Public Histories in South Africa: Between Contest and Reconciliation

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Introduction

Public history refers to the purposeful search for a usable collective past. It includes a broad range of practices, participants and places. It has begun to dissolve old oppositions between 'history' and 'heritage' and 'professionals' and 'amateurs' and has encouraged a widespread curiosity about the past. It is also a complex arena of contested interpretations, where history and memory become entangled and where stories and silences compete.[1]

This article presents a critical survey of the multiple characteristics of public history in South Africa since the coming of majority rule in 1994. Its emphasis is on public history at built sites (or tangible heritage) including, importantly, the way they are interpreted. Interpretation, together with performance and commemoration, is often considered an instance of intangible heritage. This article argues that there is a strong interplay between tangible and intangible; indeed, exploring this interplay is a strength of public history. Officially at least in South Africa, 'heritage' itself refers to (tangible) sites and objects.[2]

The discussion begins with a brief account of public history in South Africa pre-1994, before focusing on its deliberate reorientation since then. One section examines the making of a post-apartheid narrative through the commissioning of a host of new sites of memory. This is followed by another which considers the various ways in which older memory institutions have been harnessed in the interests of a broader project of ethnic diversity and inclusion.

The making of public histories in South Africa

Public history has a long lineage in South Africa. Yet in a deeply divided society in which the black majority experienced centuries of oppression at the hands of a white minority,[3] and where monuments, memorials and museums have been strongly associated with state formation and nation-building, the content, methods and purposes of, and audiences for, public history have always been multiple and contested.

From the early twentieth century, Afrikaner historians were extremely active – to the extent that they 'cannot be seen in isolation from their community'[4] – in disseminating a version of the past that cast Afrikaners as having brought 'civilization and prosperity to a land that was theirs by God-given right'.[5] A key moment in consolidating their claims came in 1938 and the staging of a re-enactment of the so-called Great Trek of one hundred years earlier. In 1838, several groups of Boers (forebears of those who came to identify as Afrikaners) departed the British Cape Colony and struck out for the interior, a movement that culminated in the establishment of two Boer republics. The re-enactors travelled by ox wagon from Cape Town to Pretoria, where huge crowds gathered for the culmination of the event: the laying of the foundation stone for the Voortrekker Monument. The Monument became the most potent symbol of the birth of the Afrikaner nation: it was completed in 1949, the year after the Afrikaner National Party came to power, inaugurating forty years of apartheid rule.[6]

As well as promoting Afrikaner interests, the National Party made strenuous attempts to foster a broader white identity and used symbolic moments – the initial Dutch East India Company's settlement from 1652, for example – and heritage sites such as the Castle of Good Hope, built in 1666, to achieve this.[7] On the 300th anniversary of the Castle in 1966, every white schoolchild in South Africa received a copy of the publication *Bastion of the South*, a celebration of white power in the African subcontinent, recalling 'our history from a new angle … of the advances and technical triumphs'.[8] This was a time when many African states were achieving independence.

The main influence in the founding of libraries, archives and museums was another section of white society, closely aligned to the British world and the British imperial project. In the colonies of the Cape and Natal, knowledge institutions had been central to the emergence of a white, middle-class identity in the nineteenth century.[9] After the South African War, which brought the Boer republics under British control, the settler elite actively pursued a vision of modernity imported from the metropole. They assembled collections of European art and artefacts, built new public institutions and actively encouraged a (white) visiting public, in the interests of civilisation and moral upliftment.[10]

As if to underline the sense of modernity, early museum collections also focused on the natural wealth powering South Africa's industrial revolution of gold and diamond mining, as well as the flora and fauna that had been assimilated into a European classificatory system.[11] Indigenous people were treated as part of nature rather than culture. Not only did this approach legitimise the alienation of their land, thus releasing the labour required for the mines; it also underpinned western thinking about so-called 'race science'. To this end, most museums kept collections of indigenous human remains, such as bones, and displayed these, as well as casts of indigenous bodies, in their 'nature' sections.[12] Rich oral traditions – the main means of communicating history through the generations in indigenous societies – were not considered of any value and were largely ignored.

