



# FREEDOM - OUR RESPONSIBILITY

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2014  
SOUTH AFRICA

International conference to build a culture  
of reconciliation, sustainability and empowerment  
University of the Free State, Bloemfontein  
26 to 30 September 2014

## **Day 1: Friday 26 September 2014**

### **Keynote address**

**Jonathan Jansen** – Vice-Chancellor of University of Free State (UFS)

### ***New ways of thinking and doing transformation at universities.***

You're in a country that has a history of madness, and a province with a particular history of madness in terms of race segregation. Therefore it is significant we (UFS) are based here – we work to show people that it is not about race, it is about humanity. Our challenge in doing this is still high.

Let me give you a sense of place – if you came in from the M1 you would have past a building with a horrible title on it – 'damn of tear and a sores of bitter memories'. You are instantly reminded of bitterness and heaviness. If you came through the other side of town you would have past the Boer War museum which shows all sides of our conflict. When you go in you realize that there is a wound that is still not healed in SA – particularly with the Boers, now Afrikaners.

The phrase 'the better versions of yourselves' implies that there is a worst version of ourselves and this mentality created Rwanda, Syria and the other problems in the Middle East and part of the reasons behind these conflicts is that we come together as the worst version of ourselves.

This university has a reputation for racism. When I first started this job, I came under cover - it was totally divided. I asked two white students on my first day – how can I serve you? They all answered with one voice – do not force us to integrate. I was expected to hear – lower fees, better food, accommodation. I remember thinking how is this possible so far after apartheid. I reflected and thought – that is going to be the first thing I tackle – segregation. How can you bring the youth into this space after so many decades of division when their churches, families and culture is still often divided. How do you bring them into communion and fellowship? The short answer – with great difficulty!

I am not well liked in this province because I am challenging mindsets and culture. Parents and alumni are up in arms about my mission here but the good news is that the students are beginning to get it. With reference to my challenge, I call my objective 'Nearness':

- Nearness beyond proximity; how do you get to something else other than being close to one another? I try and immerse myself in the lives of students – I visit their churches, sports events, meetings, I try as much as possible to be where they are – spiritually, empathetically and intellectually.

- 'Nearness' through mediated action; what does it take to be fair, just? I work to make sure the students are educated before they are trained and specialized. That they are confronted with the past which is difficult, we try and create dialogue around current segregation issues. Many hate the conversations when they start and then by the end most of them 'get it'.
- 'Nearness' in real time; I talk to students about their issues which mostly fall around relationships (family, teachers, boyfriend, girlfriend). We haven't had any violence or demonstrations on campus in many, many years – this is because we talk peace, we work on relationships, and we teach how to love - all. Emotional closeness helps sort out a whole lot of problems.
- 'Nearness' as communion; South Africans love to eat! We put a call out to students and invite them to breakfast. Often we choose students who have a story – mostly around recovery and leadership. You will never see an event that I arrange that will only have black/ white people – I always bring everyone to the table.
- 'Nearness' as truth-telling; people don't like to talk about difficult things such as race but here we talk about these difficult issues in order to get past them. Nearness invites truth-telling.
- 'Nearness' by resemblance; working towards students seeing each other for their common humanity – not as Zulu, Indian, Afrikaners, etc. This is our vision.
- 'Nearness' as a courage or risk-taking; within the youth there is a an unbelievable capacity to be better than my generation – to get over the burdens my generation has created. It doesn't happen automatically – you need intervention and I'm grateful to my team for creating this environment.

### ***The real meaning of transformation***

I'm always looking for signs that show the university is changing in a significant way, such as - we have the first black woman as Student President which is unheard of in a racial and sexist society. Transformation; "when she transformed into a butterfly, the caterpillars spoke not of her beauty, but of her weirdness. They wanted her to change back into what she always had been. But she had wings" Dean Jackson.

### ***My personal transformation came from being influenced by two Afrikaners.***

Transformation is a qualitative change in what you see and understand, the renewing of the mind.

### **Inaugural address:**

#### **Thabo Manyoni, Mayor - Bloemfontein**

I am happy to see civil society represented here because I believe that in order to talk about freedom, we should make sure it is not only reserved for politicians, as freedom is all of our responsibility – that of civil society. If we leave concepts like freedom to our leaders we might be found wanting later, this is because freedom is about all of us. Freedom needs to be underpinned by 1) Human dignity 2) Human rights 3) Self-determination. Most of the time we hear about freedom within democracy but in most cases this freedom is imposed and it is not sustainable, the classical example is mostly what happened in Iraq where we who thought we knew a lot about democracy and tried to impose democracy on others. So the element of self-determination is important when dealing with development and sustainability. We are all gathered here because we are interested in matters of empowerment, sustainability and integrity that are most needed for the unity of all, these are greater than any force that will keep us apart.

We have leadership challenges in this country, so when we talk about freedom – it is freedom from what? Freedom from poverty, violence, economic freedom? Our challenges are manifestations from our past and we see the bitter fruit that has been left. Apartheid was based on a lack of integrity and disregarding others as human beings – poverty within racial lines. Freedom must be underpinned by the three core elements that I previously mentioned, it cannot be imposed and it has to be gradually worked on. It seeks all of us to hold our hands together because we know that we are one world and where we live is all of our home no matter where you are. This notion also calls for leadership. We see the same outcries in communities around the world as we live in two economies – one for the poor and one for the rich. We need leadership to change that situation so we can all say – yes, we are all one. We (the Mayor of Bloemfontein's Department) are working to be agents of change – led by integrity. We understand we are here for the people less fortunate than us. In terms of the objectives of this conference – empowerment, sustainability and integrity - we need ethical leadership. Integrity is not about leadership alone, it is a societal issue. A society that does not value integrity will never be able to prosper.

