

# Post-apartheid South Africa: a united or a divided nation?

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The 1990s witnessed one of the most startling and dramatic social and political transformations in history. These transformations culminated in the advent of a new political dispensation in South Africa (Coombes 2003). On 27 April 1994, the “new” South Africa was born. That day also heralded the formal demise of the apartheid system.

During apartheid, the South African state enforced and reified subgroup identities, racial identities in particular, through rigid processes of spatial, political, social and cultural engineering (Eaton 2002; Ramsamy 2007). The power of the White Afrikaner government was consolidated through creating separate territorial, social, cultural and political spaces for Blacks, Coloureds, Indians and Whites. To the most extreme, these policies led to the establishment of separate ethnic “homelands”. The fact that groups lived their lives in separate “homelands” and residential areas, resulted in limited social and cultural interaction. Furthermore, there was a little overlap in the symbolic spaces and historical narratives of the various groups constituting South African society.

The geographic unity of South was reinstated with the re-integration of the former “independent” homelands in 1994 (Ramsamy 2007). All forms of legal racial segregation were erased from the law books. However, the arduous task of creating a new social, cultural and symbolic infrastructure for the newly created South African nation had just begun (Coombes 2003). The tensions and discrepancies involved in these processes provided a glimpse on the vault lines of a society, as well as changing conceptualisations of the “nation”, “group” and “community”, during a process of large-scale social and political transformation.

## **2. NATION-BUILDING AND THE STATE OF THE NATION**

Despite the fact that the territorial unity of South Africa was re-established in 1994 and that racial segregation was abolished, it was widely believed that South Africans lacked a cohesive, commonly accepted and overarching national identity and a sense of nationhood (Eaton 2002). Heribert Adam comments: “A South African nation is yet to be born. South Africa constitutes an economic and political entity at present, but not an emotional one” (Adam 1995:46).

Therefore, a process of nation-building was regarded by many as the logical step to fill the voids left by the apartheid system and to forge a united and harmonious South African nation (Eaton 2002). Political rhetoric on nation-building soon became prevalent in which various symbols and events were employed. The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) adopted the slogan “Simunye – we are one!” The triumph of the South African rugby team in the 1995 Rugby World Cup was widely proclaimed not only to be a sports victory, but also a victory for nation-building. In fact, the picture of former President Nelson Mandela, waving to the crowds, dressed

in a Springbok rugby jersey, was a symbol of the birth of a “new” South African nation. Similarly, South Africa’s participation in the Olympic Games since 1996, as well as the 2010 FIFA World Cup was employed to bolster patriotism and nation-building. However, nothing surpassed the popularity of the metaphor of the Rainbow Nation, first coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Eaton 2002). Both in South Africa as well as abroad, it has become an important symbol of the hopes and ideals that a new nation, united in its diversity, has been born on the southern tip of Africa.

However, nation-building in South Africa has also been controversial. During the first years of democracy, two strategies were discerned (Ramsamy 2007). The dominant ethos during these first years has been the ideology of non-racialism, based on the idea that a common South African identity should replace various sub-national identities such as racial and ethnic identities. It is epitomized in the words of Nelson Mandela: “We have no Whites; we have no Blacks. We only have South Africans” (Ramsamy 2007:471).

The embracement of the Rainbow Nation metaphor, in which the colours of the rainbow reflect the various ethnic and racial groupings in South Africa, could be interpreted as a deviation from the staunch stance on non-racialism. According to Ramsamy (2007), the metaphor represents a compromise between the ANC’s commitment to non-racialism and attempts to deal with the continued existence and also politicization of cultural, ethnic and racial identities in post-apartheid South Africa. However, the overall aim of nation-building has remained the forging of a united nation and a single overarching national identity (Blaser 2004).

The advent of the Mbeki-era heralded an important shift, an African shift in the nation-building discourse (Blaser 2004; Eaton 2002; Herwitz 2011). This shift is

epitomized in the words of former President Thabo Mbeki (African National Congress (ANC) 1997:44):

*But it is critical that the overarching identity of being South African is promoted among all those who are indeed South Africans, as part of a process of building an African nation on the southern tip of the continent. The affirmation of our Africanness as a nation is recognition of a geographic reality and the awakening of a consciousness which colonialism suppressed.*

The ideology of Africanism is embodied in terms such as “an African century” and the “African Renaissance” (Herwitz 2011). Blaser (2004) points out that this shift is not an entirely new phenomenon as an Africanist nationalist has had a constant presence in all anti-colonial movements in Africa. It rather implies a return to an imaginary pre-colonial past which becomes not only the source of myths about the South African nation, but also, eventually, culminates in policies on various levels, including in the symbolic realm (Herwitz 2011). In propagating the ideas of an African Renaissance, Mbeki refers to the great African monuments of the past, at Timbuktu, at Axum, in Zimbabwe and at Aswan, to bolster the idea of a glorious pre-colonial past. In this distant past, where colonialism and apartheid do not figure, Black and indigenous Africa are proclaimed as a source of virtue and value. In essence, it implies the triumph of pan-Africanism (Blaser 2004; Labuschagne 2010).

Therefore, Africanism has become the new ideology for nation-building (Herwitz 2011). However, It has deepened the controversies in the nation-building discourse (Blaser 2004). The nation is no longer culturally neutral; it is defined in terms of an

African culture. The aim of nation-building becomes the creation of a single nation with a dominant African identity, which should become the primary identity of all South Africans. Furthermore, it holds that an overarching national identity should include and reflect African culture. As a result, cultural hegemony is exerted in an essentially multicultural and multilingual society (Blaser 2004).

Nation-building in South Africa has been criticized on various fronts. Degenaar (1994) warns that a term such as nation-building should rather not be mentioned in a country such as South Africa. Instead of propagating nation-building, diversity should rather be respected and valued. The greatest opposition to nation-building has, however, been reality itself. Although it is undoubtedly true that ethnic, racial and regional identities have been manipulated and reified during apartheid, South African society has remained fractured despite strong nation-building efforts. Various research studies indicate that although a strong South African identity has indeed took hold among many South Africans, the majority of South Africans identify some cases equally as strongly and other cases even more strongly, with their respective racial and ethnic or language groups (Bornman 2010, 2011).

Coombes (2003) poses the question whether the main fault line in South African society remains the juxtaposition of Black against White. She answers this question herself by denying a simplistic binary opposition between the two largest racial groups. It is indeed the case that the struggle against apartheid has commonly been typified as a struggle between two dominant racial groups (Black and White). However, it is often not taken into account that neither Blacks nor Whites are homogeneous groups. The White society consists of at least two major ethno-cultural groups, namely English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking Whites (also known as Afrikaners). Similar to the ethnic and language differences among Whites,

there are also nine Black language groups associated with distinct Black ethnic identities. As most Black ethnic groups have strong ties with certain regions in South Africa, Black ethnicity also corresponds with particular regional identities. Therefore the province of KwaZulu-Natal is commonly regarded as the homeland of the Zulu nation. The presence of the group known as Coloureds – a group of mixed racial descent – as well as the largest Indian community outside of India, are often not taken into account. Venter (1999) points out that it is not simply a case of Black against White, but historical processes have also brought two civilizational paradigms in contact in South Africa: the African and Western civilizations.

