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# INTERVIEW WITH RADIKOBO NTSIMANE

## ENTREVISTA CON RADIKOBO NTSIMANE

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Radikobo Ntsimane (1963, Matlwang Village, South Africa). PhD in history from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2013 and pastor of the Lutheran Church in South Africa. Specialist in South African peoples' history and oral history. Deputy Director of the Museums Service in KwaZulu-Natal, Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, South Africa.

## INTERVIEW WITH RADIKOBO NTSIMANE

Poznań, Poland, August 23, 2022

*Today its August 23<sup>rd</sup> and I am with Radikobo Ntsimane Thank you very much for accepting to give me this interview. I would like to know about you, your origins. Why did you study history? Where did you do it?*

I come from Potchefstroom,<sup>1</sup> a town in the old South African province of the Transvaal. I was born in a village outside Potchefstroom called Matlwang in 1963. And we were forcefully removed from Matlwang Village into the township<sup>2</sup> of Ikageng. Our land was expropriated, and we moved into this new township, the urban area from the rural area, in 1968 by the apartheid government.

*You were five years old. And you remember it clearly.*

Clearly that part. It's a big event. Everything in our life is to be forcefully removed. And that is when I went to school in this town called Ikageng in Potchefstroom, where people have been moved to live in this village from the areas where the white people lived together with blacks, and the coloured people, and the Indian people. But now three townships were created for the blacks, for the Africans it was Ikageng, for the Indians it was Mohadin and for the coloured people it was Promosa. So, we lived there, went to school, but my parents had a tradition, which they still have, that they could send any child to one of their relatives to assist them because those relatives didn't have a child. So, my sister and I were sent to live with the aunt of my grandmother in a village called Ga-Maloka in Lichtenberg, to look after her, who was turning blind. So, we lived there and on the second year, going to school there as well, that village was forcefully removed under the apartheid government to a place called Delareyville. After 1976, my sister and I went back to live with my parents in Ikageng because they thought that was too far for us to be on our own with their old granny. Then I went to be confirmed as a Lutheran, in the Lutheran Church. I lived briefly with the pastor who was the husband of my mother's cousin, which means my mom and the mom of the wife of this pastor were siblings. So, I lived there and, in this church, they used to play brass instruments and I liked

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<sup>1</sup> Potchefstroom, founded in 1838 by the Voortrekkers, is the second oldest European settlement in the Transvaal, a province in Northwest South Africa. It is on the banks of the Mooirivier, which in the local language means 'beautiful river', <https://serturista.com/sudafrica/potchefstroom-caracter-de-rios-e-historia/>

<sup>2</sup> "Township, locality, municipality, and in the case of South Africa, 'segregated district', residential units built in specific areas and intended for the use of 'black Africans', according to the spatial restructuring project undertaken by the architects of apartheid", Alejandro Castillejo Cuéllar, "Entre los intersticios de las palabras: memoria, posguerra y educación para la paz en la Sudáfrica contemporánea", in *Estudios de Asia y África*, 2006; XLI (1), pp. 11-46. Retrieved from: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=58641101>

to play brass instruments. So, I remained a member in the church until now. But when I finished the higher primary moving into the secondary schools, we didn't have money and my mom got money together and took me to school that year. But before, I visited relatives and asked them to pay for my school fees in the new senior school, but none of them had money. But this pastor said: "we can organize money for you in the church, but then you have to go to the seminary to train". And I think they were unfair because they said, after completion, you must serve 10 years, although they were only taking me to school for three years. Be that as it may, I went to finish high school and went to the seminary. But in high school, one of the subjects that interested me was history. So, in fact this pastor told me that I had to take history and geography which would be necessary later, but there was no geography in my high school. What I think was good, was that I had seminary training, theological training, to do history and geography of the Bible world in New Testament, Old Testament. It was going to be helpful, but I enjoyed studying history of South Africa. In 1983, I completed high school, went to seminary which was supposed to be a six-year course, but I was the first person to go to seminary with completed high school, which we call in South Africa matric.<sup>3</sup> But instead of doing 6 years, I did 5 and some of the students were not very happy that I did not have to do everything else. But I continued liking history at the time, and I could handle the subject matters and the studies easily, so I was encouraged to register with the university concurrently. That time at the University of South Africa, I did Greek and Hebrew, subjects we were already doing at the seminary, so I did them and passed two years of Greek and one year of Hebrew, which gave me an advantage. Later, when I studied at the university of Natal, I would bring these courses and submit them as necessary, for recognition by the university. And I completed my studies in 1988 and went to do Vicarage which is pre-ordination courses under a pastor in Gauteng, Soweto. I was ordained and married in the end of 1990 and was given a congregation in Gauteng near the airport in Benoni. Later I was asked to serve in a rural congregation east of Pretoria in Dennilton,<sup>4</sup> and then I was asked to go teach at the seminary after two years. After five years in the field as a pastor, I was asked to teach at the seminary. I was glad because I could continue with my studies, and I was teaching in the seminary Greek, New Testament, Old Testament and Church history.