From the very theme of this conference a question must be asked – freedom from what? I have already indicated some freedoms that are needed and I think when it comes to matters of sustainability our greatest deficiency has been to give people fish, rather than teaching them how to fish. We had to go through this process to get over the past, now we have to bring equitable livelihoods for South Africans, yet the current system is not sustainable - we have to get South Africans to provide for themselves. This is what we want to achieve in our country, we hope our new National Development Plan will be the catalyst towards this. We focus on skills development and education to get towards sustainability and self-sufficiency. For our development plan to work we need a vision and a leader to drive it, otherwise it will just be a good document. As someone once said 'everything falls on good leadership', it cuts across all disciplines – institution structures, businesses, NGOs and others.

The butterfly effect creates a hurricane somewhere else – this calls for activism. No amount of shouting at a problem will make it disappear, in other words our talking needs to be followed by concrete action. We who consider ourselves as activists – there must be action that follows our words. Hence this small step of the gathering here will impact the generation to come. We need to take what the conference indicates to make sure it becomes part of our lives. ***You all being here is empowering us to be community leaders.***

You are all the torch bearers in these dark days; I think as much as indicating the seeds planted in the colonial area, you can plant us sustainable livelihoods in our communities for our future – I thank you all.

**Welcome address:**

***Susi Gubler, Head of the Lyndi Fourie Association International (LFAI)***

I'm extremely happy to see all of your hearts and souls here. I want to say in a few words how this conference started. It all started when I had to do a seminar on leadership that involved stories of good leadership and on the 4<sup>th</sup> night I told the class about Nelson Mandela, whom I once had the privilege to meet. He was probably my biggest teacher in my life. I did some research into further stories, I came across Ginn Fourie on the internet. She was not alone, her story involved Letlapa Mphahlele. I found this story which made me speechless - a story about conciliation. I invited Ginn and Letlapa to Switzerland as we could all learn from them. They had worked in schools, churches, businesses to build

reconciliation. ***Letlapa told me that reconciliation is a great gift but you have to go beyond conciliation, making sure that the same situation that lead to violence is ceased.***

Africa is the continent of the future, and the future is now. Why should this conference be held in Africa? Can't we put it on the global scale as we are all interconnected, all human. We had the spark of the idea on a mountain one day and this idea sparked a fire in the hearts of many others who helped stage the conference.

The concept of this conference is that everyone brings their knowledge and experience to share for anyone to take. Bring and take. So everyone can go home empowered and equipped, ready to start the change. The interesting thing is that even before the conference things started to happen and the connections started to happen, such as James from South Sudan, Toumi from Bloemfontein and many others.

### ***Beyond Forgiving – the story of Ginn Fourie and Letlapa Mphahlele.***

#### ***Howard Grace – Film producer***

This film was directed by a Palestinian Muslim who grew up in Gaza so you can understand his motivation behind making this film. Howard's reason for being involved in the film goes back to when he lived here in the late 1970's whilst working for Initiatives of Change South Africa and he fell afoul of the security system and had to immediately leave.

#### ***Ginn Fourie & Letlapa Mphahlele – protagonists:***

The hope that is generated from this documentary is that of reconciliation for the country - **Ginn.**

Each system that our conciliation has bought to Africa has been part of system that marginalizes people today, for example the economic, education, societal and justice system. The challenge of this conference is the activism that one can take away from here.

**Letlapa:** whilst driving here today, I past a truck that had a sign that said 'share the road – save lives'. If we are to share the prosperity of this planet, how many lives will be saved. If we are to share the prosperity of this province, country – fairly and justly – how many lives will be saved. The fact of the matter is that people are dying because they don't have access to medicine, people are remaining illiterate because they cannot go to school and so on.

***This film has the power to take the message of forgiveness to the four corners of the world*** – Letlapa.

**Ginn:** Beside this conference, we are walking with the Platfonteiners (and everyone) to find a more equitable way of live. It takes the depth of my pain of the loss of my daughter to understand the effects of our ancestors. Intergenerational trauma is past down from generation to generation.

#### ***Acknowledgement of Responsibility for the past is essential for reconciliation:***

##### ***The problem of denial of complicity. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela***

The inspiration of the topic of my talk is acknowledgement. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa has become very well known around the world, I joined this Commission in 1995. Whilst working here I witnessed with my own eyes how people can forgive, how apologies can be made as I saw when witnessing Ginn and Letlapa case. This forgiveness opened a new avenue of interest for me, in restorative justice and how perpetrators meeting families of the victim can assist.

I want to talk about apology and acknowledgement. There is too much of a focus on the actual act of forgiveness, there is little significance and reflection on the power of acknowledgement. This is important because when people are wounded and face terrible atrocities, they feel they have been dehumanized – the perpetrators often do not humanize the victim. Another importance which is that the perpetrator dehumanizes themselves and well as their victim. The perpetrators has to silence their voice of consciousness so that they too do not recognize their own humanity. Perpetrators by acknowledging the pain and showing remorse in many cases for the first time are recognizing the humanity of the person they have wounded – ‘I am sorry’ , it is this recognition that suggests expressing a sense of remorse and ownership of actions. People are uncomfortable with their shame which makes us hideaway form the world and from ourselves and yet shame is an important part of feeling remorse. Unless we feel guilt, we can’t feel remorse.

