TRUTH IN TRANSLATION – THE “TRUTH” BEHIND THE PLAY

What was the TRC?
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was a national commission assembled after the end of Apartheid in South Africa to “promote national unity and reconciliation” and to identify the “causes, nature and extent” of apartheid-era violence.

It provided a space in which those who had been victims of gross human rights violations under apartheid could come forward and make their stories heard for the first time. They could apply to the commission for investigations to be done and for reparations to be given. Perpetrators of violence could request amnesty from prosecution and by giving testimony and by being found to have provided true and full accounts, could have amnesty granted.

The TRC was a crucial turning point in the history of South Africa. It was a product of the negotiation process which aimed to bring an end to over 300 years of colonialism and apartheid and which led to the establishment of an interim constitution, which provided for democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Since there had been no “outright winner” in the conflicts leading to the end of apartheid, compromises needed to be made on both sides. One of the agreed-upon compromises in this settlement was that amnesty would be provided for those who had violated human rights. Thus restorative justice rather than retributive justice was chosen as a way to bring about reconciliation in the future.

The TRC was set up by means of the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act of 1995. The mandate of the commission was to bear witness to, record and in some cases grant amnesty to the perpetrators of crimes relating to human rights violations, reparation and rehabilitation.

Dullah Omar, the Minister of Justice in 1994, said: “If the wounds of the past are to be healed, if a multiplicity of legal actions are to be avoided, if future human rights violations are to be avoided and indeed if we are to successfully initiate the building of a human rights culture, then disclosure of the truth and its acknowledgement are essential…. The fundamental issue for all South Africans is therefore to come to terms with our past on the only moral basis possible, namely that the truth be told, and that the truth be acknowledged.”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu listening at the TRC.

“The notion of healing for me is mysterious. The act of performance is almost religious. This project has been a marriage of the two.”
– Lionel Newton (Marcel in Truth in Translation)
How did the TRC work?

The work of the TRC was accomplished through three committees:

The Human Rights Violations Committee investigated human rights abuses that occurred between 1960 (the Sharpeville massacres) and 1994 (the first democratic elections). This committee heard the victims tell their stories: As journalist, Max du Preez described,

“mothers, fathers, daughters, sons, husbands sitting in front of cameras and microphones to tell of their suffering at the hands of policemen or soldiers – or sometimes guerillas in the armies of the ANC or PAC. Most of it was intensely emotional: even grown, hardened and proud black men who had never cried before in their lives broke down in tears...Many of those who had testified at these hearings told us that the act of sitting down at the witness table before the commissioners and members of their community – and the television cameras and radio microphones – made them feel that their society, their nation, was at last recognizing their pain and honouring them for their suffering. That brought them a form of closure.”

Only a proportion of the victims could in fact appear in public hearings. Their participation was to an extent, symbolic. While 2000 people told their stories in the public hearings, more than 21 000 applications were processed by the commission.

The Amnesty Committee considered applications from individuals who applied for amnesty for gross human rights violations. This committee had a quasi-legal framework and was presided over by a judge. Proceedings were characterized by grueling questioning of applicants by lawyers, reports by investigators and statements from victims. The Amnesty process meant that the silence was broken on what had occurred in the past and denial of these violations was no longer possible. It also contributed to uncovering the causes, motives and perspectives of past atrocities.

The Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee was charged with restoring victims' dignity and formulating proposals to assist with rehabilitation. The TRC made recommendations on what reparations could be made to individuals and to communities, including financial aid, pensions, housing, education, land restitution, monuments and symbolic reparations. It also oversaw the exhumations of bodies and the reburials.

There was also an investigation unit and a number of other sub-committees. The commission worked independently of Government.
What made the South African TRC different?

There had been other similar processes before the South African TRC, notably in Argentina and Chile. However, this process was different in both its transparency and the level to which the nation participated in the process.

Public hearings of the Human Rights Violations Committee and the Amnesty Committee were held at venues across South Africa, from major towns and cities to small rural villages. These hearings were televised and a special hour-long weekly programme captured the main events.

Called “Truth Commission Special Report” it was presented by progressive Afrikaner journalist, Max du Preez, former editor of the Vrye Weekblad. Radio and television news broadcasts provided coverage in all official languages of South Africa. Newspapers carried stories on a daily basis. No-one had the excuse any longer of being able to say “I did not know”.

The commission was empowered to grant amnesty to those who committed abuses during the apartheid era, as long as the crimes were politically motivated, proportionate, and there was full disclosure by the person seeking amnesty. There was, however, no blanket or general amnesty, as there had been in other countries which had held TRCs. The law required individual application in writing with full disclosure of the facts. This meant that a great deal more of the truth was uncovered than might otherwise have been the case.

No side was exempt from appearing before the commission. The commission heard reports of human rights violations and considered amnesty applications from all sides, from the apartheid state to the liberation forces, including the African National Congress and the African Peoples’ Liberation Association.

While this was controversial, since many people did not agree that the liberation movement should be treated equally with the apartheid government, it meant that a more complete and balanced picture of the South African past was presented. More than 21000 victim statements were processed, relating to some 38 000 incidents and the killing of some 14 000 people. In the Amnesty process, after 1888 days of hearings, 1167 amnesties were granted out of a total 7116 applications.

On October 28, 1998 the Commission presented its Final Report, which condemned both sides for committing atrocities and in 2003, a final two volumes of the Report were tabled in parliament.

“In a world in which talk of war is escalating and becoming a normal part of our daily discussion, all of us have a responsibility to continually conscientize each other of the abnormality of the status quo. Truth in Translation is my campaign in that struggle.”

– Fana Mokoena (Thabo in Truth in Translation)
Why was a TRC necessary?

South Africa’s history has been one characterised by oppression, abuse, division and the denial of human rights to those indigenous to the country. First the Dutch, and then the British, colonised South Africa, before the declaration of the Union of South Africa in 1910, independent from Britain. The “Union” however, was constructed from the start as a country that ignored the rights and interests of the black majority of its inhabitants. And from its very beginnings the politically conscious educated class of Africans, began to mobilise itself into political organisations to voice their dissent, along with Mahatma Gandhi and other iconic political leaders. Two years after the declaration of the Union, the organisation which would become the African National Congress was launched. Even before apartheid, the trend towards racial divisiveness could be clearly seen.

Apartheid (or “separateness”) was a government policy enforced in South Africa when the National Party took power in 1948. It was characterised by legislation, which divided and demeaned people, taking away their basic human rights. The effect of apartheid legislation was invariably favourable to the Whites and detrimental to the other race groups. The impact of these laws was felt in every aspect of life in South Africa.