The conclusion can be drawn that South African society has remained highly heterogeneous. The unity of the South African nation is still not a given almost two decades after the advent of a new political dispensation and nation-building remains controversial and contested. Symbols, monuments and historical narratives play an important role not only in attempts towards nation-building and creating national unity, but also in the construction, maintenance and strengthening of sub-national identities. According to Harrison (1995), all political actions are associated with expressive action in the form of the deployment of symbols. Therefore, the new South African regime has not only brought about socio-political change in the country, but has also transformed South Africa symbolically in terms of a new identity, a new set of values reflective of a post-colonial society and a new set of goals for a new nation (Labuschagne 2010). Overall, the aim of nation-building and the creation of an overarching national identity are claimed as the founding principle for changes to the symbolic landscape. In the process, various forms of symbolic politics as identified by Harrison (1995) and Mac Ginty (2001) have been implemented to reconstruct and to transform South Africa symbolically.

### **3. NEW NATIONAL SYMBOLS FOR A “NEW” NATION**

The adoption of a set of national symbols has become a common practice among all nations of the world. According to Cerulo (1989), this practice stems from a long history in which ruling houses or groups used to make use of banners, crests and fanfares for purposes of announcement and identification. Therefore, national symbols have become modern totems to identify and characterise a particular nation-state.

Similar to other newly independent and newly democratic states, the new political elite in South Africa also saw the need for a set of new symbols to identify and characterise the new state and the new nation. New national symbols were carefully designed to symbolize the altered nature of the new democratic state and to reinforce the political transition (Mac Ginty 2001). Once again, nation-building, the forging of a united South African nation and an overarching South African identity have been forwarded as the most important reasons in the design of new symbols (Bornman 2006).

#### **3.1 The national anthem**

In line with the reconciliatory mood of the transitional period, a proclamation issued on 20 April 1994 by the then State President Nelson Mandela, stated that South Africa would have two national anthems (“National symbols”, n.d.), namely *Die Stem van Suid-Afrika* (*The Voice of South Africa*) and *Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika* (*God Bless Africa*). *Die Stem* was the national anthem during the previous dispensation. It was first written in Afrikaans, but later translated into English. From 1952, it was sung both in Afrikaans and English. At first, the patriotic song had three verses referring to

elements of the South African landscape, historical elements such as the Great Trek, as well as commitment to the fatherland. On request of the government, a fourth verse with a religious theme was added later (“Die Stem van Suid-Afrika”, n.d.).

Black South Africans generally disliked *Die Stem* and during the early 1990s when the dismantling of apartheid was already on the table, the ANC decided that it would not be sung at sports events. However, an instrumental version was played during a rugby match between South Africa and New Zealand in 1992 and the crowd sang along.

*Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* was written and composed by Enoch Sontonga, a Methodist mission school teacher (“National symbols”, n.d.). The first stanza was originally written in Xhosa as a Christian hymn in which God is asked, as the title suggests, to bless the children of Africa. Seven additional verses were later added in Xhosa by the poet Samuel Mqhayi. It soon became popular as a church hymn. The first verse would usually be sung in Xhosa or Zulu followed by the Sesotho version. As no official translations of the song exist, the words vary from place to place and from occasion to occasion.

However, *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* did not remain a religious hymn, but soon became politicized. During apartheid, it became a symbol of defiance against the apartheid government, and also a pan-African liberation song (“Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika”, n.d.). The strong pan-African connotations are reflected in the fact that it is currently the national anthem of Zambia and Tanzania. It also became the official song of the ANC during apartheid and was widely regarded as the non-official anthem of South Africa.

It came as no surprise that *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* was selected as national anthem for the democratic South Africa. Despite its ties with apartheid, *Die Stem* nevertheless retained official status together with *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* (“Die Stem van Suid-Afrika”, n.d.). At the final match of the 1994 Rugby World Cup, *Die Stem* was sung by a Black choir. Both songs were sung at the inauguration of Nelson Mandela in 1994.

However, the practicalities involved in singing two national anthems proved to be too cumbersome (“Die Stem van Suid-Afrika”, n.d.). In 1997, following the adoption of the South African Constitution in 1996, a new hybrid version was adopted as the official anthem of South Africa. This version combines not only *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* and part of a stanza of *Die Stem*, but also a newly composed last stanza in English based on the melody of *Die Stem*. About five of the languages mostly spoken in South Africa are combined in the new anthem. The first two lines of the first stanza of *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* are in Xhosa; the last two lines of the first stanza in Zulu; the second stanza in Sesotho; the third stanza taken from *Die Stem* in Afrikaans; and the fourth in English (“Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika”, n.d.).

### **3.2 The South African flag**

Similar to the selection of a new anthem, the choice of a new flag formed part of the negotiation processes (“Flag of South Africa”, n.d.). The pre-1994 flag reflects the unification of the four former British colonies – the Cape, Natal, Transvaal and Orange Free State, to form the then South African Union. The idea of adopting a unique flag for the Union of South Africa was met with great resistance among English-speaking Whites as it was perceived as an attempt to remove British symbols. Therefore, the flag which was first hoisted on 31 May 1928, represented a

compromise between British and Afrikaner interests. It is based on the white, blue and orange Van Riebeeck flag – the so-called *Prinsevlag* (Prince's flag), which used to be the Dutch flag when Van Riebeeck landed in the Cape in 1652 and was the first flag believed to be hoisted in South Africa. In the centre, on a white band, are the flags of the various colonies that were unified in 1910, namely the British Union Jack (Cape and Natal) as well as the flags of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Although this flag contained elements of British colonialism, it was closely associated with Afrikaner interests and in later years, it was typified as the “apartheid flag” by opponents of the previous dispensation.

It was consequently decided to invent a completely new flag for the new democratic South Africa. In 1993, a countrywide competition was held in which the public was invited to suggest the design (“Flag of South Africa”, n.d.). Although the then National Symbols Commission received more than 7 000 designs, none of the six finalists received sufficient support. In the end, a design of the then State Herald, FJ Brownell, was selected to be used as interim national flag for the April 1994 elections and the inauguration of Nelson Mandela. Although it was stated in the interim Constitution that this flag would be used for a probationary period of five years after which another round of discussions on the flag would be held, its acceptance was so positive that it was proclaimed as the official national flag in the 1996 Constitution.

The flag has a horizontal red and blue band of equal width at the top and the bottom (“Flag of South Africa”, n.d.). In the centre is a horizontal green band which splits into a Y-shape, of which the arms end in the two corners of the hoist side. The top of the Y-shape embraces a black isosceles triangle of which the two sides of equal length are separated from the green stripe by yellow stripes. The red and blue stripes are furthermore separated from the green stripe by narrow white stripes.

A governmental source holds that the individual colours or colour combinations could have different meanings for different people and groups and no universal symbolism could be ascribed to any of them (“National symbols”, n.d.). However, the three dominant colours, green, black and yellow, are, commonly associated with the ANC. The other three, red, white and blue, are used in the flag of the old Transvaal republic: the flag of the Netherlands and the flag of the United Kingdom. According to FW De Klerk in his autobiography *The last trek: a new beginning* (1998) chili red is used instead of plain red (which English-speaking Whites would prefer) or orange (which would reflect the Dutch heritage of Afrikaners). The centre Y-design is interpreted as the convergence of diverse elements in South African society heading into the future in unity, a reflection of the former and current motto of the South African coats of arms (see the next section).

