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COMMEMORATING PAINFUL EXPERIENCES IN A DIVIDED SOCIETY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE THOKOZA MEMORIAL: A CASE STUDY

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts (Heritage Studies)

Johannesburg, 2008

Abstract

In broad terms, this research will look into the origin of the Thokoza memorial, its construction process and unveiling with view to determine how the memorialisation succeeded in the midst of historic divisions in the township. As a point of departure, the research will seek to shed light on the violent period of the early 1990s in the former Witwatersrand area, with focus on the townships of Katlehong, Thokoza and Vosloorus (KATORUS). The three townships are part of the former East Rand (Ekhuruleni metropolitan Council) in the Gauteng Province. The aim of including a short history of the violence in the research is to provide background information which will help the reader to get a sense of perspective on the memorialisation process that took place thereafter. As part of tracing the origin of the memorial, the research will try to determine who the actual originators of the idea of a memorial were, what motivated their decision, and how the whole idea and process were negotiated given the political divisions, hostilities and the bloodshed of the memorable past. The research will go on to look into the planning of the project, funding, construction, unveiling process and challenges faced throughout the project as well as how these were dealt with. The final part of the research will focus on the lessons learnt from the Thokoza experience.

Declaration.

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts (heritage Studies) in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other University before. I also declare that this is my original work produced and submitted in accordance with all rules of professional academics standards and ethics.

Acknowledgement.

I would like to acknowledge the following people and organisations for their contribution to this research work:

1. Dr Margaret Mojapelo for supplying a lot of information on the memorialisation process in Thokoza.

2. The South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) for allowing me to use their files on Thokoza and other memorial projects for this study.

3. The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) for giving me access to their papers and newspaper clippings.

4. All people and organizations that contributed to this project in one way or another.

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6. My family, for their support throughout the period of studying and thereafter.

Table of Contents

Title details……i
Abstract ……ii
Declaration ……..iii
Acknowledgment…….iv
Table of contents……..v

Background

Chapter 1
1 Introduction…….2
1.1 Why this topic of study……2
1.2 Study in the context of the broader Heritage Management…….2
1.3 Methodology……6
1.3.1 Introduction…….6
1.3.2 Primary Sources……..7
1.4 Literature Review……8
1.4.1 Secondary Sources……..8
1.4.2 Literature Types……..8
1.4.3 Brief History on memorialisation…..……13
1.4.4 Relationship between collective memory construction and healing…….....14
1.4.5 The use of History in memory construction……..24
1.4.6 The Vietnam Memorial in the USA…..……26
1.5 Conclusion……28

Chapter 2
2.1 Introduction……...29
2.2 Historical background……..…….29
2.3 Nature of violence in Thokoza…….…31
2.4 Aftermath of the violence…….36
2.5 Conclusion……38

Chapter 3
3.1 Building of Memorial…….40
3.2 Introduction……40
3.3 Background…….40
3.4 The origin of the idea of a memorial……..……41
3.5 The ANC Thokoza branch and SDU's……...44
3.6 Phenduka Section displacees……..……44
3.7 Dr. Margaret Mojapelo……45
3.8 Conceptualization of the memorial project……..……..45
3.5 Why a memorial?…….51
3.5.1 Remebrance……..51

3.5.2 Peace…….53
3.5.3 Healing of wounds……..54
3.5.4 Bringing Hope……...
3.6 Design of the memorial…….58
3.7 Funding of the project……..…….61
3.8 Actual construction of the memorial…….63
3.9 Conclusion…….63

Chapter 4
4 Problems, Obstacles and Wayforward……...64
4.1 Introduction……64
4.2 Painful memories……..……...64
4.3 Divisions with Thokoza as a community……...68
4.4 ANC-IFP differences……68
4.5 SDU's – SPU……70
4.6 Complaints from other political organizations……..71
4.7 Acquisitions of land……...71
4.8 Role of the Media……....74
4.9 Squabbles between members of the TMF……..78
4.10 Conclusion……78

Chapter 5
5 Unveiling of the Thokoza Memorial……79
5.1 Introduction……..79
5.2 Original plans for unveiling & first postponement……..79
5.3 Second Postponement……..82
5.4 Third postponement……..84
5.5 Dissolution of the TMF……86
5.6 Final Arrangement……87
5.7 Unveiling Ceremony-16 October ……87
5.8 Opening of Khumalo Street……..90
5.9 Memorial Unveiling (Cenotaph)……91
5.10 Speeches……92
5.11 Conclusion……93

Chapter 6
6 Lessons from the Thokoza experience…… 94
6.1 Introduction……94
6.2 Differences & Divisions……95
6.3 Collective ownership……..98
6.4 No problem is impossible to solve……..100
6.5 Psychological Healing……..103
6.6 Keeping the memory alive……105
6.7 A community initiative……106
Appendix I……..……..……..…….107
Table of Reference……108

BACKGROUND.

As a point of departure, I think it is necessary to point out that the research and body of this report were completed in the years (1999- 2000). Due to unforeseen circumstances the completion of the report was delayed. Some additional information has been incorporated into the report after resumption to make it up to date. Strangely, the delay might have made the topic of the research report more relevant than it was several years ago, especially in view of the occurrence of xenophobic violence reminiscent of what happened in Thokoza of the early 1990s. The issues raised by this report around possibilities of healing and reconciliation in cases of internecine violence, it might be argued, are still pertinent today.

CHAPTER I

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will briefly explain why this topic of study was chosen, the relevance of this study and its links with heritage management practices. This chapter will also outline the methodology used in the study including the literature review. In the literature review special attention will be given to the following: a brief history of memorialisation, the difference between memorialisation and monuments, the relationship between the reconstruction of collective memory and healing, and the role of history in the reconstruction of memory. On the role of history in memory construction, the Vietnam memorial in the United States of America will be employed as an example.

1.1. WHY THIS TOPIC OF STUDY

The aim of this study is to establish how negotiations around the memorialisation process succeeded in the midst of intense conflicts that divided Thokoza as a community. Central to this topic is the urge to know how the memorialisation process in Thokoza succeeded while several memorials initiated under politically tense situations e.g the Colesburg, Tembisa, and Boipatong seemed to have failed at that point in time. It should be noted that some of the memorials that failed or were incomplete at the time when the original part of this research was done have been largely upgraded now.

The Colesburg memorial was built to commemorate the youth who died in a protest march after the assassination of the four Craddock civic leaders, Matthew Goniwe, Sicelo Mhlauli, Sparrow Mkhonto and Fort Calata. When the people of Colesburg learned of the death of the four leaders, they were angry and rose in protest. The police responded by shooting at the protesters, fatally wounding four youths. The Colesburg memorial was an attempt by the people of that small town to memorialise these youths. Unfortunately, due to lack of funding, the memorial stands unfinished even today.

The Boipatong memorial was organised as an initiative to commemorate victims of the Boipatong massacre (Vaal area of the Gauteng Province). By the year 2000 when this research was conducted for the first time, the memorial remained unfinished due to sharp disagreements between survivors and local government councillors. It is only now (2008) that plans to build a memorial for the victims of the massacre are taking shape.

The other memorial that did not succeed as intended during the time of the compiling of this report is the Tembisa memorial which was designed to commemorate all people from the township known as Tembisa (in the Midrand area of Johannesburg) who died in different episodes of the liberation struggle. The memorial is on the brink of reconstruction due to the fact that some people felt that it was too small and that the material used in the construction was not durable. In addition, residents and political organisations such as the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), protested that they were not consulted during the initiation and implemented of the project.

The Hector Pietersen memorial in Soweto was built through the initiatives of the African National Congress and some community structures, in remembrance of the youth who died in the 1976 Soweto uprising. During the negotiation, the construction and after the completion of the project, problems around issues such as the naming of the memorial, consultation and involvement of stakeholders ensued. Community members and organisations protested that they had not been consulted in the process and that the cenotaph was too small and ill-planned. Those in charge of the project argued that they could have done better had there been enough funds for the project.

However, the memorial was given a face-lift and content upgraded after a greater part of this research was completed. The upgrade included the conversion of the first cenotaph into a memorial precinct consisting of an elaborate cenotaph, museum and archival space. The precinct was landscaped, paved all around, and given a parking area linked to an adjacent hall known as Uncle Tom to form a fenced memorial square. The elaborate upgrade marks a major shift from the humble and unfinished cenotaph of the late 1990's.

With a considerable number of these memorial projects initiated in mid to late 1990's succumbing to problems, it was important that an investigation or study be conducted on Thokoza to find out how the people of Thokoza and those who contributed to the process succeeded where others failed. Hopefully it will enable scholars and people at large to appreciate the challenges around reconstructing collective memory in divided societies emerging from intense conflicts.

1.2. STUDY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BROADER HERITAGE MANAGEMENT.

This study is a relevant and necessary exercise in an attempt to understand developments in the heritage sector in the country, especially because memorials are covered by the National Heritage Resources Act (25) 1999 making them an integral part of the country's broader heritage. Although most memorials are made of tangible material such as bricks and mortar, they gesture towards intangible heritage as conceived by the NHRA (25 of 1999) in the sense that they are a tangible representation of memory which is intangible.

A number of initiatives at national level attest to the perceived importance of memory and memorialisation in South Africa's attempts to redefine its heritage e.g. the national Department of Arts and Culture (DAC)'s decision to launch its Oral History Project aimed at the reconstruction of public memory through recording and digital preservation of this aspect of memory, the NHRA (25 of 1999)'s provision for the conservation of memory associated with sites[1], and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) chapter of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)'s decision to have **'**Memory, Meaning and Place' as the theme of their 2002 Conference[2]. This puts memory and meaning in the centre stage of heritage debates in the subcontinent and internationally. The rationale for this decision was to advance the protection and conservation of intangible heritage by way of research, debates and conscious processes of mainstreaming it into the broader vocabulary of heritage conservation internationally.

[1] National Oral History Project document, 2000.
[2] International Committee for Monuments and Sites (ICMOS) plan for Harare Conference, 2002.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Introduction.

This section of the first chapter will consider what the relevant theoretical issues are, then move further to give a clear account of the methodology employed to investigate the topic at hand as well as the different types of literature used. In addition, topical areas such as changes to commemorative practices after the World War I and African commemorative practices will be looked into briefly. The study will look into whether it is possible to tie together the goals of commemorating loss and that of healing societal divisions, and whether the people who were responsible for the Thokoza memorial had these aims in mind. Issues such as how discussions around the memorial were initiated, who was involved, what the different positions were and how these differences were reconciled will be examined as well. In addition, questions on, who designed the memorial, what it is supposed to represent, and who decided where it should be built will also be explored.

To answer these questions, I collected information from a selection of residents of Thokoza, particularly those who played leadership roles in the project, and those who were directly affected by the violence. This included community leaders, leaders of political and civic organizations, and ordinary people who were involved in the project. In addition to residents of Thokoza, an array of project stakeholders such as former

Alberton Town Council members, funders, facilitators and the media personnel were also used in information gathering. They were helpful in answering the above questions.
I do acknowledge the subjectivity of the responses acquired through this process, especially of close stakeholders and those who were directly affected. In order to research this topic in a broader context and to give it some sense of theoretical perspective, a variety of literature sources relating to the subject were employed.

1.3.2 Primary sources

I included newspapers that published events and stories pertaining to the violence mainly because they gave a sense of how the vocabulary and intensity of the violence in the East Rand developed and perhaps even played a pivotal a role in shaping people's perceptions of what was happening. I also chose to use interviews with Dr. Mojapelo a great deal in order to access and present the thinking of one of the principal movers behind the memorial. I do acknowledge that she has a particular perspective on this matter, and that her offering is her own account which might not represent the absolute truth.

In the process of investigating these primary sources the sensitive nature of the issues at hand has been considered, that is, the painful memories of the violence. I was aware that people might be offended when they are questioned or reminded of the violence, and acknowledged that this is not an easy task to handle especially due to the fact the violence they experienced was extremely horrific. The memories were still fresh in people's minds and have left an indelible mark on the lives of many. However, my closeness to the

organizations and people involved in the memorialisation process did not only help me to get the information, but it also impressed on me the horror and the ongoing suffering that Thokoza residents endured. For instance, through my close association with Dr. Mojapelo, who was a Council member of the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) which was then the National Monuments Council (NMC) and George Molatana whose company, Khula Tombstones was involved in the construction process, I came to be trusted by many of the interviewees.

Through my involvement with the Khulumani Support Group, the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) and the SAHRA as a researcher and employee, I was also able to obtain the necessary information without much difficulty. In the case of members and the leadership of political organisations, I had to explain the significance of the research before I could interview them. I had worked together with some of them on this project before my research started and had as such gained their trust in the process.

The documentary primary sources used in this research include newspapers such as the *Sowetan*, *Star*, *Saturday Star*, *City Press*, *Sunday Times* and *Mail and Guardian*, the TRC report and the video cassette on the unveiling ceremony of the Thokoza memorial, Dr Mojapelo's unveiling speech, NMC case files, and the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) case files. In addition to these, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report and documents related to it were used.

1.4. Literature review.

1.4.1 Introduction.

Up to the point when the original information for this research was gathered around the year 2000, very little scientific study has been done on the Thokoza memorial, because the project was started in 1997 and only completed in 1999 with the unveiling ceremony. The readily available literature was in the form of primary sources: newspapers, oral sources, pictures and a few audio-visual records. To gives the research a proper theoretical framework, I had to refer to general literature on political violence, history, memory, and memorialisation in South Africa and other countries.

1.4.2. Secondary sources

The secondary literature helps to provide information on commemoration from other countries with similar sets of experiences as South Africa, especially Thokoza. This is important for the purpose of comparison and cross pollination of ideas on the subject at hand. In addition, secondary sources may provide other researchers' perspectives, for example, on how history was mobilised in dealing with pain and sorrow in the aftermath of World War I, the Holocaust and the Vietnam Veterans memorials which was constructed not as a monument to justify American involvement in the war, but as a way in which Americans could come to terms with their losses[3]. The literature review will be structured in line with topical issues relating to the subject e.g. general literature; history of memorialisation etc.

[3] CF Video

1.4.3 Literature types

This research will look at available literature on memory (including memorialisation or commemoration), reconciliation, healing and violence. Although there is a lot of literature on memory especially of cases of memorialisation internationally, there is not much dealing with African cases. It is due to this gap that I employed my common knowledge as an African who is acquainted with traditional practices on commemoration, and my personal experience of working at SAHRA, where I handled several commemoration projects involving rituals, especially in African communities.

As a starting point, I think it is necessary to explore literature on the history of memorialisation and commemoration so as get a better picture of how these processes developed and evolved over time. The works of scholars such as Edmond Blunden and Walter Thickeray are useful in this regard in that they give a vivid history of memorialisation in the prologue of Phillip Longworth's book titled *The Unending Vigil: History of the commemoration process by the Common Wealth nations*. Pace's book on the mummification process in ancient Egypt will be used to provide a background on indigenous forms of commemoration[4]. In addition to Pace, oral literature will be used for information on forms of commemoration in Africa. Literature on memory will also be examined for the purpose of understanding processes of construction of memories, especially during memorialisation and in commissions of enquiry. Works of Brendon Hamber and Richard Wilson are helpful. Hamber and Wilson represent those who are critical of national processes of memory reconstruction such as the Truth Commission

and commissions of inquiry. Their argument is that such projects deal with issues of memory at a very broad scale and in the process survivors' and victims' version of memory is neglected[5]. The article of Sabine Marschsall titled "*Pointing to the Dead*" on memory reconstruction in Mamelodi and in Sharpville gives insight into how memory can be used in political strategy and agenda[6]. Additional to this will be James Young who contends that "memory is never shaped in a vacuum; and the motives of memory are never pure"[7].