An oppositional public history emerged in the newspapers and night schools of black political organisations and trade unions, particularly from the 1940s, evidence of a growing awareness that 'memory is a weapon of the oppressed in negating efforts to routinise their lived realities'.[13] This tradition later continued in educational initiatives such as Learn and Teach and Khanya College in the 1980s and Workers' College in the 1990s, where a critical pedagogy incorporated the collection of oral history and the publication of alternative histories of indigenous societies.[14]

An influential development within this critical tradition was History Workshop, founded at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg in the late 1970s. A loosely-based group of professional historians committed to the spirit of the original History Workshop in Oxford, the Johannesburg offshoot was strongly committed to an interdisciplinary 'history from below', making use of oral testimony to research the lives of ordinary people and marginalised groups. It disseminated its work through open events and publication of popular histories.[15] It also trained a number of 'barefoot historians' in collecting oral testimony and writing history.

The achievements of History Workshop have been considerable, from popularising a reinterpreted South African history to prompting the introduction of public history/public culture courses in universities.[16] However, it has also attracted criticism. At least until the 2000s, participants were almost exclusively white, far removed from the everyday experiences of those whom they studied, and there was little reflection on their positionality or on the absence of black scholars, who had largely been driven into exile.[17] Oral testimony tended to be mined for evidence rather than approached as constitutive of a memory complex. History Workshop was also very largely a one-way affair: the work of professional scholars disseminated beyond the academy, rather than an exercise in shared authority.[18] Finally, several academic historians, including within History Workshop, seemed reluctant to engage with the rise of heritage – or indeed any form of public history initiated beyond the academy – as majority rule approached.[19] Some of its members have, though, viewed new opportunities as a positive development for public history.[20]

Post-apartheid and anti-apartheid narratives

The government that swept to power in 1994 following the first democratic elections was presided over by Nelson Mandela and dominated by the African National Congress (ANC). It was also a government of national unity, tasked with drawing up a new constitution and devising the machinery of state to process both material and symbolic reparations, following centuries of oppression of the black majority. From the perspective of a country seeking to come to terms with its violent past in a spirit of reconciliation and building the so-called 'rainbow nation' of multiple ethnicities, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was of foundational significance.[21] Established to hear evidence of gross human rights violations during the preceding era (1960-1994), it set parameters for memory and forgetting, of rescuing deeply traumatic experiences of political struggle while silencing accusations of systemic injustice. In 'recomposing' the turbulence of the past,[22] it was the flawed compromise upon which the new settlement depended.

The TRC was the 'most ambitious historical project ever undertaken' in South Africa.[23] For two years, 1996-1998, the Commission collected some 20,000 statements from victims. These and other TRC records, including audio-visual recordings of public hearings, were subsequently deposited in the National Archives in Pretoria, in the hope that they would be a freely accessible 'people's archive' relating to the birth of democracy. For one reason and another, however, they remain inaccessible. Instead, the South African History Archive (SAHA), an independent initiative founded during the freedom struggle, has largely been responsible for making available some of this material, as well as alternative documentation related to the TRC. It has also used Freedom of Information requests to access the main collection in Pretoria.[24]

This example of the state's stalled delivery is emblematic of many aspects of public history practice in the country since 1994. Another outcome of the TRC was a proposed portfolio of legacy projects, addressing heritage that had been neglected or marginalised before 1994 and intended to underpin the identity of the new nation. The initial list, published in 1998, was a pastiche of proposals related to the anti-apartheid struggle ('patriots' and key events), social groups such as workers, women, missionaries and the Khoesan, a slave trail, war graves, the precolonial past and colonial wars: the centenary of the South African War was imminent.[25] This list underwent several changes but twenty years on, even some of those identified as 'flagship' projects were incomplete. The Department of Arts and Culture, which was responsible for

initiating them, cited the lack of overall policy guidance, as well as infrastructure challenges and contractual disagreements among the reasons.[26]

Successfully completed legacy projects include those considered cornerstones of the new democracy. Some were repurposed as museums at symbolically important sites, such as Robben Island Museum in Table Bay, Cape Town and Constitution Hill in Johannesburg. The former is best-known as the prison where Mandela and many other leaders of the anti-apartheid struggle were incarcerated. Discussions about the future of Robben Island predated the TRC. Its reincarnation as a museum in 1997, and subsequent listing as a World Heritage Site, emphasised the triumph of the human spirit over suffering. Yet as with so many of the sites under discussion here, the relationship between political-commemorative and tourist-commercial purposes remains uneasy.[27] Constitution Hill was similarly a former political prison; it was the site chosen for the country's new Constitutional Court and incorporated a notable art collection and museum. Again the symbolism is clear: 'the remaking of the prison as a place of freedom, of inverting the site from one that is hidden and dreaded to one that is open and accessible'.[28]