The Population Registration Act ensured that every South African was classified into a race group, either Black, White, Asian or Coloured (mixed race). This classification then brought with it certain privileges or restrictions. The Separate Amenities Act meant that segregation between the races was carried out in every aspect of life, including transport, education, health care, access to buildings etc. In every respect, the separate amenities set aside for “Non-Europeans” were less well-resourced, convenient or plentiful than those for “Europeans” or Whites. Education of black people was controlled by the Bantu Education Act, which advocated a curriculum which would equip Blacks only for low-level jobs, such as manual labour.

Black and White people were prohibited from marrying or having sexual relations under the Mixed Marriages and Immorality Amendment Acts, and people were forced to live in separate residential areas, under the Group Areas Act. This Act resulted in forced removals of people who happened to be living in what were considered to be white areas. The Bantu Homelands Citizens Act made all black people citizens not of South Africa, but of one of several homelands, designated to these according to their ethnic grouping. The Pass laws then regulated the movements of black people, who had to carry an identification document (or pass) with them at all times. No black person could seek work in an urban area (outside of their Homeland) without having a permit to do so.
Anti-Apartheid activity was curtailed through the Suppression of Communism Act, which banned any political organisation calling for radical change in the status quo, and the Terrorism Act, which allowed for measures such as detention without trial. Through these laws, a police state was created in South Africa, which allowed for the abuse of human rights on every level. Resistance against these measures began with strikes, acts of public disobedience and protest marches. But when these were met with violence (for example, in the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, where 69 people were killed for protesting against the pass laws), so armed resistance became the only alternative.

In turn, the Apartheid government hit back at the liberation movements (the African National Congress, the Pan-African Congress, the South African Communist Party) by declaring states of emergency and banning these organizations. Many thousands of their members were harassed, imprisoned, detained without trial, tortured or killed. The capture of Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and others of the ANC leadership in Rivonia in 1963, resulting in sentences of life imprisonment, meant that many others left the country to go into exile. Some trained as soldiers within the armed wing of the ANC (Umkhonto we’Sizwe) in camps in neighbouring African countries, or in the Soviet block countries. Others worked to sustain the struggle abroad and gain support for the notion of a free and democratic South Africa. Exiled ANC leaders were targeted for assassination and The Bureau of State Security (Boss) took over military intelligence and reported directly to the prime minister.

Within the country there was extensive censorship and repression, with conscription becoming compulsory for all while males in 1967. South Africa became more and more isolated as sport, cultural and trade boycotts built up. Events such as the Soweto Protests where students protested about being taught in Afrikaans, and many were killed in the process, spread a spirit of revolt like wildfire across the country.

The 1980s were characterized by massive repression and state-orchestrated violence to contain the threat of so-called “radical” elements and in response, an intensification of the armed struggle. Political divisions between the ANC and the Inkhatha Freedom Party led to protracted violence in KwaZulu Natal, which divided black communities. Suspicion of police informers within the ranks led to communities turning on one another, often using the petrol-filled tyre or “necklace” as a weapon. South African secret agents infiltrated ANC ranks and this in turn led to ANC training camps being used as places where suspected spies were tortured and executed. In the late 1980s the Mass Democratic Movement was launched to campaign vigorously against apartheid. South Africa was on the brink of civil war.
In 1989 PW Botha resigned as State President (after a stroke) and was replaced by FW De Klerk. Nelson Mandela, who had begun secret talks with the government from prison, saw an opportunity to begin negotiating a way forward. The political climate changed as prisoners were released, parts of the Separate Amenities Act were changed and some of the repression of the past was lifted. In 1990 FW De Klerk made an extraordinary speech in which political parties were unbanned, Mandela’s release from prison was announced and emergency restrictions were lifted. A new order had been heralded. White minority rule was almost over.

In the years leading up to the first democratic elections of 1994, as the new constitution was debated in the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa), it became apparent that a negotiated settlement between the parties would require compromises on all sides. Violence was still very much a reality of the political landscape; parties such as the PAC had not yet suspended the armed struggle, and attacks on civilians continued. Violence between the ANC and Inkatha also flared up continuously, fueled by what many referred to as “the third force”, the participation of the security forces in arming and supporting Inkatha units.

Nelson Mandela was elected as President of South Africa in 1994 and made reconciliation the hallmark of his leadership. In the following year the new Constitution of South Africa was adopted, and its provisions made possible the establishment of the TRC.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission allowed for all South Africans to come to terms with their history of division and oppression in a way that would allow for public admission of the conditions that led to the excessive and systematic abuse of human rights from 1960 onwards. The TRC was designed to examine both the human rights abuses committed in the name of preserving apartheid and of fighting against it. As Archbishop Tutu said, it was an attempt to heal the wounds of the past by exposing the cause and the nature of the injuries.

Who was involved in running the TRC?
The TRC was chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. As a church leader, a Nobel peace prize winner and a spokesperson for all those who had been oppressed and all those who had wanted equality and freedom, Tutu was the ideal person to head the commission. President Nelson Mandela selected the seventeen commissioners from a shortlist of 25 names that in turn had been chosen by a multi-party panel. Dr Alex Boraine was the Deputy Chairman. Other commissioners included Mary Burton, Advocate Chris de

This group of distinguished individuals had made their presence felt in the legal, social services, medical and human rights sectors. They included freedom fighters, former detainees, exiles, church leaders and politicians. They were chosen as respected community representatives, coming from a range of cultural, political and social backgrounds.

The Successes and Criticisms of the TRC

Many questions around the TRC remain hotly debated issues in South Africa and across the world:

- Did the TRC achieve forgiveness and reconciliation?
- Did the TRC uncover all the truth?
- Was the TRC biased or limited in its findings?
- Did amnesty breed an ethic of impunity amongst perpetrators?
- Were victims victimized again by the fact that after the TRC they were unable to seek justice from the courts for the wrongs done to them?

Many victims feel that the TRC failed to achieve reconciliation between the black and white communities. However, the purpose of the TRC was never to achieve reconciliation, but to promote it. And reconciliation did happen in many instances. Many feel that justice is a prerequisite for reconciliation rather than an alternative to it. Some victims felt that the TRC favoured the perpetrators, since perpetrators were able to get amnesty, while the reparations process was slow, flawed and insufficient. Some people refused to participate in the process, including PW Botha, the ex-State President (who referred to the TRC as a “circus”) and Gatsha Buthelezi, the leader of the Inkhata Freedom Party. When FW de Klerk appeared before the commission and reiterated his apology for the suffering caused by apartheid, many felt that his response was insufficient and that he was not prepared to take personal responsibility for wrongs committed.

Some people opposed the amnesty process, feeling that it would rob them of justice. One example is the family of anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko, who was killed by the security police.

Many of the criticisms of the TRC can be laid at the door of the new government, which in many cases, failed to act on the recommendations of the commission, as laid out in its Final Report. Those who did not receive amnesty or who had not applied for amnesty in the first place, were not prosecuted at the time; reparations were insufficient and poorly handled.

