organisations to which many women's organisations across the country are affiliated (Shreiner, 1995:27). It was formed in 1909 and had always been a non-racial organisation. The organisation was a research organisation and only sent memoranda as a method of protesting, and as a result it suffered less police harassment (Shreiner 1995:17). NCW had many organisations from Pietermaritzburg that were affiliated to this organisation; it is estimated that about 60 organisations in Pietermaritzburg had links to this organisation (Shreiner, 1995:27). All these organisations had representatives that attended all NCW meetings. In Pietermaritzburg there was a Sobantu branch of NCW which was a member of the NCW and there was an Edendale branch as well (Shreiner, 1995:27). The organisation was later split into two with the National Council of African Women specifically designed to cater for the needs of African women who felt the organisation could not cater for their needs. There is a lack of hard evidence to detail how this organisation mobilised women in Pietermaritzburg, but it was one of the oldest organisations that is testament to a need for unified action by women.

The Black Sash

The Black Sash is one of the most prominent but non-politically affiliated women's organisations in the country. In Pietermaritzburg the Black Sash is well known for its many protests that it organised there. Black Sash had a political wing that mainly organised protests in the form of vigil stands in Church Street and a non-political wing called the Advice Offices. The Advice Offices were all over the country and their mandate was to offer advice to people on bread and butter issues such as legal and labour issues. Vigil stands by Black Sash members were used as a way to protest against government

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brutality. The vigil stands comprised of white women standing in public areas carrying placards with information as to what they were protesting about. The Black Sash became very popular in the 1990s in the Pietermaritzburg area (Harley, 2008:6). Black Sash women were also part of the Imbali Support Group (ISG) which consisted of a group of white men and women who volunteered to sleep in Imbali in order to be witnesses to violent crimes that were ongoing and perpetuated against United Democratic Front (UDF) members (Harley, 2008:6). The theory behind the Imbali Support Group is well illustrated in the words of Anne Harley of the Black Sash:

> The theory was if there were white people who could be witnesses to what was going on then there would be less violence. It didn't always work that way. There were still attacks. But where there were attacks, a lot of that information was taken seriously by the courts and by the police because it was white people's information (Harley, 2008:5).

The Black Sash worked with many women's organisations that were affiliated with the UDF. Black Sash became an avenue where many women joined simply to express the many grievances they had against the government. The organisation was multi-racial and had a profound impact in the Pietermaritzburg struggle for justice and for women who could not find a home to express themselves politically.

The Natal Organisation of Women

The Natal Organisation of Women (NOW) is an organisation that was formed in order to champion women's issues. The NOW was formed in 1983 being born out of the Durban Women's Group (Madlala, 1992:1). The Durban Women's Group (DWG) also had women from Pietermaritzburg as part of it. NOW was not largely political, but was formed largely in order to commemorate Women's Day. It also helped bring women's issues to the fore (Madlala, 1992:1). The main leaders of this organisation were: Nozizwe Madlala, Phumzile Mlambo, Thandi Sgodi and Thoko Msane – now known as Thoko Didiza (Mkhize, 2008:6). Women in Pietermaritzburg were initially part of the Durban Women's Group, but later affiliated to NOW. However, NOW became too non-political for women in Pietermaritzburg who saw NOW as basically an extension of the DWG, which did not cater for the political needs of women in the Pietermaritzburg area that was becoming engulfed in political violence at the time. Women who formed part of NOW had to find other organisations that addressed their needs in their own immediate communities.

The Midlands Women's Coalition

The Midlands Women's Coalition (MWC) was one branch of the many branches that were affiliated to the National Women's Coalition (NWC). The MWC ran workshops all over the areas around Pietermaritzburg to educate women about the issues affecting them, especially in the lead-up to 1994 (Harley, 2008:7-8). The NWC was formed in Gauteng but then established branches all over the country. The MWC consisted of a number of women who had been involved in the Black Sash and many others who had been involved in other UDF affiliated organisations such as the NOW, but were at this time interested in women issues (Harley, 2008:7). The MWC comprised a coalition of individual women as opposed to a coalition of organisations of women (Harley, 2008:7). Among other incredible women who formed part of the MWC were women like Jabu Bhengu, Fiona Boymen and Mary Kleinenberg (Harley, 2008:7). It was a completely voluntary organisation (Harley, 2008:7). The MWC ran workshops in places like Thembalethu on Saturday mornings on a range of issues (Harley, 2008:7). In the lead-up to 1994 the MWC also produced a women's charter for the National Women's Coalition (Harley, 2008:8). The MWC was later dissolved due to a lack of funding and subsidising interest in keeping this organisation going.