Away from the main metropolitan centres, another legacy project marked an attempt to reinterpret, in multicultural spirit, an event which had always occupied a central role in Afrikaners' symbolic claims to ownership and control of land. In 1838, one of the Great Trek groups clashed with the army of the Zulu King Dingane at the River Ncome, near present-day Dundee in KwaZulu-Natal. Although vastly outnumbered, the Boers won the battle with their deadlier weaponry. They renamed the site Blood River.

There had long been a museum and memorial at Blood River, presenting the Afrikaner version of the battle and its sacred significance. The legacy project involved constructing a new museum on the other bank of the river, telling the 'Zulu' story. For many, this project appeared to appeal to a narrow ethnic nationalism. Violent conflict between the Inkatha Freedom Party (the main vehicle for Zulu nationalism since the 1970s) and the ANC, both in the KwaZulu-Natal region and in many townships near Johannesburg, had almost derailed the constitutional talks in the early 1990s. The new Ncome Museum perpetuates an oppositional militarism, its content recalling stereotypical warriors of the past and its architectural features challenging the Afrikaner monument, rather than engaging it in dialogue.[29] The intended bridge linking the two sites has never been built, further entrenching the symbolism of failed reconciliation.

By far the most ambitious legacy project, Freedom Park, has been developed on a new site on the outskirts of South Africa's administrative capital, Pretoria. Initiated after the 1999 election, when the victorious ANC was freer to pursue its own sense of history and memory, Freedom Park was closely connected to incoming President Mbeki's vision of an African Renaissance.[30] Completed in 2013, the Park incorporates a memorial complex and museum and situates itself as the nation's most significant gesture of reparation – a site of liberation, rather than mourning. Yet it also demonstrates how difficult and disputed the concept of 'reconciliation' remains, with its trustees declining to record the names of former apartheid defence force personnel killed in the guerrilla wars that helped to end the old regime.[31] There are echoes, too, of the Ncome scenario: Freedom Park is located on a hill in close range of the Voortrekker Monument, whose trustees defiantly erected memorial walls containing the defence force names.

Very deliberately, several smaller legacy projects, often steered to completion by local government initiative, have been sited in black townships and former homelands. The geography of apartheid meant that black urban dwellers were forced to live on the outskirts of towns and cities, in racially defined and tightly controlled areas, with only the most basic amenities. In rural areas, black people were confined to overcrowded so-called 'homelands' that comprised less than 13% of South Africa's total land area. Two of the Mandela Museum sites are in the former Transkei homeland and Cata Museum and Heritage Trail is in the former Ciskei homeland.[32]

Almost from their inception, townships became flashpoints of struggle against the apartheid regime and many of the new legacy sites tell the stories of key moments: the adoption of the Freedom Charter

in Kliptown in 1955, the anti-pass protests at Sharpeville and Langa in 1961, the Soweto youth uprising of 1976, the massacre of protesters in Bhisho, Duncan Village, Boipatong and Athlone, for example.[33] Yet bitter disputes have accompanied the installation of many of these new museums and memorials. Partly this is to do with the ANC's appropriation of struggle narratives. Some events have been notably absent from those considered worthy of memorialisation.[34] Furthermore, not all of the events or individuals memorialised were associated with the ANC or its allies at the time; some were the work of rival organisations. For example, the anti-pass campaigns of the early 1960s were led by the Pan Africanist Congress, and the Black Consciousness Movement played a significant role in raising youth awareness of injustice in the 1970s. There is another kind of appropriation that causes resentment: memorials often fail to relate to local memories of how things happened, representing instead a more abstracted version of struggle and liberation. Local alienation is further compounded by the anger of many township communities over government failure to deliver services since 1994.[35]