“Out of all the gifts God gave us there also is “forgiveness”, which is never easy to practise; but through forgiveness, I believe the world can be healed.” – Bongani Gumede

(Nhlanhla in Truth in Translation)
Zapiro was responsible for numerous political cartoons reflecting on the TRC

**So how successful was the TRC?**

You decide… In the play, the interpreters come up with an arbitrary figure of 9.5% success. Not very impressive, you might say. But on the other hand, Marcel argues, “that is 9.5% more reconciliation, more forgiveness, more truth than South Africa had ever had before.”

As Reverend Peter Storey said about the TRC, “The TRC did not fail. It did everything it could. It is now up to South Africans, white and black to find a way forward.”

These sentiments are echoed by Nobuhle, at the end of *Truth in Translation*, when she says:

“This time of healing has been a pretty picture that we have drawn across the land - and every day the dry wind comes from the north to wipe it out. But we’ve made this image of what we can be - that’s what we have to celebrate - and we have to draw those lines again while our hands remember. Then maybe we will step back one day and stare with wonder at what we have done, what we have become…”

― Jenny Stead (Claire in *Truth in Translation*)

― Nick Boraine (Peter in *Truth in Translation*)

― Jeroen Kranenburg (Rudi / Schalk in *Truth in Translation*)

“To me this production has always been about hope. The hope of a better world, a better country, a better tomorrow, a better me... That’s what the TRC ultimately symbolised. The great inconceivable, unimaginable audacity to hope.”

- Jenny Stead (Claire in *Truth in Translation*)

Forgiveness is a practise, a verb! Something you can choose to DO. Every morning that we wake up we can choose to forgive and we can work on it. It doesn’t happen overnight and it’s not a once-off event. You have to practice forgiveness to get better at it. This is something that I have learnt being part of this play!”

- Nick Boraine (Peter in *Truth in Translation*)

“Stupidity is the most dangerous activity on this planet. To act stupidly in the face of humanity. To deny, to act without thinking, to sow fear and short sighted morals, to exercise your “God-given” right to tell people that they are right or wrong… is stupid.”

- Jeroen Kranenburg (Rudi / Schalk in *Truth in Translation*)
The people and stories that appear in the play

The Cradock Four – The Eastern Cape has a long history of resistance to apartheid. In the area of Cradock, ANC activists Matthew Goniwe, Fort Calata, Sparrow Mkonto and Sicelo Mhlauli disappeared on the way to a political meeting in Port Elizabeth. Their mutilated bodies were found a week later. Their funeral was the catalyst for the declaration of a partial State of Emergency in the Eastern Cape. Nnomonde Calata, Nombuyiselo Mhlauli, Sindiswa Mokonto and others testified at the TRC. Teacher, Sicelo Mhlauli was stabbed 43 times, had acid poured in his face and his hand was cut off, to be displayed in a jamjar by police officers as a warning to other “terrorists”.

Nohle Mohapi’s husband, Black Consciousness Movement activist, Mapetla Mohapi was tortured and killed in police detention, at the Kei Road police station. At the time, police claimed that he had hanged himself with his own pair of jeans. He was a contemporary of Steve Biko, who would die in police custody a year later. Nohle Mohapi was the very first person to give testimony at the Truth and Reconciliation Hearings in East London in April 1996.

The Pebco Three – Sipho Hashe, Champion Galela and Quaqaweli Godolozi, were Eastern Cape activists and leaders of the Port Elizabeth Civic Organisation (Pebco). They disappeared on their way to the airport, having been convinced that they were meeting a British diplomat to secure funding from overseas. In fact, the meeting was a trap. The three men were taken to an isolated police station called Post Chalmers, where they were interrogated and beaten to death. Gideon Nieuwoudt applied for amnesty for this crime, along with two others. He was assisted by askari, Joe Mamasela, who was also involved in the abduction.

The three widows of the Pebco Three testified at the hearings. Elizabeth Hashe told how her husband, Sipho, had already spent ten years imprisoned on Robben Island between 1963 and 1973 for his ANC activities. She herself had been repeatedly harassed by security police during this period. Monica Nquabakazi Godolozi, wife of Quaaweli Godolozi, had two children aged 5 and 1 when her husband disappeared. When asked by Jillian Edelstein about her appearance at the TRC, she said, “I didn’t have the chance to talk before. It was inside. It was painful inside. I still do not believe the security police – they keep changing their story. I’m not sure it is the truth. They are lying.”

Sister Jeanette Mahonga was a member of the ANC women’s league and a freedom fighter. She was also a nurse. Her house was petrol-bombed and she was set alight. The attack was carried out by policemen wearing balaclavas. She died five days later.

Solwandle Looksmart Ngudle was an active member of the ANC, of the SACP and of the South Africa Congress of Trade Union. He worked in Cape Town as a newspaper seller for Contact, a newspaper supporting the Liberal Party, but was also commander of the ANC armed wing. In 1963 he was detained under the “90
days” detention without trial act, and after 17 days of torture in a Pretoria prison, was found hanging in his cell. The Security Police claimed that he had committed suicide. His widow, Beauty, called on the commission to help her find Ngudle’s bones so that he could be given a proper burial. An exhumation was carried out on 1 March 2007 and Looksmart was re-buried with proper honours. He was awarded the Order of the Disa in 2004.

Mr Johannes van Eck, a bus contractor from the area of Klerksdorp, who was holidaying on the farm of a friend in the Messina area in 1985. His wife and two children were killed by an ANC landmine, along with three family friends. Mr Ncube and Mr Londula were charged with the killing, but they were released under the 1992 indemnity process, where various political prisoners were released, and later Mr Ncube was given a medal for bravery from Nelson Mandela. The ANC claimed that the use of land mines on the white border farms was justified because the Apartheid Regime had declared border farms military zones, and because white farmers were integrated into the security system and provided with the tools of war.

Joe Mamasela was an askari, a former freedom fighter, who was arrested, tortured and then became a police spy and member of the infamous Vlakplaas hit squad. The murder of his half-brother by the ANC helped to further alienate him from his former comrades. He refused to ask for amnesty at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, claiming that he too was a victim. He claimed to killing more than 40 people and was subpoenaed to testify in numerous cases in which he was involved, including those of the Pebco 3, the KwaNdebele 9, the murder of Griffiths Mxenge and the Guguletu 7. He was an expert at infiltrating groups of young activists and luring them to their deaths. As a result of his testimony, three former security policemen who had applied for amnesty for 40 murders had to increase their tally to nearly 60 before the hearings were out.