The Midlands Women's Group

The Midlands Women's Group (MWG) is one organisation that was up front in the pursuit for justice during the most intense period of violence in the history of Pietermaritzburg. The MWG was formed between 1986 and 1988 as a voluntary organisation (Harley, 2008:9). Again the MWG comprised a mix of women who had been involved in the MWC and Black Sash who came together to form this organisation (Harley, 2008:9). This organisation became crucial in the politics of the Midlands. The MWG was formed initially by women from Caluza who then organised women in Mnyandu, KwaShange, Haza, Mpophomeni KwaShifu, Ntembeni and Mgwagwa (Mkhize, 2008:6). This organisation soon spread across places as far as Ixopo and Dundee (Mkhize, 2008:6). The organisation reached the strength of about 12 000 women altogether who were affiliated to it (Mkhize, 2008:6). The boundary of what constituted the Midlands was afterwards redefined in order to accommodate the growing numbers of women who were not from the defined areas. The role of this organisation soon included much more than just organising protests, as soon afterwards its members were seen at funerals and even went to the extent of raising money for families who could not afford to bury their own (Mkhize, 2008:6). The MWG achieved a number of milestones in its fight for justice in the Pietermaritzburg area; however, it was unfortunately dissolved due to a lack of funding. The founding pillars of the

MWG were Happy Blose, Nana Mnandi, Fiona Boymen, Lulu Gwala and others (Mkhize, 2008:7). The killing of youths from 1987 to 1990 was the main factor that pushed women to organise themselves and indeed their success was tremendous (Mkhize, 2008:7).

All the above organisations offered a platform upon which women could make their voices heard. The approach with which women pursued politics in Pietermaritzburg was very systematic. Kentridge (1990: 44) describes the actions of a group of women during a protest in 1983 in the following way:

> I was intrigued by the action taken by these women. It seemed to me to be remarkably cohesive and focused in a war in which shifting allegiances and lack of direction were the norm. Their interventions were low key and sporadic and yet they had achieved a number of their objectives.

The politics of women, although not simple, had very clear strategic goals which these women pursued. Women who involved themselves in various protests against injustices were united in action most of the time. These actions were deliberate, rather than being sporadic. Such unity can only be attributed to the support and strength of various organisations to which women were affiliated. The early formation of women organisations in the city alone proves that women have long seen themselves as having a role to play in political affairs.

The role of women in the unions

When a number of liberation movements had been banned from South Africa in the 1960s a political vacuum was left in the liberation struggle. Many unions during this time began to champion the democratic ideals that were being championed by the banned liberation movements. Women became major participants in these unions where they also found the opportunity to champion women's ideals of freedom from gender oppression as well as to fight for the over-arching democratic values of the liberation struggle. In the Pietermaritzburg area the two unions where the participation of women increased were the Miners Workers Union (MAWU) and Congess of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu).

The MAWU

The MAWU is one union that became prominent in Pietermaritzburg and did a great deal of work in mobilising women into political activity. MAWU held its first meeting in May 1973 in Edendale, outside Pietermaritzburg, and from

there began organising meetings in factories all over the country (Fairbairn, 1991:31). Towards the middle of the 80s, women's voices were beginning to be heard in the unions. Women workers were demanding a firmer stand on issues like maternity benefits and childcare (Fairbaim, 1991:43). One of the great women leaders well known for her stewardship in MAWU was Jabu Ndlovu. Her activism is well documented in the thesis of Malinga (Malinga, 1996). MAWU, with a substantial number of women, became very active in the Sarmcol Strike (Fairbairn 1991:48). In April 1985, 950 workers at the BTR Sarmcol factory at Howick went on strike and were subsequently dismissed on the 2 May, 1985. MAWU launched a national solidarity campaign calling for their reinstatement (Fairbairn, 1991:49); and, when the issue could not be resolved, women bore the impact that came with the dismissal of their husbands from work. Women were mobilised by MAWU in support of their dismissed husbands.