Almost diagonally opposed to those who are against collective memory reconstruction is the paper of Peter Storey on the significance of the TRC in South Africa which will be used to provide the perspective of those who support collective memory reconstruction and presentation such as the TRC.[8] In addition to these rather two sides, the writings of H. Deacon on the shaping of memory is valuable in that it looks at how people choose to shape public memory. The example she used as a case in point is Robben Island where, according to them, ex-prisoners and warders chose to remember the island as a university of the liberation struggle at the expense of memories associated with suffering and ostracism[9]. The island has also been presented as a symbol of the triumph of the human spirit against evil forces of oppression and dictatorship[10]. The problem with a presentation of memory based on symbolism is that symbols are open to partisanship and are capable of obliterating other memories as well.

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[4] Pace, M: 1965. Egyptian Mummies.
[5] Hamber, B and Wilson, R (1999): Symbolic Closure Through Memory, Reparation, Revenge in Post Conflict societies. Paper presented at the Traumatic Stress in South Africa Conference hosted by the CSVR.
[6] Marschall, S: Pointing to the Dead: Victims, Martyrs and Public memory in South Africa (SA. Historical Journal, 60 (2008).
[7] Young, J: 1993 The Texture of Memory: Holocaust memorials and meaning.
[8] Peter Storey: A different Kind of Justice: (in the New World Outlook: The Mission Magazine of The United Methodist Church, 1999).
[9] Deacon, H (In Coetzee, C and Nuttall, S, 1998. Eds: Negotiating the past: The making of memory in South Africa).
[10] Ibid.

Literature on the transition to democracy in South Africa provides a broader picture of the situation in the country at the time of the Thokoza violence and thereafter. Phillip Bonner and Vusithemba Ndima's paper on the roots of violence in the East Rand, identified social conditions in hostels and the general treatment meted to hostel dwellers as contributory factors to hostel dwellers being attracted to violence[11]. The TRC report also provides background on the nature of violence in the country in the early 1990s and on matters pertaining to memorials as forms of symbolic reparations.[12] For instance the TRC report indicates that the ANC, IFP and the apartheid government played a major role in the causation of the violence through out the country including the East Rand[13]. This will be used along with newspapers that actively covered the violence in Thokoza such as the Star, Sowetan, Mail and Guardian, City Press, and Sunday Times. The newspapers provide relevant information about the situation in Thokoza during and after the violence as well as their own perspective of the violence.

On memorialisation process in the country, Lazarus Kgalema's study on memorials and monuments (including the Thokoza memorial) is central. Kgalema's work provides a lot of information, not only on the violence, but also on the origin of the Thokoza memorial and the actual building process. Compared to this study which focuses specifically on the Thokoza project, Kgalema's work was a survey focussing on several memorials in the country. It did not provide answers to the questions on Thokoza's success and the challenge it faced. However, Kgalema's research does provide valuable information for comparative analysis with other memorial projects that failed in the same period of time

[11] Bonner, P. and Ndima, V. (1999): 'The roots of the violence on the East Rand,1980-1990', paper presented at the Institute for Advanced Social Research, University of Witwatersrand, October 1999.
[12] TRC report: Volume Six Final version, 2003.
[13] Ibid.

the Thokoza project was completed. His research examined the Mamelodi, Wilgespruit, Katlehong and Tembisa as well as the Thokoza memorial projects in brief. Mojapelo's speech given at the unveiling of the Thokoza memorial also provides valuable information in the sense that it gives a summary of the entire memorialisation process in Thokoza. Lastly, newspapers (see previous page) reported on the memorialisation process as a whole. The photographic material displayed at the Thokoza memorial, most of which consists of photographs of episodes and incidents of the violence, was donated by certain newspapers to the memorial project in Thokoza[14].

1.4.4 Brief history of memorialisation

Memorialisation has a very long history that evolved over a long period of time. For instance, Pace indicates that it was a common practice in ancient Egypt[15], and this is corroborated by incidents related in the Old Testament (Christian Bible). Phillip Longworth traces memorialisation back to the ancient Hebrews who buried the dead including their enemies after a battle as a way of showing respect for human life[16]. This is confirmed by Blunden who cited the story of Joab, Commander in King David's hosts[17] as example of someone who pursued this practice. He contrasted this with the Persians who are said to have burnt the remains of their enemies[18]. Commemoration is also said to have been practised amongst the Ancient Greeks in the form of disposal by way of burning the remains of the dead[19]. Medieval Europeans and Elizabethan England favoured the used of social distinction as a yardstick for qualification to receive the honour of commemoration as captured in the following words: *'that we may wander o'er*

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[14] Margaret Mojapelo: Speech for the Unveiling of the Thokoza memorial. October 1999.
[15] Pace, M. (1965): Egyptian Mummies.
[16] Longworth, P. (1985): The Unending Vigil, updated edition.

[17] Blunden, E. (in Longworth Phillip, 1985): The Unending Vigil, introduction, p.xix.
[18] Ibid
[19] Ibid

this bloody field. To book our dead, and then to bury them,… to sort our noble: from our common man.'[20]

According to Edmund Blunden, the turning point in the history of memorialisation came in the 19th century when the British started taking the commemoration of their fallen soldiers seriously[21]. This brought a complete break from the past in that commemoration became a highly considered part of the aftermath of wars. Inspite of this development, the use of social distinction in commemorative practices continued prompting Thickeray to comment: *'the ordinary soldier had been shovelled into the hole ... and so forgotten.'*[22]

At the end of the American Civil war, commands were given to the military generals to mark off a plot in every battlefield suitable for the interring of the remains of the dead with head-boards bearing their numbers, and where possible their names[23]. By the year 1866 there were forty-one of these cemeteries containing about 100 000 Union soldiers and these cemeteries were officially declared and dedicated final resting places for soldiers by President Lincoln[24]. **A**fter the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, the governments of France and Germany agreed to respect and maintain the graves of soldiers buried in their respective countries. After the Anglo-Boer War (1902), Britain sponsored the Guild of Loyal Women, a South African organisation that provided steel crosses as memorials for the graves of fallen soldiers who had not been given a memorial[25]. Literature suggests that in Africa, commemoration is of indigenous roots. For instance, Pace asserts

[20] Blunden, E. (in Longworth Phillip, 1985): The Unending Vigil, introduction, p.xix.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Thickery, W.M. (in Longworth Phillip, 1985: The Unending Vigil: Introduction. p.xix)
[23] Blunden, E. (In Longworth Phillip, 1985: The Unending Vigil: Introduction. P.xx)
[24] Blunden, E. (In Longworth Phillip, 1985: The Unending Vigil: Introduction. P.xx)
[25] Beater, J. Manager of War Graves Division, interviewed by Mokwena K.P, 13 May 2000.

that pyramids in Egypt were used to commemorate the dead by giving them a decent burial, which was an important religious belief of the time[26].

1.4.5 The relationship between collective memory reconstruction and healing.

When history occurs, whether an historian is there to record or not, those who witness the occurrence archive it in their memories. To people who were actually involved in the incident, and those who witnessed it as life experience, the occurrence can create stronger and lasting memories. When the incident is memorialised, the experience is reconstructed through the recall of memories. Literature suggests that memory as a phenomenon can be brittle, suppressed, repressed, changing and that it can be influenced by politics[27]. According to Novick, the re-enactment can happen consciously with those who are involved choosing what, and how to remember[28]. I must stress that Novick is critical of the concept and phenomenon of collective memory which he says is susceptible to political manipulations.

Concurring with Novick, are Hamber and Wilson who refer to the recall process as the recomposing of memories[29], or versions of history. In this context, memorialisation would refer to the deliberate, purposeful and planned recalling of certain memories by a group or through an institution such as government or the state. It involves more than just the recalling of events, but also the careful recomposing, reconstruction and even

[26] Pace, M.: Egyptian Mummies.
[27] Young, J: 1993 The Texture of Memory: Holocost memorials and meaning.
[28] Novick, P (1999): The Holocaust and collective memory
[29] Hamber, B and Wilson, R (1999): Symbolic Closure Through Memory, Reparation, Revenge in Post Conflict societies. Paper presented at the Traumatic Stress in South Africa Conference hosted by the CSVR.

deconstruction of such memories to suit a particular agenda. This process is not an instantaneous but a carefully planned one.

It is also important to look at the relationship between the construction of memory and the healing process, especially in so far as it relates to the use of memorials. Hamber argued that it is necessary for people to relive past experiences in order to come to terms with the past and therefore move into the healing process in a secure emotional environment[30]. He states that it has been argued that survivors in a state of transformation from political conflicts in the past are usually urged to: '*let sleeping dogs lie or to let bygones be bygones'*. In light of the above, he argues that, '*psychologically, sleeping dogs do not lie, past traumas do not simply pass away with the passage of time'*[31]. The argument here is that people may not necessarily forget the past because government has come with a memorial project or a Truth Commission whose intention is to ensure the realisation of a political project such as nation building whose success depends on people agreeing to engage on voluntary or forced forgetting of past events. Memories have a way of continuing even if they are not in line with the popular expectations of the powerful or majority.

Apart from an individual, the reconstruction of memory can also take place at a community level where a collective decides to engage in an exercise meant for conscious remembering of an event or people. Halbawch in Novick, calls this collective memory[32].

[30] Hamber, B (1998): The Burdens of Truth. An evaluation of the psychological support services and Initiatives Undertaken by the South African TRC, in American Imago, Vol.55, No 1, Spring 1998.
[31] Hamber, B (1998): The Burdens of Truth. An evaluation of the psychological support services and Initiatives Undertaken by the South African TRC, in American Imago, Vol.55, No 1, Spring 1998.
[32] Halbawchs (in Novick, P .1999: The Holocaust and collective memory)

The cases of Thokoza and Mamelodi, where memorials were built with the intention of reconstructing the memories of violence so as to aid the healing process are good examples of this. One other example is when a government for instance, comes up with projects such as Truth Commissions, commissions of enquiry and commemoration projects which are usually employed to revisit and recompose memories,[33].

Hamber and Wilson argue that:

'the idea of dealing with the past through a national Truth Commission ascribes a collective identity to a nation, and assumes that nations have psyches which experience trauma similar to individuals. This view tacitly implies that pursuit of national unity is a unitary, and coherent process, and that the national process of dealing with the past and individual processes of dealing with the past are largely concurrent and equivalent. Thus a national process of uncovering and remembering the past is said to allow the country to develop a common and shared memory, and in so doing creates the sense of unity and reconciliation for its people'[34].

In the above-cited passage Hamber and Wilson are engaging the relationship between memorialisation and healing by interrogating the collective (national) and the individual approaches to the reconstruction of memory. The collective approach refers to an initiative for instance by an entity such as governments or at least recognised by them, to reconstruct and represent memory through the use of a Truth Commission, commissions of inquiry and projects such as public memorials and monuments. Such a move is believed to be helping the nation to develop a common and shared memory which is pivotal to the enhancement of unity and perhaps reconciliation, as in the case of South Africa. In some cases, the collective process would be seeking to re-enact one memory for the entire nation and individuals within it inspite of their different experiences.

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[33] Hamber, B (1998): The Burdens of Truth. An evaluation of the psychological support services and Initiatives Undertaken by the South African TRC, in American Imago, Vol.55, No 1, Spring 1998.

[34] Hamber, B and Wilson, R (1999) Symbolic Closure Through Memory, Reparation and Revenge in Post Conflict Society (Paper presented to the Traumatic Stress in South Africa in South Africa conference, Johannesburg).

The argument raised against the collective approach to memory reconstruction is that it is not in sinc with the fact that human society is by its nature heterogeneous. Hamber and Wilson argue that the collective national approach to memory reconstruction ascribes a collective identity to a nation, an identity of a traumatised people,[35] and this makes it rather dubious. Hamber and Wilson are very critical of national processes such as the TRC in South Africa, the reason being that the initiatives fail to recognise that each one of the traumatised individuals live in a world of their own unique circumstances. This result in the national process failing to reach down to the individual's personalised trauma, especially because the process was seen as a high profile initiative handling mostly well-known cases involving high-profile political activists.

The same situation repeats itself on the level of small communities such as townships and villages that experienced violence in the past. One example of how collective memory can go wrong is the Stanza Bopape memorialisation project in Mamelodi near Pretoria where a memorial was supposedly built in honour of those residents of the township who died during the liberation struggle and yet the memorial was named and presented in terms of its wording after Stanza Bopape. The passage below captures the consequent discomfort:

' to the surprise of the people of Mamelodi and the frustration of the families of the victims, the ANC and the Civic organisation singled out Stanza Bopape and built a memorial stone for him … In this case the ANC and the Civic believed that the Stanza Bopape memorial represents the Mamelodi struggle against apartheid … families of the dead activists did not appreciate the exclusion of their children in the memorial'[36].

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[35] Hamber, B and Wilson, R (1999) Symbolic Closure Through Memory, Reparation and Revenge in Post Conflict Society (Paper presented to the Traumatic Stress in South Africa in South Africa conference, Johannesburg).

[36] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace reconciliation. Occasional paper written for the study CSVR.

This quotation represents complaints of communities and individuals against what they considered to be an attempt to unilaterally reduce and submerge their history, individual memories, pain, trauma and healing processes under the image of an individual, Stanza Bopape. Since emotional healing requires space for individuals to reflect and go through emotional healing at their own pace, collective healing together with structures associated with it such as Truth Commissions seem to be taking away that individual space by emphasising a collective approach. This carries the potential to submerge individual memories under the collective's brand of memory thereby delaying their healing.

This is attested by the passage cited above which shows how collective memorialisation initiated and run by political leadership alone was seen to have failed to come to terms with the real needs of individual survivors. It shows how the memorial erected by the ruling party, the ANC, supposedly for the community was seen to be sidelining everyone else except its cadre, Stanza Bopape. I think it is necessary to point out that concepts such as nation and community are not necessarily referring to homogeneous entities. According to Anderson, they actually exist in people's imagination.[37] In line with Anderson's argument one can conclude that the idea of a nation having a psychic like human being and that maybe they are capable of suffering trauma is theoretically without basis. In line with the above, it appears that concepts such as national trauma and national healing are also dubious political myths. This also applies to the concept of national healing which seems more figurative than material.

One programme initiated on a national scale may not in practical terms be in a position to

deal with the trauma experienced by every individual throughout the country. Even the historic and much published TRC could not attain that kind of a fit, hence organisations such as Khulumani Support Group took upon themselves the responsibility of filling in the obvious gaps and provided psychological support to victims or survivors of violence at individual levels. The TRC Evaluation Report compiled by Khulumani and the CSVR states that the TRC's national programme for healing was far above the individual survivors' level and couldn't deal with their trauma and healing needs[38].

As has been suggested, the Stanza Bopape memorial in Mamelodi was the ruling party's initiative and represented the party's views and agenda, not those of the victims of violence, hence most victimised families in Mamelodi boycotted it. They argued that they were not consulted on how to commemorate or where to build the commemoration structure and that the name of the memorial was decided without consultation.