Some sites of considerable significance have been developed by private interests. The leading example is the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, *the* site to understand the history of apartheid, as well as the struggle to end it. It is owned by Gold Reef City, the business consortium which built it as a public service component of its large casino and entertainment complex nearby.[36] The Apartheid Museum also operates Mandela House in Soweto and the Mandela Capture Site in KwaZulu-Natal. (The country's main Mandela Museum, distributed over three sites in the Eastern Cape, including the two noted above, is state funded.) Another private initiative of importance was the Liliesleaf Farm Museum near Johannesburg, where virtually the entire high command of the underground South African Communist Party and ANC were arrested in 1963. The site was managed and part-financed by a trust but received substantial public support. It closed indefinitely in 2021, amidst accusations of financial mismanagement.[37]

There is a notable characteristic about much of this memory work, whether publicly or privately funded: the power wielded by professional architects and exhibition designers. It is they who have been entrusted with developing memorial narratives and voices, rather than members of a client local community, invested with a strong sense of how voices and narratives should be articulated. These professionals have generally consulted with public historians and members of local communities, but the fact remains that they are the most powerful agents in the process, who tend to 'usurp' the role of knowledge workers and the keepers of community memory.[38] Frequently they are content to tell a broad ANC version of events, in order to secure contracts in the first place: the struggle narrative is in many ways a creation mediated by commercial interest.

In addition, the strategic plans and annual reports of the National Heritage Council, the agency within the Department of Arts and Culture tasked with the development of legacy sites, make clear that a strongly transactional approach dominates its ethos of heritage-making.[39] There thus seems to be something of an authenticity vacuum at the heart of the 'post-apartheid memorial complex'.[40] It is inimical to the emergence of what one might call 'slow curation' – an often painstaking, always iterative process of deep meaning-making for those whose stories are surfaced, sifted and shared, as well as sustaining an active, engaged audience. Even though most South Africans alive today were born after 1994, there are still strong living links to most of these events; they have not passed entirely into the realms of memory.

The District Six Museum in Cape Town is an exception that is often held up as an exemplar of what an 'engaged' museum should be. District Six was a long-established, ethnically mixed neighbourhood, predominantly of those identified as coloured, located close to the city centre. In the 1960s the apartheid state declared it a white area, forcibly removed the 60,000 inhabitants to townships on the bleak Cape flats 25 kilometres away and demolished the buildings.

The Museum emerged from a community movement campaigning for restitution and opened in 1994. Its purpose was, and continues to be, to keep alive the memories of District Six and displaced people

everywhere as a vehicle for advocating social justice, as a space for reflection and contemplation and as an institution for challenging the distortions and half-truths which propped up the history of Cape Town and South Africa.[41]

Housed in a disused church on the border of the old District Six, it has always depended on private and philanthropic donations and income from visitors and events. From the start, the Museum's permanent and temporary collections, both tangible and intangible, were inscribed with meaning by the people whose lives it aimed to represent. As it has evolved, its restitution advocacy has become more significant. Tellingly, it is one of the few new heritage attractions in South Africa with an engaging web presence, reflecting its core values.[42]

District Six Museum's origins lie outside the formal legacy project framework, as do many other smaller sites of memory across the country that have appeared since 1994, the vast majority of which relate to the anti-apartheid struggle. A small number commemorate other forms of past pain, such as the very heavy toll of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Most of them are nevertheless included in the National Heritage Council's plans for a Resistance and Liberation Heritage Route, established with the support of UNESCO in 2005.[43]

There have also been notable developments in digital public history since 1994. Digital Innovation South African (DISA), funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, began in 1997. DISA bring together national repositories and universities, with the aim of digitising and curating content related to the anti-apartheid struggle. In its first phase it made available a number of serial publications produced by the liberation movements. This was followed by the addition of archival content. It has faced many challenges, ranging from the management of complex partnerships, access to digital platforms, the ramifications of digital copyright and access to content, to social and political debates about memory in digital space.[44]

South African History Online (SAHO) began in 2000 and now claims the title 'the largest public history project in South Africa, if not the continent'.[45] One of the country's most accomplished social documentary photographers and a veteran of the anti-apartheid struggle, Omar Badsha, initiated SAHO with few resources and little interest from professional historians. He always envisaged this online resource as building bridges between exhibition and classroom, history and heritage, archive and library, experiential and instructional. [46]

Over the past two decades, SAHO has grown enormously in size and scope, as well as in the number of staff who run it, and has attracted funding from the South African education authorities, philanthropic foundations and other large donors. It has partnered university history departments in South Africa and abroad in creating both born-digital and digital surrogate resources and training public historians, and has won awards for its role in a 'global movement for the production of free scholarly and educational content about Africa and by Africans'.[47]