*So you speak Hebrew, Greek, English, Afrikaans. Any another language?*

I speak my language, Tswana.<sup>5</sup> I studied German at the university and took German in my PhD. I used a lot of German because I had to read old texts of the late 1800s because the mission society that started my church came to South Africa in the late 1800s. My PhD is on the

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<sup>3</sup> "The term Matric in South Africa refers to the last grade in High School which is known as Grade 12. Matric is a highly valued grade" because it is needed "in order to be awarded a Matric Certificate, which is the qualification needed to study at university". <https://www.matric.co.za/the-meaning-of-matric-in-south-africa/>

<sup>4</sup> Dennilton is a town in Sekhukhune District Municipality in the Limpopo province of South Africa, which consists of 99.5% of Black residents. <https://www.city-facts.com/dennilton/population>

<sup>5</sup> Tswana is one of the eleven official languages in South Africa and is spoken as a mother tongue by part of the population in Botswana. It is the most widely spoken language in South Africa. <https://www.datosmundial.com/idiomas/tswana.php#:~:text=E1%20tswana%20es%20una%20de,78%25%2C%20corresponde%20en%20Botsuana>

history of Lutheran medical missions.<sup>6</sup> I wanted to understand who saw the necessity of introducing a health system when there already was a health system of the indigenous people. How did they understand the health system of the indigenous people and its value? But I realized that they thought it was witchcraft. When you read the texts not only of the missionaries of the Hermannsburg,<sup>7</sup> where my church started, but the other mission societies as well like the Belgium Mission Society, the Norwegian Mission society, the Swedish Mission society, the Finnish Mission society, they thought that the traditional health systems were witchcraft. When you read in German, they always speak about *zauberei*, which means witchcraft. I think they wanted to promote the Western type of medicine and they medicalized health. So, I wanted to ask how did the Lutheran churches lose their medical hospitals, and why did they not fight to keep their hospitals? In 1960s the government took schools from the churches. But the Roman Catholic Church remained with their schools. I think they had a strong financial backing, so they kept their schools. They would pay their teachers, but the government said, “we will inspect the schools and make sure that you toe the line.” So the hospitals were nationalized in the 1970s, and my church was amongst the first to let go of the hospitals. My question was: why did they justify having hospitals introducing medical missions as part of their mission and why was it so easy for them to let go? And I argued that they collaborated with the government. I interviewed some of the missionaries who introduced these hospitals. They said the people would get a better deal because we were using mission money which was not enough, and we were running hospitals poorly as far as finances are concerned. When the government takes them over, they will get a better service. That was the argument. But my point there is, they always were in collaboration with the apartheid government, and they were not very genuine. They could have maybe let go of others, kept some schools, run them in the Lutheran way, or run them as best as they initially thought, similarly to the hospitals. I took quite a while to complete the PhD. I had to go to Germany and read the German text Sütterlin<sup>8</sup> and other different kind of writing styles, because Germany was different, and people in various parts had their way of writing. So, I spent time in the mission centres, in Hermannsburg, in Bergen,<sup>9</sup> in Kreuzberg, Berlin,<sup>10</sup> also in a small Lutheran mission centre, Bleckmar. That's where my mission organization is housed, they separated from the Hermannsburg Mission Society, and they opened a small one, Bleckmar Mission, in the 1850s. So, I went and read the texts, found out why they started. They thought that for the gospel to find space amongst the indigenous people, you