A similar controversy occurred regarding the Nangalembe memorial in Everton Zone 7 in the Vaal area, built to commemorate mourners who died during massacre of moaners at the night vigil of a certain Christ Nangalembe. According to Mrs Nangalembe, the memorial was built by local politicians in front of her house without her knowledge[39]. She lamented that the memorial aggravated her trauma since sight of the memorial revived the terrible memories of the tragedy.[40] She said that she went to the extent of planting a tree between her window and the memorial so that she would not always see it when she stood in front of the window. Instead of helping her go through her personal

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[37] Anderson, B. (1991): Imagined communities: Reflection on the origin and spread of nationalism.
[38] CSVR and Khulumani Support Group: Survivors' perceptions of the TRC and suggestions for the final Report.
[39] Mrs Nangalembe (Evaton); mother to Christopher Nangalembe who was killed by unknown gunmen in 1992. During his night vigil 25 people were killed by unknown gunmen: NMC file No 9/4/1/3/1.
[40] Ibid.

healing, the memorial perpetuates the haunting experiences and memories. Yet, the memorial was supposed to be 'the community's' way of memorialising and healing of those who died[41]. It does not seem as though individual survivors were regarded as members of the so called community since some of the directly affected survivors such Mrs Nangalembe seemed to have been excluded.

The great challenge with which the government of both Presidents, Thabo Mbeki and his predecessor Nelson Mandela, were faced with from the onset, was to unify a nation divided by political hatred, ominous racial policies of the past, memories of painful experiences under oppression, and naked imbalances in economic development. Faced with such divisions and maybe uncertain about the fragile peace that came like a shot from the dark after the elections of 1994, the new government decided to put nation building and reconciliation high on their list of priorities. Reconciliation and nation building were the processes and programmes of the South African government aimed at arresting the problems outlined above.

These processes of reconciliation and nation-building may not be on the victims' agenda of priorities. The victims and survivors' primary needs might be personal healing and not national reconciliation per se since the two are not necessarily mutually inseparable. Some of the victims might not even be aware of the government's processes and priorities and how they relate to their own personal traumatic situation. In fact, the very ideas of reconciliation and nation building that some of our memorials seem bent on

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[41] Mrs Nangalembe (Evaton); mother to Christopher Nangalembe who was killed by unknown gunmen in 1992. During his night vigil

promoting may not have anything to do with individual trauma and healing at all. There could be serious danger when projects of memorialisation and healing conform to political agendas of the ruling party or government itself.

In the same way as the TRC did, national and community projects for symbolic reparation (commemoration projects) have shown a tendency of approaching issues of memory and healing on a very broad scale to an extent of failing to address the actual trauma of the individuals. After considering the problems that national or collective processes can cause, especially the sidelining of voices that needed a platform and as such further traumatising the very individuals they are suppose to help, one is left with some doubt on whether national projects have the capacity to help the individual healing process or not.

As I said previously, that one is tempted to reject concepts such national trauma and national healing due to amongst others, their limitation in terms of both definition and realistic applicability. I think it would be simplistic to conclude that attempts to achieve healing by way of Truth Commissions and collective memorial projects are absolutely futile. There are those who believe that national processes such as the TRC played a cardinal role in providing spaces and platform through which the wounds of the past could be laid bare so that appropriate remedial measures can be taken. One of such measures or outcomes of the TRC process was the birth of organizations such as Khulumani whose focus was to address issues of personal healing. According to the study conducted by the Khulumani and the CSVR, survivors they interviewed affirmed that

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25 people were killed by unknown gunmen: NMC file No 9/4/1/3/1.

though the TRC did not cater adequately for their healing, it did however provide a necessary platform upon which individual healing progressed[42]. The fact that a nationally driven memory reconstruction process may not completely address the needs of individual victims and survivors may not mean the two cannot converge at all. There is an area of convergence between public memory and individual survivors' memory. This could be exemplified by the Robben Island case as argued by Deacon, that individual prisoners and warders have individual versions of the memory of the island, and yet they seem to agree on the need to shape a public memory of the island as a university of the liberation struggle, a place of shame, and above all, a symbol of triumph of the human spirit against the evil systems of oppression[43]. Annie Coombes seem to corroborate Deacon on the issue of attempts to create a monolithic narrative at Robben Island considered easy and not confusing to the tourists and tour guides.[44]

Thokoza is a good example where some of project leaders were victims and survivors of the violence themselves. Ordinary people who hold no office or position in any political structures were also instrumental in the conceptualization of the project. It is against this background that the separation between the elite and the so called ordinary as totally distinct camps, each one with a memory of its own, becomes misleading if not completely misplaced. In the same manner, one can argue that although projects such as the Thokoza memorial and others of its kind, born of collective efforts of communities, may not adequately address the needs of individual survivors, they do however play a

[42] CSVR and Khulumani Support Group: Survivors' perceptions of the TRC and suggestions for the final Report.
[43] Deacon, H. (in Coetzee, C. and Nuttall, S. 1998. (eds): Negotiating the past: The making of memory in South Africa.

[44] Coombes A.E (2004): History After Apartheid

crucial role in creating space for suppressed voices to be heard, maybe for the first time. In Hamber and Wilson's words, these types of projects help traumatised individuals to *'articulate their individual narratives'*[45], which is necessary for the healing of the individual. This kind of platform for the voices of surviving victims should be understood as the beginning and not the final stage of a psychologically liberating process and the TRC is said to have provided such a platform.[46]

1.4.6 The use of history in memory reconstruction.

History has been used in different ways by different historical figures to achieve certain political ends for their regimes. For instance, the Nazi regime in Germany used history to motivate for the establishment of racial policies, and upheld the theory of an undefeated Germany in the First World War. Germany's defeat and its poor performance after the war, was simply rationalized by attributing it to either infiltration or weaknesses of the Weimar statesmen who according to the narrative, had signed a shameful armistice. Historically, it has become a normal practice for every regime that comes to power to try to consciously create or impose own version of history over those they rule.

According to Thompson, in South Africa some Afrikaner historians such as Floors Van Jaarsveld, author of several history school textbooks, used history to create a political myth of a united Afrikaner people (nation) whose conquest of black tribes was part of a

[45] Hamber, B and Wilson, R(1999): Symbolic Closure Through Memory, Reparation and Revenge in Post-Conflict Society (Paper presented to the Traumatic Stress in South Africa Conference held in Johannesburg).

[46] Peter Storey A different Kind of Justice: (in the New World Outlook: The Mission Magazine of The United Methodist Church, 1999).

divine calling aimed at civilising these tribes[47]. In explaining such behaviour by renowned historians, Thompson argues that this is a manifestation of the fact that history is not reconstructed or narrated outside an ideological context[48]. This proposition find credibility in the way the Great Trek was dramatised in several South African School textbooks to create an impression that the Voortrekkers were a well-organised group of people, and that they pre-planned the Great Trek, and yet,[49] the opposite is true.

This kind of presentation was just an attempt to recompose memories of the Great Trek with the intention of creating some "sacred pilgrimage" out of it as well as to fabricate the Afrikaners' innocence and to cover up for land dispossession, forced detribalisation and the economic disempowerment of African tribes[50]. In the same manner as historical writings, Elizabeth Delmont pointed argues that memorials, monuments, gardens of remembrance and other commemorative structures are born out of processes not immune to the influences of political ideology and doctrines as well as natural bias[51]. In a way, one can say that these structures serve to represent and reinforce certain ideologies. They are products and carriers of the version of memory preferred by those in power as argued by Tim Muil of the Natal Mercury, in his analysis of the state of imbalance in KwaZulu-Natal province with regard to historical markers, stated that:

"conquerors erect monuments, and nowhere can this be better seen than in KwaZulu-Natal. The chief reminders of the Anglo-Zulu war that smashed the Zulu Empire under

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[47] Thompson, L.M. (1985): Political Mythology of Apartheid.
[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.
[51] Delmont, E. (1993) The Voortrekker Monument: From Monolith to Myth (in *South African Historical Journal*, 1726-1686, Volume 29, Issue 1, 1993, Pages 76 – 101).

Cetshwayo are cairns, plinths and tombstones erected for the British"[52].

The issue of the use of history for political and power entrenchment is not something of the past, especially if one considers cases such as Mamelodi, Evaton and Boipatong where disputes ensued between the ruling party (ANC) and survivors with memory reconstruction being the bone of contention. For example, in Mamelodi, the problem was not just the exclusion of people from participating. At the centre of it all seems to be a contest over the version of memory to put forward as 'the narrative' on Mamelodi's role in the struggle. The point in case was the erection of the Stanza Bopape memorial to commemorate those who participated and died in the liberation struggle in Mamelodi. The ANC and the Civic Association seemed to have felt that the role of Mamelodi in the struggle could be remembered by using Stanza Bopape as the focal point, while survivors on the other hand were not happy with that approach since it singled out an individual for elevation to the utter exclusion of other victims and their role[53].

According to Duma Khumalo, in Boipatong, ANC councillors decided to erect a memorial for victims of the Boipatong massacre at the local stadium against the wishes of families of the victims who felt that for historical reasons the memorial should be built where the incident took place[54]. Local Councillors are said to have simply proceeded with the building of the memorial in spite of complaints that the actual history of the incident could being lost, and that survivors would be alienated from the memorial[55]. This shows that power struggle over the control of memory is still an issue in South Africa especially

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[52] Muil, T. (1979) in Natal Mercury.
[53] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of Hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper published by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR).
[54] Duma Khumalo (oral source); NMC Case file No 9/4/1/3/1

in relation to the memory of the dead. This seems to confirm Marschall's argument about the strategic use of the dead and their memory for the advancement of political agenda[56]. The dead seems to be at the centre of the raw once more. As usual they are in an unfortunate position of silent absence where they can not decide on the matter at hand.

1.4.7 The Vietnam Memorial in the USA

I would like to spend a bit of time on the Vietnam memorial in the United State of America not just because of its international popularity, but also because it is one of the memorials that the people of Thokoza used as a source of information and example when they built theirs. Literature indicates that the Vietnam memorial was built for the veterans and victims of the Vietnam War[57]. It is estimated that approximately 50 000 American soldiers died in the Vietnam War[58]. The memorial was built to help Americans to come to terms with their great losses in the war. To the ex-combatants, the memorial is a place where they relive their experiences of terror and suffering through the re-enactment of past memories during visits. What seemed to have compounded the memories of pain was that some of them felt that instead of being treated as heroes on their return home, it was as if they were not welcome in their own society[59]. Exacerbating this feeling was the debates on whether the Vietnam War was really necessary or not. For instance, it is now a well known fact that President Eisenhower of the US was against involvement in the

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[55] Duma Khumalo (oral source); NMC Case file No 9/4/1/3/1

[56] Marschall, S: Pointing to the Dead: Victims, Martyrs and Public memory in South Africa (SA. Historical Journal, 60 (2008).

[57] ww.asnwers.com: 2007 (History of the Vietnam War- Vietnam Veteran memorial design)
[58] Ibid.
[59] Johnson, P. (1984): A History of the Modern World: 'Peace by terror'

Vietnam War[60]. Despite Eisenhower's warning, the US did get involved in the Vietnam War as part of its operation against communist expansion, and the aftermath, as reflected by the statistics provided above, was not good for them. As a result of the involvement and the great loss of human life, the Vietnam memorial was built. The memorial was built mainly due to demand from civil society. The memorial does not say a lot about war, but focuses on the dead, survivors and their healing[61]. It is a symbol of the power and ownership by civil society with regard to the future appropriation of the aspects of memory that involves them.

1.5 Conclusion.

This literature review has shown the different forms of literature used in this study, including comparative literature on memorialisation from outside and inside South Africa, and indigenous forms of commemoration (African), constituted mainly by oral sources. It also looked at literature on memory, including literature on the TRC, the use of history, and that of the violence in Thokoza. In addition, concepts such as collective memory were looked into. The challenges around the concept of national memory were also explored in brief. Related to the idea of collective memory, concepts of national trauma and national healing were also interrogated. The aim was to enable this study to look at the Thokoza case in relation to these concepts and processes.

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[60] Johnson, P. (1984): A History of the Modern World: 'Peace by terror'.

[61] ww.asnwers.com: 2007 (History of the Vietnam War- Vietnam Veteran memorial design)

CHAPTER TWO

2. BACKGROUND ON THE VIOLENCE IN THOKOZA.

2.1 Introduction.

This chapter will give background information on the Thokoza violence in the period 1990-1994. Although the aim of this project is not to investigate either the causes or the course of the pre-election violence in Thokoza, providing information on the violence that preceeded the memorialisation process is essential for understanding the process itself. The information on the violence is aimed at giving a picture of the situation that prevailed in the area in the period between 1990 and 1994. The information will include some historical background of the situation in the country as a whole as well as the former Witwatersrand, the East Rand and Thokoza in particular prior to the 1994 elections. It will provide a description of the nature of the violence, the geographical area where the violence took place, and the different explanations of the violence.

2.2 Historical background

The 1989-1994 violence in Thokoza should not be viewed in isolation from the situation that prevailed throughout the country prior to the 1994 elections. It is should be viewed as part and parcel of the broader unrest in the Katorus (Katlehong, Thokoza, Vooslorus) townships of the East Rand, the Witwatersrand and the country at large.

Prior to the advent of a new South Africa (1990-1994), the country was plunged into waves of destructive political violence, in various forms including faction fights, train massacres, house attacks, police brutality, mob public violence and labour unrest, which resulted in a considerable number of deaths. Black townships were the most hit by the violence. In the early 1980s, the most sensitive spot in the country was Natal (now Kwazulu-Natal), which had become a valley of death, while the Witwatersrand, though not entirely peaceful, did not experience much violence. However, at the closing stages of the 1980s the battlefield shifted from Kwazulu-Natal to the Witwatersrand. Philip Bonner and Vusithemba Ndima state that:

'between July 1990 and the first democratic elections in South Africa in April 1994, the Witwatersrand experienced the most sustained blood letting of its brief 100 years of existence. From July 1990 to April 1992 alone, 1 209 people died and 3 697 suffered injuries in sequence of attacks, reprisals and counter reprisals between hostel dwellers, squatter populations and township residents. The East Rand was the epicentre of the violence at that stage ... accounting for 36, 3% of total deaths and 67, 6% of total injuries'[62]

The above information shows the extent of the violence in the East Rand and the former Witwatersrand as a whole prior to the 1994 general election. The shift from Kwazulu-Natal as the epicentre of the violence to the Witwatersrand was not a mere coincidence, but can be attributed to the move of the IFP which had been warring against the ANC in Natal into the Witwatersrand in the late 1980s[63].

Philip Bonner and Vusithemba Ndima also stated that most of the violence in the East Rand was centred in the townships Katlehong, Thokoza and Vosloorus. Although the

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[62] Philip Bonner and Vusi Ndima: 'The roots of violence on the East Rand, 1980-1990' paper presented at the Institute for Advanced Social Research, University of Witwatersrand, 18 October 1999

[63] Philip Bonner and Vusi Ndima: 'The roots of violence on the East Rand, 1980-1990' paper presented at the Institute for Advanced Social Research, University of Witwatersrand, 18 October 1999.

area of study of this report is Thokoza alone, it is also important to know that the violence took place in the former Katorus area as a whole. According to Vanessa Madumo, although the three townships of Katorus were hit by the same wave of destructive violence in the same period (1990-1994), each one of them fought its own battles with the enemy under different circumstances[64]. It is against this background that those who live in Vosloorus view the Thokoza memorial as a memorial for the Thokoza people alone and not the entire Katorus, hence it is named the Thokoza memorial[65].

2.3 Nature of the violence in Thokoza.

The violence in Thokoza can be used microcosm of the pain and confusion the country went through before the 1994 election. The violence in Thokoza was presented in the media as a conflict between hostel dwellers and township residents. It was one of the worst political feuds the country went through before the 1994 election. This can be attested to by newspaper reports during and after that time. *The Sowetan*, 11 June 1998 described the Thokoza violence in this manner:

'In 1991 Thokoza experienced the worst carnage in its history. For instance more than 18 people returning from the funeral service of slain Thokoza civic leader Sam Ntuli, were gunned down'[66].