The Five Hundred Year Archive (FHYA), a project of the Archive and Public Culture Programme at the University of Cape Town, responds to a renewed interest in the history of South Africa before the arrival of the first European settlers in the seventeenth century.[48] It grapples with the fundamental memory/history challenge that all knowledge of this long 'pre' history has been refracted through the oral traditions, writings, art forms and so on, produced over the past five hundred years of colonial/postcolonial history. It also confronts issues to do with the identification/misidentification of material remains. Importantly for digital public history, FHYA has in addition questioned the cultural biases of existing archival platforms' algorithms and seeks to overcome these in the development of a new content management system.

Renovating the old heritage estate

On the eve of majority rule, some 97% of listed heritage sites were devoted to the achievements of the white minority.[49] In the interests of reconciliation, all these sites, which included the nation's museums, were

protected in terms of post-apartheid heritage legislation. They have all had to confront uncomfortable truths about their past, in the context of a heightened awareness of their association with conquest and the act of appropriating objects as a form of 'systemic violence'.[50] Those sites in receipt of public funds have been forced to reconsider their practice, from the content and management of their collections to the nature of their displays and audiences, in support of 'the creation of a national identity inclusive of all citizens'.[51]

A most important process, ideologically and symbolically, has been redefining the distinction between 'nature' and 'culture', thus reconceiving colonially styled 'ethnographic collections' as cultural artefacts belonging to the rich traditions of the subcontinent. For example, in the 1970s the old Africana Museum in Johannesburg had relocated its 'ethnographic' collection to the former produce market in the Newtown area of the city, retaining the 'proper' museum at its site in the public library building. The two collections were reunited and completely reinterpreted at the Newtown site, which opened as MuseumAfrica in 1994.[52] Yet 'culture' itself remains a troublesome concept for two reasons. The first is the difficulty of finding a vocabulary for discussing cultural diversity without resorting to the divisive, essentialist ethnic categories of the past. The second is that the concept of multiculturalism itself, on which the new nation has been constructed, is something of an ascribed, 'unfree' form of identity.[53]

A related ethical predicament facing museums has been their collections of human remains. In 1997, the McGregor Museum in Kimberley invited two historians from the University of the Western Cape, Martin Legassick and Ciraj Rassool, to participate in an exercise in museum transformation.[54] In the process, they discovered a connection between the origins of the museum and the early trade in human skeletons; in turn, as noted earlier, there was an inextricable link between these remains and the rise of race science/scientific racism in western memory institutions.

Around the same time, negotiations were underway for the repatriation of the remains of Sara Baartman, a Khoesan woman who had been the victim of extreme colonial violence. Taken to Europe in 1810 and exhibited in the most degrading of circumstances as a specimen of the primitive, she died in Paris in 1816; the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle retained her body parts for study. Her remains were repatriated in 2002 and she was given a proper burial.[55] Legassick's and Rassool's study was thus an important intervention in a growing debate about respect, restitution and reburial, which had international ramifications.[56] It should be added, however, that some South African institutions have been markedly reluctant to return remains.[57]

Another practice which perpetuated racist classifications, as mentioned earlier, was the display of body casts. In 1960, the South African Museum in Cape Town (now part of the Iziko group of museums) placed a group of Khoesan body casts in a diorama showing 'normal life' – timeless, peaceable, with no hint of dispossession or social exclusion, for the gaze of a white visiting public. Following a concerted campaign, which included the temporary exhibition *Miscast*, in which visitors were unavoidably made complicit in silencing and stereotyping, the casts were removed from display in 2001.[58] The experience revealed the complexities of contemporary claims to representation and identity in a country with such a troubled ethnic legacy: some Khoesan groups were deeply offended by *Miscast*, for example, and saw no problem with the diorama.[59]

A further dimension of the rehumanising of heritage has been the greater prominence accorded to sites of ancient settlement. This story was suppressed under apartheid, as it 'directly contradicted the [Afrikaner] myth that black South Africans arrived in South Africa at around the same time as the whites'.[60] Thus archaeological sites such as the Cradle of Humankind, Thulamela and Mapungubwe have not only provided black South Africans with a deeper sense of attachment to this land but have also helped expand South Africa's World Heritage Site listings.[61]

Slavery was a feature of everyday life at the Cape for nearly two hundred years. Its slave heritage was similarly ignored under white rule, as it did not fit comfortably in the civilising narrative.[62] An added

complexity was that descendants of slaves sought a separate accommodation in the emerging twentieth-century state structures by distancing themselves from the black majority. The diversity narrative of the rainbow nation has allowed the reinsertion of slave heritage in public memory, and given it additional legitimacy through international efforts, such as UNESCO's, to create slave legacy routes.