### **3.4 Coat of arms**

A new South African coat of arms was also introduced on Freedom Day, 27 April 2000. This replaced the former coat of arms that was in use since unification in 1910.

The design process started in 1999 when the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, once more, invited ideas from the public (“Coat of arms of South Africa”, n.d.). Based on the ideas received as well as inputs from the cabinet, a brief for designers was prepared and Design South Africa, an umbrella company for design companies all over the country, was requested to brief ten of the top South African designers. The design of laan Bekker was chosen in the end.

The design comprises a series of elements organised in a symmetric egg or oval shape. Some of the most important elements are the following:

- The most conspicuous element in the lower part of the oval is the motto — *!ke e: /xarra //ke* – a phrase in the language of the Khoisan language of the Xam people meaning “diverse people unite”.
- In the centre are two Khoisan (or Bushmen) figures which are derived from the Linton stone, one of the most famous examples of Khoisan rock art which is currently housed in the South African Museum in Cape Town. The fact that a depiction of the oldest inhabitants of South Africa and probably in the world has been used, is said to be symbolic of belonging to the nation which is extended to larger humanity.
- On top of the shield with the two human figures are depictions of two African traditional weapons, namely a spear and a knobkierie, serving as symbols of defence and authority.
- The oval shape of ascendance consists of various elements indicative of the South African landscape, namely the king protea, the secretary bird and the rising sun. The king protea, the South African national flower, is said to signify, among others, the beauty of the flora of the country. The powerful secretary bird is regarded as the equivalent of the lion on earth. It is depicted in flight symbolizing growth and speed and is furthermore perceived to be a symbol of the protection of the nation against its enemies as well as the ascendance of the South African nation. It is depicted in gold which signifies its association with the sun and the highest power. The rising sun serves as symbol of brightness, splendour and the supreme source of energy, life and wholeness. Furthermore, it symbolizes the promise of rebirth as well as intellectual faculties such as knowledge, reflection, good judgment and willpower.

According to a governmental source, the combined egg-shaped structure of the coat of arms suggests the rebirth of the spirit of the heroic South African nation ("National coat of arms", n.d.) The motto of the previous coat of arms – *Ex unitate vires* – was written in Latin as is commonly the practice in European countries. The meaning of the current motto is not much different. It is however written in one of the oldest indigenous languages being spoken on the African continent. Furthermore, the use of African figures is conspicuous. Moreover, all the other elements are typical African elements emphasizing Africa, the African landscape and African culture.

### **3.4 Role and impact of the new national symbols**

Various strategies related to symbolic politics can be discerned in the selection and adoption of new national symbols for South Africa (Harrison 1995; Mac Ginty 2001). Firstly, expansionism is reflected in the fact that an almost entirely new set of symbols has replaced the full array of symbols associated with the previous dispensation. The majority of the old symbols, apart from a small section of *Die Stem*, have been removed and replaced by the invention of new symbols. In the case of the national anthem, re-ranking has taken place in the sense that the song that strongly reflects pan-Africanism and the Liberation Struggle *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*, has not only been placed alongside the former *Die Stem*, but also alongside the freedom song which was sung before *Die Stem* (commonly associated with Afrikaner interests) .

Whereas the symbols of the previous dispensation were predominantly Eurocentric in nature, the newly invented symbols sharply differentiate the current dispensation and government from the previous regime. A predominant tendency towards Africanism characterizes the new symbols, a reflection of pan-Africanism even

before an Africanist turn in the nation-building discourse has been identified (Blaser 2004; Eaton 2002). The dominant colours of the new national flag are commonly associated with the ANC. The colours associated with Afrikaner and British interests have been removed and replaced by a newly invented colour – chilli red. The first and dominant stanzas of the national anthem are a song written in Black languages associated with the Liberation Struggle and pan-Africanism. Furthermore, prominent in the new coat of arms is the displacement of European elements such as the motto in Latin with almost the same words written in an ancient African language. All the other elements of the coat of arms are reflective of either African culture or the African landscape. The presence and influence of European and Asian cultures are almost completely absent.

Despite the predominant African contents and the fact that only limited recognition is given to other South African cultures, the new symbols were apparently well received by the South African public. According to Adam (1995), they have been successful in creating reconciliation, unity and new forms of nationalism. The new multi-coloured flag has been "banalized" by being painted on faces at sport events such as soccer, rugby and cricket and printed and displayed on all kinds of curios and consumer items. Overall, the impression has been created that national pride, as reflected in the new symbols, has surged to levels formerly unknown (Bornman 2006).

However, research has indicated that the new symbols have not been accepted as widely as is often assumed. Research by Bornman (2006) indicated that Blacks attached significantly more value to the new symbols than did Coloureds, Indians and Whites, who are further removed from the seat of power. The lowest importance ratings were recorded for Afrikaans-speaking Whites (or Afrikaners); in fact, the ratings for this group were so low that they can be interpreted as a lack of

identification with or alienation from the current national symbols. The influence of sub-national identities, in contrast to an overarching South African identity, can furthermore be discerned in the fact that people who identified more strongly with a community or group distinguished by a distinctive culture, identified less with the new symbols.

Mac Ginty (2001) also notes indicators that the roots of the new South African symbols might be rather shallow, in particular among certain groups. During the transitional years, the acceptance of the new flag was lukewarm among some groups and the old flag was often waved at sport events. These attempts have been publicly denounced as offensive and the previous flag typified as the “apartheid” flag. Even today, debates flame up on the use of the old flag and the rights of Afrikaners to display this flag. In a recent letter to an Afrikaans newspaper, a reader asks why the English are allowed to freely wave the Union Jack associated with imperialism, while Afrikaners are not allowed to use the old flag (Van der Merwe 2013). This is, but one indication of the close ties between Afrikaner identities with the old flag and with the other symbols associated with the previous dispensation.

The Economist (Mac Ginty 2001) notes that none of the members of the national rugby team who visited England in 1994 knew the words of the new national anthem. In recent times, the members of most sport teams were forced to learn the words of the national anthem. Furthermore, it is often noticed at sport events that Whites remain silent while *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* is sung and only join in the singing once the words of *Die Stem* start. The vault lines in South African society also became clear in a symbolic clash at a recent public meeting organised by the municipality of Pretoria in order to discuss the proposed name change of the city to Tshwane (Versluis 2013). The atmosphere between supporters of the name change (mainly Black) and

those opposed to the idea (mainly White) was tense. White attendees demonstrated their opposition by standing on attention and singing the full pre-1994 version of *Die Stem*. Black attendees immediately reacted by singing *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*. Yearning for the old symbols is furthermore reflected in the fact that Theuns Jordaan, a popular singer representing a new generation of Afrikaner artists, sings *Die Stem* as a popular song on one of his albums. In a prelude, he pronounces that this song would also be “dear to our hearts”. Therefore, the old symbols have not vanished completely from the minds of the members of the public; they have remained part of the historical and cultural legacy of Afrikaners in particular.