Other newspapers also gave vivid pictures of the kind of violence that took place in Thokoza, at times often using sensetionalism. For instance, newspapers used a language used in describing conventional warfare in their presentation of the violence. This can be attested by the kind of wording employed in the passage cited above e.g. use of emotive words like 'carnage" and 'slain'. By using the above words and phrases such as "river of blood" in the extract below, in a way, the presentation tended to overstate the actual facts.

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[64] Vanessa Madumo is a member of the Refentse Youth Group behind the Vosloorus Memorial project
[65] Ibid.

[66] Sowetan, 11 June 1998.

The Saturday Star, 15 August 1998, published a story of a certain Ouma Mabaso who had lost her parents in the violence in 1993 when two men armed with AK47 assault rifle broke into their house fatally shooting her father, and then following her mother and sister into the bedroom where they shot and killed them as well. Ouma was left with bullet holes through both thighs and her nephew is confined to the wheelchair for life as a result of a bullet that went through her spinal cord in the same attack[67].

The City Press, 29 November 1998, had this to say about the violence: '*only two years after the unbanning of the liberation movements and the release of Nelson Mandela from prison, the community found itself immersed in wanton violence, death and destruction*'[68]**.** The same newspaper goes further to say: '*In 1992/3 the community was choking from the river of blood that claimed the lives of at least 700 victims and dislocated others alongside the notorious Khumalo street and its immediate environs*[69]'. The Star, 29 October 1998, describes the situation in Thokoza at the time as if talking of a World War film: '*The heavy smell of gun smoke hung along the street in Thokoza before the 1994 election, as this East rand township road shot into prominence as South Africa's most feared street of death*'[70]. I think it is necessary to acknowledge the pivotal role played by the media in covering both, the violence and the consequent commemoration process. It is however, necessary to note that the presentation of the violence by the media seemed to have been characterized more by exaggeration.

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[67] Ouma Mabaso (surviving Victim from Thokoza Phenduka section)'s story, in Saturday Star 15 August 1998.
[68] City Press, 29 November 1999.
[69] City Press, 29 November 1999.

[70] The Star, 29 October 1998

Research done by the National Monuments Council indicates that about 3000 people died in Thokoza alone as a result of the violence[71]. However, the number of people who were confirmed dead, through names received, is only 800[72]. In that period, between 1990-1994 Thokoza became a total contradiction and misnomer to its name which means 'happiness'. The 'place of happiness' had degenerated into a battlefield and some of its streets became deathbeds for scores of people on a daily basis. Apart from the many deaths, there were uncountable injuries, including permanent disabilities[73].

Thousands of people were totally dislocated from their homes, most for the entire period of the violence (1991-1994). Some houses and businesses were burned down. Taxis were hijacked and some people simply disappeared, especially along Khumalo street, which had been given many ominous descriptive names such as *death street, the country's most infamous street, the battlefield, the no-go zone or no-go -strip, the notorious Khumalo, the great divide, the boundary* and *focal point of many violent clashes*[74]. Again, the language used in presentation creates an impression that one was writing on about an episode of conventional warfare. After reading some of this articles, it makes one wonder what impact did this have on people's understanding of what was happening.

Victims of the violence came from various backgrounds, including the old and young irrespective of political affiliation or rank, ordinary civilians some of whom were politically non-aligned, journalists, service providers such as plumbers who came to fix

[71] National Monuments Council Victims of Conflict File No: 9/2/2000/006.
[72] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper published by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR).
[73] Saturday Star, 15 August 1998.
[74] City Vision (City Press) 30 November 1998.

water pipes in the location, policemen and women, members of the peace-keeping force, civic leaders, politicians, township residents, hostel dwellers and squatter camp residents. For instance, thirteen-year old Thami Twala was shot while playing on the Khumalo street[75], Ken Oesterbroek, a journalist, was caught in the crossfire and fatally shot during a skirmish between Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) members and those of the peace-keeping force[76], while Abdul Shariff was hit by a fatal bullet from Kwesini Hostel aimed at a passing delegation which included the former African National Congress (ANC) General Secretary, Cyril Ramaphosa, Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK) veteran Robert McBride and South African Communist Party (SACP) Chairman, Joe Slovo[77].

Sam Ntuli, a civic leader in Thokoza was gunned down on his way to a meeting in the township. This is to mention just a few of the many who perished during the violence and to turn what may seem to be statistics into identities. According to *The Sowetan*, 11 June 1998, scary headlines such as '*blood bath in Thokoza'* had become a common feature in the newspapers[78]. Even three years after the violence (1998), the dark memories of the time still hung around in people's minds. Some described that period and the situation as a:

'*sad past, painful past, a tragedy, horror and pain, war situation and unbearable strife'*[79].

The most difficult thing about the violence in Thokoza was its complex nature. It was

[75] Mail and Guardian 16-22 October 1998.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Sowetan 11 June 1998
[78] Sowetan, 11 June 1998.

complex in the sense that it was difficult to say who the role players were, who the targets were and what the causes were. The other issue that made the violence complicated was its persistent continuation in spite of concerted efforts to bring it to an end. Because of this complicated nature the violence, as has been suggested, was given many labels, each suggesting either its cause or who the role players in it were. Philip Bonner and Vusithemba Ndima confirm that a multiplicity of explanations have been advanced to account for the origin of the violence. Central to their thesis on the causation of the violence is the deterioration of hostels and the living conditions of the hostel dwellers[80]. This is said to have created serious discouragement and discontent among hostel dwellers.

The former Project Director, Dr Margaret Mojapelo was indirectly dismissive of the various definitions of the violence in her unveiling speech wherein she said: '*... the violence in our communities was given many labels, namely: Xhosa-Zulu faction, black on black violence, IFP and ANC conflict, Hostel versus Township residents*'[81]. She went on to add another dimension on the origin of the violence by saying: '*However, to us who were right in the centre of it all, we saw it as a well planned/state orchestrated undeclared war on our people/communities with the primary objective of undermining our first democratic elections in the country*'[82].What she is saying is that the violence was the work of the apartheid government aimed at preventing the first democratic elections

[79] Sowetan, 11 June 1998.
[80] Philip Bonner and Vusi Ndima: Roots of the violence on the East Rand 1980-1994: Paper presented Institute for Advanced Social Research, University Of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, October 1999.

[81] Mojapelo Margaret: Speech for the Unveiling of the Thokoza memorial 16 October 1999.
[82] Ibid.

in the country from taking place.

The Independent Board of Enquiry into information and repression (IBI), August 1991, identified the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and its subsequent aggressive recruitment of hostel dwellers as chief instigator and father of the violence[83]. Other sources, for example Dr Mojapelo's unveiling speech, pointed at the existence of a third force believed to be the central figure behind the problem. The National Party government and its police force were also identified by some township residents as the authors of the endemic violence.

However, it should be noted that it was not only the East Rand violence whose causation was contested. Many killings in the country at that time, including Kwa-Makhutha, Boipatong massacre, Shobashobane, Everton Zone seven night vigil massacres, and the Sam Ntuli's funeral procession massacre, were all highly contested and even now remain a matter of debate, allegations and speculations. There are many views on what caused the violence in the East Rand, especially Thokoza. The reason for so many explanations of the origin of one phenomenon is due to the fact that almost every one of the above-mentioned groups had been involved in the violence one way or another.

2.4 The aftermath of the violence.

Whatever the causes of the violence may be, the truth is that they were hard to untangle. The prolonged crisis had serious repercussions on the community. The first problem that

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[83] Independent Board Of Inquiries into Information and repression (IBI) August 1991.

resulted from violence is that lots of people were left homeless since they had had to flee their homes. Some of the houses deserted by township residents were occupied by Zulu-speaking people believed to be supporters of the IFP and this created problems at the end of the violence when the owners returned to them[84].

When the Zulu speaking people who had illegally occupied the houses left them after the violence, they were rendered homeless and some had to live in hostels as families. The real owners of these houses also lived in fear after repossessing them since the existing peace could not be guaranteed after violence of the magnitude experienced by Thokoza. Schooling was completely disrupted and children fell behind in their education because of the violence.[85] Some schools were destroyed. The major problem experienced in some schools in Thokoza afterwards was the culture of violence[86]. Children had been exposed to violence and as a result some of them were carrying guns to school after the violence.

Apart from disturbances in schooling the violence also left psychological wounds in the community, which will obviously take extraordinary means to heal. According to Dr Mojapelo '*major psychological disorders namely: post traumatic stress disorder and depression*'[87] were some of the consequences of the violence. She went further to say that the rate of suicide had increased during and after the violence, and that the stress level of the people was also very high, as manifested by the gun culture[88]. Dr Mojapelo stated that

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[84] Star 29 October 1998.
[85] Dr Mojapelo Margaret in the speech for the Unveiling of the Thokoza memorial.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Sowetan 11 June 1998

she also suffered chronic depression after the violence, since she had been in the middle of it[89]. Deaths of young and old in her surgery brought her psychological problems.

One of the problems that resulted from the violence was the division between the hostels and the township residents. This was compounded by the fact that many people still harboured the memories of losing their loved ones, which created a reason for the existence of a gulf between the former adversaries. This could be a problem in the future if the peace and unity initiatives fail to materialize or are not taken seriously.

Even after the 1994 general elections, Khumalo Street remained a no-go zone, since people did not trust each other. Hostel dwellers did not venture that much into the township either, while township people also stayed away from hostels initially. With the former community-armed formations of the ANC (Self Defence Units known as SDU's) and IFP (Self Protection Unit known as SPU's) still armed to the teeth, (there was no evidence that they had been disarmed at that time) there was enough reason for tension, suspicion and fear. In addition to the division, the memories of pain existed as result of the violence. There are many people whose families were wiped out completely. Some were left orphans, and some with no relatives at all due to the violence.

2.5 Conclusion

[89] Dr Mojapelo, Margaret: Interviewed by Mokwena K.P. on 5 March 2000.

This is the type of a situation that existed in Thokoza before and after the 1994 election. Although the violence had not just subsided, but effectively stopped, there is no doubt that the peace that followed was both uneasy and difficult to guarantee, especially in view of the number of unanswered questions pertaining to the origin of the violence. The lack of answers to such pertinent questions leaves lots of suspicions, accusations and counter accusations unchallenged. What we are learning here is the precariously tense situation and unpromising conditions under which memorialisation in Thokoza was supposed to take place. Under such circumstances, can we expect the memorialisation process to be easy, let alone succeed?

CHAPTER THREE

3 BUILDING OF THE MEMORIAL

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will look into the actual building process of the memorial. This process includes the conceptualisation, planning and actual physical construction of the memorial. The issues to be investigated will include the following: Who came up with the idea of a memorial? Why was a memorial important? Who designed the memorial? What was the design supposed to represent? How was the project funded? The chapter will also shed light on the planning and the actual building of the memorial.

3.2 Background

The first democratic elections in the country in 1994 marked the end of a period of insurmountable tension and bloodshed throughout the country. Even though the violence did not stop completely, its decline was considerable and abrupt. In the former Katorus townships, as doves of peace started to fly and displacees fearfully and suspicious crawled back into their homes or remains thereof, somewhere in Thokoza the idea of a memorial stone was already being discussed by the displacees, the ANC and other structures. The memorial was built between 1997 and 1998 and was after several postponements unveiled by then President of South Africa, Mr Thabo Mbeki and the president of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) Mr Mangosutu Buthelezi, on 16 October 1999.

3.3 The origin of the idea of a memorial.

There are several often conflicting versions of who the originators of the Thokoza memorial were. According to Kgalema, several parties claim responsibility for the authorship of the memorial.[90] These include the Thokoza Phenduka Displacees Committee (TPDC), African National Congress (ANC) Thokoza branch and its aligned Self Defence Units (SDUs), the Self Protection Units (SPUs), and Dr Mojapelo, who is a medical doctor in Thokoza and a district surgeon. Dr Mojapelo was in Thokoza during the violence. She witnessed the pain and deaths that took place, since some of the casualties of the violence were brought to her surgery, some of which she referred to the Natalspruit hospital. After the violence she decided to cooperate with others in an initiative to commemorate those who had died[91].

It seems likely that all of these groups as well as Mojapelo had a hand in the origins of the memorial. However, it seems each one of them had a different idea of how to go about this commemoration. The versions that will be examined in this paper about the origin of the memorial in Thokoza are not necessarily the only ones, but they are the ones uncovered by this research.

3.3.1 The ANC Thokoza branch and the Self-defence Units (SDUs).

[90] Kgalema, L. (1999): Interview with Tebogo Nchike Secretary of ANC Thokoza branch, (in Symbols of Hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper published by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR).

[91] Dr Mojapelo

In the previous chapter, the fact of the ANC-aligned SDUs being at the helm of the violence, as the vanguard of the township defence and security was covered briefly. The SDUs fought against the IFP-aligned SPUs who were defending the hostels. The SDUs, just like their former opponents the SPUs, were adversely affected by the violence. The SDUs lost fellow comrades-in-arms, friends, relatives and family members due to the violence. In those days, membership of the SDUs meant putting not only one's own life in danger, but even those of family members and relatives.

It was therefore not surprising that they are said to have came up with the idea of a memorial to remember their own members and loved ones who had died. According to Mojapelo, after the violence in 1995, the SDUs decided to commemorate those who died during the violence, especially their former members, friends and relatives who died[92]. This was supposed by Tebogo Nchike, the former Secretary of the ANC Thokoza branch, who stated that it was the ANC and the SDUs who initiated the discussion on the memorial in a series of meeting between 1994 and 1995[93]. According to him, the SDUs were the ones who came with the idea of commemorating those who died in the violence and that their suggested form of memorial was a wall of remembrance[94].

According to Mojapelo's inauguration speech, it was not only the SDUs who had this idea, but there were combined efforts with the SPUs. I do not know how practicable this

[92] Dr Margaret Mojapelo: The Director of the Thokoza memorial project: Interviewed by K. P. Mokwena on 5 March 2000.
[93] Kgalema, L. (1999): Interview with Tebogo Nchike Secretary of ANC Thokoza branch, (in Symbols of Hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper published by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR).

[94] Ibid.

could have been with all the tension still hanging in the air after the elections. However, this statement was supported by the Mayor of Greater Alberton Town council, Mrs Nomsa Maseko, who states that the SDUs and the SPUs came to the Town Council offices to ask for the donation of a site to build a memorial for those who had died during the violence[95]. According to her, the Council did not give them the land because the two former enemies had too many differences on the matter. The IFP representative, Wilson Nchangase, did not seem to know anything about such an attempt at joint effort between the SDUs and SPUs.

Mojapelo is quoted in Kgalema's paper as having said that the planned commemoration was in the form of a wall of remembrance where the names of those who died were going to be inscribed.[96] The wall was supposed to be built near Phola Park informal settlement. However, the project did not get off the ground due to lack of infrastructure, organisational problems and funding. There was no project plan; the planned memorial wall was perceived to be for SDU members and relatives alone, excluding everyone else. This made the whole project unattractive to donors; hence it failed to secure funding.

The other reason for the failure of the wall of remembrance could be that the time was not ripe for such a one-sided commemoration. The project did not embrace everyone in the community in terms of participation and therefore carried the potential to resuscitate

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[95] Mojapelo in Kgalema, L. (1999): Interview with Tebogo Nchike Secretary of ANC Thokoza branch, (in Symbols of Hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper published by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR).