The COSATU

Cosatu is the biggest union to have come alive after the banning of the liberation movement. Cosatu mobilised many women to join it and participate in its activities in KwaZulu-Natal and Pietermaritzburg. On 6 August, 1989 at the Wadley Stadium, the women of Cosatu organised a rally that was attended by about 2 000 people. The rally was convened by Cosatu's Women's Committee to mark National Women's Day. The theme of the rally was entitled 'Women Make History and Fight for Peace' (Natal Witness, 1989:1). It focused on the role the women of Pietermaritzburg played in the peace process. Children and men came to support the Cosatu women's rally at Wadley Stadium in Edendale on Sunday, turning it into more of a family outing and a cultural festival rather than a political rally.

The role of women in political violence

One of the myths concerning the role of women during the period of political violence is the portrayal of women solely as the victims of this political violence. This overlooks the fact that there were many women who took an active role in either perpetrating the violence or engaging in the peace process. Lina Mabhida made the following statement while addressing a crowd of about 2 000 people in a rally held at Wadley Stadium in 1989: "Women should stand up and prevent this violence which is dividing our land … it is the women of the community who must stand up and speak out to prevent more killings in our country" (Mabhida, 1997:12). The role of the women in the UDF and in the Seven Days' War needs to be discussed in detail to highlight this point.

The role of women in the United Democratic Front

According to Cherry (2007:44), people in Imbali say the war started in 1983. The war started with the formation of the UDF in 1983. Government had announced a "new deal for South Africa". They were going to introduce a tricameral parliament. Whites, coloureds and Indians would be represented but Africans would be left out. The UDF united civics, youth, students, women's and church organisations to fight against the "new deal" (Cherry, 2006:44). The UDF was popular. New organisations were springing up in the townships to fight the new parliamentary system as well as the system of community councils and these organisations quickly affiliated to the UDF. The community councils were new town councils for African townships. But people all over the country realised that the community councils would have vey little power and refused to support them (Cherry, 2007:44). Many homes in Imbali had been attacked, and the people inside killed, whether they were involved in the struggle or not. It was becoming clear that the most vulnerable people were those who were at home most of the time – the women and children (Cherry, 2006:53). Many women during this time came to realise the sad reality that they could no longer just sit back and watch, but had to become actively involved in the war that ensued. Cherry (2007:86) noted that, "Thousands of women have struggled to keep their families together in the war; many have fought and died." During all this time the role women played in this war has been understated (Kentridge, 1990:41); nevertheless, they have exercised caution and rationality in their approach to war (Kentridge, 1990:45). Throughout 1988 women became very active politically, they protested against the installation of "kitskonstabels", and they protested against police brutality. They marched regularly to the PFP offices in Pietermaritzburg where they often received support (Kentridge, 1990:43-44).

The Seven Days' War and women

During the Seven Days' War in Pietermaritzburg which, as can be gathered from the name was a war that lasted for seven days, Inkatha veterans descended on all the places that were labelled as being a stronghold for UDF supporters. The Seven Days' War changed women's approach when it comes to war. Mkhize puts it like this:

> During the Seven Days' War women were not supposed to stand aside and watch when there is war; they had to engage in the battle as well. You had to throw stones against people who were carrying guns. That is when we realised how important the women's liberation effort was and that women are equal to

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men. The only thing men have as an advantage is physical strength. In terms of brain power, thinking and doing things women also had a role to play. We did play that role (Mkhize, 2008:7).

Women's actions during this plight commanded respect and attention (Kentridge, 1990:44). They were not interested in attack or counterattack; they had in mind the benefits of peace rather than continuing war. (Kentridge, 1990:44-45). The sad reality is that at a later stage of the conflict women became as much the victims of attacks as men were (Mkhize, 2008:7) with quite a number of them being raped before being killed (Khoza, 1998:6). In a nutshell, women had various responses to political violence – they were supportive where they could be and aggressive when situations dictated to them.