Griffiths Mxenge, a former Robben Island prisoner, and affectionately known as the “ANC lawyer”, was a brilliant and courageous man, who had defended hundreds of people arrested for apartheid related offences. He was murdered en route from his office in central Durban to his township home in Umlazi in November 1981. That day one of his dogs had been poisoned by security police. He was abducted and taken to the Umlazi cycle stadium, where he was stabbed 45 times by Mamasela, another askari, Brian Ngqulunga and two policemen, Nofemela and Thshikalanga. His face was mutilated and his ears cut off. His funeral was held a week later; it was attended by 15000 and presided over by Archbishop Tutu. The security police tried to spread rumours that he had been murdered by the ANC for misusing their funds, but his status as a hero of the people was never doubted. Four years later, his wife, Victoria, an activist and leader in her own right, was also murdered in her home in Umlazi.

The KwaNdebele 9 were nine young men who were lured to their deaths by Joe Mamasela under the pretence of doing their military training in the ANC. They were driven to a house in Vlaklaagte in the KwaNdebele homeland, and lined up against a wall. They were then executed by security police. The bodies were doused in petrol and set alight.
The Guguletu 7 were seven young men who were shot and killed at close range in an ambush at an intersection of Guguletu, Cape Town, in part of what was referred to at the time by the South African authorities, as a “legitimate anti-terrorist operation”. The security forces claimed that the youths were known terrorists and were about to attack a police bus carrying senior police officers. In fact the entire event was a Vlakplaas hit-squad operation, with months of pre-planning. First the group which had been untrained, was infiltrated by two askaris who claimed to be commanders returning from exile and who offered to train them. They were trained for two months, during which time the askaris gathered information on them, and they were then led into the trap. The askaris escaped and were paid for their work, and their deaths sent out a strong message to other would-be MK recruits. The mothers of the boys found out about their sons’ deaths on the television news. One of the officers involved in the attack, Thapelo Mbelo, arranged to meet with the mothers to ask for their forgiveness personally.

Vlakplaas was the headquarters of a security force hit-squad for more than 10 years. It is a 250 acre farm only 20 minutes from Pretoria, and was the site of numerous interrogations, torture and as many as a 1000 murders. Dirk Coetzee was responsible for starting the unit and Eugene de Kock took over from him, and commanded Vlakplaas for about eight years of its existence from 1985 onwards. The unit grew from 16 to 120 men in size. Here, after the murder and torture, the men would gather for a celebratory braai and would receive medals from apartheid ministers.

Dirk Coetzee was the first commander of Vlakplaas. He was responsible for numerous murders, including those of Durban attorney Griffiths Mxenge, who was stabbed more than 40 times and Sizwe Kondile, who was drugged, shot and his body burned. He also turned various former freedom fighters, to become askaris (police informants), including Joe Mamasela. Other activities included murder, attempted murder, kidnapping, poisoning, victimisation, assault, theft and border violations. In 1989, he gave an exclusive interview to the Vrye Weekblad (the publication of journalists Max du Preez and Jacques Pauw), which first revealed the existence of death squads within the South African police. He revealed that General Lothar Neethling had supplied poison to the police with which to drug and kill anti-apartheid activists. He left the country while the story broke in South Africa, but returned before 1994 and participated in the Truth and Reconciliation commission hearings.

Eugene De Kock was the commander of first Koevoet (a counter-insurgency unit in Namibia which boasted the highest kill rate of SWAPO insurgents), and then of Vlakplaas (after Dirk Coetzee), where he was responsible for numerous murders, using everything from letter bombs, poison, booby-trapped headphones and vehicles to more conventional weapons. He was also responsible for the bombing of the headquarters of the South African Council of Churches, the ANC headquarters in London and other targets. He was a key figure in arming the Inkatha Freedom
Party to carry out attacks on the ANC, contributing to the upsurge of so-called “black-on-black” violence during the early 1990s.

Known by his men as “Prime Evil”, Eugene de Kock was one of apartheid’s most decorated policemen; he was finally convicted of 121 apartheid crimes and was sentenced to 212 years in prison. He is currently serving his sentence, and has recently spoken out against Ex-State President FW de Klerk, who he believes should be held responsible for the crimes he allegedly ordered and allowed during apartheid.

Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, one of the human rights commission members, and a psychologist, wrote a book about her conversations with Eugene de Kock, called *A Human Being Died That Night: A South African Story of Forgiveness*.

**Boipatong massacre** – This massacre of 49 people, including women and children, in their homes in the Vaal triangle on 17 June 1992 by mainly Zulu hostel-dwellers from the KwaMadala Hostel, caused the Nelson Mandela and the ANC to walk out of negotiations to end apartheid, accusing the ruling National Party of complicity in the attacks. The TRC hearings heard applications for amnesty from 16 Inkhatha Freedom Party (IFP) members. The commission established that indeed it was likely that a third force was involved in the attack. In the hearings on the Boipatong massacre, there was general consternation when an IFP amnesty applicant, Victor Mtembu, defended his killing of a nine month old baby, by claiming that “a snake gives birth to another snake”. He was granted amnesty for his role in the attacks.

**TRC exhumations** resulted in many people finally, after years of uncertainty, finding the bones or remains of their loved ones. Those exhumed by the commission after having been killed by apartheid police, include the list of names spoken at the end of Act One: Siphiwo Mtimkulu, Phumezo Nxiweni, Ntombi Kubheka, Lesaja Sexwale, Sureboy A Dali, Thabo Rakubu, Mtimkhuly Mavuso, Blessing Ninela, Zola Tati, Charles Tsatsi, Titus Dladla, Thuluso A Matima, Mzwandile Radebe, Ruben M Letsila, Richard B Molokwane, Vincent Sekete, Emmanuel Mthokizisi, Mbova Mzimela, Brian Ngqulunga, Paulos Madiba, Watson M Majova, Aaron Makwe, Patrick Motwaletswele, Magic Madi, Ndlela Sibiya, Matthews T Nkosi, Selby Mavuso, Robert Mokoena, Sipho Kolisi, Milo Malatsi, Abbram More, Oupa Lukhele, Alfred Nkosi, Mlungisi Velaphi, Daniel Nkabinde, Oupa Funani, Bafana Maholombe, Bhekuyise Sithebe, James Masango, Bheki Sam Mchunu, Henry Mavella, Manyoni Nkosi, Mxolisi Penwell, “Mubi” Khumalo, Linda Fikekahle, “Post” Kuzwayo.
Siphiwo Mtimkulu was a 22 year old student activist from Port Elizabeth, when he was shot and his body burnt to ash, along with his friend Topsy Mdaka. Their remains were thrown into the Fish River. Before this time, he had been systematically harassed, detained, interrogated, tortured and poisoned. He was hospitalised in Cape Town and when released home was confined to a wheelchair, as a result of what the thallium poison had done to him. He decided to sue the Minister of Law and Order for torture, but within weeks of his beginning proceedings, he disappeared. The security police denied knowledge of his whereabouts, and put about a story that he had gone into exile and was a terrorist. They prevented his mother, Joyce Mtimkulu from giving testimony, and harassed her and the family for 15 years after Siphiwo’s death. One of those actually involved in the murder of Siphiwo, was Gideon Nieuwoudt, who for years claimed that the family knew about Siphiwo’s whereabouts and were hiding this knowledge from the police. When Mrs Mtimkulu finally came to the commission to give testimony, she brought along a piece of Siphiwo’s hair that she had kept as evidence of what the poison had done to him. Gideon Nieuwoudt by then had decided to approach the family for forgiveness. In a scene captured by Mark Kaplan in his documentary Where the Truth Lies, he visited the family in their home. He claimed to have told them the full truth and he asked for forgiveness. Enraged, the son of Siphiwo, Sikhumbuzo (who had never met his father) smashed a vase over Gideon’s head. This real-life scene became the germ of the idea for the movie, Forgiveness, starring Arnold Vosloo and Quanita Adams (one of the cast members of Truth in Translation).