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<sup>6</sup> Radikobo Ntsimane, “A Critical History of the Lutheran Medical Missions in Southern Africa with Special Emphasis on Four Hospitals”, PhD, Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> The Evangelical-Lutheran pastor Louis Harms founded in 1849 the Hermannsburg Mission Seminary (today: Evangelical-Lutheran Mission in Lower Saxony), a training school for missionaries who worked especially in the southern African continent and in Ethiopia. <https://www.path2prayer.com/famous-christians-their-lives-and-writings-including-free-books/louis-harms-devoted-pastor-and-mission-pioneer>

<sup>8</sup> Sütterlinschrift, Sütterlin or Suetterlin is a form of German calligraphy that was taught in German schools from 1915 to 1941, designed by Ludwig Sütterlin. the name Sütterlin is often used to refer to all varieties of the old German script. <https://es.wikidial.org/wiki/S%C3%BCtterlin>

<sup>9</sup> Bergen, Norway. <https://www.kirken.no/nb-NO/bergeninternationalchurch/om%20oss/>

<sup>10</sup> Berlin, Germany <http://www.holytrinityberlin.org>



had to disregard and discredit everything, almost everything that was indigenous, especially the health system, which they did not understand because it is connected to ancestor veneration and ancestor worship.

*Where did you do your PhD?*

I did it at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa<sup>11</sup> and completed it in 2012. Before that, I was fortunate because there were American missionaries from the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in the United States<sup>12</sup> who were working together with my church. They visited the seminary, and I was the only black African teacher there. One of the leaders asked me, “What can we do so that you finish your studies quickly?” I had pre-registered with the University of South Africa, and it was going slow, and I told this fellow, “My church has to give me study leave and you have to pay for it and then I will finish quickly”. He said, “Let's go for it!”, and the following year I was at the university doing honour's degree.<sup>13</sup> So, they recognized the studies I did at UNISA (University of South Africa) and the studies I did at the seminary, and they said this is equal to a bachelors, you don't have to do a bachelor. So, I went to honour's degree. I concentrated on the history of Christianity under a professor called Philippe Denis,<sup>14</sup> a Dominican monk who was teaching at the Dominican house and the seminary of the Roman Catholics, St. Joseph in Pietermaritzburg. This man had decided that he would start a project because he saw that there were not many books about the history of the church in South Africa written about the black churches and written by blacks. So, he started an oral history project. He taught himself oral history and when I came in 1995, there was in the previous year a conference called “the Making of Indigenous Clergy in South Africa” and a conference came and a number of papers were produced from that conference and they produced a book by different scholars, some of the lecturers, and some of the students, on the indigenous clergy. Of course, there is argument on who is indigenous, what is indigenous, but that doesn't matter. This argument will always be there because South Africa is an apartheid country, and the churches were brought from elsewhere. But mainly, who were the indigenous, the first black clergy. And I became very interested in that course, I attended it in 1995, 1996

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<sup>11</sup> The University of KwaZulu-Natal was formed on 1 January 2004 as a result of the merger between the University of Durban-Westville and the University of Natal. <https://ukzn.ac.za/>

<sup>12</sup> Since its founding in 1847, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has sought to plant distinctly Lutheran churches where members can be involved in Word and Sacrament ministry. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod began work in South Africa in 1982. <https://www.lcms.org/worldwide-regions/united-states#>

<sup>13</sup> In South Africa the bachelor's honors degree requires an additional year of study after a normal three-year undergraduate program. It is also known as a graduate degree. Admission to an honours degree program requires above-average academic standing. <https://www.southafricaeducation.info/higher-education/higher-education-qualifications-in-south-africa.html>

<sup>14</sup> Philippe Denis, Dominican brother of the Southern Belgian Vicariate, currently member of the Southern African Vicariate. Professor of History of Christianity at the School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal. Director of the Sinomlando Centre for Oral History and Memory Work in Africa. <https://www.domuni.eu/en/university-life/professor/?idTeacher=214> Author, among others, of *The Dominican Friars in Southern Africa. A Social History (1577-1990)*, Leiden, Brill, 1998, (Studies in Christian Mission, vol 21) and *Lettres d'Afrique du Sud. La nation arc-en-ciel à la croisée des chemins*, Bruxelles-Fernelmont, EME, 2010.

and with oral history, I helped in producing a book conducting interviews with the bishops of some churches, and a book was made by Philippe Denis as an editor called *The Casspir and the Cross*.<sup>15</sup> The Casspir is a soldier, police, kind of armoured vehicle, so the police would always attack the townships and they dispersed the gatherings of protest using the Casspir. So, it was the Casspir and the Cross how the clergy challenged the apartheid government.