The patriarchy system and women's struggle for liberation

In Pietermaritzburg patriarchy has been a major factor throughout the women's struggle. It has defined the public sphere as more important than the private sphere (Malinga, (1996:2). Women have been given a role in the private sphere as it is more suitable to their gender. This affected and limited women's participation to a great deal. Women were often prevented from participating politically in Pietermaritzburg. Women leaders had to ask permission from male leaders to do things, despite the fact that the very same men were articulating liberal ideals (Mkhize, 2008:7). This can only mean one thing of the men: "that the patriarchal system was heavily entrenched in them" (Mkhize, 2008:7). To many the beginning of violence was the solution to breaking free from the system (Mkhize 2008:5).

Conclusion

Women had been confined to what Gordimer terms, "traditional female participation" as witnessed in the supportive roles they played (Gordimer, 1993:3). However, this changed when women began to take leadership positions beginning first in women's organisations, and later in the unions and political parties. The eruption of violence in Pietermaritzburg changed their role. They were not only confined to supporting men in the struggle, but also they themselves became active agents for peace. Patriarchy served to limit women's participation in politics but, on the other hand, patriarchy also presented an opportunity to women to resist the system when women joined active politics against the will of their own men. In spite of this, however, women continued to fight for their rights and their struggles were not insignificant. They had to stand up and voice their grievances often at a hefty price to their marriages (Mkhize, 2008:6). This was the brighter side of the struggle

for women in the fight against gender oppression. To a great extent it can be concluded that women played a crucial role in defusing violence, while on the other hand promoting peace and liberation values. Women did not sit silently and watch their husbands and children being killed in violent attacks; they also did not sit silently while injustice was being perpetrated against society. They stood up to protest in the streets, to lending a hand where it was needed, to caring for those who were in need and to defending themselves when it was necessary. In essence women were the backbone of the struggle and in the fight for justice and the promotion of peace (*Natal Witness*, 1989:1).

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Teaching Oral History

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Introduction

Doing oral history is neither simple nor innocent. Doing oral history is not a simple case of recording the stories of people and writing them down verbatim in a pre-arranged setting. Oral history practitioners need to acquire skills to retrieve relevant information in a respectful way; they also need skills to interpret the information in a way that will heal both individual and societal memories.

Several manuals are available to guide oral history practitioners towards doing oral history in a healthy way. The Sinomlando Centre for Oral History and Memory Work in Africa at the University of KwaZulu-Natal has published a training manual, *Introduction to Oral History* (June 2006), which is available on their website.[1] Also, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation has published an oral history resource guide, *Making Apartheid History* (2009),[2] which trains learners and students in the values and methods of oral history research.

The aim of this presentation is to provide a guide for oral history practitioners to do oral history. It is presented in the form of a proposed course to be taught in oral history research. The course consists of seven study units and is supported by assignments, making the course suitable to be taught during workshops as well as through distance teaching.

Although the contents of the course are given here only in outline, it is driven by specific values. The first of these is to view memory as emergent and not as the outcome of simple causation. A person's story is "caused" by many related and unrelated events and perceptions; so if the oral historian places them in a straight line of causation it will distort the memory of the interviewee.

The second value is that of dialoguing between binaries. To invite questions into the retrieval of memories that force the interviewee to choose between opposites is again a distortion of memory. Questions that need a "yes" or "no" answer, for instance, need to be avoided in order to invite a multi-faceted story into the research.

Thirdly, cultural hermeneutics is a very important value for conducting oral research. Cultural hermeneutics presupposes a sensitivity towards

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[1] www.sinomlando.ukzn.ac.za
[2] *Making Apartheid History: my contribution* (IJR 2009).

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the culture(s) of the interviewee while simultaneously inviting the interviewee to move towards a contra-culture, an alternative story of hope, a story of resistance against oppression and exploitation.

The fourth value is that of healing. Retraumatising an interviewee by retrieving his or her story, and then leaving him or her behind while you run with the story, is unacceptable. The aim of oral history interviewing is the healing of memories.

Study unit 1: Preparing

In this study unit, the oral history practitioner is taught how to accomplish the following:

(1) Choose and access a research population

- To have access to a research population is one of the most difficult parts of oral history research. One cannot simply turn up in a community, or at somebody's house, and announce one's intention to do interviews. Either the practitioner must be invited to do the research, or the community/individual must be consulted and informed about the aim of the research as well as the process which will be followed, and their ultimate agreement secured.
- A research population can, of course, only be identified in terms of the topic that is going to be researched. Once defined, the topic will guide the practitioner to select relevant interviewees.