Beyond Forgiving is a powerful story of how forgiveness is possible and we can see the power of this reconciled relationship - we can build broken communities and spread peace with this act. Acknowledgement and apology is the one thing that we are missing in South African from the white people.

I want you to reflect upon Ginn telling us about the reaction of Letlapa's community from her apology, some say it's just a statement but it's the power of recognition of the pain of others that is powerful here. The process of dialogue is about bringing all into the conversation so we can speak about the past, make our apologies and also speak about the shame. Guilt is a heavy burden to carry for things you have not done which is past on down from generations, this is transmitted down generations through anger and narratives from parents. What is required from us is that we recognize the pain that we carry, the narratives and our ancestors actions.

We cannot deny the past and point blame to our current government, there needs to be recognition for the past order to build towards a shared responsibility for the future. We have to rise up to the hopefulness of the next generation, through small contributions from people who have benefited from the past like me, and like others. This generation cannot end up like their grandparents. It is about going beyond acknowledgements and holding the hands of our victims and really going forward together.

### **Panel on ‘The Power of Conciliation’**

**Chair: Marina Cantacuzina**

Each panel member was asked to tell their story of conciliation and what do they think is key in order for peace to be sustainable.

**Sue Hanish- IRA bombing survivor:**

In 1991 I was involved in an IRA bombing in London, the bomb exploded and I, along with 39 other people were injured. The man next to me was killed. I lost my right leg and received serious injuries to my left leg, I received a week of treatment and numerous weeks of slow rehabilitation. As an occupational therapist it was very difficult for me to be in the wheel chair, on the ‘other side’. I was lucky - I got another limb and all the physical therapy and services in England, I was very fortunate. Yet despite this, the worst thing was the scar that was left on my soul – I was very hurt, wounded, lost and felt abandoned through the process of trauma. I went through the day to day activities of getting back to life with a false smile which I wore for several years. I tried to make sense of what had happened to me and why. I reached out to others who had similar stories to tell which I found healing. My family didn’t understand this reaching out, they thought it was uncovering the wounds but sharing humanity and other peoples pain helped me – it was about reclaiming myself, partly through other peoples stories which I found comforting.

**James Mali** – *story of conciliation from South Sudan*

Some people here might wonder why I walk with a stick, I tell them it was the consequences of the civil war in South Sudan. Soldiers came into my village one day whilst I was a small child lying under a tree when my brother was looking after me. The soldiers were looking for the owner of my house (my father). My father was at work and the soldiers were frustrated by this, one grabbed me by my leg to swing me against the tree. My mother came out screaming 'don't kill my son', he swung me around his head into the tree several times. There were no medical facilities near my house and I received severe injuries to my leg, as you can see.

Later when the wounds had healed, I found a stick and learnt how to walk with it as I needed to fetch water and carry out tasks for my family. Life went on and I was trying to find out what to do with my life. Children in my region often study under trees because of the lack of schools, so I decided to join and teach some in my community. Today, most of the children I am teaching are the children of my perpetrators.

I have left the grudges and all these things behind me, I have forgiven my perpetrator. I told this to him one day when I met him and he cried and apologized. We have made reconciliation

**Ginn Fourrie** – *story of conciliation from South Africa*

The process of conciliation, in my understanding, occurs between two parties that have not previously been friends. If friends argue – reconciliation gets the relationship back. People honour me for forgiving Letlapa but I say I forgave Letlapa and Letlapa also forgave me and my ancestors which is a huge debt. Because of this connection that developed between us, we experienced conciliation. Letlapa could have said thanks for the forgiveness, goodbye but he invited me to his homecoming ceremony and I was honoured there. We kept moving on this journey and it became natural to connect and talk more, soon a Foundation was established in the name of my daughter, Lyndi. For me that is what conciliation is - the acceptance of forgiveness which is a huge privilege. The reason why we are willing to share our story is because of the hope it brings. Lyndi was a sacrifice for all us whites in South Africa.

It took ten years for the change to take place and understand the deep connection. Letlapa and I often talk about interconnection because we feel each other's pain.

**Wilhelm Verwoerd** - *grandson of former Prime Minister, Hendrik Verwoerd*

What would it take for my ancestors to come to the point of them truly understanding the suffering they caused and then truly saying sorry? It would take them to open their hearts and move beyond the ideological, philosophical, political ways to face the painful truth. For me conciliation is not a romantic notion, it is the painful journey of facing the truths. It is through Ubuntu that has helped my journey of understanding my ancestors. It was my black friends that helped me understand this process. They respect ancestors and told me that we are not asking you to forget or despise your grandfather, the important thing is about what you do with your life to help the situation we are all in now.

***Let's look at this word 'responsibility' – it is about the willingness to respond. It is my responsibility to respond to the suffering of people caused by my ancestors.***

***What does forgiveness mean to you?***

**Sue:** forgiveness for me is not about the person that did this to me, it is about understanding my humanity and the relationship I have with myself and the ability to move on. It is about not blaming and accepting what has happened to me.