Philippe Denis took me in as a student assistant. In my honours degree I dealt with the role of the laity in the church;<sup>16</sup> what the lay people can do with their gifts, their talents that my church was not taking very seriously and was not using, like the Zionist churches were doing, or the African independent churches were doing. In the master's degree, Philip Denise had a course on the Group Areas Act of 1950, an Apartheid Government act to move black people from the city centre and take them out to the periphery of the cities. That was also the same act that took me from the rural area into the township in Potchefstroom and took the coloured people and the Indian people from the city centre to the townships that I mentioned.

So, we looked at the role of the church there. What role did the church play in opposing that move? Because the churches lost their buildings, had their people displaced and their schools were taken, so the question was: what role did they play? Now through this course I decided that I would write my master's degree on the role of the church in the forced removals in the Transvaal,<sup>17</sup> where the apartheid government had already established small areas for black people promoting pseudo self-governing states. They gave the black chiefs and traditional leaders, and I hear that they were governing among their own people. So, I wondered what did the Lutheran Church mission do at that time? How did they react to the first removals to the creation of apartheid, Bantustans,<sup>18</sup> and homelands? So that was my master's degree, and when I completed it, I went away, back to my teaching post. But, because I had a master's degree, I was made director of the seminary, and at that time already our seminary was attracting foreigners, people especially from Liberia in times of Charles Taylor,<sup>19</sup> so people could come. And besides, the old lecturers at the seminary were about to retire. That is why I was made seminary director while the lecturers were there, so that I would get some acclimatization or some stability. But at that time, we relocated the seminary to Pretoria because I already introduced only matric at the

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<sup>15</sup> Philippe Denis, Thulani Mlotshwa and George Mukuka, *The Casspir and the Cross. Voices of Black Clergy in the Natal Midlands*, Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publications, 1999

<sup>16</sup> Radikobo Ntsimane, "The Role of Lay Ministry in the African Independent Churches (AICs) With Special Emphasis on the St. John's Apostolic Faith Mission (St. Johns. AFM) Church and its Relevance to the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (LCSA)" Honours Degree, Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal. 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Radikobo Ntsimane, "The response of the Lutheran Church to the Group Areas Act in the North West", masters, Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 1999.

<sup>18</sup> "The Bantustan Policy of the Republic of South Africa, drawn up and implemented since the 1950s, aims at the creation of self-governing, and ultimately independent, "homelands" for the forced resettlement of the black population of South Africa, where the blacks are able to exercise political rights." Eckart Klein, "South African Bantustan Policy", *Encyclopedia of Disputes Installment*, 1987, vol. 10, pp. 393-397, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/B9780444862419501020>

<sup>19</sup> Charles McArthur Ghankay Taylor (b. 1948) was President of Liberia from 1997 to 2003. He is serving a 50-year sentence for war crimes and crimes against humanity. <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/04/26/world/africa/charles-taylor-fast-facts/index.html>