[96] Dr. Margaret Mojapelo: The Director Thokoza memorial project : Interviewed by Mokwena KP on 5 March 2000.

and further exacerbate the divisions in the township. However, Mojapelo acknowledged that this was the beginning of the Thokoza memorial since this seemingly one-sided idea crystallised into something good when merged with thoughts from other stakeholders when the right time finally came. When the Thokoza memorial foundation was established, the SDUs were represented and contributed greatly. According to both Kgalema and Mojapelo, they contributed to the process from the stage of concept through to the actual construction of the memorial as well as the unveiling.

3.3.2 Phenduka Section Displacees.

The Phenduka Section Displacees Committee (PSDC) also claims authorship of the idea of a memorial in Thokoza. This is affirmed by the *Sowetan* newspaper, 17 October 1999, which cites the Committee as co-founders of the Thokoza memorial[97]. The Phenduka Displacees' Committee is from a section or part of Thokoza location known as Phenduka.

According to Mojapelo, this section was the most hit by the violence since it was just opposite the notorious M'shaye'zafe hostel, a former stronghold of the IFP during the violence, with the equally notorious Khumalo street as the dividing line. Mojapelo (in Mail & Guardian) confirms that most of the casualties in Thokoza came from that section[98]. When the violence was at its zenith, township residents at the Phenduka section fled their homes and most were completely displaced. It was after the violence, when residents were returning to their houses that the committee was formed with the aim of its

[97] Sowetan, 17 October 1999.
[98] Mail and Guardian, 16-22 October 1998.

helping people who were displaced to get their houses back. Lots of the house in the area had either been vandalised in the violence or illegally occupied by other people.

Some residents of Thokoza also affirmed that the TPDC were the cofounders of the memorial. This is exemplified by the words of one community leader, Khalipha Ndzipho, who attributed the building and unveiling of the memorial to the TPDC in this way: *'... thanks to the selflessness of the Phenduka Displacees' Committee and other structures in the township*[99]*'*.

The Committee had a vision of a tombstone to commemorate those who died in the violence. According to the Chairperson of the TPDC, Mr Sam Theron, it was Reverend John Khumalo (Coordinator of the TPDC) who came up with the idea of a tombstone to be erected at the playground between Tambo and Slovo section, where most of the fighting also took place[100]. The tombstone was to have a roll of honour (names of all people who died during the violence) inscribed on it. The idea was supported by both the TPDC and TMF after its establishment. It was however felt that instead of a tombstone, the commemoration structure should be referred to as a memorial. They hoped the memorial would help to soothe the pain experienced in the past and thereby heal the wounds left by the violence[101]. The idea of a tombstone did not materialise as a project due to lack of infrastructure and proper planning.

3.3.3 Dr Margaret Mojapelo

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[99] Ndzipho Khalipha, Community leader from Thokoza in the Sowetan Newspaper, 17 October 1999
[100] Sam Theron is the Deputy Chairperson of the TPDC (in Sowetan Newspaper, 17 October 1999)
[101] Ibid.

Dr Margaret Mojapelo, who became the project Director of the Thokoza Monument Foundation, and a sponsor, witnessed the horrors experienced by the township during the violence, since she was working in Thokoza during that time (see page 59). According to her, many people died while receiving medical attention at the Natalspruit hospital, and some of these casualties also passed through her surgery before going to the hospital[102]

Mojapelo was born in 1957 in Atteridgeville, where she attended primary school. From Atteridgeville she went for her high school education in Seshego which is a township in Pietersburg (Now Polokwane), where she completed her matric in 1977. She completed her MBChb with the University of Natal in 1984 and then worked as a doctor at Natalspruit Hospital until 1988, when she opened her surgery in Thokoza. When the violence started in Thokoza she had already been working in the area for quite some time. She has, as such, first hand information about the situation in Thokoza, particularly concerning the violence and its aftermath[103].

Kgalema and Viney agree that Mojapelo was the co-founder of the memorial with other structures in the township[104], and in an interview with the writer of this document on 5 March 2000, Mojapelo concurred that she had had an idea of a memorial that would help people of Thokoza deal with the tragic past that had caused them so much pain and stress.

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[102] Sunday Times, 29 November 1998.

[103] Dr. Margaret Mojapelo: The director of the Thokoza memorial project: Interviewed by K.P. Mokwena on 5 March 2000.

[104] Ron Viney worked for Peace action in Thokoza during the violence and also represented the National Monuments Council in the Thokoza memorial projects during its planning and erection. (Interviewed by the writer).

She stated that after the violence she had suffered post-traumatic stress herself and had to get medical attention. This was a result of witnessing the blood of young boys and girls, mothers and fathers, and everyone who passed through her surgery, at the hospital and on the streets during the violence on a daily basis as a medical practitioner[105]. It was against this backdrop that she nurtured a desire to contribute to the establishment of a conspicuous memorial inclusive of all affected groups. Such a memorial should transcend the divide of political ideology and past differences in the community.

According to her, such a structure would assist in addressing emotional pains from the past more effectively than normal medical procedures since it would exist forever and be a testimony to everyone about the horrors of political hostilities and wars. Key to the effectiveness of the memorial is that it should be constructed in an inclusive manner such that everyone would be able to identify with it. She said that she was prepared to join hands with anyone who shared her vision of the commemorating the casualties of the Thokoza violence[106]. She met with the TPDC in the beginning of 1998, and shared her thoughts with them on the matter. This is however contradicted by Reverend John Khumalo who stated categorically that the TPDC were the ones who conceived and advertised the idea of the memorial in the press, and that other interested parties including Mojapelo, appeared on the scene after seeing the issue in the newspapers[107]. According to him Mojapelo, like the ANC, IFP, SDUs, SPU and all other stakeholders

[105] Dr. Margaret Mojapelo: The director of the Thokoza memorial project: Interviewed by K.P. Mokwena on 5 March 2000.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Rev. John Khumalo (Deputy Director TMF), interviewed by Mokwena K.P., 13 May 2000.

came to discuss the issue with them in the beginning of 1998 onwards as a follow-up to the newspaper article.

This led to the establishment of the Thokoza Monument Foundation (TMF), which was tasked with coordinating and facilitating the project, of which Mojapelo became the Project Director. In this forum an agreement was reached that a commemoration structure should be all-inclusive in terms of memorialisation, and would then be in a good position to commemorate and at the same time bridge the gulf created by political differences and the violence of the past in the township. Such a memorial would not only reconcile former warring parties, but would be an asset to the peace process as well[108]. Kgalema[109] and Viney[110] state that Mojapelo was involved in the memorial from the stage of conceptualisation, planning and fundraising to the actual construction and unveiling, which she confirmed in her speech for the unveiling of the Thokoza memorial[111]. She was also involved in the project as a sponsor with her surgery becoming project office.

Although all the above-mentioned stakeholders claim credit for initiating the memorial project in Thokoza, it is clear that they all had a desire to see those who lost their lives during the violence commemorated. The only difference is that each one of the parties had a different vision and approach on how to go about achieving this. After a process of

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[108] Dr. Margaret Mojapelo: The director of the Thokoza memorial project: Interviewed by K.P. Mokwena on 5 March 2000.

[109] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of Hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper published by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR).

[110] Ron Viney worked for Peace Action in Thokoza during the violence; and he also represented the National Monuments Council in the Thokoza memorial projects during its planning and erection (interview by Mokwena K.P., 4 April 2000).

consultation led by the TPDC and Dr Mojapelo, most community structures as well as political organisations in the community were drawn into participating in the project, and it is this collective approach that resulted in its ultimate success[112]. This brings one to a conclusion that although each one of these groups had a vision of its own, the Thokoza memorial is a product of a collective than the individual brain.

To me the issue of who started the memorial does not seem to be a controversy. The disagreement and many claims that Kgalema notes about the identity of the actual authors of the project, do not constitute a controversy, but point to the existence of a plethora of views on the origin of the memorial. The case is laid to rest by the fact that none of the above-mentioned claimants was able to implement its own vision alone, and the fact that the project only took shape when the TMF was established. This conclusion is supported by Ndzipho Isaac's words in the Sowetan Newspaper, 17 October 1999: '*... thanks to the selflessness of the Phenduka Displacee's Committee and other structures…*'[113]. The credit is evenly distributed, which points to the fact that the memorial was a product of collective rather than individual effort

3.4 Conceptualization of the memorial.

The first task of the TMF after its formation was to conceptualise the memorial. According to Kgalema, the following structures were represented at the meeting where the idea of memorialising the dead was discussed and endorsed for the first time in

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[111] Dr. Mojapelo Margaret: Speech for the unveiling of the Thokoza memorial, 16 October 1999.
[112] Dr. Margaret Mojapelo: The director of the Thokoza memorial project: Interviewed by K.P. Mokwena on 5 March 2000.
[113] Isaac Ndzipho, a community leader from Thokoza in Sowetan, 17 October 1999.

public: *'The ANC, IFP, South African Civics Organisation (SANCO), South African Police Services (SAPS), Alberton Town Council, Youth, Religious and Cultural organisations'*[114]. It was agreed that for the project to succeed, the ANC and IFP should be represented, since they were the parties that had been fighting during the violence, but that they should not own the project, since it belonged to the community[115] The TMF was tasked to come up with a clear concept from a myriad of the ideas that had come up in the meeting. According to Dr Mojapelo, after thrashing out the ideas at hand, it was concluded that a garden of remembrance with a central memorial was most suitable.

It was after such an agreement on that Mojapelo volunteered to conduct research on different forms of monuments and memorials nationally and internationally so as to determine a suitable structure for Thokoza. Some of the memorials she looked at were the Vietnam memorial and the Jefferson Memorials in the US; and the Hector Pietersen memorial in Soweto. The conceptualisation was done by the TMF with Mojapelo conducting the research. According to Ron Viney, Mojapelo was instrumental in the process since she went from place to place, including the offices of the National Monuments Council, inquiring about different monuments and memorials[116]. She was trying to find out how monuments and memorials were constructed and what influenced certain designs.

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[114] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of Hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper published by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR).
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ron Viney (Represented NMC in the Thokoza memorial projects during its planning and erection. Interviewed by Mokwena K.P., 4 April 2000).

3.5 Why a memorial?

There are several reasons why a memorial was important to the people of Thokoza. In the first section of this chapter we noted that the memorial in Thokoza was not born out of an individual mind, but from several individuals and organisations that had conceived of different visions. Among versions were the wall of remembrance conceptualised by the SDUs, a tombstone by the TPDC, and monuments by Dr Mojapelo and the TMF. There are several reasons why a memorial was deemed necessary and more lelevant to Thokoza, and these are some of them:

3.5.1 Remembrance.

According to the Thokoza Monuments Project Proposal, the reason for a memorial to be built was that it would be a 'special place of remembrance.[117]' In other words the memorial was built with one of the major purposes being to remember those who died during the violence. When answering the question as to why the architects of the process thought that a memorial structure would fulfil that role, Dr Mojapelo says that if the people of Thokoza were part of the process of erecting the memorial and the deceased's names were inscribed on the memorial, relatives and family members of the deceased would identify with it. The names would give to the memorial some sense of association with the deceased, their family and relatives. When people saw the memorial, it would become a reminder of the violence as a whole[118]. According to Mojapelo, this guided the

[117] Thokoza Monument Foundation project concept paper (in National Monuments Council Victims of Conflict File No: 9/2/2000/006).

[118] John Khumalo: Deputy Director TMF in Sowetan newspaper 15 October 1999.

manner in which the memorial was built, with names inscribed on it, just as a tombstone has a name. This seems to be inline with the trend set after the world wars were most memorials were designed and constructed in memory of those who died to give a message that what happened is very wrong and should not be repeated. Examples of memorials built with such intention are the Vietnam Veterans memorial in America and most holocaust memorials. The Deputy Director of the TMF, Mr John Khumalo, is quoted in the Sowetan Newspaper as saying that the memorial was a reminder of bad things that happened in the past so that they should not be repeated[119]. On the same note, Kgalema says that the authors of the project saw it fit and appropriate to remember the area's victims of violence[120]. Finally, the TMF decided that the memorial be called the Thokoza memorial or monument so that it served to remember all those who died in Thokoza. Thus one of the aims of the memorial was to remember the dead.

The memorial was also supposed to have a moral lesson that violence is not good for human life in addition to capturing the memory of that which transpiered in Thokoza[121]. Names inscribed on it served to recall the identities of people who died, the name of the memorial itself functioning as a reminder of what Thokoza went through. Pictures of people carrying a coffin were aimed at capturing the memories of endless burials during the violence. The horrifying pictures of episodes of violence, showing mutilated human body parts, corpses being dragged out of the water, some sprawling on street corners, and

[119] Sowetan Newspaper, 11 June 1998
[120] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of Hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper published by the CSVR.

[121] Rev. John Khumalo (Deputy Director TMF), interviewed by Mokwena K.P., 13 May 2000

ugly battle scenes, are kept in the memorial garden to show the intensity of the violence so that people should not forget and therefore repeat what happened. All this was done not only to capture the memories, but also to say that what happened was wrong and that it should not be repeated. The memorial was built in a beautiful garden so that it would have aesthetic appeal to the tourist.

3.5.2 Peace.

Another issue that comes out clearly as a cardinal need for the war-weary people of Thokoza, was lasting peace. Thokoza was rocked by violence for at least four consecutive years. Many of the residents lost relatives and loved ones. Others lost their properties, including houses and businesses, while education was disrupted and pupils delayed for those years. Fear reigned supreme in the township and peace became a much-needed dream. This came out clearly in the articles of several newspapers when the question was asked as to why a memorial was important e.g. the *Sowetan* and the *Star*. *The Sowetan*, 11 June 1998, quoted residents who said: **'***we hope the unveiling of this memorial will bring everlasting peace***'**[122]. The *Saturday Star*, 29 October 1998, *Mail and Guardian*, 16-22 October 1998, and *City Press*, 30 October 1998[123], carried pleas, concerns and messages from community members whose major expectation from the memorial was enduring peace. The *Mail and Guardian* ,16-22 October 1999, interviewed an anonymous shopkeeper whose business served both the hostel and the township

[122] Sowetan Newspaper, 11 June 1998.
[123] City Press, 30 October 1998.

residents. In this interview the shopkeeper stated: *'I hope the memorial will help the community to have everlasting peace'*[124].

The *Saturday Star* interviewed IFP supporters in the nearby hostel (Hezekiel Dlamini, Sibongile and Smangele Mdluli) who also voiced their conviction as follows: '*we believe the memorial will bring lasting peace since we are really tired of the violence and no-go areas'*[125]**.** They also said that they wanted peace with township residents to be sustained forever. Hezekiel Dlamini was quoted in the same paper as saying that he hoped that Shenge (Mangosutu Buthelezi, IFP leader) and Madiba (former President Mandela) could come to Thokoza and bless the peace initiative. Kgalema adds to the above views by saying that the authors of the memorial project developed the idea with the aim of sustaining the 'relative peace that was achieved after the general election'[126] It is therefore clear that the memorial was not meant only for the purpose of remembrance, but the need for peace was also a foremost imperative. Obviously, collective memorialisation itself would have been impossible when disagreements, tension and violence were still prevalent. In addition to this, my observation of the prevalent practices on memorialisation, particularly in South Africa, is that they are done after the problem or the incident to be commemorated has taken place. In line with this, it seems unlikely that those who died in violence would be commemorated when the violence was still continuing. It makes sense that the peace process comes first and then memorialisation which served the purpose of cementing the fragile peace.

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[124] Mail and Guardian, 16-22 October 1998.
[125] Saturday Star 29, October 1998.
[126] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of Hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper published by the CSVR.