Museums have addressed areas of obvious neglect in several other ways. Some merely added on to existing displays – the strategy adopted at the South African Military Museum, for example, where displays of guerrilla warfare coexisted uneasily alongside the dominant military narrative. Many have attempted a more thoroughgoing change, for example initiating dialogues with previously dispossessed communities about how to represent artefacts of incomplete provenance. This kind of relationship, however, is still at an early stage of development.[63]

Others extended their remit. In the dying years of apartheid, the Durban local history museums acquired the site of the former 'native administration' building and transformed it into KwaMuhle, telling the story of the black working class - one that does not have prominence in the national diversity narrative. The National Cultural History Museum in Pretoria inaugurated Tswaing, billed as the country's first eco-museum. The site of a meteorite crater and former salt mine, its interpretative scheme featured the oral histories of those who had worked at the old salt factory. Yet they were heavily mediated; conflicts surrounding ownership of and access to the site were silenced in the process of Tswaing's inscription into the national heritage estate.[64]

Some sites placed themselves beyond this extensive transformation process. The outgoing apartheid authorities, fearing for the future of the symbols of Afrikaner power, removed the Voortrekker Monument and the Blood River Heritage Site, together with generous public funding, to the Heritage Foundation, a not-for-profit company. The sites claim that they remain popular with visitors.[65] It should be noted that other prominent Afrikaner sites have remained in the public estate and have become more inclusive. For example, the Women's Monument in Bloemfontein, which was unveiled in 1913 to commemorate the suffering of white women and children in British concentration camps through the South African War, now remembers the black people who were held in such camps, too.[66]

A few of the statues inherited from the era of minority rule, such as those of the architects of apartheid and leaders of the former 'homelands', were removed as the new government took power. Several that remained *in situ* became flashpoints for contests over representation, identity and belonging.[67] The best-known case occurred in 2015 when students at the University of Cape Town attacked a campus statue of the arch-imperialist Cecil John Rhodes. Their #RhodesMustFall protests were directed at the slow pace of higher education transformation, rather than at official heritage policy; other Rhodes statues were not touched.[68] Their actions nevertheless sparked an international campaign questioning the persistent iconography of colonialism and slavery in public spaces.

Conclusion

Since 1994, South Africa's terrain of memory has been deliberately transformed in the interests of a new kind of nationhood. There have been two principal means to achieve this aim: the creation of new sites, most of which contribute to a grand narrative of anti-apartheid struggle, and the renovation of South Africa's older heritage estate in the interests of ethnic diversity.

By displacing and relocating white minority heritage narratives, post-1994 initiatives have resulted in a far more inclusive national public history. Yet this paper has shown that the process has also constituted an extremely 'disputatious field of engagement'.[69] Struggles over representation continue, and the fashioning of a new, usable past remains somewhat extractive. There is still a way to go before public history in South Africa may be considered more genuinely 'bottom up'.

Endnotes

1   These qualities of public history are explored in Paul Ashton and Alex Trapeznik, 'Introduction. The Public Turn: History Today', in Paul Ashton and Alex Trapeznik (eds), *What is Public History Globally?*, Bloomsbury Academic, London and New York, 2019, pp1-8.

2   Republic of South Africa, National Heritage Resources Act, 1999, accessed October 1, 2021, https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/a25-99.pdf.