seminary, no one below. You must finish your school and be ready for university or college, so I said only those people can come to the seminary, so we relocated to Pretoria with the hope of joining into one seminary, the Lutheran Church that was only for the Germans. They said we could not come to Natal, the rural place, so we moved next to the University of Pretoria<sup>20</sup> and the schools for English speaking Liberians. They said we want our children to go to schools that use English and they wanted to find employment. So, Pretoria was the ideal place, but we also wanted to attract lecturers who were young and did not want the rural area where the seminary was in Natal. They said, “No, we want to go to the movies, we want to eat out, we want our children to sleep at home, not to take them far away to the boarding schools while they are still young.” After three years at the seminary, I had left my wife in Natal. We were hoping that she would come and find a job soon in Pretoria, but it wasn't working. I decided to leave the seminary, and said, “This is not working for my family. It's working for the church, but not for my family. My wife is by herself, so she only comes once a month when she has her salary, and then has to leave quickly. It's not good for me, for the children and for the seminary,” because I was always working under pressure. So I left, but the church was very unhappy with me and they kicked me out. But I found a job at the university where I taught History of Christianity, the third level, and did research with Philippe Denis in the area of oral history who got me a position. And after Master's Degree I was also supervising the honours learners, and I also taught in a Lutheran seminary nearby and the university handed me over, so I taught both at the university and the Lutheran seminary. At the university, Philippe Denis, who was a member of the International Oral History Association, organized and invited me to participate in the international Oral History Association Conference that was in Pietermaritzburg, and Philip was the main host at our university. So that's how my love of oral history was fed, had space to blossom, to grow, and I produced with Philippe a book called *Oral History in a Wounded Country: interactive interviewing*.<sup>21</sup> That's how we call it, because in South Africa, the country was wounded, there was a lot of blood under apartheid, segregation, displacement, killings, disappearance of people, gagging of people and the like and the like. And there was also the armed struggle waged by the African National Congress<sup>22</sup> and the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania<sup>23</sup> and the Azanian Liberation Army. And with support from overseas, there was internal mobilization and also international support through what came to be known as disinvestments. I think Pepsi left South Africa, Kodak left South Africa. I am not sure who else left, but the big international companies left in support of the struggle for liberation. But now with oral history, with the international Oral History Association, IOHA, that came to Pietermaritzburg, we got a lot of exposure. And I had an opportunity to go to Prague in the Czech Republic, where I got

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<sup>20</sup> The University of Pretoria (UP) was established in 1908. <https://www.up.ac.za/>

<sup>21</sup> Radikobo Ntsimane, Philippe Denis, eds., *Oral History in a Wounded Country: interactive interviewing in South Africa*, Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008 [https://books.google.com.mx/books/about/Oral\\_History\\_in\\_a\\_Wounded\\_Country.html?id=3jnxAAAAMAAJ&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.com.mx/books/about/Oral_History_in_a_Wounded_Country.html?id=3jnxAAAAMAAJ&redir_esc=y)

<sup>22</sup> The African National Congress (ANC) is a social-democratic political party in South Africa. It has governed the country since 1994. <https://www.dw.com/es/congreso-nacional-africano-cna/t-42607331>

<sup>23</sup> Kwandiwe Kondlo, *In the Twilight of the Revolution: The Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (South Africa) 1959-1994*, Basel, Switzerland: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2010, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvh9vkw1>



even more exposure into the workings of oral history. And, later, this oral history introduced me to what you call memory work. And there was a small organization started by a professor called Sabine Marschall,<sup>24</sup> who has worked a little bit on the places of memory in South Africa. She started the organization but I heard today from Philippe Denis that she passed away because of COVID. And the organization has died with her because she was just starting it. So, with memory work and my visit to Prague, I was invited to participate in the Family Memory Project where we worked on a book, a beautiful book, called *Family Memory. Practices, Transmissions and Uses in a Global Perspective*. There's a very recent book finished in 2021, published January 2022.<sup>25</sup> So, we went on in collaboration with other scholars in South Africa. And some books also came up on the reconciliation and the violence in Pietermaritzburg,<sup>26</sup> the seven days war in Pietermaritzburg<sup>27</sup> just after the transition into democracy. Before completing my PhD in 2012, I did a number of publications, both in book chapters and scientific journal publications. And so, my interest has expanded beyond regular history where you use written sources, moving into the history where you use oral sources. But now, with my background in oral history and interviewing, I also take note of where memory plays a role. And I'm in the family memory project. I don't know what my future projects will be and will do, but that is where we are at.

*Tell me about the museums. Because I believe that history is not only for scholars. It has to be spread about, and one way to share it with the public is through museums, through well done exhibitions and well thought exhibitions.*

While I was at the museum service, I introduced a project publication called *Ubuciko Amagugu*,<sup>28</sup> and it would be good because it would trigger on *Ubuciko Amagugu* and its heritage, so art and heritage. And we have published, so far, five volumes. But you know, this is a government project, and they don't allow people to speak on behalf of the government because when you do it, you may misrepresent the political ideology of the government. So they were not very much in favour of this in general until the fifth one. I hope we will write some more. We wrote for the museum community, but we also reviewed books which would be of interest to people working

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<sup>24</sup> Sabine Marschall (?-2021), Associate Professor of Cultural and Heritage Tourism, University of KwaZulu-Natal. Author, among others, of *Landscape of Memory. Commemorative monuments, memorials and public statuary in post-apartheid South-Africa*, Leiden, Brill, 2009 <https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A3145795/view>

<sup>25</sup> Radikobo Ntsimane, "The Ntsimane Family Traditions and Rituals in Pre- and Post- 1994 South Africa" in Radmila Svarickova Slabakova (ed.), *Family Memory: Practices, Transmissions and Uses in a Global Perspective*, London, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Radikobo Ntsimane, "Violence, Landscape and the Possibilities of Reconciliation in KwaNxamalala in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal", in *Museum International*, Vol.63, Issue 1–2, May 2011, pp. 70–78.