3.5.3 Healing the wounds.

In addition to preserving, symbolising and sustaining the fragile peace in Thokoza, the memorial was regarded as an initiative to bring healing to the wounds caused by the violence. This is captured well in Dr Mojapelo's speech for the unveiling of the memorial in which she says that the media often ask her the question, *'Why a monument? Why not leave bygones be bygones ... through asking families to submit names of their beloved who died in the conflict, are we not exacerbating their anguish or resuscitating bad memories of the past?'*[127]

Contrary to the above negative view, Mojapelo argued that building a memorial for the victims of violence in Thokoza will not result in the exacerbation of the pains and anguish from the past. She presented her view of the matter in the following manner: '*situation in Thokoza is like a wound which was sutured still full of debris, and we know that the consequence of such mismanagement is sepsis and infection. In order to get the wound right, there must be no short cuts- the wound has to be taken to theatre for complete debridement (removal of all dirt, full irrigation with a lot of sterile water and antiseptics) - then the healing will definitely be permanent.'*[128]

Her use of a medical metaphor to dramatise the situation in Thokoza was meant to convey the message that brutality and bloodshed of the past had to be recalled in detail and recomposed in order for healing to be realised. Kgalema seems to concur with her in his proposition that the opening of the curtain covering the names of the victims during

[127] Dr Margaret Mojapelo: Speech for the Unveiling of the Thokoza memorial, Thokoza 16 October 1999.
[128] Dr Margaret Mojapelo: Speech for the Unveiling of the Thokoza memorial, Thokoza 16 October 1999.

the unveiling ceremony was psychologically important for the families of the deceased in the sense that their traumas were once more re-experienced, and now in a safe atmosphere[129]. This refers to the attainment of relief through crying, which is psychologically therapeutic, a biological way in which the body relieves itself of negative emotions through crying. This is healing on the emotional level. John Khumalo uses the words 'restoration of Thokoza to its glorious past'[130].

The restoration he is talking about is neither emotional nor physical, but it is the healing of the image of the Thokoza from being known as a slaughterhouse to a real *place of happiness*. Dr Mojapelo states that the stress levels of the people of Thokoza were very high because of the violence[131]. It is against that background she pursued the issue of a memorial strongly believing that it would contribute to total healing.

This confirms that the memorial was meant to enhance the healing processes at community level from the divisions, fear and uncertainty, a culture of violence that needed to be eradicated, and the stigma that had so tarnished the image of the township. If people from different political backgrounds and walks of life could identify with the memorial, this alone would indicate that some healing had taken place. The memorial was meant to be something all the different parties could identify with and therefore be rallying point through which peace and togetherness on communal level could be achieved.

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[129] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of Hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper published by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR).

[130] John Khumalo: Deputy Director TMF. (Coordinator TPDC) in Sowetan 15 October 1999.

3.5.4 Bringing hope.

It would not be inacurate to describe Thokoza on the eve of the first democratic elections in the country as a place and community seriously battered into hopelessness by violence. In her speech for the unveiling of the memorial, Dr Mojapelo stated that in addition to post-traumatic stress, the suicide rate had increased[132]. With education disrupted, bread winners in some families dead, unemployment levels very high, and post-traumatic stress and depression dragging people to debasement, there was a reason for people to be hopeless and suicidal. With fear and uncertainty reigning supreme, there was a need for an intervention that can address fears of residents and convince them that there was light at the end of the tunnel. The memorial seems to have been conceived to provide just that.

According to the Sowetan Newspaper, 16 October 1999, the sight of the two leaders Thabo Mbeki (ANC) and Mangosutu Buthelezi (IFP) working together in itself reinforced residents' hope for a peaceful future[133]. The fact that political organisations known to be adversaries in the past, were now prepared to put their differences aside and build a collective memorial, was itself a reason to be hopeful.

3.6 Design of the memorial

For the memorial to be built, the TMF had to make a quick decision on the kind of a memorial they wanted. Sam Theron of the TPDC was cited in the *Sowetan* Newspaper,

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[131] Mojapelo, M. (in the Sowetan Newspaper, 11 June 1998)
[132] Dr Margaret Mojapelo: Speech for the Unveiling of the Thokoza memorial, 16 October 1999.

11 March 1998, as saying that they were already inquiring from many places how other people honoured their dead[134]. Since the TMF was composed of individuals from different backgrounds with different ideas, thorough discussion and interrogation of these ideas was necessary in order to come up with a decision on the type of a memorial that would suit Thokoza and the episode of history being commemorated. It was then decided that the memorial should be a big and visible structure in the centre of a small garden of remembrance.

With regard to the actual structural design of the memorial, it was decided that information gathering research be conducted on different forms and types of memorials. The research would have to consider examples from within and outside the country. According to Ron Viney, after being given the task of conducting the research, Mojapelo came to the NMC office in 1998 inquiring about memorials[135]. Mojapelo states that as she was studying memorials in and outside South Africa, she observed that memorials commemorating black people were very few, very small and inconspicuous.

On the contrary, memorials commemorating white people and their historical events were the largest numerically, and were also big and visible. In addition, she realized that such structures were aesthetically attractive and positioned in public spaces for everyone to view and celebrate[136]. Memorials and monuments in other countries were also constructed in public spaces and not in cemeteries. This motivated the TMF to decide

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[133] Sowetan Newspaper, 16 October 1999.
[134] Sowetan Newspaper, 11 March 1998
[135] Ron Viney (interview with Mokwena K.P., 3 April 2000)
[136] Dr Margaret Mojapelo (interview with Mokwena K.P. 5 March 2000)

upon a structure that was visible enough to match the magnitude and profile of the incidents to be commemorated in Thokoza. According to Mojapelo, Thokoza did not only suffer from the violence, but also from negative publicity in the media. It was felt that erecting a small structure that is inaccessible or not visible enough would be shameful, especially after the people of Thokoza had suffered such pain and bad publicity[137].

Several considerations shaped the actual design of the memorial and the following are some of the main ones: the significance of the memorial, the need for the memorial to provide a suitable and adequate room for visitors, its function as a symbol of remembrance, peace and reconciliation, the need for durability, and the necessity that it be a public space. Since the memorial would commemorate people and not just statistics, it was decided that *a roll of honour* (names of the victims) be included on the memorial. This was the most significant part of the design, especially because of the feeling that the absence of the names of victims would make it difficult for survivors and people in general to identify with the structure[138]. It was also decided that whatever shape the memorial takes, it must be made roomy and shady enough to accommodate visitors. The pictures bearing testimony to the violence should be part of the memorial garden[139].

Mojapelo looked at the examples of the Hector Pietersen Memorial in South Africa, established to commemorate the Soweto uprising of 1976, and the Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC, commemorating American losses[140]. The former was a flat tombstone-

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[137] Dr Margaret Mojapelo (interview with Mokwena K.P. 5 March 2000)
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid
[140] Vietnam Memorial websites.

like cenotaph upon which a portrayal of the wounded Hector Pietersen in the arms of Mbuyiswa Makhubo was engraved, together with message inscriptions. The memorial was inside a small yard together with some steel containers wherein photos of the 1976 Soweto uprising were displayed. The Vietnam Memorial is a wall forming part of an historic complex on a mall in Washington DC. The wall has names of people who died in the Vietnam War inscribed on it and offers people an opportunity to interact with the names of the deceased who are thus commemorated. The wall is made of shiny and reflective granite, allowing people to see their own reflection on the memorial wall, an act symbolic of their togetherness with the deceased.

Common factors that influenced the decisions at Thokoza with regard to these memorials were that neither of them were in a cemetery or graveyard, but were in public spaces. Mojapelo also felt that they were beautiful and attractive. These findings helped the TMF to finalise its decision to put the memorial in Khumalo Street instead of the cemetery[141].

3.7 Funding of the project.

The TMF compiled a business plan for the project, explaining how the project would be run, including its financial requirements. The media was approached to help in publicising the project and its fundraising campaign. When donors learned of the project in the media and from members of the TMF, they became interested and decided to invest[142]. Mojapelo said in her speech for the unveiling: *'this project was completely*

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[141] Dr Margaret Mojapelo (interview with Mokwena K.P. 5 March 2000)
[142] Dr Margaret Mojapelo: Speech for the Unveiling of the Thokoza memorial, 16 October 1999.

donor driven ... No cash funds were involved, received or exchanged between the donors and the TMF'[143]**.**

Donors included emerging black business at the grass roots level, well-established corporate black businesses, technical executives and government. The following individuals and business groups were responsible for the funding of the memorial, according to the NMC files: The Alberton Town Council donated land on which the memorial garden is built, and the layout of the garden as well as the future maintenance of the garden. Rainbow Construction provided construction works and labour, South African Breweries (SAB) Isando plant provided concrete wall fencing and gates and Corobrick supplied bricks and pavers[144]. The National Monuments Council compiled the roll of honour and paid for the inscriptions on the memorial. It also contributed to logistical arrangements.

Mojapelo's business provided project management and implementation services, the Department of Sports Arts and Culture paid for the granite plaque, brick pavers, landscape and irrigation, while the Katorus Special Presidential Projects provided flag poles and sign writing. Transnet supplied containers for the display of pictures, Karabo Engineering, Savuka Electrical and ILM Lightening provided electricity and lighting. Thokoza Monuments Foundation Committee (TMF) were responsible for the overall planning and running of the project, the TPDC was responsible for the water connection,

[143] Kgalema, L. (1998), Symbols of hope, Dr Mojapelo M. (1999): Speech for Unveiling, NMC files 9/2/200/006

[144] Ibid.

Trees for Africa provided trees, and youth formations did general work such as the compilation of the names for roll of honour and posters. The City Press Newspaper supplied pictures of episodes of the violence in the East Rand while the Sowetan Newspaper contributed through publicising the "100 days of Goodwill" in Thokoza[145].

3.8 Actual construction of the memorial.

The Thokoza Monuments Foundation Committee planned the initial stages of the memorial. They conceptualised and developed a business plan for the project, explained what it was all about, what resources were required and developed a programme of action. After the business plan was compiled and the fundraising done through newspaper advertisements and the approaching of individual companies by members of the TMF, the next stages required technical expertise which involved drawing of the plans as required by the TMF.

The drawing of the plan was done by a local architect in conjunction with Rainbow Construction, after which the plans were presented to the TMF for approval. Then the plot of land allocated needed some cleaning and landscaping since it was a rubbish dump and this was done with the help of Mojapelo and the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture (Gauteng), and the SAB fenced the garden. The construction was done between May and July 1998. By the end of July 1998 the main structure of the memorial was complete and ready unveiling.

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[145] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of Hope: Monuments symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation**.** Occasional paper published by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR).

3.9 Conclusion.

The design, funding and construction of the Thokoza memorial demonstrate a lot of planning, adherence to making the project inclusive and a practical collaboration between community structures, government and private sector. The fact that the departure point of the memorial's designing was the commissioning of information gathering research, indicates not only seriousness on the part of communities, but it is a sign of a good planning and strategic capabilities of the project team itself. This gave the project team an opportunity to benchmark with other societies and countries.

The multifarious participation in the implementation of project and the number of funding parties could be seen as an indication of a commitment to making the project inclusive. This is demonstrated by the fact that even ordinary members of communities were involved, including the former SDUs and SPUs in miscellaneous and specialized work.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. PROBLEMS, OBSTACLES AND WAY FORWARD.

4.1 Introduction.

This chapter will look at the problems experienced in the entire memorialising project and how the memorialisation process managed to proceed in the midst of these problems. These will include problems experienced right from the conceptualisation stage, through the actual construction and unveiling of the memorial.

4.2 Painful memories

The Thokoza memorial was envisioned immediately after the 1994 general elections while wounds of the violence were still fresh and unhealed. As noted in the previous chapters, the violence had been intense, and had had enormous effect on the community during and after the violence. In addition, the situation in Thokoza was still very tense after the elections as former displacees were returning to their homes, and those who occupied those houses illegally were supposed to leave them. The situation was conducive to confrontation and resumption of hostilities. Some people were left homeless since their houses and other properties had been completely destroyed by the violence. Instead of the situation being characterised by joy, pain became the order of the day since some individuals and families realised that their relatives who had disappeared had died during the fighting.

Many people were still suffering emotional trauma as a result of the violence. Mojapelo, states that one of the major problems that threatened not only the project but the precarious peace in the community as well, was the recurrence of painful memories which came as a result of of the violence and hatred[146]. According to her, at the embryonic stage of the project already, a threatening problem ensued as a result of the SDUs refusing the idea of an all inclusive memorial. Their argument was that they could not share a memory pedestal with IFP members whom they accused of being responsible for killing people during the violence. Among those who held to such strong views was a young man who witnessed the massacre of his entire family by hostel dwellers during the violence[147].

This youth argued and pleaded with Dr Mojapelo and other TMF members, saying that he would feel insulted if his family members, who were politically non-aligned and innocent victims of Inkatha, were put on the same platform with their murderers. His colleagues in the SDU supported him, and adopted his view as their approach towards memorialisation. Since the youth were stakeholders in the project, for it to succeed it was imperative that their voices were not ignored. Ignoring them would have been read as a deliberate move to sideline them. In addition to that, it was not only the SDUs who suffered serious loss and pain in the past, but the SPUs as well.

[146] Dr Margaret Mojapelo: Director of the TMF, interview with Mokwena K.P., 5 March 2000.
[147] Ibid.

The greatest challenge facing those who were in the forefront of this project was how to encourage people to forget the past and work for the future; how to convince them to bury the hatchet and let bygones be bygones; and how to get former warring belligerents to see each other as part of one community that needed peace. It might be easy to put such a message across superficially, but not to make it sink into people's hearts that had become reservoirs of pain, sad memories and even hatred. The major problem was the existence of what seemed to be a psychological barrier in the form of painful memories of loss hindering people from forgiving each other easily.

Sandile Memela (in Sunday Times 29 November 1998) described the political and psychological atmosphere in Thokoza at that time as: *'soaked in the memory of the innocent children, fathers and mothers who were hacked and shot to death in senseless violence that has scarred the history of the nation.*[148]*'* He was suggesting that the memorial was being erected in an atmosphere still characterised by memories of pain and loss. Pain combined with feelings of hatred and political divisions created a potentially explosive situation that could have sabotaged the project and initiatives for peace. Yet the approach of the authors of the memorial was to come up with a memorial that would neither be partisan nor divisive[149], a memorial that would restore Thokoza to a unified community and maintain the precarious peace.

The standpoint of the SDUs and the SPUs proved to be a total contradiction to the aims of the memorialisation process as propagated by the TMF, that is, to unite Thokoza

[148] Memela Sandile (in the Sunday Times 29 November 1998)

through the memorial. The gravity of the problem was felt by other role players in the project who discerned the need for speedy intervention to avoid a situation where the polarisation could have resulted in two separatec memorials being built in the same location. Such a move could have perpetuated the existing political animosity and torpedoed the long term peace process. The intervention came from the Thokoza Monument Foundation (TMF) who deployed Dr Mojapelo in the beginning of 1998 to hold serious talk with the leadership of the SDUs on the matter[150]. Together with the TPDC, she talked to organisations such as the SDUs, SPUs, the ANC and the IFP, who were also resisting collective memorialisation.

Mojapelo states that it took serious explanation on her side to get them to understand the need for a memorial that covered the community as a whole, and the dangers of the approach they (SDUs and SPUs) were demanding. Although their standpoint was reasonable and it was also understandable for them to be angry, the future of Thokoza and its peace process was largely dependant on the success of united efforts and initiatives. The memorial needed to be handled as a combined effort of all stakeholders so as to redress mistakes of the past that caused the divisions. Even though the painful memories were still there, a peaceful future was very important for everyone.