The words spoken by Mrs Mtimkulu at the end of Act One are taken from the belated funeral of Siphiwo, which was held on the banks of the Fish River:

‘In the midst of big things, in the midst of strong winds, the father of my king, Jesus Christ, you looked after us. Our God said we must come and stand here, over this river. We heard, after long years in the dark, that the bones, the remains, of our husbands, our children, were thrown here, by the people ruling at that time. But they were caught out, because, dear God, you said a human being’s bones cannot just disappear.’

Jeffrey Benzien was a feared torturer, who was particularly well known for his use of the “wet bag” method for extracting evidence. This entailed placing a sodden bag over the victim’s head, while the person was held down, bringing them to a point of asphyxiation, over and over again. Few people were able to withstand the torture for more than half an hour. Two of his victims who gave testimony at the Truth commission were ANC freedom fighters, Tony Yengeni and Ashley Forbes. They had the opportunity to question their former torturer face to face. Benzien was a broken man by the time he appeared at the commission. Suffering from post-traumatic stress and unable to remember what he had done specifically to his victims, he was full of self-loathing. He actually demonstrated his famous wet bag torture method at the commission, making for
some of the most dramatic images of the hearings. The Benzien hearings revealed the extent to which the torturer’s success depends on an “intimate knowledge of the human psyche” and that there is an intimacy that develops between the torturer and the tortured over long periods of interrogation. Tony Yengeni, by then a member of Parliament in the new ANC-led government, asked Benzien what kind of a man would do such a thing to other human beings. He answered:

“Not only you have asked me that question. I, I, Jeff Benzien, have asked myself that question to such an extent that I voluntarily, and it is not easy for me to say this in a full court with a lot of people who do not know me, approached psychiatrists to have myself evaluated, to find out what type of person am I.”

He was finally granted amnesty by the TRC. While Benzien has become emblematic of the torturer-policeman, it should be remembered that he was just one of many of officers who went home to their wives and children after making their victims beg for their lives.

An image of Jeffrey Benzien from Sue Williamson’s Truth Game series

**Necklacing** – a practice that became commonplace in South African townships in the late 1980s as a means of dealing with traitors (or ‘impimpis’). Black policemen, town councillors and other suspects were killed in this manner. Necklacing involved the killing of a person, by placing a tyre filled with petrol around their necks and setting it alight. Usually these murders were carried out by people’s courts or by mobs, who first administered a severe beating often to the point of death, before necklacing the individual. Winnie Mandela, the wife of imprisoned Nelson Mandela, publicly endorsed the practice in an infamous speech. Archbishop Desmond Tutu once managed to save a person from necklacing when he rushed into a crowd and threw his arms around a man about to be killed. There have been claims that necklacing was a practice introduced by the “third force” and was never ANC policy.

**FW De Klerk** - South Africa’s last State President of Apartheid-era South Africa was FW de Klerk, who served from September 1989 when PW Botha resigned after a stroke until May 1994, when Nelson Mandela became the first leader of a democratically-elected government in South Africa. He was the leader of the National Party (the party responsible for apartheid, in power from 1948) and is usually credited with engineering the end of apartheid, for which he shared a Nobel Peace Prize with Nelson Mandela, bestowed in 1993. He served as Deputy President of South Africa under Nelson Mandela for the first two years of the new regime. FW De Klerk came from a family with deep roots in conservative Nationalist politics. His great-grandfather was a Senator, his grandfather stood for parliament and his uncle was
the Prime Minister, JG Strydom. His father became a cabinet minister and President of the Senate. He himself entered the cabinet in 1978 and occupied various posts, including that of Minister of National Education and Planning, where he supported segregated universities and was not known as a leader of reform.

However after assuming party leadership, and leadership of the country, he called for an end to apartheid, unbanned the ANC and other political parties and released political prisoners, most famously, Nelson Mandela.

When he came to the TRC, he used his appearance not as an opportunity to admit culpability and knowledge of apartheid abuses, but rather as an appeal to his constituency. He apologised for apartheid, and for the mistakes made by his party, but then claimed that “he did not know” what had really gone on. He threatened legal action against the TRC, prompting the commission to remove the section implicating him from its first publication of its report. In recent allegations, Eugene de Kock claimed that de Klerk’s hands are “soaked in blood” and that he had been aware of, and even ordered killings in the anti-apartheid conflict. FW De Klerk has claimed that “I have not only a clear conscience. I am not guilty of any crime whatsoever.”

Winnie Mandela – Winnie Madikizela Mandela is an icon of the struggle against apartheid. She came to prominence through her marriage to Nelson Mandela, and became known as the “mother of the nation”, during his imprisonment. For many years under apartheid, she was herself harassed by police, imprisoned many times, and for a long period confined to the area of Brandfort in the Orange Free State. She attracted a great deal of national and international media attention, and became a figurehead of the struggle against apartheid. Charismatic, beautiful, courageous and outspoken, she served as a rallying point for the masses. Always controversial, she publicly endorsed the practice of necklacing and was herself implicated in a range of murders, kidnap and assaults, through the actions of the Mandela United Football Club, a group of bodyguards that surrounded her. She was accused by ANC leadership of conducting a virtual reign of terror in parts of Soweto. The “coach” of this club, Jerry Richardson, accused her of ordering the kidnapping and killing of Stompie Seipei (a 14 year old freedom fighter who may have given information under police torture), as well as of ordering the killing of Lolo Sono, and others. She was convicted of kidnapping and accessory to assault, but her six year jail sentence was reduced to a fine on appeal.

After Mandela’s release from prison, their marriage broke down on the grounds of her adultery, and they divorced in 1996. She served in the first democratic government and was elected as President of the ANC Women’s League, but was dismissed from her position on allegations of corruption. She appeared before the Truth and Reconciliation commission here she denied all accusations against her, calling them ludicrous. When Archbishop Tutu controversially begged her to
apologise and to admit her mistakes, she finally and reluctantly did so. He then asked for the mother of Stompie Seipei and Mrs Mandela to publicly reconcile, and they embraced in the hearings. This moment was analysed by the media, some calling it reconciliation, and others more cynically calling it a public relations exercise.