Although the new South African national symbols are proclaimed to have been invented to promote post-conflict healing, reconciliation, nation-building and unity, indications are that they are meeting with mixed success (Mac Ginty 2001). In some instances such as the case of the flag, White people in particular could be associating it with the ANC due to the dominant black, green and gold colours. The strong African elements in all the symbols could furthermore have served to alienate Whites. The absence of strongly recognisable elements rooted in the historical legacies of Whites and other groups, Afrikaners in particular, is probably the reason for a degree of apathy towards the new symbols. People could nevertheless have grown accustomed to the new flag and coat of arms due to their pervasive presence. The new anthem, however, appears to be divisive, especially in situations of heightened intergroup tension. People tend to sing, for example, only the parts that they can identify with. However, given the fact that Blacks form an overall majority in South Africa, the predominance of African elements implies that opposition comes from minority groups and is mostly deafened by the majority.

However, the main danger is that the state and its symbols are being manipulated and appropriated by one group and one political party at the expense of others (Harrison 1995). Mac Ginty (2001) draws the conclusion that the mixed reaction to the new South African national symbols illustrates the difficulty to establish symbols that are commonly accepted and truly unifying in a divided nation with widely divergent historical and cultural legacies. Moreover, it highlights the pitfalls associated with nation-building in a deeply heterogeneous and multicultural society.

#### **4. THE POLITICS OF MEMORY AND HERITAGE**

National symbols are not the only elements in the symbolic inventory of a country or group. Another integral components are statues, monuments, museums, memorials and other heritage sites. These reflect the human faculty of remembering and memory, our relationship with the past and the way in which the past has shaped our identities and our experiences in the present (Mare 2007). Political transformation in South Africa has also been characterized by concerted efforts to transform the heritage landscape (Herwitz 2011; Marschall 2005; Ross 2007). In fact, since 1994, heritage symbolism has become a prominent focus of discourse in the political arena and a site for the renegotiating of issues related to memory, cultural identity and citizenship (Marschall 2010).

State involvement in the preservation of memory and heritage dates back to the Bushman Relics Protection Act of 1911, which aimed to protect the country's pre-colonial and prehistoric heritage (Delmont 2004). The 1934 Historical Monuments Commission had the task to protect the built environment of settlers and colonists, while the National Monuments Act of 1969 was employed to bolster Afrikaner identity

and later, the concomitant ideologies of Afrikaner nationalism and separate development. The consequence was that the new political dispensation inherited a highly skewed heritage landscape where 98% of approximately 4 000 monuments represented colonial and settler history, while the remainder was associated with natural heritage, archaeological, paleontological, geological and rock art sites.

Since the advent of democracy, various initiatives have been launched for the country to come to grips with its tumultuous history of which the memories have often been smothered, silenced or ignored (Coombes 2003; Delmont 2004; Labuschagne 2012; Ross 2007). These initiatives were inspired, in particular, by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, which had the task to investigate gross human rights violations from 1960 to 1994. In its final report entitled *Living with the Issue of Reconciliation*, the TRC states its intent to leave a permanent legacy that will foster reconciliation and peace building and outlines a number of recommendations to concretely reflect and heal the wrongs of the past. One of the recommended strategies is that museums should be erected and maintained to celebrate different aspects of the past, to balance the past, to further justice and to foster reconciliation on various levels.

The necessity to reflect a more balanced picture of the country's history was taken further by the National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 (Delmont 2004). The Act proclaims heritage protection to be an important founding stone for the nation-building project. Following the proclamation of the Act, the Department of Arts and Culture identified and initiated a number of the so-called Presidential Legacy Projects in the various provinces of South Africa. The consequence has been an "iconoclastic" expansion of the symbolic landscape with the development of

numerous new monuments, statues, museums and heritage sites (Bakker & Müller 2010:48; Delmont 2004; Herwitz 2011; Maré 2007; Ross 2007).

Symbolic imbalance during apartheid has probably been more conspicuous than in the capital city of Pretoria (Labuschagne 2010). In 1999 (five years after the political transition), there were 14 monuments within the boundaries of the city which represented White and Afrikaner interests, with only three commemorating the plight of Blacks who died during World War I and the liberation struggle. It is therefore almost inevitable that Pretoria has become an important focus for symbolic transformation — a process which has served to bring tensions between divergent historical legacies to the fore. Some of the characteristics of and changes to symbolism in Pretoria are discussed in the following sections:

#### **4.1 The Voortrekker Monument**

The Voortrekker Monument is one of the most well-known landmarks in Pretoria and probably also one of the most controversial and scrutinized historical symbols associated with the previous dispensation (Coombes 2003; Grundling 2001; Moeschberger 2010; Ross 2007).

The gigantic granite structure is prominently situated on a hill at the southern entrance of Pretoria. The monument commemorates the Great Trek; that is the migration of Afrikaans-speaking White settlers from the Cape colonies to the interior of South Africa during the second quarter of the 19th century (Giliomee & Mbenga 2007). This migration closely resembling American westward expansion was characterized by a number of violent conflicts with indigenous groups. Important events during the Great Trek are portrayed on 27 large marble friezes on the ground

floor of the monument – a display reported to be one of the largest and most impressive of its kind (Grundlingh 2001).

However, the real inspiration for the building of the Voortrekker Monument comes from a later historical event, the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902). Herwitz (2011) proclaims that if there were no Anglo-Boer War, there probably would have been no Afrikaner nationalism and no Voortrekker Monument. The Anglo-Boer War between Great Britain and the two independent republics in the interior established by the Voortrekkers, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, featured one of the first instances of concentration camps in world history. The British commander, Lord Kitchener, infuriated by the stubborn resistance of ragtag groups of Boer farmers, burned their farms so that nothing could be produced and placed the women and children in concentration camps where thousands died of disease. The war left the Voortrekker descendants demoralized and impoverished. Their freedom was taken away and they were once more victims of the alien political culture of British imperialism (Grundlingh 2001:98). As large numbers had to move from devastated farms to the growing cities, they were feeling the debilitating effects of the 1931 Depression, which had reduced them to the ranks of poor Whites within unfamiliar urban environments.

The centenary of the Great Trek was celebrated in 1938 by a symbolic trek of nine ox-wagons from the Cape to the North (Grundlingh 2001). The reception of the ox-wagons in cities and towns on the way resulted in unsurpassed cultural and political theatre. Frenetic crowds dressed in traditional Voortrekker clothes welcomed the wagons; couples were married; babies were baptized; memorials were unveiled and streets were named after Voortrekker heroes. Although this second trek was deliberately orchestrated to mobilize Afrikaners, even cultural and political leaders

were surprised by the reaction. The reasons for the unsurpassed frenzy can be found in the fact that the trials and tribulations of the Voortrekkers resonated with the problems that Afrikaners, especially those living in cities, experienced at that time. At the root of the enthusiasm were beliefs that only coordinated and unified cultural and political mobilization could lead to a more prosperous future. Therefore the 1938 centenary celebration served as a powerful binding agent for Afrikaner nationalism.