Mojapelo is quoted in the *Sunday Times* (29 November 1998) as saying: *'We suffered violence and felt the loss as a community... it was very important that this project*

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[149] Kgalema L. (1999) symbols of hope : Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper written for the CSVR, October 1999.

[150] Memela Sandile (Sunday Times, 29 November 1998.)

transcends petty political differences and that we rally around it as a community[151].'

After much debate, reasoning and persuasion by the TPDC and Mojapelo, the SDUs, the ANC, IFP and everyone else agreed to let go of the past divisions, while it was acknowledged that the pain and differences in opinion might not necessarily stop[152]. The TMF and community leaders knew that healing the wounds was going to be a long process but with a collective effort by former enemies in the form of a memorial, the community would at least have taken a major step towards reconciliation and peace.

4.3 Divisions within Thokoza as a community.

The other problems that threatened the success of the project were the divisions that existed in Thokoza. We noted in the second chapter that political differences together with other factors had left Thokoza divided, a situation that also contributed to violence. The divisions that existed before and during the violence continued even after it had stopped[153]. The idea of a memorial came when these divisions were still in existence. This proved to be costly for the progress of the project. No go zones still existed.

4.4 ANC-IFP differences

The violence on the East Rand was attributed to the war between the ANC and the IFP for political and territorial domination. The ANC and the IFP were still not on good terms

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151 Sunday Times, 29 November 1998.
152 Sunday Times, 29 November 1998.
153 Ibid.

when the project started and this was going to be the first time that they had been brought into close cooperation, particularly on a project with such political sensetivities. It was decided to include both parties as major stakeholders in the project because of the role they played in the violence being commemorate[154]. The two differed radically on many issues concerning the process. For instance, the ANC, just like their SDUs, were initially not comfortable with the idea of an all-inclusive memorial. They wanted their own memorial, which would commemorate their own members, while the IFP also had their own opinions on memorialisation[155].

The two groups also differed radically on the issue of the name to be given to the memorial. The ANC members wanted the memorial to be named after one of their many heroes, Sam Ntuli, who was murdered by unknown gunmen during the violence[156]. He had been a civic leader and member of the ANC during those difficult times and was known to have masterminded most of the rent boycotts and the emergence of community security groups. The IFP refused to accept the name, arguing that it would make the memorial sound as if it were representing the ANC alone[157]. The TMF recognised the problem and decided that the memorial be called the Thokoza Memorial to avoid unnecessary contestations[158].

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[154] Dr Margaret Mojapelo, interview with Mokwena K.P. March 2000.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Kgalema L. (1999): Symbols of hope : Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper written for the CSVR, October 1999.
[158] Ibid.

A stage of the project delayed most by the political differences between these organisations was the unveiling, which had to be postponed three times in one year.[159] The two insisted that the memorial be unveiled by their national leaders (former State President Nelson Mandela and Buthelezi President of the IFP), even though the memorial was supposed to be a non-partisan community initiative. This delayed the unveiling many times since these leaders were also not readily available for the unveiling. Petty squabbles between the two organisations cost the project valuable time, energy and resources. It took strength and determination on the part of the TMF to map a way forward in the midst of such problems.

4.5 SDUs-SPUs

Apart from the ANC-IFP differences, their SDUs and SPUs also had their own differences. These were the parties who had fought most during the violence. One would not expect them to be in good terms with one another, particularly in a tense situation like this. Their differences on this issue were witnessed by several individuals, including Dr Mojapelo and Mrs Nomsa Maseko, the former Mayor of Greater Alberton. According to Maseko, the two former enemies came to see the Council to ask for a piece of land for a memorial. The Council could not grant their requests because of the glaring differences between the two. They were told to go and settle those and then come back prepared to smoke a peace pipe.

[159] Kgalema L. (1999): Symbols of hope : Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper written for the CSVR, October 1999.

4.6 Complaints from other political organisations

Apart from the problems discussed above, there were other sources of delays in the project. Political organisations such as the PAC, AZAPO and UDM were not represented in the TMF since some of them had only a few members in Thokoza and no offices. Some of these members did not attend community meetings where the project was discussed. Long after the project took off the ground, reprsentatives of such parties would appear from nowhere and demand representation[160]. This delayed progress and had to be addressed urgently through discussions with such individuals and groups. The TMF did not want them suppressed as that would have resulted in some communities and individuals being alienated from the memorial, which would have undermined the credibility of the process.

It was agreed that everyone should be allowed to have a voice in the project and organisations such as the PAC, AZAPO, UDM, and SACP acquired representation[161]. It was agreed that since the project was not meant for peace alone, but also for reconciling whatever differences might exist in the community, all organisations should therefore be represented. This would help to correct a perception of the project as serving the interests of a few individuals. Roping them into the project was also a time consuming and delaying process since they had to be briefed on all aspedts of the project.

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[160] Dr Margaret Mojapelo: Project Director TMF, telephone interview with Mokwena K.P., 14 April 2000.

[161] Ibid.

4.7 Acquisition of land

One of the major requirements for the construction of a memorial garden as spelt out by the project plan was a piece of land. According to the Chairperson of the Thokoza Phenduka Displacees Committee (TPDC) Mr Sam Theron, a delegation from the TMF approached the Alberton Town Council on the 6 April 1998 to ask for a plot of land on which a memorial could be built[162]. According to him, the delegation consisted of Mojapelo (Project Director), Louis Sibeko (ANC Thokoza Chairperson), Sam Theron (TPDC Chairperson) and Rev John Khumalo (TPDC coordinator, and TMF Deputy Project Director). The Alberton Town Council was initially reluctant to give the land. According to Mojapelo, in the past the Council had always dragged its feet when it came to delivery in black communities[163]. The council did not want involve and they kept on complaining about shortage of budget.

It was only after the intervention of the National Monuments Council (NMC) who wrote a letter to explain to the Council the significance of the project in Thokoza, and urged them to allocate the land, that the Council agreed. The letter was written by the then Chairperson of the War Graves Committee of the National Monuments Council, Dr Bill Nassen. Some members of the Council like John Matshikiza were also very supportive and it was through their persuasion that the land was finally acquired[164].The allegation that the council was reluctant and that it dragged its feet when requested to provide land

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[162] Sam Theron (Chairperson of the TPDC) in Kgalema (1999): Symbols of Hope)
[163] Dr Margaret Mojapelo: (Project Director TMF) interviewed by Mokwena K.P., 5 March 2000.
[164] Ibid.

was dismissed by the Town Council who argued that they did not give TMF any problems with regard to the allocation of a site[165]. An official of the Council was quoted in the Sunday Times, 29 November 1998 saying that they provided the site and even offered to take charge of the maintenance of the garden in the future through its Department of Parks who would also dedicate an annual budget for memorial garden[166]. There are question on whether the council did fulfil all their promises of landscaping and maintaining the memorial garden as we will see other parties disputing this latter.

According to Kgalema, the following were the three sites identified for the project: site one was at the central part Khumalo Street between the stadium and the Youth Centre, sites two was located next to the taxi rank at the south end of Khumalo Street, and site three was situated next to the Schoeman Cemetery[167]. The site located along Khumalo Street between the stadium and the Youth Centre was considered the most suitable due to the following reasons: first, because it was where most of the battles took place, secondly, because it was close to Khumalo Street which was considered central to the history of the violence, thirdly because the site was accessibility to a greater part of Thokoza, and lastly, because it was close to two other public spacees namely, the stadium and the Youth Centre. According to Mojapelo, this was necessary due to the fact that the memorial garden was designed to be a public space itself[168].

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[165] Sunday Times, 29 November 1998.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Kgalema, L. (1999) Symbols of hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper written for the CSVR, October 1999.
[168] Dr Margaret Mojapelo: (Project Director TMF) interviewed by Mokwena K.P., 5 March 2000.

As I stated earlier, the Alberton Town Council had promised to take responsibility for the landscaping and maintenance of the site, their immediate task was to transform the sites from a rubbish dump into usable well landscape garden[169]. This created another problem since the Council did not landscape the site as promised. When the TMF inquired why the promise had not been fulfilled, the Department Of Urban Planning and Community Services argued that it had never been given instructions to do so[170]. It also complained about lack of funds. The Council also demanded that the TMF pay for a water connection into the site even though the site was municipal land, hence the TPDC paid for the water (see next paragraph).

The National Monuments Council was once more requested to pressurise the Alberton Town Council to keep its promises and take the project seriously[171]. In the meantime, Mojapelo used her own funds to hire machinery to come and level the ground. The TPDC donated two sums of money into the project amounting to R2 400. The first amount was R1 600, available for any use in the project, and then another sum of R800 for connecting water into the site. After this amount was used, what remained of it went into the TMF treasury[172]. This seems to contradict earlier statement by Mojapelo, that no cash was exchanged between TMF members and funders. The Gauteng Provincial Government and the Department of Sports Arts and Culture also helped financially for the landscaping.

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[169] Kgalema, L. (1999) Symbols of hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper written for the CSVR, October 1999.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Beater, J. Manager of War Graves Division, interviewed by Mokwena K.P, 13 May 2000
[172] Kgalema, L. (1999) Symbols of hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper written for the CSVR, October 1999

4.8 Role of the media

The media contributed to the project by publicising it, particularly during the fundraising stage. However, they also seemed to have contributed some problems and complications for the project. Several people involved in the project and independent commentator agree that there were times when the media fabricated untrue stories about the project. According to Kgalema, there were instances where the media publicised allegations that suggested that money had been embezzled or misappropriated by Mojapelo[173]. Both Kgalema and Mojapelo, argue that the allegations were publicised without enough investigation on how the project was run. This almost caused serious problems not only for the TMF, but also for Mojapelo. It resulted in a situation where certain communities approached the TMF members demanding to know how funds were used after such allegations were published by the media about a lot of money that had been pumped into the project. This led Mojapelo's complete withdrawal from the project[174].

According to Mojapelo, the media blew to proportion the whole issue of differences among members of the TMF. She lamented that the media had been made aware that the project was donor driven in manner that they (donors) supplied building material, and that no cash was exchanged between the TMF and donors, and yet the media continued to talk about misused funds[175]. She considered this to be a deliberate and destructive misrepresentation of the facts, intended to harm certain individuals.

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[173] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper written for the CSVR, October 1999.
[174] Ibid.

On the other hand, contrary to Mojapelo's view, Wilson Nchangase of the IFP considered the suspicion of funds misappropriation as presented by the media to be reasonable since it was an indication of the situation existing among community members[176]. To him, the project was not run in a transparent way. He complained that the Project Director kept transactions from him even though he was the Treasurer. What the media said was not fabrication, but a reflection of dissatisfaction among community members and some members of the TMF, including himself. Mojapelo was quoted in the Sunday Times, 29 November 1998, arguing that Nchangase as the Treasure r of the Project knew very well that the project was donor driven and there was therefore no cash to be misappropriated[177]. She further argued that the media should have had the decency to investigate thoroughly before they published such damaging allegations, hazardous to the project and the peace initiatives[178].

Ron Viney who represented the NMC also supported the view that the media did a lot of damage by blowing minor disagreements out of size and thereby creating confusion among communities involved[179]. According to him, one example was when the media reports claimed the misappropriation of funds and that Dr Mojapelo was bulldozing her way forward without consulting others, which according to him was not a true reflection of the situation at all. Such allegations delayed and threatened the project since they led to the suspension of the TMF[180].

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[175] Sunday Times, 29 November 1998.
[176] Nchangase, Wilson (in Kgalema, L. 1999: Symbols of hope)
[177] Mail and Guardian, 16-22 October 1998
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ron Viney (interview with Mokwena K.P, 3 April 2000)
[180] Ibid.

4.9 Squabbles between members of the TMF.

The TMF did not finish its work on the memorial because of internal fights and disagreements. As the project neared its conclusion, the TMF became embroiled in further problems, most of which were born of internal squabbles such as competing amongst themselves for credit regarding the success of the project[181]. Some members of the TMF accused the Project Director of using the memorial to achieve her own ambitions and stated that she was bulldozing her way forward without consulting with them[182]. In addition to that, she was also accused of withholding from other members an invitation for a seminar about the Thokoza Monument, hosted by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR). From amongst the TMF Committee it was only Mojapelo who was afforded the opportunity to speak. This raised serious concerns among colleagues in the TMF.

Mojapelo was also blamed for not revealing financial transactions to her colleagues in the projects throughout the entire process, especially the treasurer of the TMF, Wilson Nchangase who complained that as treasurer he had a reason to feel marginalised, since the Project Director handled all transactions alone[183]. He complained that he been marginalised from all transactions involving project donations and these allegations made the IFP and TPDC to suspect that maybe there was misappropriation of funds[184].

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[181] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper written for the CSVR, October 1999.
[182] Ron Viney (interview with Mokwena K.P, 3 April 2000)

[183] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper written for the CSVR, October 1999.
[184] Ibid.

Mojapelo states that she then withdrew from the project completely to allow other TMF members to run it, and to avoid the project being sabotage by unnecessary disagreements[185]. This further delayed the unveiling of the memorial prompting the Alberton Town Council and the Gauteng Government to step in and suspend the TMF from the project. Ironically, it was the Alberton Town Council that had displayed an attitude of indifference and had played hard-to-get tactics when the project was at its inception.

The TMF was replaced by a new structure known as the Thokoza Monument Council (TMC) made of representatives of the Alberton Town Council, Gauteng Provincial Department Sports, Arts and Culture, the ANC and TPDC and the IFP. The TMC's primary task was to organise the unveiling of the memorial before the country's second democratic elections in June 1999. This failed to materialise and the new government under Thabo Mbeki came into power before the memorial was unveiled. According to Mojapelo, TMC did not succeed in getting the memorial unveiled since they did not have the information required by the presidency in order for the President to come and unveil the memorial[186]. The TMC therefore called her to come back and lead the process again[187].

[185] Dr Margaret Mojapelo (Project Director TMF) interview with Mokwena K.P., 5 March 2000.

[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.

4.10 Conclusion.

In spite of problems relating to personality clashes amongst members of the TMF, the media presentation of both the conflict and memorial process, the continued prevalence of rivalries often manifesting in the form of suspicions, and the challenges around mobilising all players and keeping them focused as noted in this chapter, the memorial was finally completed. This was great dividend of the undying determination of the parties involved, and the timely intervention of the Gauteng Government, the Greater Alberton Town Council and the presidency.

CHAPTER FIVE.

5. UNVEILING OF THE THOKOZA MEMORIAL

5.1 Introduction.

This chapter will look at the unveiling process right from the original unveiling plans, several attempts that followed, up to the day of the unveiling. It will include the planning of the process and the reasons why the first few attempts did not materialise. Finally the chapter will give a brief picture of the unveiling ceremony and its activities.

5.2 Original plans for unveiling and first postponement

When the memorial project took off in 1998, the plan was to finish the building of the memorial before Youth Day, 16 June 1998, which was to be the date of the unveiling[188]. Even though the idea of a memorial had existed in the minds of some organisations and individuals in Thokoza since 1994, the actual process of memorialisation, including the planning and actual construction of the memorial, was only set in motion in the beginning of 1998. According to the Thokoza Monument Proposal, the Programme of Action for the memorial was supposed to be as follows[189]:

[188] (NMC file No 9/2/2000/0006)
[189] Ibid.