**James:** for me, forgiveness is whatever one wants to decide – you can decide to relieve

yourself from the bitterness and move ahead or remain trapped.

Wilhelm: in the context of politics, to forgive you have to acknowledge what you did as a country is wrong, therefore you let down your institutions and the party, so one has to be very careful when talking about forgiveness from a political and national circumstance. There is a great challenge for this work at a human level.

**Letlapa:** not far from here in 1995 I appeared in the court of law for murder and terrorism. I applied for bail and was out in the stand to convince the judge that I was not a risk. The investigator argued that I had many names and a person with so many names is a potential flight risk. When asked what were the names – he replied with many and one was Verwoerd!

***Reconciliation and forgiveness should not be used interchangeably because forgiveness is strictly personal, it is a choice that you make.*** It is the acceptance of forgiveness that is personal, that is why nations cannot forgive each other. When Ginn forgave me, I felt for a lack of better words, the restoration of humanity. She had every reason not to forgive me. When a person forgives, they are helped and when you don't forgive you carry that hate and when you forgive you let it go.

This has been a journey for me, Ginn is not the first person that I have met who have suffered from my commands. Lyndi was white but there were also fellow Africans that were killed. I haven't asked for forgiveness but I have sought understanding from the victims family in terms of why I did what I did. Forgiveness doesn't mean you give up struggling but it restores humanity – it shows you understand the path and we empathize with you. Forgiveness is bigger than religion, it is not a Christian concept. If we include it in religion, we would be narrowing the concept.

### **Day 3: Sunday 28 September**

#### **Empowerment – Group of speakers from Africa**

##### ***Vincent Mabulu, Bloemfontein***

In the 1990's a large tender was put up to look at housing rights; it looked at social, affordable housing and the conducive working environment of the workers of the municipality – particularly Lady Frere, a town that used to fall under the Transkei homeland. No development happened in this area, even today nothing happens. There is a call for us to put our efforts into the development of the rural areas. More and more people are migrating to the cities, yet our strikes going on today show that the cities cannot take any more citizens. They are stretched to the limit because of this global trend of movement from rural to urban areas.

Other issues we had to look at within this tender was the improvement to infrastructure. Many infrastructures are old, they need revamping and of course additional infrastructure is needed. We need to eradicate the existing billing system which is a key challenge in our communities today. Information Communication Technology is lacking, as citizens we have to take part in helping the government development these areas.

We have to improve the service delivery systems. Primarily, we have to look at job and income generation activities so that rural areas have the same services as urban areas – there should not be a vacuum. We have to work on local empowerment in rural areas, for this to happen we need a financial injection and for this we need investment in the areas. This tender was structured in a way that it could not guarantee that the investor would get their investment back. We had to look at a number of possibilities linked to these projects

that could make them attractive to the investor, for example we looked at agriculture and sustainable energy generation. It is important that we engage youth in these areas which we are attempting to do.

As a country we cannot forever continue to give people social grants - ***let us create opportunities for people to become self reliant.*** Social grants in the end cause shortages elsewhere for important projects. By ensuring self-reliance - we create jobs for our youth and others. Our young people are being enticed to join the queues for social benefits – they don't go to school, they have kids young as they see the potential for this easy money. Life is not meant to be easy – you have to work hard to make it easy for yourself. As an engineer, I am bound to facilities so they do not become meaningless in terms of the contribution to the economic development of improvised areas.

***John Tesha, Africa Forum.***

If you are my age you have learnt that the political and economical landscape of Africa is changing, we are moving towards social and ecological development. This is the continent of the future. You would not believe that we have 45 former presidents that have left office democratically in our organization, they wish to still contribute their knowledge and skills for the development of this continent.

The criteria for joining this Forum is simple: 1. You must have democratically entered and exited your office of president. 2. You worked to promote the advancement of democracy in your country 3. Integrity and accountability – that you stand on ethical and moral grounds. We have 45 Presidents within this organization which is located in SA. They are more demanded outside Africa than inside and this says something. Their core competences are: advisory, facilitation and leadership development (able to make a contribution).

Many of us on this continent do not recognize the role of the private sector - we think it has no role in economic development. Of course, this sector is essential and now we are moving towards entrepreneurship - the entrepreneur has a key role to develop Africa. We have stifened entrepreneurship – we don't give it support and now we have thousands of students with degrees and they are not employed. With unemployment comes high crime rates.

We have to create incentives for people to stay in their villages so we can solve the problems of rural areas. We have to create jobs and affordable homes, so people want to stay. What do we have – we have land so let's move into agriculture. Why should this continent import rice from Japan - why can't we grow our own? We must create incentives to grow our own rice and other imported products. We have to look into agro-business which is where we can create jobs. We have to talk about housing and infrastructure. We have to make rural areas attractive – the government cannot do this so we have to encourage the private sector to make this change. Innovation is clear and it is the way for the future. We must encourage our youth to be responsible, to observe high level of integrity and for this we need governments that operate with integrity. The way you do this is to create vibrant partnerships between the private and public sector and to create a conducive environment for these to succeed.

***I will bring the Presidents of the Forum here in the future to share this experience with you. You will and must succeed in your endeavours.***



## **Communities Empowered – INTER AFRIKA PLAN, Cooperative Governance, Ethical Leadership - Anthony V. Trowbridge**

What I am proposing today is a rural renewal which is OUR responsibility. The mission is to improve the growth of community development through viable and sustainable activities. Let me take the spirit of the conference and make a confession – I am privileged, I am of British colonialist decent. The primary factors of our attention here are to see what we can all do to; overcome poverty, create sustainable settlements, increase local capacity building, foster community ownership, create effective private and public partnerships and to create self-reliance and self-respect.