(2) Prepare the necessary documentation

An oral agreement between the interviewer and the interviewee(s) is not enough, and may even be illegal. The following is necessary in terms of preparatory documentation:

- An ethical clearance document must be obtained from the practitioner's institution, for instance from the university or the Department of Arts and Culture where he or she is employed. The institution will request the practitioner to formally provide them with the aim of the research, a copy of the interview guide/questionnaire and the procedures that will be followed to obtain consent from interviewees.
- An interview guide/questionnaire must be compiled to enable the practitioner to reach the aims of the research.

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Compiling an interview guide/ questionnaire requires great skill and oral history practitioners need to be informed about different types of questionnaires. In oral history research, the questionnaire needs to leave ample space for the interviewee to narrate his or her memories. When checking on the contents of the interview guide/questionnaire the practitioner has to ask herself or himself the following questions:

- Have I asked questions on the biographical details of the interviewee, including questions on variables such as race, gender, age, income and affiliations?
- Have I asked questions that will invite stories and cannot be answered simply with a yes or a no?
- Have I asked relative influence questions without "fishing" for potentially hurtful information?
- Have I asked questions that will provide the information that I am looking for?

- A consent/release form must be prepared which allows for interviewees to be informed about the aims and procedures of the interviews, and for them to be part of the subsequent process of publication. A consent/release form must allow for the following categories:
  - the name of the interviewee and the date of the interview
  - the interviewee's agreement to the aims of the research
  - agreement on where the record of the interview will be kept and to whom the copyright belongs
  - agreement on how the interview will be used in the public arena

(3) Apply for funds

Doing oral history research is expensive. Funding is available from universities and a variety of other sources. Oral history practitioners need to be taught

- where funds are available
- how to prepare an application
- what items to budget for

(4) Establish a structure for interviewing

Additional preparation for interviewing is necessary, such as

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- gathering information about the interviewees
- appointing an assistant and/or a translator and/or a cultural interpreter
- appointing a committee that will check findings at specific points during the research
- choosing a type of interview (individual or group interviews)
- scheduling interviews

Study unit 2: Doing the first interview

(1) Challenges during interview(s)

Interviewing is a skill that needs far more than its explanation to oral history practitioners: they also need to get practical experience in interviewing. The values explained above – of emergent causality, dialoguing between binaries, culturing and contra-culturing and healing – need to be adhered to constantly. Apart from these skills and values, the following are challenges that need to be faced during interviewing:

- Do not be late, and always check whether the recording equipment is working.
- Explain clearly the objectives of the research to the interviewee(s) (again).
- Explain and complete the consent form.
- During group interviews, see to it that one story does not overpower other stories.
- Promote remembering without retraumatisation.
- Apply listening skills.
- Build trust, and be respectful.
- Ask for photographs, baptismal records, birth records and any other supporting documentation and make arrangements to return them.

(2) Aftercare

Again, no interview is a "hit and run". The following should be done in terms of aftercare:

- Already during the interview, the confidence of the interviewee(s) should be gained by making an appointment to present the written story to them.
- Write down the story/stories in order to provide the interviewee with a copy.
- Photograph the photos and other mementos.
- Keep a diary of the interviews and design a manual, electronic and/or digital filing system.
- Follow up clues.
- Confirm the next appointment.

Study unit 3: Doing counselling during retraumatisation

This is a highly contested part of doing oral history. Most oral historians believe that when an interviewee starts to cry during an interview, he or she should be referred to a professional therapist. This is of course recommended if the interviewee agrees, although the inference that he or she has a "problem" may further retraumatise the interviewee. This study unit will teach interviewers basic skills in narrative counselling to deal – albeit as a preliminary – with the trauma of the interviewee. Narrative therapy[3] is considered an observably good therapeutic medium for dealing with retraumatisation in oral research interviewing, because of the narrative character of both.

The narrative counselling process can be summarised as the MEET process with reference to the first letter of each of its four stages:

- Map the problems that saturate the story.
- Externalise the trauma, that is guide the interviewee towards accepting that he or she is not the problem, but that the trauma lies outside him or her and can be resisted.
- Empower the interviewee against the trauma by moving towards an alternative story of hope.
- "Thicken" the alternative story with practicalities such as referring the interviewee to a support group – or a therapist.