These aspirations were cemented 11 years later by the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument on 16 December 1949 (Grundlingh 2001). The date of 16 December marks one of the most notorious events during the Great Trek, namely the Battle of Blood River (Ncome), when the Voortrekkers succeeded to defend themselves successfully against an onslaught of the Zulu army of King Dingane. It is significant that the lower level, which is regarded by many as the most sacred level, contains a burning flame known as the flame of civilization and a cenotaph with the words "We for thee South Africa". At 12:00 on 16 December, the sun shines directly on these words through a small round window in the dome.

The fact that the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument happened only one year after Afrikaners come to power in 1948, means that it is irrevocably associated with White Afrikaner political power and domination and also with apartheid (Coombes 2003; Ross 2007). Furthermore, it is often assumed that Afrikaners "cannot escape from the "spell" of the monument"; they "are trapped by racism, by religion, by their myths and by their history" (Grundlingh 2001:97).

However, Grundlingh points out that Afrikaner identity and its relationship with the monument has changed since 1949. One of the most important reasons is a demographic revolution among Afrikaners. Under the rule of National Party, they

urbanized even faster than before. Furthermore, protectionist policies gave large numbers access to full-time work opportunities. Many climbed the occupational and economic ladder to achieve middle and upper class status, while they gained a prominent presence in professional occupations. Apart from control over the agricultural sector, their control over private enterprise also grew strongly. By the 1970s, Afrikaner bourgeoisie have firmly established themselves. Economic success has also exposed Afrikaners to the lure of a global consumer culture which has loosened the ties that bind them to the country, group and culture. Many have emigrated to countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Although 1994 did not represent a deathblow for Afrikaner identity and ethnicity, those who have stayed in South Africa have discovered alternative ways of cultural expression such as annual cultural festivals of which the Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK) is one example.

Despite changes in their economic prospects, the Voortrekker Monument has remained an important symbol for Afrikaners for their identity, role and place in South Africa. Fears for the future of the monument under Black government led to a decision by a consortium of Afrikaner cultural organisations to form a non-profit company in 2000. The company took ownership of the monument and its extended site. According to the first chairperson of the Voortrekker Monument Company, Christo Kuhn, this was done to preserve Afrikaner heritage and to keep the monument from becoming a political play ball. Although the ANC protested, albeit demurely, the ANC nevertheless declared the monument as a national heritage site and has continued to support it financially, although these contributions have declined steadily in recent years (Rademeyer 2011).

The new management has realised the need to change the public image of the monument in order to make it more acceptable within the changed political environment (Grundlingh 2001; Ross 2007). The culture of Afrikaners had to be detached from apartheid. In speeches at the monument on the Day of Reconciliation (formerly the Day of the Covenant), the religious significance of the day, instead of a political connotation, has been emphasized. Furthermore, much has been done to emphasize the monument as a cultural facility and a historical resource centre and to make it attractive for local visitors, families and tourists. An exhibition of artefacts depicting life on the Great Trek was moved from the restaurant to the cellar of the monument. The extended terrain contains an amphitheatre for open air concerts, facilities for antique and traditional food markets, the Fort Schanskop Museum (one of the forts built to defend Pretoria against the British in the Anglo-Boer War), walking and bicycle trails as well as a nature reserve containing a number of wildlife species. A historical resource centre and archive for important Afrikaner documents have been added recently.

These attempts have apparently been relatively successful. According to its website, the Voortrekker Monument is currently the most visited heritage site in the province of Gauteng and one of the top ten historical cultural visitor attractions in South Africa ("Voortrekkermonument", n.d). The growing tourist industry in South Africa is one of the major reasons that the Voortrekker Monument is not staying all alone on its hill, becoming a sealed off rather than a living past, as many analysts have prophesied (Grundlingh 2001).

However, an important question is not only how Afrikaners and tourists feel about the Voortrekker Monument, but also how South Africans from other groups perceive it. This is a pertinent question as the friezes in the entrance hall predominantly depict

Blacks as savages who ruthlessly attacked the Voortrekkers (Grundlingh 2001; Ross 2007). According to Grundlingh, Black responses vary from extreme discomfort to indifference. Some Blacks who took the trouble to visit the monument found the site insensitive and offensive. Other saw it merely as a historical monument depicting a particular epoch in South African history. A Black guide at the monument remarks: "To me the monument tells the history of the Voortrekkers and how they got the land in the interior. Nothing else" (Grundlingh,2001:103).

The most telling reaction came perhaps from the black singer, Abigail Kubeka, when she performed at the monument in April 2000. Kubeka remarked that "...the last inch of the country is now part of the nation" (Grundlingh 2001:104). This remark probably says it all: Blacks are currently governing the country as a whole and that means that they also have control over the soil on which the Voortrekker Monument is built. That implies that they can afford to be indifferent or even ignore its significance; they can choose not to take heed of whatever it symbolizes.

The privatisation of the Voortrekker Monument has also not stopped speculations on what should be done about and with it after the advent of a new dispensation (Coombes 2003; Grundlingh 2001; Ross 2007). Apart from talks that it should be torn down as a symbol of the destruction of apartheid, there have also been suggestions that it should be painted pink and transformed into a gay nightclub. In a satirical mode, it has been described as a "pop-up toaster", a "1940 art deco radio", "an Andy Warhol drawing, a somewhat absurd, even kitsch symbol" (Grundlingh 2001:101).

Ross (2007) makes some suggestions on how the symbolic significance of the Voortrekker Monument can be transformed in order to promote a more complex

narrative of South African history. He suggests that comparisons should be drawn between narratives regarding the struggle of Afrikaners against British imperialism and the struggle of Blacks against apartheid. Therefore, a degree of convergence around metaphors of resistance and liberation can be emphasized. Although Afrikaners have begun to acknowledge the role that slaves and Blacks played in the Great Trek and the Anglo-Boer War, Blacks are portrayed predominantly negative as aggressors and savages on the ground floor friezes. These images are set in stone and cannot be changed. However, Ross feels that some bold steps need to be taken to change the values attached to these images. Therefore, it needs to be acknowledged openly that Blacks attacked the Voortrekkers as they perceived them as conquerors. As many Black tribes were afraid of the military power of Afrikaners (they had guns which the indigenous tribes did not have), they launched surprise attacks on the Voortrekkers (Giliomee & Mbenga 2007). The one-sided view can be changed to a more multifaceted view of the events. Another possibility is to convey a strong message to school groups and other visitors to “Never again” refer to the country’s racialized past as depicted in some of the friezes of the monument.

Since the ANC came to power in 1994, there had been talks to appropriate the lower level of the Voortrekker Monument for an exhibition related to the liberation struggle (Labuschagne 2010). Maré (2007) holds that this would have implied that the ANC would appropriate for themselves exactly the thing that they opposed, namely White domination. It would have meant the coexistence of the spaces of Afrikaner and Black struggles in one symbolic structure, while the hegemony of neither of them would have been resolved. However, these intentions came to naught probably due to the privatization of the monument. Therefore, despite numerous speculations, the Voortrekker Monument is still standing on its hill at the southern entrance to Pretoria.

Instead of removing or changing the monument, ANC expansionism has taken the form of the addition of a number of heritage sites and other forms of symbolism as discussed in the next sections.