I have a vision for a wholesome Africa: Jan Christian Smuts is my mentor, he is spat on by some Afrikaners as he worked to reconcile them with Africans. We recognise the 'oneness' concept – we are all one or another; wholes are more than the sum of their parts.

Some top-down constraints to rural development: no policy to correct rural-urban sprawl, the failure of the trickle-down theory (to meet local departmental plans) and interventions and aid (these cycles the problems). Recognize what Einstein said '*the world we have created today has problems which can't be solved by thinking the way we thought when we created them*'. "*Sometimes we need to look at those things that 'go without saying' – to make sure they are still going*" – Carl Becker.

**As developers, we can only plant seeds of thought.** Seeds of thought can lead to action. An example of a whole is a seed that contains the entire whole that is therefore something that grows and evolves not something that is imposed but introduced to a community to accept and cultivate.

- *Good governance – Our responsibility:* the seed thought – who are your real leaders? It is the people who DO things, not the people who promise and talk about them.

For the building of a wholesome society it needs: human capital (skills), social capital (organisations, clubs, associations, etc), financial capital (debt capital), environmental capital (biodiversity) and local indigenous knowledge. To build a community from the ground up there needs to be a pyramid, a firm foundation of: family & friends / sport, faith & recreation / civil society & social activities / peace & development programme / education & training, IT, indigenous knowledge / community management & economics / food security / healthcare / rural towns. To make all of these factors occur, is to plant a seed and thought and follow it up with the people from the community.

- Peace & Development – Our responsibility: implanted seed of thought - an open distance course of self-instruction in community building on a need to know basis. It is the learning by doing experience undertaken by studying: agriculture, business, education, environment, finance, health, religion, security, services, tourism, recreation – the outcome is the formation of a 'Community of Excellence'.

*A Wheel of Development:* in the centre is the leader - a 'hub person' – if you don't have a hub person the wheel can fall apart. This 'Council of Expertise' structure is acceptable because it is legitimate, autonomous, democratic, flexible and ethical. A community led 'Council of Excellence' is the missing link between civil society and both the public and private sectors. The new 'Council of Expertise' provides: traditional leadership with a second council of expertise that offers - indigenous knowledge inputs, technical and provisional links and private and public partnerships.

- Information – Our responsibility. The creation of information centres for communities, the open access and sharing of information.
- Economic – Our responsibility: planted seed of thought – **community economics**. An understanding of the basic objectives of the community to generate their own economics – **'peoples capitalism'**. To understand money and how it moves in the system, to generate local wealth and employment, achieve greater self-reliance and activate 'dead capital'. The only way to overcome poverty is to generate wealth, instead of just making money. Investment has to be attractive, invest first where your best interests are instead of where the best interest is. Re-circulating money instead of the government redistributing it. Adding value to local resources.
- Food – Our responsibility: the seed of thought - planting vegetables in permanent circles is an answer for smalls farming holders to manage food security. Natural circle cultivation saves lives through improved nutrition and immunity to disease. The principles: no ploughing so the environment is retained, the circle only needs to be done ONCE in life, it needs maintenance only, permanent irrigation (100% water reaches roots), watering at any time of the day – in any temperature, the water table is increased, grasses are harvested for compost, production is scaled from subsistence to commercial. It is all you need to create a farm.
- Healthcare – Our responsibility:
- New rural towns – Our responsibility: implanted seed of thought – the need to rebuild cities as they are obsolete as we know them. Solution: new towns made up of 'e-Villages' resolves the problems. Forget the myth that cities must grow. e-Villages: are planned for pedestrians (children need to play in the streets.). We need a renewal of the African culture of community e.g. street committees. e-Villages are made up of eight blocks of six clusters that includes a community and healthcare centre, etc. Nine e-villages make up a town.
- Rural renewal – Our responsibility: seed thought – a royal renaissance in Africa.

### **Communities Empowered – *Political participation of Women in Africa* – Eve Thompson**

Empowerment is really a two way street – I've been doing training over the last twenty years and I have been as much empowered by the people I have targeted for empowering. That for me is very important to keep in mind as we consider ourselves to do the empowering.

#### *Political empowerment of women in the DRC: opening up the political space:*

Democracy and governance works through different avenues such as civil society, local governance work, fair elections, maintain youth and women in activism and others. There are 53 countries in Africa and I have visited more than half of them, it is only when I came to the DRC that I realised it is one of the most patriarchal of the countries that I have experienced. Could there be a link between gender equity and development? There has to be when you look at a recent UN report that ranks countries in the world and almost consistently DRC comes at almost the bottom. You have to look at ***the link between development and the disempowerment of women***.

*What's holding women back politically in the DRC?* The political space for women is closed, factors for this include:

- *Cultural attitudes and norms:* attitudes towards young women and girls – women are submissive (both men and women accept this), young women are seen as commodities (many are sold off), physical violation of women, etc. Attitudes of unmarried women – the requirement of a husband to be respected. Attitudes towards women who enter into politics/workplace – these are sometimes referred to as prostitutes. Attitudes towards men who support women - men being disrespected for their willingness to take on chores that are typically for women.
- *The prevailing social construct of the country:* because women are undervalued in Congolese society, they are under developed: 3% of women in DRC are enrolled in University.
- *Women themselves reinforce negative perceptions/ stereotypes:* some exploit the opportunity of being in a political space to the maximum.