Study unit 4: Inviting more voices into the research

Every interviewee's story has, of course, a validity and integrity of its own. However some stories, especially conflicting ones, need some verification.

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[3] A basic introduction that is suitable for training is Alice Morgan's *What is narrative therapy?* Dulwich Centre Publications, 2000.

More importantly, stories need to be expanded by inviting more voices into the main narrative. This can be done in a variety of ways, of which the following are examples:

- Graveyards are an important source of information. They provide dates and affiliations.
- Archives cannot be avoided in oral history research. This not only includes national and provincial archives, but congregational archives and home archives too! Church council or any other organisational minutes, if they are made available, are primary sources to the lives of many people.
- A literary review can be helpful to establish the wider world in which the interviewees are involved. Publications on the research are to be accessed and read. A Google Search for related information is almost compulsory. Oral history practitioners are to be taught these skills of retrieval and how to incorporate them into oral history research.

Study unit 5: Reporting back

Reporting back to the research population can make or break an oral history research project. The following may provide a few guidelines:

- Prepare a report back that will communicate effectively to the research population. Do not, for instance, prepare a PowerPoint presentation for a community with little access to electricity. Do not use high academic language to impress an interviewee who may not even recognise his or her own voice in your words.
- Prepare a report back that is in accordance with the expectations of the interviewees. They may be expecting an in-depth report while you only give an overview. They may expect applause while you present a critical approach.
- Let the voices of the interviewees speak, after you have cleared it with them. Otherwise you may step on toes and show your inability to understand the schisms in a community. You may inadvertently favour some voices over others and estrange some of the research population from you.

Study unit 6: Training lay interviewers

Oral historians are sometimes tempted to do all the interviewing themselves. This may become a huge logistical problem when dealing with an extended research population. Also, the oral researcher needs "insiders", that is people from the community to do the interviewing in order to understand its ethos. Furthermore, creating jobs in a researched community should be one of the aims of oral history research, as will be indicated in the next study unit.

Training of lay interviewers will be in the form of a summary of the contents of study units 2 and 3:

- skills in doing interviews, including dealing with consent/release forms
- skills in doing basic counselling to stabilise a retraumatised interviewee

Study unit 7: Finalising the outcomes of the research

Depending on the aims and expected outcomes of the research, the oral history practitioner needs to be equipped to deal with the following:

(1) Prepare a publication

The aim of oral history research may be to publish an academic book or article, or prepare a popular publication for the community:

- Academic book/article: master's and doctoral students will, independently of this introductory course on oral history research, be trained to write academically on the findings of their research. The norms of referencing and dialoguing critically with sources will apply.
- Popular publication: often communities (or congregations) ask researchers to research their stories and compile a publication such as one to commemorate a centenary. The aims of such a publication are important. Does the community want a history of their victories and the good old times (*Heilsgeshichte*) or do they want a history of their sufferings, for example under apartheid (*Unheilsgeshichte*)? These then are a few of the skills needed to produce a popular publication:
    - Choose the type of publication that suits the need of the community/research population.
    - Budget and access funds for a publication.

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- Plan for its execution, making editorial decisions. Who will write what? What goes in, what remains untold? How does one "freeze" a walking voice?
- Obtain quotes from and enter into contracts with a type-setter and a printer.
- Plan the handing-over party.

(2) Preserve the interviews

Whether the interviews are published or not, they need to be preserved either on tape, on video, on paper, electronically or digitally. Oral history practitioners need to be

- trained to exploit the opportunities for preservation offered by contemporary technologies
- informed about the ethical and legal boundaries of preservation (see the *National Policy on the Digitisation of Heritage Resources* [2010/2012] compiled by the Department of Arts and Culture).

(3) Integrate interviewees into communities of healing

With this last point on the training agenda, we are back where we started: ultimately, the aim of oral history is to heal memories. While the telling of one's story can be regarded as part of healing itself, healing itself occurs with the integration of the interviewees into broader communities of healing, which the oral history practitioner should be able to identify in his or her environment.

Conclusion

South Africa is crying out for its stories to be heard and to be made public. Oral history research has become an indispensable way to deal with memories of the past. Its relevance and necessity are confirmed, but it needs to be acknowledged that oral history research becomes dangerous in untrained hands. This course is proposed in order to tackle this danger.