<sup>27</sup> Philippe Denis, Radikobo Ntsimane & Thomas Cannell, *Indians Versus Russians: An Oral History of the Political Violence in Nxamalala (1987–1993)*, Pietermaritzburg, Cluster Publication, 2010.

<sup>28</sup> *Ubuciko Amagugu*, (Journal), KZN Provincial Department of Arts and Culture, Museum Service.

in museums. My main responsibility in KwaZulu-Natal Province Museum<sup>29</sup> Service is to research for exhibitions. So I help and support the affiliated museums to do exhibitions, but we are also expected, as a government subdepartment, to do exhibitions. So this year we have 4 exhibitions. One that we have researched for is on the pandemics but we have not yet mounted it. We have also done an exhibition on people of KZN (KwaZulu-Natal). Because of xenophobic attacks in South Africa in the past, we want to show the public that the people in KZN are not only Zulus and white people. There are other people as well who are minorities, but they've made major contributions in the development of the province and we would like to show in an exhibition that these people have got every right to be here. At the end of the exhibition, we have a piece of paper where we ask people: where are you from? Because we believe even the Zulus, who are included in Pietermaritzburg and in KwaZulu-Natal, are from somewhere, so that you can trace that the movement of people did not originate with the refugees from Africa and Pakistan, and in such places. Another exhibition that we are busy with is a maritime exhibition. We have got a museum very close to the beach in the south of the province in a place called Port Shepstone, and what we want to show through the exhibition is that there was always a relationship of the indigenous people with the ocean and we try to show those things by showing the indigenous name, the use of the fauna and the flora and how there was economic activity. Of course, on a minor scale, how was the use of the maritime relationship as far as health is concerned and how the ocean was used to provide food for our people. The last exhibition for this year is called Cannabis. Recently cannabis was outlawed, but in the 1950s, there was a war of dagga, the war of cannabis in a place called Bergville.<sup>30</sup> The research is ongoing, we have not yet completed it. There were about 50 people who used to plant dagga and sell it, the police came to arrest them and in the process some were killed. So, we would like to draw attention to the public on the issue of the struggle against the decriminalization of hashish.

*You told me you are interested in places of memory so I share with you a few African examples of what I know is published.*<sup>31</sup> *You might find some of them on the internet, at least the table of contents. There are specific cases about Togo*<sup>32</sup> *and Rwanda.*<sup>33</sup> *Can we talk about African places of memories in general?*

We can, but my expertise in these places is very limited. I can talk about some examples. I think on a broader scale in Togo, they speak about places where slaves were caught. I think of Senegal, and Ghana. These are places that can, on international level, be understood as

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<sup>29</sup> KwaZulu-Natal Museum Service is responsible for promotion and preservation of South Africa's rich and varied cultural heritage by assisting in the development of local Museums in KwaZulu-Natal. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Arts and Culture has 40 Museums affiliated to it, all of which are open to the public and receive financial assistance from Provincial Government. <https://www.sa-venues.com/attractionskzn/natal-museum.php>

<sup>30</sup> The Bergville Dagga War of 1956 is a turning point in the apartheid government's war against drugs. <https://www.cannabiz-africa.com>

<sup>31</sup> Loimeier, Roman, "Erinnerung in Afrika: Einleitung", ("Memory in Africa: Introduction"), *Africa Spectrum*, Vol. 41, No. 2, Memory Cultures, 2006, pp. 149-153.