*What we do regarding how to get women to use their political space effectively:* we give support, we help women be more viable in being political actors, we help them to promote their stature in political parties, we prepare them for candidates in local elections and finally an important but overlooked element – we get men involved in being advocates for women. *Constructive actions that we implement to encourage women to be more viable as political actors:* Women's Day, women bloggers, we established a candidate school and we run various activities to get men involved in this process.

## **Healing History and Self & Group Empowerment**

### ***Storytelling, liberating and empowering - Wilhelm Verwoerd***

Three things that symbolize my journey: Baggage – brotherhood – betrayal.

I grew up in the 60's and 70's in South Africa in an exclusively white, very segregated, white Afrikaner community, with a lot of religion and of course there was the role my grandfather. I know this is painful for the black community here but in my community he was a hero because during his time South Africa became a republic. People were telling stories of his life and also of where they were when they found out that he had been assassinated.

When I was a teenager and before my time, all white youth were conscripted into the army - there was a lot of militarization in South Africa. I was very fortunate to get a scholarship to go and study in Holland the UK during this time, this removal from the environment where I lived was critical to me. In Holland I was confronted with stories from South Africa and also about my grandfather. One person said to me 'do you know what I did when I heard your grandfather was assassinated? I took my shirt off, ran into the street and danced because we were liberated'. You need to get rid of the baggage of life and learn and this was a humbling process in when I did this.

It was the generosity of the spirit of black South Africans that helped me grow out of the 'clenched fist' of apartheid and my history. After many years of battling with my past, studying it and journeying through it such as meeting the ANC in Zambia and going into Soweto to meet a significant person that had suffered from Apartheid but the major point was meeting Madiba(Nelson Mandela) in 1991 when the ANC were mobilising and preparing for election. There were a few people there from Stellenbosch University and we were considering joining the ANC. Madiba walked down the corridor and we met. I was very keen to meet him as when I was in the UK I wrote him a letter apologising for my

grandfather who had put him in prison for 27 years but I told him that I want to commit my life to reconciliation in South Africa. The first thing he said to me was 'can I ask you something - how is your grandmother? If she doesn't mind, please send her my greetings to her'. It was this generosity of the human spirit. He let me speak but we didn't spend too much time talking about the past, he said 'let's focus on working together for the good of SA'. As you can imagine, this didn't go down too well in my family. It came down to the point that if I joined the ANC, I would lose the relationship with my father. But before it got to that, my meeting with Madiba went public and brought shame to my family. My father said to me 'I do not want to speak to you again'. The language that I find most helpful is inclusive compassion - not forgetting where I've come from but to include the people that I can come from. The vision of inclusive compassion is remarkably difficult but also deeply liberating and I think that is where the positivity lies.

### ***Healing trauma & the forgiveness project – Marina Cantacuzina***

Since the UK invaded Iraq, I wanted to collect counter culture stories – those of healing. Someone made a point to me about victims and perpetrators – it is difficult to distinguish sometimes which is one reason that complicates the concept of forgiveness. The stories I have been collecting for over ten years has become an exhibition that I have called 'the F word' because I realised that forgiveness is a difficult word. People have different opinions and it cuts public opinions in half. I have collected 130 stories for this exhibition from around the world of forgiveness. We get people to talk about forgiveness – we don't push it or campaign for it, we create dialogue around it.

Amongst other activities, we have a prison project in the UK that models the restorative process using stories. "A story told at the right time in someone's life can shine a light sufficiently bright to illuminate the way ahead on the map of life". There is something of hearing a story about the healing narrative that can help the wounded. I came across an academic that has done a lot of work around trauma and she told me that people who recover best intensely pursue the thing that matters to them the most. It occurred to me that the people I have met with stories of trauma has intensively pursued what mattered through listening to in others stories. Critical to forgiveness is the process, the ability to feel the anger and pain – it is all part of the healing process. Forgiveness is many things and it is highly contested – people all have different opinions on it. Ginn's definition for instance "forgiveness is the principle decision to give up your justify right to the act of revenge"

Forgiveness isn't a good deed born out of the victims generosity and it is more than just letting go and moving on.

### ***Why forgiveness might be useful:***

- Research shows it is an effective public health tool.
- It breaks the cycle; you can 're-story' your life.
- It repairs broken relationships and communities. Not in the time of violence but as part of the repairing process. It's something you do – you give up something, your old beliefs.
- It is an act of self-healing.

Letlapa stated in *Beyond Forgiving* "her forgiveness was like being struck by lightning on a cloudless day. I had not expected it. It was an opening for me". It is this re-humanising of the human spirit which forgiveness has the power.

## **History & Present situation of the San People**

### **Mario Mahongo**

When the war broke out in Angola in 1962, the San people were used as trackers in the SA defence force, they were also used as soldiers in this border war. When Namibia became politically independent from SA the San people were offered a choice to stay or come to South Africa, they decided to go to SA believing they would have better opportunities here. The San people are originally from SA, so they also saw it as returning home. It is very sad that although they are the first people, they are the smallest ethnic group of Southern Africa. Fortunately there are still some that exist.