In 2003 she appeared in court on corruption charges and was sentenced to five years in prison, after which she resigned from all leadership positions in the ANC. Her sentence was suspended since she claimed that the crimes were not committed for personal gain. She remains a person who summons the respect and adoration of people on the ground, but has largely retired from public life.

**Stompie Seipei Moketsi** was a 14 year old activist who was abducted from the Methodist Church Manse in Soweto and taken to Winnie Mandela’s home, where he was tortured, sjamboked, and finally stabbed to death by the Mandela United Football Club. Seipei had been accused of being a police informer. Other young activists who were “slaughtered like goats” were **Lolo Sono** and **Tony Tshabalala**.

“**In the fight for freedom is so easy to turn into the monster you are fighting, and when telling someone else’s story, it’s often impossible not to make it your own. Telling the story of the interpreters, the stories they had to hear and translate, and how it affected them, revealed to me a different side of myself, of my country, of my people and of our history. A side that I comfortably chose to ignore before.”**

- Robert Koen (Gideon in *Truth in Translation*)

**The TRC Interpreters**

The South African Constitution stipulates that there are 11 official languages in South Africa (now 12, including sign language), and that these languages should be enhanced and developed. It also says that no person may be discriminated on the basis of language. As a result the TRC required the services of interpreters to use simultaneous interpretation within hearings, speaking first person for victims, perpetrators, and commissioners in order to ensure that clear communication was achieved.

The University of the Free State provided the service of their Unit for Language Facilitation and Language Empowerment and recruited, selected and trained up the interpreters. Initially 23 trainees were appointed to be interpreters at the TRC, after a two week training course. More interpreters were trained at a later stage so that the group eventually numbered around 35.

There were many challenges to being an interpreter. The interpreters all had to be able to interpret into English as this was used as a base language, but for most interpreters, it was their second language. They had to be able to do sight translation of documents, particularly during the amnesty hearings where statements were read for the record. They had to deal with intense emotional pressure because of the content of the material they were dealing with, and many of the interpreters started showing symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome. The hours were long and stressful; they worked in small booths, which were hot and uncomfortable, and
which demanded absolute silence, because of the sensitivity of the microphones. They travelled constantly for a period of two and a half years, and in some cases, for longer; they were away from home for long periods of time, without the support and comfort of family members. Apart from the emotional and physical demands of the hearings, they also had to become used to being in the media eye all the time, as their voices were used for radio and television programmes. They were constantly expected to display professional behaviour and adhere to a strict code of conduct. Since they fell outside the auspices of the TRC, they had no recourse to counselling or debriefing, as the other TRC employees had.

There were also many technical difficulties around the nature of interpreting. The register used at the human rights hearings and the amnesty hearings was very different – in the amnesty hearings, there was a great deal of complicated legal terminology, much of which didn’t exist in the languages being spoken. Sometimes interpreters had to invent terms, which were legal in nature and which have now become part of their respective languages. There were also problems around the translation of euphemisms and taboo terms (for example, terms around sex), which could not be translated directly, or in particular contexts.

In the development of *Truth in Translation*, we spoke to many of the interpreters who worked at the TRC. We would like to thank in particular, Khethiwe Mboweni-Marais, Angela Sobey, Louis Nel, Charlene Dobson, Nomusa Zulu, Sydney Mokobe, Wisani Sibuyi, Siphithi Mona, Abubaakr Peterson, as well as Lebohang Motibela, and Annelie Lotriet for their inputs.

“Mostly i have learnt that more often than not people need and want simply to be heard. have their lives mean something. having someone say, yes, i hear you. these things happened to you, and because i am a witness to your experience it wont have been for nothing. i believe that for healing to happen, hearing needs to happen.”
– Quanita Adams (Alia from *Truth in Translation*)

“Every time I get up on the stage I am reminded of what a better place we are in in South Africa, but also never to forget those dark days, because it is only through remembering that we don’t allow the darkness to return.”
– Sibulele Gcilitshana (Nomawethu in *Truth in Translation*)

“After seeing the show at The Market theatre for the first time I thought these actors were so privileged. I wanted to audition so much to be a part of this show, to be a part of South African history. I felt it’s not just a show; we are relating a story in order to be an ambassador, and it brought back all the memories of my cousin who we never buried, who had left home to go to Lusaka, and never came back. My aunt died on my cousin’s birthday, still waiting for her son to come back home one day.”
– Baby Cele (Nobuhle in *Truth in Translation*)
Glossary of Useful South African words

Hamba kahle – go well
Intoliki – interpreter
Hola Mababeza – Hey there, baby!
Dop – drink, tot
Howzit – Hey, Hi, what’s up? How are you?
Ouma - grandmother
Tatie – crazy, insane
MK – the popular acronym for Umkhonto we’Sizwe “spear of the nation” (the armed wing of the ANC)
Bru/broer – brother, male friend
Ewe – Yes
Haaibo – An exclamation, similar to “Good heavens!”
Comforter – the person who ‘smoothed the victims’ path” at the hearings, by sitting with them, looking after them and mothering them through the experience
Bakkie – a pick-up truck
ANC – African National Congress, the liberation movement, under apartheid; now the party that holds power in the South African government
Arm blanke – Poor (indigent) whites
Arme blanke – Poor (to be pitied) whites
Moffie – a disparaging term for a homosexual
Net so genuine as joune – just as genuine/authentic as yours
Ek kan nie sien nie, sersant – I can’t see, sargeant.
Poephol - aashole
Askari – a turncoat; a freedom fighter, who is turned to become a police spy
Naatkop – a jibe, with a meaning similar to “aashole”
Molo tata – Hello/Morning Father
Inja - dog
Esasigebenga – a scoundrel
Moegoes – stupid people
Coloureds – people of mixed race, descended from Bantu, Khoi-San, European (with some Indian and Malay heritage), but classified as a single grouping under apartheid. Many ‘so-called’ Coloureds speak Afrikaans as their home language. While they were discriminated against under apartheid, they were allowed limited rights, which resulted in an apartheid hierarchy where Coloureds were better off than Blacks.
Mfundisi – Teacher/Priest
Voetsek – Push off/ Fuck off
Asseblief - Please
Moenie met me lol’ie - don’t test/push me
Ek is al klaar in a mood – I’m already in a bad mood
Kaffir – extremely derogatory term for black person (means “non-believer)
Vok-Vok de Kock – Fuck-fuck de Kock (Eugene de Kock’s nickname)
Boers – literally, farmers, but more generally, Afrikaners
Toi-toi – protest dance used in rallies
My liewe mej. Simpson. Ek wens vir u ‘n bron van onuitputbare sielsgenot. – My dear Miss Simpson. I wish for you a source of inexhaustible spiritual joy.
SABC – South African Broadcasting Centre – the National broadcaster
Lusaka – capital of Angola, and a site of ANC training camps
Boet - brother
Wet bag torture – a form of torture perfected by Jeffrey Benzien in which the victim is suffocated using a wet bag placed over the head
Klein kaffir Kak – small kaffir/nigger shit
Commie – disparaging term for communist
Necklace – a form of physical torture usually leading to death, carried out by a crowd as a means of lynching, where the victim has a petrol-soaked tyre placed around their neck and is set alight
Sjamboked – whipped with a sjambok or leather strap
Impimpi - traitor
Poes – female genitals, equivalent to cunt/pussy
Windgat – snobbish/highly tight
Plat hotnot nose – flat Hottentot nose
Kroes halwe bles – curly half bald
Whitey – a white
Umhlobo wam’ – my friend
Amandla Awethu – Power to the people
Sakubona and kunjani – a derogation of sawubona and kunjani: Hello and How are you?
Mnqundu wakho – means “aashole”, but considered very vulgar / obscene
Shebeen – illegal drinking place usually in a township
Magogo - grandmother
Rainbow nation – a term coined by Archbishop Tutu to refer to the multi-cultural South African nation, “the Rainbow people of God”
Tits - breasts
Thula wena – Shut up, you
Mpilo sfebe – A very poor, overly literal interpretation in bad Zulu of “Life’s a bitch”
The Songs