## **4.2 Freedom Park**

One of the most important projects to transform the symbolic landscape of Pretoria has been the erection of Freedom Park. This park, the most ambitious of the Presidential Legacy Projects, was launched on 16 June 2000 (Baines 2009; Labuschagne 2010). It has been fully funded by government with an initial budget in excess of R700 million. The official website indicates its erection as a direct response to the call of the TRC for symbolic reparation (“Freedom Park: a heritage destination”, n.d.). According to the initial mission statement, the park is committed to the nation-building project:

To provide a pioneering and empowering heritage destination in order to mobilise for reconciliation and nation building in our country; reflect upon our past; improving our present and building our future as a united nation; contribute continentally and internationally to the formation of better human understanding among nations and peoples (Baines 2009:334).

Freedom Park is located on a 52-hectare site on Salvo-kop (the name indicates the heavy artillery fire that came from the hill during the Anglo-Boer War), yet another hill at the southern entrance of Pretoria. As such, it is directly facing the Voortrekker Monument. Labuschagne (2010) holds that it had been a strategic decision on the part of the ANC-government to build the park on the particular site. Salvo-kop is not of particular historical or religious value for the majority of South Africans and, in particular, not for Blacks. Anthropological evidence suggests that migratory Black

tribes stayed too short in the eastern and southern parts of Pretoria to establish permanent sites with significant historic and symbolic meaning. However, there is a site in the northeast of Pretoria, the area surrounding the *Wonderboom* (Wonder Tree – an extraordinarily large wild fig tree), that holds symbolic value as for centuries migrating Blacks used the site to perform religious rituals. This area has a much stronger historical, cultural, anthropological and religious link with pre-colonial history which could underpin the values to which Freedom Park subscribe. However, the choice of Salvo-kop bypassed the heritage and symbolic status of the *Wonderboom* area in favour of a site that has a much stronger link with colonial history – the history of the Transvaal Republic founded by the Voortrekkers and the British occupation of Pretoria.

Although Freedom Park invites visitors to walk where their ancestors used to walk, no substantive anthropological or historical links with the past exist at the site. There are no “footprints in the sands of time” which the visitor can follow as proclaimed in an official pamphlet, at least no footprints from pre-colonial times. Therefore, the history portrayed by the park is in reality an “invented history” (Labuschagne 2010:122). The fact of the matter is that the site on Salvo-kop was chosen for political reasons and has no nexus of symbolic links with the ancestors of the majority of South Africans.

Salvo-kop was chosen in order to situate Freedom Park at the centre of a nexus of historical sites associated with Voortrekker history, namely the Voortrekker Monument and the Fort Schanskop and Fort Klapperkop museums. The latter are two fortifications that were erected and used to defend Pretoria against the British during the Anglo-Boer War. In doing so, the Black ANC government has, according to the theory of symbolic conflict of Harrison (1995), appropriated a space in the

symbolic realm of Pretoria and has put its stamp on the entrance of the city and thus also on the city itself. Another motivation, according to Labuschagne (2010:117) was to perform “a visual amputation of the historical link between the cultural dimension (Voortrekker Monument) and Afrikaner control of political power, practically manifested by its supporters occupying the offices of the Union Buildings”.

At the highest point in Freedom Park, the visitor has a spectacular all-round vision of the Voortrekker Monument, the Union Buildings and both forts. However, in the architectural design of Freedom Park, no allowance has been made for a visual link with the other sites in the vicinity. Therefore, the Salvo-kop side does not provide a symbolic centre point and does not establish a historical and symbolic link with the historical legacies of other groups residing within the Pretoria area.

The choice of the particular site created a “bizarre triangle” which elicited conflicting responses from various sides of the political spectrum. Synagues (2010), for example, depicted the new visual and symbolic environment as confrontation between democracy (the Union Buildings), freedom (Freedom Park) and White domination (Voortrekker Monument). Maré (2007) ascribes the placement of the park to the post-colonial ethos that a post-colonial monument should be in the vicinity of a colonial monument. This was done in a deliberate effort to counterbalance the values and motives as represented by the other monuments in the area as well as to share the entrance to the capital city. Ross (2007) also interprets the erection of the park as a counter move to the symbolism of the Voortrekker Monument and an attempt to “correct” the Voortrekker narratives. He does not, however, regard the placement of the park to directly face the Voortrekker Monument as confrontational. In following the strategy of addition, rather than removal or appropriation, Ross feels that a spirit of pluralism has been fostered (Harrison 1995).

In contrast to the gigantic structure of the Voortrekker Monument, Freedom Park does not protrude from the landscape and displays a more modern, open and environmentally-friendly architecture. It has been designed to gently blend into the topography of rolling hills of the highveld (Labuschagne 2010). According to Labuschagne (2010), aerial photography shows a remarkable resemblance with the Great Zimbabwe Ruins near Masvingo. Its network of walls and buildings, as well as the way in which it gently nestles on the slopes of the hill, provide a visual link to the Great Enclosure Complex at the ruins. Most visible from the city of Pretoria is the surrounding stone wall which serves to re-emphasize the visual link with the outer wall of the Zimbabwe Ruins. This link probably serves to emphasize not only pre-colonial history, but also South Africa's links to Africa. Along the ridge is a line of poles with blue lights which are said to resemble freedom. However, the lights are not visible during the day and gave the park a porcupine appearance which distracts from its simplistic beauty. Furthermore, they do not really carry any symbolic substance.

The symbolic space contains several elements, each serving a particular purpose with a symbolic link which determines its placement (Labuschagne 2010). One of the most important of these is called the *Isivivane*, the so-called resting place of the spirits of those who died in struggles for humanity and freedom. Another important element, the *S'khumbuto*, represents a memorial for the various conflicts that have shaped South Africa. It contains an eternal flame to remember unknown soldiers, a sanctuary (a serene environment where ceremonies in remembrance of victims could be conducted), an amphitheatre that can seat 2 000 people and the Wall of Remembrance with the names of those who died in eight conflicts in which South Africans were involved (see the next section). Planned future projects entail the

*//hlapo* (a live exhibition of cultural and historical subjects that could be handled, discussed and used so that visitors would not only be spectators, but also participants), a facility for the storage of documents on freedom struggles (the Pan-African Archives), as well as the *Vhuawelo* (a peaceful garden for meditation, healing and spiritual contemplation).

Analysts have been markedly silent on the symbolism of Freedom Park. During a visit to the park in March 2013, the current author was struck by the predominant occupation with elements of death and African ancestry worship such as the honouring of the “spirits of those who died” (“Isivivane”, n.d.). Not only do these emphases place the park firmly within the realm of Africanism and African culture, but also create the aura of seriousness associated with a graveyard rather than a site providing inspiration for the living and the future. The one aspect of the park that should be offering a lived experience, the *//hlapo*, was still absent at that time. The exhibition space contained large banners with pictures of a number of Black African leaders, leader figures of the struggle as well as leaders of other African countries (assumably these assisted Blacks during the liberation struggle). No leaders of other South African groups who also played a prominent role in the liberation struggle were portrayed. Furthermore, it was difficult to see the relevance of a banner with the photo of Che Chuevera for South Africans.