I am very grateful for the organizers of this conference, it is because of them that we are all here today to learn about and visit the San people. In this case UNISA are very important, they have provided great support to the San community. What I want to tell you is that when UNISA confronted us about conflict issues that we have experienced, we are very grateful because we have experienced great conflict in the border war. I am also grateful for UNISA for the opportunity they granted to our young people so they can further study to go for the career they wish to have in their life.

### ***Conflict Resolution & Justice System in the San People's tradition***

The San of Platfontein have had to deal with disputes for a long time in different circumstances:

- Cattle herders intruding from the north before colonialism: enslavement and genocide.
- Colonial powers (Dutch, Portuguese, the English): enslavement and genocide.
- The Cold War: militarisation of the San in Angola and Namibia. They were good soldiers.
- The 'new South Africa': experiencing marginalisation and xenophobia. The San are treated as immigrants in their own country.
- Internal tensions.

They have nearly been destroyed many times.

#### ***Their building blocks of peace:***

- Platfontein has a unique endogenous knowledge of dispute resolution as a whole community process without the need for modern courts, with the aim of restoring/creating relationships.
- Positive values: the importance of peaceful relations. Conflict avoidance through dialogue. Respect – for all inside and outside their community. Dignity of personhood – no matter their deprived situations they always remain dignified. Acceptance of equality – Ubuntu in action. Belief in restorative justice – the past is the past and has to be restored for the future.

Yet they are trapped in a conflict and poverty stricken cycle.

## **Day 4: Monday 29 September**

### **In search of the San – *Paul Weinberg***

I arrived in the San community for the first time and saw a long line outside of the bottle store and asked myself – what is wrong? It didn't match up to my romantic vision of this indigenous culture.

I've come to learn that the lives of the San community have been thoroughly mythologicalised, obscuring their real circumstances and fragility. They have been mythologicalised through many films and misinterpreted media.

I witness the first time the San people voted in 1994, they were and still are hugely marginalized.

Their lives have moved from hunter gatherer to soldiers, to struggling in the mixed economy, to now being labourers on farms (not farming their own land).

They live by the ecological 80 – 20 rule; they take 20% of the land's resources (whether plants or animals) and they leave the remaining 80% for the land or other animals.

Why can South Africans raise millions and millions of Rand for the Rhino and leave our native people marginalised and destitute which will erode our traditional culture forever?

Even the vultures are depressed in the San Community.

The San people have been embroiled in wars that were never theirs.

### **Dreams for my people – Virginia and Credo Mutwa**

*The audience put their right hand on their hearts as the elderly, well respected man walked to the stage.*

**Credo Mutwa:** first I want to tell you about the lady sitting on my left here. She is my wife and she has saved my life twice. Without her I am nothing. We must respect our mothers, sisters, aunts and girlfriends, we are nothing without them.

I am seriously concerned with the lack of morals in South Africa today. I am a seeker of the truth. At the moment black people do not understand how great we are and white people do not understand cooperation. We should be proud and not look down on ourselves. We need to stop fighting, let the blacks killing each other stop. Let us be at peace, let us love each other. I cannot urge this anymore, let us show our greatness.

We are a nation searching our destiny but we can't whilst we are fighting. We need to stop poisoning each other. We must either live together in friendship or die together as stupid people.

**Virginia Mutwa:** I speak to you as a mother. What are we doing hating each other so much? I often think about this as I travel around the world. Our fathers say to us 'love your neighbour' – do we see this in our communities today?

My brothers – speak to our youth and tell them not to rape, hurt and abuse our women. She is the medicine of life. Love your women and be proud of them.

### **Day 5: Tuesday 30 September**

#### **Integrity & Ethics**

**Bedan Mbugua, Kenya:** I have a mission – to recruit each one of you into the fight against corruption; to call those resources in you to sustain this war against corruption. Each of you can unleash your power to do something good if you believe in yourself.

Power is a monstrous conspiracy against its citizens. When you look at citizens in general in all those countries where corruption is rife – you also find poverty in a large scale because corruption is a conspiracy against its citizens. For example you find justice is in favour of those who are powerful and strong against, again, the poor. For many years in my country (Kenya) we have never seen a powerful person jailed for corruption - why? Because it has a way of protecting itself, it is machinery that is the winner all the time and the majority of the people are the losers. In business, those in power wins the tenders, it creates an unfair advantage to competition.

I would like to compare corruption to the Ebola disease; the similarities between the two are that they both kill people. The difference is that Ebola creates a reaction very quickly. We forget that corruption has killed millions, for example in hospitals where money for drugs are being stolen.

Africa without corruption is the continent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, all over the continent is rich with natural resources, from gold, diamonds, titanium and others - what does this mean? It confirms my statement. If all these resources are used for the welfare of its people, you will be able to quickly see the development. We have tried to combat corruption but it is still not enough.

I want to tell you some of the initiatives we are doing, as a media house and also as individuals. There is a huge problem of illicit alcohol in many African countries – this illicit brew is sold cheaply and is readily available, it kills and disables youngsters brains. Our media house came up with an idea to focus on women and youth to combat this problem – we wanted to create an army of a million women to fight this problem. We identified women across Kenya in churches, community leaders saying to them - we must work together to crush this enemy. In each county of the country we aimed to raise 10,000 women. We look at where the alcohol is produced and we focus on closing them down. That is one initiative.