The Hair: Original Hugh Masekela number based on testimony
The hair of your husband was pulled out.
I-i-yoh! Hey!
His tongue was pulled and stretched. His fingers were cut off.
Achoo-wee-i-yoh!
Forty-three wounds in his body. They poured acid in his face.
Mayi-ba-bo-ho-ho-ho
Chopped off his right hand. Then he was blown up.
His pieces were... scattered... all over the floor...
His pieces were... splattered... all over the wall...
His pieces were... plastered... on the ceiling.
Splattered...

Modder B: A struggle song referring to detention without trial that occurred across the country in prisons like Pretoria's notorious Modder B prison.

bamthatha lomfana (they took this boy)
bamfaka izinstimbi (they handcuffed him)
bamthumele lee (they put him in leg irons)
eModder B (they took him to Modder B)
uzobuyanini (when will he come back)
buyanini (repeat)
siphethwe yindlala (he's the breadwinner).

Born Killer: (Original Hugh Masekela number based on testimony)
Born killer. Born killer
I was ordered to kill. You question it... Hey!
You gonna be killed. Hey!
He's a born killer.

Teddy Bear: (Original Hugh Masekela number based on testimony)
Teddy bear (men x 4)
Six men stormed into the house
And blew off ...my husband's head
My daughter cries in her sleep
Wipe the blood from my father's face
Father Christmas,
Please bring me a smiling teddy bear
My daddy is dead.

Ha Bo Tle: (a drinking song)
Ha bo tle (bring it on...)
ha bo tle re bo (bring it on let's...)
kgakagthe (drink it...)
Tsela Malome tsela (pour, Uncle, pour)
Verwoerd: (a struggle protest song)
Nans indod emyama Verwoerd (x 4)(the black man is here, Verwoerd)
Hini Verwoerd
Bashoba Nans iNdod emyama Verwoerd (beware the black man is here, Verwoerd)

Power In the Blood: (Original Hugh Masekela number based on Sipho Sipamla’s poem Da Same, Da Same)
Power in da blood
Justice in da soul
We are all vampires
Sometime you wanna know
Da meaning of my talk
Da meaning of my talk is very simple.
When the nail of da torn tree
Come for scratching on da skin.
E don’t care if you black
E don’t care if you white
E don’t care if you Indian
E don’t care if you Chinaman
One thing come for sure
Blood gonna be red
It’s da same for everybody, same for everybody, same for everybody
Blood will sure be red...

He Went Away: (Original Hugh Masekela number based on testimony)
NOBUHLE:
He went away, He never came back (repeat)
We will never, See him again (repeat)
They took him away, We never saw him again (repeat)
I want to know where his body is buried (repeat)
His children were babies when they took him away (repeat)
They will never get to know their daddy. (repeat)
ALL: Don’t cry, Thula my love (repeat)
Thula Thula Thula my love (repeat)

**Senzeni na:** *(traditional song, sung at funerals and at TRC hearings)*
Senzeni na (What have we done?)
Tatum twalo segodoke. (Let's take our baggage and go.)

**Lamtietie:** *(traditional Afrikaans lullaby)*
Lamtietie Damtietie
Doe doe my liefstetjie (sleep my darling)
Slaap maar sag (sleep softly)
Sluimerend, dromerend (drowsily, dreamily)
Lamtietie Damtietie
Doe-doe my liefstetjie
More wek moeder haar engelkind (tomorrow mother will wake her angel child)
Bo in die bloue lug (above in the blue skies)
Flikker die sterretjies (the stars are twinkling)
Moederhart's dierbaarste diefstieje (mother's heart's darlingest little thief)
Onskuldige ogies, en voetjies en handjies (innocent little eyes and feet and hands)
Kyk net die hemel se brandwagters (look at the heaven's guards - the stars)

Andrew Buckland (Marcel)

**Young Woman:** *(Original Hugh Masekela number based on testimony)*
Young woman
Accused of being an informer
Chased beaten and stoned
A tyre around her neck
Doused with petrol and set alight
She's on fire... fire... fire...

**Time to come forward:** *(Original Hugh Masekela number)*
ALL: It was a time to come forward, to come forward,
It was a time to come forward. Hey. (x 2)
NOBUHLE: The war was over.
The elders called on the nation
For reconciliation.
It was a time to come forward.
ALL: It was a time to come forward... A time to tell the truth.
NOBUHLE: It was time for many in the nation to say there are confessions. If they remember their own transgressions. It was a time to tell the truth.
ALL: It was a time to come forward. A time to tell the truth.