Labuschane (2010) points out that the emphasis on links with Africanism and Pan-Africanism results in exclusiveness and can serve to alienate non-Black visitors. This is further aggravated by the exclusion of the names of former defence force soldiers who died in the Border War during apartheid (see next section). Therefore, despite the promises on official pamphlets and the official website, Freedom Park does not really promote reconciliation and nation-building and do not provide any clear links

with the historical legacies of other groups in order to unite the South African nation. Furthermore, it does not acknowledge and give a voice to the variety of groups and cultures that constitute the Rainbow Nation. Despite the good intentions voiced in the mission statement, official website and advertising material, it is instead experienced as an exclusively Black heritage site. The result has been apathy and a lack of enthusiasm and participation from the South African public which is reflected in visitor figures. During June 2010, the period when the FIFA World Cup was held in South Africa, Freedom Park had a mere 3 000 visitors in contrast to the approximately 17 000 people who visited the Voortrekker Monument.

Labuschagne (2010) concludes that, although the placement of Freedom Park was done to restore balance in reconstructing the past, its erection was not done in a way that reflects historical sensitivity, good planning, architectural imagination and a sensitivity for the heterogeneity of South Africa's population. Therefore, despite its enormous price tag, the park has failed to fulfil its promises to build bridges between the diverse groups and cultures of South Africa and to unite the South African nation.

#### **4.3 Two walls of remembrance – two historical legacies**

Instead of uniting the Rainbow Nation, the erection of the Wall of Names in Freedom Park has served to ignite tension and contestation between various legacies of memory, heritage and belonging (Baines 2009; Labuschagne 2010).

The controversy relates to the so-called "Border War" that was waged by the South African Defence Force on the borders between Angola and Namibia during the last decades of the apartheid regime (Baines 2009). Soldiers of the South African Defence Force (SADF) fought against Cubans, the armies of the frontline states, and other "terrorist" insurgents. From 1967 to 1992, approximately 600,000 young White

males were sent to the borders of Namibia. Analysts such as Steenkamp (2007) regard the struggle against apartheid (also known as the liberation struggle) and the Border War as two separate struggles. Baines (2009), on the other hand, believes that the Border War was a mere extension of the low-intensity civil war associated with the anti-apartheid struggle. However, different historical narratives about this war imply that White soldiers believe that they fought against “terrorists” and “communists”, while Blacks believe the participants in this war to have been “freedom fighters”.

During apartheid, a monument was erected at Fort Klapperkop to remember those who lost their lives in armed conflicts in the form of a twice-life-size statue of an infantryman at the entrance of a military museum housing (Baines 2009). The site also embodies a series of walls with the names of South African soldiers who died in the Korean and World Wars as well as some of those who died in the Border War. However, the names on these walls are not complete and have not been updated since 1994. The Fort Klapperkop site is not a well-visited site and has not really become a place of mourning and remembrance for the families and friends of those who died in the Border War. Instead, it has become an “overlooked memorial to an undeclared war” (Baines 2009:334). Since the advent of democracy, this site has been eclipsed by the much more impressive Freedom Park on the nearby Salvo-kop.

As already discussed, in the *S’khumboto* (isiSiswati for “those who have passed on”) in Freedom Park, a Wall of Names was erected to commemorate all those who died during conflicts that have shaped present-day South Africa (Baines 2009). The conflicts identified are pre-colonial wars, genocide, slavery, wars of resistance, the South African wars (first and second Anglo-Boer War), World War I and II and the liberation struggle. The Freedom Park Trust made an appeal for organisations to

nominate names for inclusion on the Wall of Names. However, when veteran organisations submitted the names of SADF soldiers who fell during the Border War, these submissions were rejected, while the names of Cuban soldiers who died on African soil in the same war were included.

The perceived sleight elicited an outcry from the public and SADF veterans and the issues were taken up by Afrikaner lobby groups such as Solidariteit and Afriforum on behalf of veteran organisations (Baines 2009). In 2007, Afriforum made additional submissions to the Freedom Park Trust and not only requested that the names of soldiers who fell in the Border War should be included, but also those of civilians and security force members who died in various forms of violence, the so-called “terrorist” violence, during the liberation struggle. Afriforum objected to the inclusion of the names of Cuban soldiers on the basis that they were fighting for communist world domination. The Freedom Park Trust agreed to include the names of victims of “terror”. However, it stood firm that the names of SADF soldiers did not deserve inclusion. The reasons forwarded were that these soldiers were defending apartheid in order to defeat the liberation struggle.

Some SADF veterans reacted vehemently by erecting an alternative wall at the access to Freedom Park on 16 January 2007 (Baines 2009). The popular Afrikaans singer, Steve Hofmeyer, played a leading role in the erection of a plaque with the following explanation (poorly translated into English):

*This triangular monument's various sides symbolise the fact that history is not one-sided. It is erected to ensure that those who will, as a result of Freedom Park's one sided usage of history, are not being honoured, will get the recognition they deserve. Even though this monument does not*

*cost the R716 million that Freedom Park cost, it is a sincere effort to pay homage to those who died in conflicts (Baines 2009:336).*

Various meetings of Afrikaner lobby groups followed. The end of the story is that a more permanent alternative wall, the South African Defence Force Wall of Remembrance, was erected at the Voortrekker Monument to commemorate the SADF soldiers who died in the Namibian/Angolan conflict (Baines 2009). There are now two walls – each representing different branches of memories and historical legacy, different historical traditions, different groups and identities and perhaps also different civilizations.

The politics of memory consequently became the source of an ideological contest with the so-called Border War as focus (Baines 2009). On the one hand, Afrikaner groups felt that the Freedom Park Trust had not been consistent in terms of the principle of inclusivity when remembering those who died in past conflicts. They pointed out that soldiers who fought on both sides of the Anglo-Boer War were honoured. However, the same principle was not applied in the case of the liberation struggle and the border war. Therefore, the well-respected Afrikaner historian, Hermann Giliomee (Anonymous 2007), branded Freedom Park as an ANC monument, while Jaap Steyn (Anonymous 2007), a language rights activist, states that Freedom Park reinforces divisions, rather than promoting reconciliation. This oversight has served to fuel perceptions among Afrikaners that they are being victimized in the new dispensation.

Analysts outside the Afrikaner community hold opposing viewpoints. Peter Stiff (Baines 2009) agrees that the exclusion of the names of SADF soldiers is indeed inconsistent with the fact that names of soldiers of both sides of other South African conflicts were included. Military correspondent, Willem Steenkamp (2007), on the other hand, feels that SADF soldiers do not deserve to be included as they were conscripted by the apartheid government and were benefiting from apartheid.

However, Baines (2009) believes that if the Freedom Park project is really committed to reconciliation, historical consensus is a prerequisite to achieving this goal. It will

imply that the Freedom Park Trust should go out of its way to accommodate those who feel that the current Wall of Names discriminate against their war heroes. In the end, all sectors of the South African public should feel that they can relate to the names of those included on the Wall of Names. If the goals of reconciliation, nation-building and the unification of the South African nation are taken seriously, then it would indeed be appropriate to include the names of those who died in the liberation struggle alongside the names of SADF soldiers.