In Kenya we have six large universities – this is a critical number of people. We went to the universities and said to them ‘you are the first that need to offer solutions to our countries problems’. They held a debate around popularising solutions to our problems and not focusing on the numerous problems. The programme quickly became very popular around campus. We promoted our next generation of leadership to train themselves to advance the solutions for the problems of Africa.

If we are going to attack corruption, it is these grass-roots initiatives that help. Let me end with my vision for Africa – I envision an Africa where the lakes are sparkling, where the people are robust, healthy and busy like bees doing productive and honest work. I envision people of diverse ethnicity, cultures and religion dancing together celebrating their diversity as a wealth for themselves. ***I envision an Africa where all these people of diverse races are stretching helping hands to each without demanding bribes.***

***Ekuru Aukot, Kenya*** I want to speak more from a constitutional perspective. Anyone that wants to be leader of this continent has to reap political power. They speak so eloquently about change but often do not follow through, because of corruption. If we don't get the right leadership, all that we have been saying during these five days cannot happen. Now this doesn't need to be political leadership, it can be academic, social leadership and other types from civil society.

Look at what happened to Kenya; we have resources, trade and yet we are going so wrong. Each generation must discover its mission. People say Africa is rising, yet I see people that are tired of all the false promises made. If we really want to develop, we have to get rid of all the anger that has emerged and we have a long way to go - as we saw yesterday in Platfontein.

We have to work around the right leadership – leadership that will take us all to prosperity. Not ones that auctions our country, for example. Today in Africa we are talking about 21<sup>st</sup> century constitution but what does this mean? What we lack is that we don't have the

drivers of change. ***To make a constitution is one narrative, to implement it is the other. Yes let's talk the language of reform but let's also get the right people that can take these aspirations forward.***

Leadership in Africa has been personalised - we get our leaders from society. I ask myself - is this lack of leadership civil society's problem? Many of our youth are radicalising, they are willing to die for their group – Al Shabaab or whichever one it may be. This is a huge problem, we are losing a generation of leaders.

***Let's not be the Sheppard that locks his goats in a pen with the hyena. We need to take responsibility and do something to change our continent - we cannot complain anymore, we have to work together for solutions.***

***Paul Hoffman, South Africa:***

I think we need to look at our history and not make the same mistakes. Our citizens have been subject to colonialism, apartheid and commercial and other types of exploitation. The 20<sup>th</sup> century was about the struggle for freedom and what we need to understand is that struggle for freedom has now morphed into a struggle for power.

I have become a missionary for accountability. I see three elements to good governance and what is needed to honour the rule of law: reason, responsibility and responsiveness.

Good governance has become absent in our continent, to get it back we need to build watchdogs into our constitutional machinery and most of all we need to have an active civil society. We all need to be active in between elections; we need to petition our MPs, we need to complain and to make our own contribution to the betterment of a political system.

Exacting accountability through 'lawfare' and education: 'lawfare' is a made up word combining the elements of the words law, welfare and warfare to produce the idea of using the law to exact accountability whether through: litigation, advocacy of words, complaints to official watchdog organisations and other acts I mentioned before.

***"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world - it's the only thing that ever has"*** - Margaret Mead.

**Panel on leadership & Integrity**

**Panel:** Eve Thompson, Bedan Mbugua, Ekuru Aukot, Yeah Samake, Acuil Banggol, Rommel Robberts and Israel Kodiaga.

Chair: Paul Hoffman.

***Points on leadership and integrity:***

**Israel:** Leadership is driven by agenda, if you don't have an agenda you can't have leadership. What is our agenda? It's not enough to say 'let's not be corrupt, let's promote respect for the rule of law' we have to look at the wider picture which is to look at the demands from our people.

**Eve:** I feel leadership emerges out of cultural contexts, particularly the quality of leadership and I think for the African cultural we have to antagonise this point more.

**Ekuru:** Have we really created a master plan for development? Can we say we actually own an agenda of a transformation plan for our countries? I question both these. Until we really dismantle our corrupt government systems and policies, we will remain in the same place and people become further divided.

**Bedan:** Contentment versus greed; the mother of corruption is greed, not because you don't have enough but because it becomes like drinking salt water - the more you drink,



the thirstier you become. One has to start developing contentment – to be in a state where one is happy with what we have, our leaders need to learn this. Commitment to act on something however small it is to fight corruption; we need to be celebrating good news (something my media house does), for example a policeman that does not accept bribes – we need to celebrate this. ***We have to encourage our young people to start engaging now, engage a mass of them to bring the change now as they will be the leaders later.***

**Acuil:** Freedom is the responsibility of our leaders. So where I am going with from here, is that we have a leadership crisis in Africa and we are trying to solve something we are not part of. ***The real problem is the conscience crisis.*** I wonder what Ginn and Letlapa would have done if they had waited for a leader to tell them what to do. They were doing what their conscience told them and therefore we need to all look at our consciences. Could we create, at this forum, a way to tell the leaders that there is another way to invest to become a leader - investing in the good aspects of us. Therefore, I think the transformation is with us and the population that are choosing the leader. What do we do with the past? You will not solve the problem with the same mentality of the past so we need to be compassionate, forget our race and ethnic divide and look at what we are doing here these past five days. We need to focus on ourselves first.

Notes compiled by Talia Smith  
TIGE UK Project Manager