*Umthwalo: (Original Hugh Masekela number)*

ALL: Umthwalo umthwalo
Sithwelen nzima eyo!
Umthwalo umthwalo (repeat)

NOBUHLE:
Bayabulawa abantwana
Bayabadubula mama
Bayabulawa nabazadi
Bayabadubula mama

Nanka masotsha
Aphet'izibhamku
Azobadubula mama
Nanka maphoyisa
Aphet' amabhazuka
Bazobadubula mama

Babashaya ngama rocket
Babshaya ngama bullets
Babshaya ngama bhomu
Nanka' maphoyisa
Bayabadudula mama

Asiwasab' amasarasini
Asiwabi namatank
Asiwabi namahippo
Asiwabi nezimpimpi

Sizobashaya ngembokodo
Sizobajikijela ngamatshe
Sizobashaya ngeketi
Sizobashaya ngetoy toy

Woza phoyisa
Woza wesotsha
Woza wempimpi
Woza Zola Budd
Wo sizobadubula nathi

Thwele thwele thwele

Umthwalo (repeat)
Heavy load, heavy load
We are carrying heavy
Loads, loads (repeat)
Children are being killed
They are shooting them
The parents are being killed too
They are shooting them
Here come the soldiers
Carrying guns
They are going to shoot them
Here comes the police
Carrying big guns
They are going to shoot them
They are firing the rockets
They are killing them with bullets
They are throwing them with grenades
Here comes the police
They are shooting them
We are not scared of the saracen
We are not scared of tanks
We are not scared of hippos
We are not scared of informers
We are going to hit them with rocks
We are going to hit them with stones
We are going to hit them with slingshot
We are going to toyi toyi
Come police
Come soldier
Come informer
Come Zola Budd
We are going to shoot you too
Carrying, carrying, carrying
Fana Mokoena (Thabo)

Sapuma Sangena: (a struggle song sung about going into exile to fight oppression)
Sobashiya bazal’ ekhaya
We will leave our parents’ home
Sapuma sangena kwa manyamazwe
We left and went into strange lands
Lapokungazi konobaba nomama
where our mothers and fathers have never been
Silandel’ inkululeko
we were following our freedom
Siti hlahla hlahla hlahanekaya
we say stay there, stay there, stay at home
Sesingena kwa manyamazwe
We left and went into strange lands
Lopokungazi konobaba nomama
where our mothers and fathers have never been
Silandel’ inkululeko.
we were following our freedom

Teta Wena Winnie Mandela: (A song based on a section from Njabulo Ndebele’s novel, “The Cry of Winnie Mandela”)
JAKE:
Teta Wena Winnie Mandela Talk Winnie Mandela talk
Size sikwazi ukujonga phambili So that we can move forward
NOBUHLE:
There is nothing I wouldn’t do.
This is my only defence of the future.
I will not validate the politics of reconciliation.
Reconciliation demands my annihilation.
Reconciliation demands my annihilation.
All of you have to reconcile with the meaning of me.
I am your pleasure, your pain, your beauty, your fear.
I am your squatter camp shack, your million rand escape.
Your pride, your shame.
You and I are the future.
We who are here to stay. At home.
ALL: Teta Wena Winnie Mandela.
Size sikwazi ukonjonga phambili

Noyana: (a traditional Xhosa hymn)
Noyana noyana (X7) ezuwini  Are you going to heaven?
noyana noyana (x7) phezulu  Are you going up there?

The Exhibition
The accompanying exhibition includes selected images from Jillian Edelstein’s *Truth & Lies* which documented the TRC in South Africa, and selected images from *The F Word – Images of Forgiveness* (an exhibition of images and stories of victims and perpetrators’ struggles to come to terms with forgiveness across the globe).

*Truth and Lies* is the result of Jillian Edelstein’s 1997 return to her native South Africa in which she photographed victims and perpetrators at hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She documented among others, the hearing in which Winnie Mandela was called to account for her alleged involvement in the murder of fourteen year old Stompie Seipei; when the security policemen responsible for Steve Biko’s death explained their actions; when the explosives expert whose letter bomb killed the white activist Ruth First admitted his role in her death; and when the hundreds of ordinary people, black and white, described what they and their relatives had suffered under apartheid.

In *Truth and Lies*, Jillian Edelstein combines her striking portraits with testimonies from those who came forward to give evidence. Geographical Magazine called it “A valuable contribution to documenting the horrors inflicted by apartheid in South Africa -- a testimony to the hope that reconciliation will follow. It is both a powerful photographic book and a book of poignant personal testimonies.”

Portraits included in the Truth in Translation exhibition are of: Mrs Mthimkhulu, the comforter - Fikile Mlotshwa, Mrs Seipei, Nombuyisile Mhlauli and Nyami Goniwe, Mrs Elizabeth Hashe, Dirk Coetsee and Eugene Terre’blanche.
The F Word – Images of Forgiveness has been described as “a powerful photographic exhibition exploring the idea of forgiveness in the face of atrocity and telling the stories of victims as well as perpetrators. It is the brainchild of journalist Marina Cantacuzino and photographer Brian Moody who in January 2004, tired of a climate where revenge and retaliation dominated the headlines, resolved to present the public with an alternative view.

Travelling to places including the United States, South Africa, Northern Ireland, Romania, Rwanda, Israel and Palestine, as well as the UK, they collected the stories of 26 people whose lives had been shattered by violence, tragedy and injustice - and who had chosen to take the challenging and often painful journey towards forgiveness.”

The portraits included in this collection are of the Linda Biehl Foundation which is run by the mother and the murderers of young USA student, Amy Biehl; Father Michael Lapsley, who suffered terrible injuries in a parcel bomb attack; Ginn Fourie and Easy Nofemela, the man responsible for the death of Ginn’s daughter, Joan van Blerk and Colin Ketschabile, Berth and Francis Climbié, parents of 7-year old Victoria Climbié who was abused and murdered by her aunt); Pat Magee, the man behind the IRA Brighton bomb and Jo Berry, whose father was killed in the blast; Duma Khumalo, one of the Sharpville Six, wrongly imprisoned for a murder he didn’t commit and Andrew Rice, whose brother David was killed in the World Trade Centre bombing, among others.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who himself features in the exhibition and is a patron of both The Forgiveness Project and Truth in Translation, describes forgiveness as a journey out of victimhood. ‘Forgiveness does not mean condoning what has been done. It means taking what has happened seriously and not minimising it; drawing out the sting in the memory that threatens to poison our entire existence. In these forgiveness stories there is real healing’.
LIST OF USEFUL RESOURCES

BOOKS:


FILMS:

Between Joyce and Remembrance (2003), directed by Mark Kaplan. About Joyce Mtikulu and the disappearance and murder of her son.

Facing the Truth (1996) by Bill Moyers. 2-part PBS series.
Forgiveness (2004), directed by Ian Gabriel, with Quanita Adams and Zane Meas.


Guguletu Seven (2000) directed by Lindy Wilson. About the unraveling of the murders of the Guguletu Seven through the course of TRC investigations.

In My Country (2004), directed by John Boorman and starring Samuel L. Jackson and Juliette Binoche

Long Day’s Journey Into Night (2000) by Frances Reid. Documentary


TRC Special Report. SABC weekly series, chronicling the history of the TRC, introduced and directed by Max du Preez (available at

We Tell Our Stories the Way we Like: The Cradock Four (1999)

Where the Truth Lies, directed by Mark Kaplan. About Gideon Nieuwoudt and Siphiwo Mtimkulu

PLAYS:


Nothing but the Truth (2002) by John Kani

The Story I am About to Tell, created in collaboration with the Khulumani support group