<sup>32</sup> Vallat, Jean-Pierre dir., *Le Togo lieux de mémoire et sites de conscience*, Paris, L'Harmattan, DL 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Meierhenrich, Jens, "The Transformation of Lieux de Mémoire: The Nyabarongo River in Rwanda, 1992-2009", *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 25, No. 5, Oct. 2009, pp. 13-19.

places of memory. There might be other places as well. In South Africa especially, such a place is the Robben Island,<sup>34</sup> which is an island where Nelson Mandela<sup>35</sup> was imprisoned, but before it was an army garrison during the First World War possibly. And it also served as a leper colony, and then, people who were opposed to governments were sent to this place. But it is especially celebrated largely because Nelson Mandela has had quite a good coverage in international media, and it shows that it's a place where you cannot kill the human spirit, and that's what it says, "To resist or to become free". There should be other places as well. In Namibia in the 1800s, there was a genocide of the Herero people onslaught by the Germans, because it was a German colony at some point and there was a man they called Von Trotha.<sup>36</sup> He was a commander of the army, the big man of the German government colony to suppress the people there, but the Herero stood up against him, and he killed them. There is literature that has now come out because the people of Namibia, the Herero people especially, have demanded reparations from the German government. But there is opposition because the government of Namibia says, "No, no, no, the reparation must be to all Namibians." The Herero say, "No, to us." So, there is a bit of a struggle around there. I think one may also identify such places of memory like the June 61 in Soweto, with Hector Pieterse<sup>37</sup> who was the first one to be killed. Arguably, some of the photographers say he was not the first; but the first to be photographed. You can have the Sharpeville Massacre.<sup>38</sup> You can have the Boipatong Massacre.<sup>39</sup> These took

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<sup>34</sup> Robben Island has been used to isolate certain people since the end of the 17th century. It is near the coast from Cape Town. From 1836 to 1931 the island was used as a leper colony and in the 20th century it became infamous as a jail for political prisoners under apartheid, like Nelson Mandela. <https://www.worldheritagesite.org/list/Robben+Island>

<sup>35</sup> Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela (1918-2013) was a South African lawyer, anti-apartheid activist, politician and philanthropist who presided over his country's government from 1994 to 1999. He was the first black president to head the executive branch of government, and the first to be elected by universal suffrage in his country. <https://www.un.org/es/events/mandeladay/legacy.shtml>

<sup>36</sup> In 1904, the Herero people of Namibia revolted and were massacred by the German colonial administration under General Lothar von Trotha (1848-1920). This massacre of the Herero and Nama is considered the first genocide of the 20th century. Tim Whewell, "Cómo fue el 'genocidio olvidado' de Namibia, cometido por Alemania y reconocido un siglo después", *BBC News*, Namibia, 29 mayo 2021 <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-internacional-57282350>

<sup>37</sup> Hector Pieterse (1963-1976) "became the icon of the 1976 Soweto uprisings in apartheid-era South Africa when photojournalist Sam Nzima took a photograph of Hector dying in the arms of a colleague, Mbuyisa Makhubo, accompanied by Hector's sister, Antoinette. The photograph went around the world. Hector was killed at the age of 12 when police opened fire on protesting students". South African History Online <https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/hector-pieterse>

<sup>38</sup> The Sharpeville massacre occurred on 21 March 1960 at the police station in the township of Sharpeville in the Transvaal Province. After demonstrating against pass laws, a crowd of protesters went to the police station. The police opened fire on the crowd. Some of the protesters were carrying their work tools, like shovels, so it is also known as the shovel massacre. <https://sites.google.com/a/ramapocentral.net/mr-whalen--suffern-high-school/apwh--events-of-post-world-war-ii/1960--sharpeville-massacre?tmpl=%2Fsystem%2Fapp%2Ftemplates%2Fprint%2F&showPrintDialog=1>

<sup>39</sup> The Boipatong massacre took place on the night of June 17, 1992 in the township of Boipatong, South Africa. The attackers were supporters of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), a rival party of the African National Congress (ANC). It is considered a key moment in the transition to democracy. James Simpson, "Boipatong: The Politics

place when the black people stood up against apartheid, and the apartheid used the Inkatha Freedom Party which is traditional Zulu political party against the black people and there was a term called Black on Black.<sup>40</sup> But in fact, it was discovered that there was a third force. The government through the army was giving guns to the Zulu people who were at migrant labourers' hostels in the township so that this can help to calm down the fighting. As time goes on, I may be able to think of other places of memory. I think every village and every township, every town will have such places of resistance.

*Those are a few places. It would be interesting to know if they have been studied as Lieux de Memoire following Pierre Nora's proposal.*

Yes. We must find out.