3   In a public history context, it is important to explain how terms referring to race and ethnicity are used. Too often, these are treated as fixed and self-evident, whereas they have long been disputed in South Africa, a country composed of a large number of indigenous polities and immigrant communities. The racial and ethnic categories that successive pre-1994 states attempted to impose on South Africans sometimes coincided with the ways they self-identified, but more often were bitterly contested. In addition, resistance movements developed their own designations to indicate aspirations to nationhood. In post-1994 South Africa, official race classifications have fallen away but identities remain contested (for example, who is entitled to call themselves 'African'). Any deployment of these unavoidable terms must therefore acknowledge inconsistencies and uneasy compromises. That is why scholars often use racial terms in inverted commas; however, this practice can seem demeaning to those referenced in such a way. In this contribution, then, black is taken to mean all South Africans who were oppressed by the white minority regime – in this sense, black and white are ideological categories, signifying historic powerlessness and power. In certain places, it is necessary to refer to particular groups of black people, such as coloured; the context will hopefully make the reasons clear. Afrikaner refers to those whites who identified culturally and ideologically with the exercise of apartheid rule, 1948 to the early 1990s. The terms European and African are used in a geographic sense.

4   Albert Grundlingh, 'Social History and Afrikaner Historiography in Changing South Africa, Problems and Potential', *Collected Seminar Papers of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London*, vol 45, 1993, p1.

5   Nigel Worden, 'Public History in the New South Africa', *Perspectives on History,* February 1, 1996, https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/february-1996/public-history-in-the-new-south-africa.

6   Elizabeth Delmont, 'The Voortrekker Monument: Monolith to Myth', *South African Historical Journal*, vol 29, November 1993, pp76-101. https://doi.org/10.1080/02582479308671763

7   Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz, 'The 1952 Jan van Riebeeck Tercentenary Festival', in Leslie Witz, Gary Minkley and Ciraj Rassool (eds), *Unsettled History: Making South African Public Pasts,* University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2017, pp52-76.

8   Eric Rosenthal, *Bastion of the South 1666-1966*, Wynberg Commando, Cape Town, 1966, p5.

9   Saul Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge: Science, Sensibility and White South Africa, 1820-2000*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006.

10   Anitra Nettleton, 'Arts and Africana: Hierarchies of Material Culture', *South African Historical Journal*, vol 29, 1993, pp61-75. https://doi.org/10.1080/02582479308671762; Marion Arnold, 'Visual Culture in Context: The Implications of Union and Liberation', in Marion Arnold and Brenda Schmahmann (eds), *Between Union and Liberation: Women Artists in South Africa 1910-1994*, Routledge, Arbingdon, 2016, pp1-32. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315096445-1

11   James Gore, 'A Lack of Nation? The Evolution of History in South African Museums, c1825-1945', *South African Historical* Journal, vol 51, no 1, 2004, pp24-46. https://doi.org/10.1080/02582470409464828

12   Martin Legassick and Ciraj Rassool, *Skeletons in the Cupboard: South African Museums and the Trade in Human Remains, 1907–1917*, South African Museum and McGregor Museum, Cape Town and Kimberley, 2000.

13   Jimi Adesina, 'Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane (1930-2013): An Intellectual Appreciation,' *South African Review of Sociology*, vol 44, no 3, 2013, pp87-88. https://doi.org/10.1080/21528586.2013.817051

14   The author trained as an educator for Learn and Teach and served as programme coordinator at Workers' College in Durban, 1992-4. The latter was modelled on Ruskin College, Oxford, which initially validated Workers' College qualifications.

15   See for example Luli Callinicos, *Gold and Workers 1886-1924*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1980; Luli Callinicos, *Working Life: Factories, Townships and Popular Culture on the Rand 1886-1940* Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1987; Leslie Witz for SACHED Trust and History Workshop, *Write your Own History*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg,1988.

16   Belinda Bozzoli, 'Intellectuals, Audiences and Histories: South African Experiences, 1978-1988', *Radical History Review*, vol 46, no 7, 1990, pp237-263. https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-1990-46-47-237; Cynthia Kros, 'Heritage vs History, the End of a Noble Tradition?,' *Historia*, vol 48, no 1, 2003, pp326-336.

17   Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu, 'A Tribute to Bernard Magubane', *Safundi*, vol 16, no 2, 2015, pp213-222. https://doi.org/10.1080/17533171.2015.986384

18   Gary Minkley, Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz, 'Oral History in South Africa: A Country Report', in Witz, Minkley and Rassool (eds), *Unsettled History,* pp27-51.

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22   Ingrid de Kok, 'Cracked Heirlooms: Memory on Exhibition,' in Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee (eds), *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory on South Africa,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p61.

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