Freedom Park is depicted as a “living monument” and the chief executive officer of the Freedom Park Trust, Wally Serote, still believes in processes of consultation about forms of memorialization and their purpose as well as the commemoration of South Africa’s divisive past and the contested meanings attached to particular events. However, Baines (2009) poses the question whether it is really possible to erect an all-encompassing memorial site, as Freedom Park claims to be, in a divided society. It appears to be even more difficult in the case of recent conflicts where the memories are still very raw. There are also a few examples of war memorials that represent both sides of a conflict. Most war memorials are sectarian in nature and memory cultures are seldom national in scope. Baines also regards it as debatable whether it is really necessary that some kind of national consensus should be reached before people can live peacefully alongside one another. Differences of opinion could rather be seen as a hallmark of a robust democratic culture where differences are not only tolerated, but also cherished.

What is nevertheless at stake is whose interpretation of history will in the end become institutionalized (Baines 2009). It is usually the case that the winners write the history, while the losers are relegated to the margins of society as the official history propagated by the political elite and cultural brokers become hegemonic. In

divided societies such hegemonic historical narratives are almost always contested. This also applies to the liberation struggle and the border war. Baines holds that it is important that the ANC government should not have the last or only say on how the country's divisive history should be remembered. Furthermore, processes of contestation should not be smothered or hindered. Such contestation should rather be valued as part and parcel of the practice of democracy, while institutions and structures should be developed to manage conflict.

#### **4.4 The statues in front of the City Hall**

Another example of the dual approach to the correction of imbalances emanates from the controversy surrounding the name of Pretoria versus the name Tshwane that is preferred by the ANC government (Labuschagne 2010).

The City of Tshwane Renaming Task Team has been playing a leading role in the reconstruction or what many historians believe to be the invention of history and memory in order to provide a historical base and cultural legacy to motivate the name change (Labuschagne 2010). As mentioned before, little archaeological evidence exists that Black tribes resided for prolonged eras within the Pretoria area during pre-colonial times. The Renaming Task Team nevertheless decided to elevate Chief Tshwane, one of a number of sons of Musi, who resided for a limited period in nearby areas, as a significant historical leader. This rather thin historical evidence has been used to legitimise the name change.

Although the legitimacy of these claims have been opposed by historians and archaeologists as well as the members of the public, the position of Chief Tshwane was cast in stone, so to speak, by the erection of an impressive statue

in front of the City Hall. There, Chief Tshwane directly faces the Voortrekker leader, Andries Pretorius, and the first president of the former Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (the independent state created by the Voortrekkers), Marthinus Pretorius.

As in the case of Freedom Park, no historical or heritage nexus exist between Chief Tshwane and the placement of his statue (Labuschagne 2010). It would probably have been more appropriate to situate the statue at one of many scenic sites along the spine of the Apies River flowing through the city and which is said to have carried his name in pre-colonial times. However, the statue was placed, in what many would interpret as a confrontational manner in front of the statues of Afrikaner leaders.

Labuschagne (2010) draws the conclusion that, once again, no integrated or holistic approach has been followed in order to promote reconciliation and nation-building. Therefore, no attempt has been made to integrate or interlink pre-colonial history with the history portrayed in the statues of the Voortrekker leaders and to promote a discourse between different historical legacies. The ANC-led governance of the city appropriated a space in front of the City Hall in order to put its stamp on the city (Harrison 1995). However, the way in which it is done, evoke feelings of opposition and confrontation that highlights societal divisions without making any attempt to build bridges between these differences.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

There can be little doubt that South Africa has undergone an “iconoclastic” revolution since the advent of a new dispensation in 1994 (Bakker & Müller 2010:48). A

complete set of new symbols has been introduced to replace the symbols widely associated with the apartheid state. On the terrain of the politics of memory and heritage, far-reaching changes have also taken place with the erection of numerous new sites.

Various strategies associated with symbolic politics and competition can be discerned in changing South Africa's symbolic landscape (Harrison 1995; Mac Ginty 2001). Invention was the dominant strategy in the establishment of a new set of national symbols such as the new flag and coat of arms. In the case of the national anthem, both expansion and re-ranking can be detected as a new song, *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*, was not only added, but is also sung first, while the *Stem van Suid-Afrika* (*Voice of South Africa*) has been modified and shortened to make the anthem more compact.

It is indisputable that there existed a dire need to rectify the heavily skewed heritage landscape inherited from apartheid by giving a voice to suppressed historical narratives (Ross 2007). Expansionism in adding numerous new sites has been the dominant strategy (Harrison 1995; Mac Ginty 2001). Instead of fostering complex narratives between the historical legacies of distinct groups, a layered approach has been followed in which new layers of suppressed or misrepresented history have merely been added (Bakker & Müller 2010). No linkages have, for example, been established to integrate the historical narratives represented by the Voortrekker Monument and Freedom Park and the City Hall statues (Labuschagne 2010). Moreover, alternative narratives have been consciously ignored and suppressed as in the case of the Wall of Names in Freedom Park, resulting in an expansionary contest with the erection of an alternative Wall of Remembrance at the Voortrekker Monument (Harrison 1995). The placing of new symbols directly facing or in the

close vicinity of existing symbols can be interpreted by communities as hostile, confrontational and threatening to valued identities (Labuschagne 2010; Mare 2007; Marschall 2005, 2010). Therefore, the privatization of the Voortrekker Monument can be interpreted as an attempt to protect a valued symbol and identity in the face of symbolic threat. The conclusion can be drawn that the altered symbolic landscape has often been serving to widen rather than bridge divisions within South African society.

Furthermore, expansionism can be discerned in the fact that a hegemonic African voice, in line with pan-Africanism and the African shift in the nation-building ideology, has become dominant and has largely replaced or obscured other and alternative South African voices (Bakker & Müller 2010; Harrison 1995; Labuschagne 2010, 2012). The predominance of African elements in the new national symbols and the resemblance of Freedom Park to the Zimbabwe ruins not only serve to emphasize links with pre-colonial Africa, but also proclaim African dominance.

Although nation-building has been proclaimed to be the driving force behind symbolic transformation, the impact of this transformation has often been divisionary rather than reconciliatory. One of the most important reasons is the fact that symbolic reforms do not reflect the diverse and multicultural nature of the South African nation. The multicoloured nature of the South African Rainbow Nation is obscured by a one-dimensional emphasis on only one colour.

The current symbolic politics indicates that South African society has remained a divided society despite strong nation-building efforts since 1994. It also emphasizes the difficulty, as already discussed, of establishing common symbols in a heterogeneous society and the futility of attempting to dissolve diverse ethnic,

cultural and religious identities within a single overarching national identity (Mac Ginty 2001). Instead of aiming to establish a single dominant (African) identity, the existence of different groups, cultures, identities and historical legacies – the many colours and flavours of the Rainbow Nation – should be fully recognized and supported, also in the symbolic realm. In order to promote reconciliation and unity, complex narratives between different historical legacies as well as robust debate should be fostered (Baines 2009). Furthermore, a singular hegemonic voice should not be allowed to drown out diverse historical narratives. The symbols representing the identities and cultures of various groups should not be abhorred, but rather accommodated, sustained and treasured. In order to prepare the way for a common future, complex discourses providing linkages between varied historical narratives need to be promoted in order to foster intergroup empathy and understanding and to ensure the peaceful co-existence of the many and diverse groups in South Africa.

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