*You were a teacher. Do you prepare children or youngsters to learn about history? Is it well appreciated, or the youngsters are not interested in history?*

I was not that kind of teacher. I was teaching people who have already finished school. These were young adults who were coming to the seminary and to the university. They have to be there, especially in the seminary, because they want to be pastors. But at the university, my main role was teaching a course that was called "History, Truth and World Views". Now, when people come from junior schools to the university, one can say they are fundamentalist, and my responsibility was to show them that truth is constructed. Let me put it like this. There is truth, there is historical truth, there is a scientific truth, there is religious truth, and because people come from different socializations, they have their own truth. And one cannot come with the truth from the Eastern Cape, from Johannesburg, from Durban, from Cape Town, in another area, and insist that this is the only truth. So, my job was to make them be able to be open minded and understand that if it is not truth every time, everywhere then it is not true. It is a truth claim, same as Christianity. If Muslims say: "No, there is a truth that we know," and Jews say, "We have the truth that we know," and other religious formations say, "We have a truth," you cannot have four truths. They are claims and my responsibility was to say they are free to have their truth and you are free to have your truth, but that does not make us to fight because our truths do not agree.

*How do you link your religion, as a professor of religion, as a minister, with history?*

I understood from the beginning that one needs to have tolerance. When I study history, I am aware of these differences, and I don't force people to become Christians. I also have heard people who said I was the devil incarnate, because I was teaching in the seminary, in the university, to people who want to be ministers and come to the university. But then I opened their

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of a Massacre and the South African Transition", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, n. 38 (3), September 2012, pp. 1-25. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254311136\\_Boipatong\\_The\\_Politics\\_of\\_a\\_Massacre\\_and\\_the\\_South\\_African\\_Transition](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254311136_Boipatong_The_Politics_of_a_Massacre_and_the_South_African_Transition)

<sup>40</sup> David Addae & Kofi Poku Quan-Baffour (2022), "Afrophobia, 'black on black' violence and the new racism in South Africa: the nexus between adult education and mutual co-existence," in *Cogent Social Sciences*, 8:1, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23311886.2022.2130458> [seen on October 3, 2022].

eyes, and they think, “Amen. This man, maybe he is sent here by the devil.” Some leave and others grow up and understand that I am still a strong believer in Christianity and I will defend the Christian truth as far as I believe it, but I will not force a Muslim not to be a Muslim. I understand they can be Muslims. They can be Jews.

*There's mutual respect.*

Yes, they can be lesbians, they can be bisexuals, they can't be cured, clearly. They can be what they want. But I also can be what I want.

*What is there in the future for you?*

I am about to retire in the next year, becoming 60. This conference that we're attending is giving me ideas of what possible projects I can work on, and I have spoken to my former professor, Philippe Denis, who wants to take me as a researcher in the research institute of the university where I was a student, and I will do that, part time. But I also, because I was supported financially by the church, I want to give the last five years of my active service, -God willing, because I may die before five years- I want to work full time in the church. I have already given to the General Pastors Convention of my church, the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, a plan of training at least 20 lay ministers. They must be over 30 years. They must have a job. They must pay for their studies. I will give them training. You remember I was a principal of a seminary, and I was thinking about adding this idea of how to prepare ministers. So, if one, if 10, if 20 can start and 10 can complete, at least my church will have some workers. My church does not pay the salaries. They try, but the money is very little, and I've been fortunate because I work for the university first and then for the government. I have not been taking a salary from the church and they could have my services for free, although it was on part time basis. Now, we can no longer have young people come from matric after 12 years of school. We teach them five years and three more years at the seminary, and then we say: now you can become a pastor and nobody pays them a salary; it's not good. So those who want to use that route to train and get a diploma and a degree are OK, but we have to tell them in the beginning that we cannot pay them a salary. Now I want the ones who can already pay themselves and, and for the next five years I will train those. On the side, I will do publications of academic nature at the University of KwaZulu-Natal where I was a teacher, for some journal chapter, academic journal, scientific journal. The university is paid money and will make some money available to me so that I can continue publishing either books or book chapters. They put down a little bit of money and I can come to conferences, and I can do research, which is what I like. So that's what I plan to do.

*Well, thank you very much.*

Transcription by Brenda Erandi Aguilar Mercado



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