1. The Project Committee and delegation of duties (Date not specified.)
2. Invitation to stakeholders and briefing (Date not specified.)
3. Application for site from the Alberton Town Council (10 February 1998.)
4. Proclamation of site as Monument (March 1998.)
5. Architectural drawings and designs (Date not specified.)
6. Invitation to sponsors (financing options) (Date not specified)
7. Other financing options (community collections) (Date not specified.)
8. Roll of honour to be drawn up and completed (End of March 1998).
9. Logo competition to be completed by high schools (End of March 1998.)
10. Invitation to dignitaries (Date not specified.)
11. Drawing up of programme-final (April 1998.)
12. Garden layout, design and planting of trees (21 April 1998.)
13. Fencing of the site (April 1998.)
14. Erection of the memorial (April-May 1998.)
15. General (last minutes touch-ups) (Date not specified.)
16. Unveiling of the monument (memorial) (16 June 1998.)
17. Closure of the project.

By 16 June 1998 the memorial had not been unveiled because it was not finished. It seems that the plan and its time frame had been unrealistic given the magnitude of the project. The Programme of Action included a number of detailed processes, for example fundraising, community awareness and lobbying for support, planning, design, and finally the erection and unveiling. In addition, the memorial was supposed to have names of the deceased engraved on it and these names were not readily available. Some people were still counted as missing and not confirmed dead[190]. According to Maria Saino, who

[190] Dr Margaret Mojapelo (Project Director TMF) interview with Mokwena K.P., 5 March 2000.

was conducting research on names of the casualties of the Thokoza violence, given the gaps around the cases of missing people and those who were confirmed dead, it was unlikely that by 16 June 1998 enough names would have been available for the roll of honour[191]. It was clear that the process of collecting names was going to take a long time. The divisions in the township and disagreements amongst role players made the process much longer than expected as well[192]. To actually think that the whole project could be completed in less than six months was overambitious, an underestimation of the complexity of the project and the work to be done. By 16 June 1998 the monument was not yet finished and thus could not be unveiled[193]. Instead, the date was used for the launching of the memorial project. This took place at the Thokoza auditorium from where a parade proceeded to the memorial site[194].

The launch included the unveiling of a placard about the project at the site and speeches by the Project Directors, Donors and the Mayor of Greater Alberton. A new date, 24 September 1998, was set for the unveiling of the memorial. It was decided that the then President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, and the IFP leader Mangosutu Buthelezi, should be part of the unveiling ceremony. The aim of inviting them was to use their presence to cement the precarious peace process in the township. This was, however, seen by other people in the township as an unnecessary politicisation of a community

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[191] Saino, M. (1998): Unpublished document on the Thokoza peace initiative (NMC file No 9/2/2000/0006)
[192] Ibid.
[193] Kgalema, L.(1999). Symbols of hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper published by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR).
[194] Ibid.

project[195], which proved to be the case since the absence of the politicians in question contributed to the postponement of the unveiling of the memorial on several occassions.

However, local politicians and those at the forefront of the project deemed it important for the ANC and the IFP to be granted the right to have their leadership coming to officiate at the unveiling ceremony because of the fact that they were the two major role players in both the violence and the project. Furthermore, their presence was necessary for the sustenance of the peace process in the township. It was felt that, if the two political parties were sidelined, they might undermine both the project and the peace process since they had strong following in Thokoza. It was also agreed that even though the two organisations had been allowed more say in the project, they should not be allowed to own the project, since it belonged to the people of Thokoza as a whole.

5.3 Second postponement.

By 24 September 1998 the memorial was ready to be unveiled. Problems arising from an incomplete list of names for the roll of honour had been sorted out. It was decided that the roll of honour be handled in an incremetalist manner allowing it to go beyond the date of unveiling. The process of collecting names had yielded about 600 names at that point in time, and it was therefore decided that the memorial be unveiled with available names. It was also resolved that names collected after the unveiling would be added to the list at a later stage.

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[195] Star , 29 October 1998.

The second unveiling date, Heritage day 1998, did not materialise due to the fact that both, Mandela and Buthelezi were not available for the occasion due to other commitments[196]. This was a result of the fact that the invitations for the two were sent out just a month before the unveiling date. According to Kgalema, the TMF leadership had had serious internal squabbles amongst themselves about who should chair the proceedings and this had delayed the planned programme including the sending out of the key invitations[197]. The two leaders were known to be very busy at the time and it was unlikely that such a late invitation such as this would have found room in their tight schedules[198].

This was disputed by Mojapelo who argued that the problem was not the invitations, but the fact that the local IFP refused to accept any replacement for Buthelezi who had stated that he would not be available at that period[199]. He offered to send Minister Ben Skhosana as a replacement for Shenge (Buthelezi) and demanded that the unveiling be postponed. President Mandela planned to send his Deputy, Thabo Mbeki, to the unveiling. The ANC wanted Mandela or Mbeki and not the provincial leaders. Because of the unavailability of Buthelezi, therefore, the unveiling was postponed for another month to 17 October 1998.

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[196] Kgalema, L.(1999). Symbols of hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper published by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR).
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Dr Margaret Mojapelo (Project Director TMF) interview with Mokwena K.P., 5 March 2000

This led to complaints from community members who felt that political organisations were sabotaging their initiatives[200]. They lamented that even though the project belonged to the local communities, it seemed as if these communities did not have any say in it. This also led to questions about the validity of claims that the project was community owned[201]. If the project really belonged to the community, why did political organisations not allow the community members, their local or provincial leaders, to unveil the memorial? If these organisations were concerned about peace in the community, why were they blocking all the initiatives for peace by insisting on the presence of their national leaders, who might not be available for the occasion?

5.4 Third postponement.

Concerning the third date for unveiling, the hindrances are said to have arisen from within the TMF leadership, especially the Thokoza Phenduka Displacees Committee (TPDC) and the IFP[202] who were said to have demanded their coordinator, John Khumalo to be given a platform to speak in the unveiling ceremony. According to the City Vision (City Press) 30 October 1998, the TPDC wanted Khumalo to address the community as the father of the monument, which was not allowed by other members of the TMF[203]. Mojapelo was quoted in the same paper as saying that the memorial was not about the pampering of certain individuals' egos, but was a community thing. Only the names of those who died would appear on the memorial. Mojapelo states that she said this because certain structures wanted their names to be written on the memorial as the originators of

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[200] Star , 29 October 1998.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.
[203] City Vision (City Press) 30 October 1998.

the memorial[204]. She said that she felt that such a move would glorify certain individuals at the expense of the broader community.

When the TPDC realised that John Khumalo was not on the programme to address the community, they felt that certain elements within the TMF had deliberately sidelined him[205]. They agitated for postponement[206]. On the other hand the IFP were still demanding that only Buthelezi should speak on behalf of their organisation. Since he was not available also for this occasion, they decided that the unveiling should be postponed. The ANC were still sticking to their guns, that only Mandela or Thabo should be invited from their ranks to come for the unveiling of the ceremony.

This prompted Kgalema to comment that:
'If the project belongs to the community as all had claimed, it is hard to understand why the process was held at ransom by the absence of political leaders.[207]'

Kgalema's use of the words '*held to ransom*' makes sense is that the endless postponement of the unveiling of the memorial impacted negatively on the community since they could not visit the memorial to lay wreaths for their loved ones who had died in the violence. After the last unsuccessful attempt to unveil the memorial, the Project Director withdrew from the project. She was quoted in Kgalema as saying: *'I withdrew at the right time.'*[208] This followed internal disputes with other members of the TMF as presented in the previous chapter. The squabbles centred on accusations that Mojapelo

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[204] Dr Margaret Mojapelo, (TMF. Project Director) in an interview with Mokwena K.P., 5 March 2000.
[205] Ibid.
[206] City Vision (City Press) 30 October 1998
[207] Dr Margaret Mojapelo, (TMF Project Director, interviewed by Mokwena KP, 5 March 2000).
[208] Kgalema, L.(1999). Symbols of hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper published by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR).

wanted to use the memorial to achieve her personal ambitions and that she sidelined other members including the treasurer Wilson Nchangase. She was also accused of misappropriation of funds and keeping from other members of the TMF an invitation for a seminar about the Thokoza memorial held at the Centre for the study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) in Braamfontein Johannesburg. According to Mojapelo, she withdrew to allow the community to handle the project on its own. After her withdrawal, the project was left in the hands of remaining members of the TMF who also did not make any headway with regard to the much-awaited unveiling ceremony.

5.5 Dissolution of the Thokoza Memorial Foundation (TMF)

After the Project Director had withdrawn from its activities, the remaining members of the TMF did not seem to make any progress with regard to the unveiling ceremony, and in addition the media continued to publicise endless controversial and negative stories about the project. As seen in the previous chapter, the Alberton Town Council and the Gauteng Provincial Government stepped in and suspended the TMF, barring it from participation in the memorial processes.

In its place an interim structure, the TMC, was established (see chapter 4). It was made up of the following representatives; Rev John Khumalo (TPDC), Mr Tebogo Nchike (ANC), Ms Primila Hamid (PRO Alberton Town Council), Mr Eddie Maloka (Gauteng Premier's Office), Mr Wilson Nchangase (IFP Thokoza representative), Gustuv Tselapedi (Gauteng Department of Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation) and Mr Benard Nikani

(Councillor and Convener). The task given to this structure was to get the memorial unveiled by early 1999. According to Kgalema, the committee was supposed to see to it that the memorial was unveiled before the country's second democratic elections on the 2nd of June 1999. The office of the Premier of Gauteng was tasked to co-coordinate the diaries of Mbeki and Buthelezi who were going to unveil the monuments.

However, this plan did not materialise due to the fact that the plan coincided with a busy period in which the national election campaigns was taking place (September 1998 and June 1999). Bringing the two leaders together before the election could have been a threat to the reconciliation process since the leaders were engaged in canvassing and the situation was a bit tense during the campaigns. It seems the premier's office realised that and decided to wait until the elections were over so that the unveiling would take place under politically sober atmosphere and conditions.

5.6 Final arrangements.

When the diaries of Mbeki and Buthelezi were finally coordinated to accommodate the date of unveiling, 16 October 1999, concluding arrangements for the unveiling were set in motion. The IFP sent Themba Khoza, while the ANC sent Obed Bapela to handle the preparations. According to Mojapelo, Bapela and Khoza demanded to see all documents relating to the running of the project (plans, transactions and so forth), which the TMC could not provide, since they were a new grouping, and the former members of the TMF who were now in the TMC did not hold any records. None of them could give a detailed

account of how the project had been run. Finally the TMC told the two leaders to inquire from Mojapelo who as former Project Director had kept records of all transactions[209].

After Mojapelo had produced the records and explained how the project had been run from the beginning up to its conclusion, the representatives from the IFP and ANC were satisfied that no money had been misappropriated. They decided that Mojapelo should now come back and take over where she had left off in the preparations for the unveiling[210]. That is how she was roped into the project again.

The duty given to Mojapelo and members of the TMC at this stage was to make preparations for the ceremonial occasion These included plans for processions from the Auditorium, where speeches would be made, to Khumalo Street for its official reopening, then to the stadium and finally to the memorial garden. Other aspects of the preparations included entertainment, accommodation of the many people who would be attending the unveiling of the memorial, and arrangement for traffic control and security (police and defence).

These issues did not necessarily fall into Mojapelo's hands as an individual, but members of the community were called to task as well. The TMC was supposed to play the pivotal role, particularly because this event involved the attendance of the President of the country and many other dignitaries. This required specialists' expertise in events

[209] Dr Margaret Mojapelo, (TMF Director) Interviewed by Mokwena K.P. 5 March 2000.
[210] Ibid.

management, especially in the area of security[211]. All of these relevant preparations had been made by 16 October 1999.

5.7 Unveiling ceremony 16 October 1999

When the 16th of October 1999 finally dawned, Thokoza became the Mecca of South African dignitaries and ordinary people across the social spectrum. It was 'all roads lead to Thokoza' that morning. Politicians, media, business, church organisations, sponsors, ordinary people and surviving victims and relatives of the deceased converged at the Thokoza stadium. Former enemies and friends came together for this historic occasion. Among those who attended were President Thabo Mbeki, Minister Mangosutu Buthelezi, Mr Sam Shilowa (Premier of Gauteng Province), Mr Jacob Zuma (Deputy State President), Obed Bapela, the late Themba Khoza, Thabo Masebe (Spokesperson for Gauteng Premier), Mondli Gungubele (MEC for Sports, Arts and Culture in Gauteng), Dr Margaret Mojapelo (Project Director TMF), Rev John Khumalo (TMF Deputy Director) and Mr Sam Theron (spokesperson of the Displacees).

Organisations attending the ceremony included NMC, TPDC, CSVR, Khulumani Support Group, SANCO, IFP, ANC, PAC, AZAPO, UDM, Alberton Town Council, Thokoza Resident Association and former members of the SDUs and the SPUs. There were several other small organisations and business groups attending the ceremony as well. Members

[211] Dr Margaret Mojapelo, (TMF. Director) Interviewed by Mokwena K.P. 5 March 2000

of media such as the Sowetan, The Star, Beeld, Citizen, Mail and Guardian, the SABC TV and Radio were also present[212].

5.8 Opening of Khumalo Street.

The mood of the day was characterised by a combination of tears of joy and pain since the day was an occasion of remembrance of the painful past where people had lost relatives and loved ones. The day started with the opening of Khumalo Street which had become a no-go zone during the violence. This was the street that had made headlines on countless occasions at the height of the violence. Since that time Khumalo Street had been regarded with fear. People were reluctant to walk along it. Although people had started using the street since the situation had returned to normal, public transport still followed other routes instead of Khumalo Street, although it was the main connecting road to other townships in the south, and the main routes to cities (see chapter two).

In the morning of the 16th of October, Mbeki and Buthelezi officially opened the street for use marking an official end to its no-go-zone status[213]. The celebration started with a parade along Khumalo Street from north to south, where the memorial and the stadium are situated. Police and traffic control vehicles formed two columns flanking the vehicles transporting dignitaries. The sound of music accompanying the drum majorettes provided entertainment for the people who were marching. A symbolic peace was signed between

[212] Kgalema, L.(1999). Symbols of hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation. Occasional paper published by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR).

the two leaders representing their organizations, marking the end of hostilities between the ANC and the IFP in the area and perhaps throughout the country. The signing of an agreement also marked the official reopening of Khumalo Street. This ritual symbolizing reconciliation was met with ululation and cheers of approval from the huge crowd witnessing the events[214].

5.9 Memorial unveiling (Cenotaph)

After the opening of the Khumalo Street, the parade proceeded to the memorial garden where the main proceedings were to take place. The small memorial garden was overcrowded with people, some of whom had come all the way from Kwazulu Natal. White garden chairs were arranged attractively, with dignitaries placed on one side for security reasons. They were followed by the relatives of victims and then everyone else. The crowd comprised of elderly, middle aged and youth. This part of the occasion began with a performance by South African Police Services (SAPS) Choir which was followed by the SAPS Brass band.

Obed Bapela of the ANC was the Master of Ceremonies, assisted by Themba Khoza of the IFP. The performance by the SAP choirs was followed by a sermon from a local Pastor, taken from the First Book of Samuel, Chapter 7 and Verse 12. The Pastor used this scripture to make a symbolic comparison with an occasion in the Bible where the Israelites laid down a stone as a remembrance and symbol of their gratitude to God for

[213] Thokoza memorial unveiling ceremony: video record of the function.

protecting them. They named the memorial stone *Ebenezer*'**. W**hen translated the words or statement *Ebenezer*' means 'up to this far you have kept us safe God[215]'. The Pastor ended his sermon by saying that the people of Thokoza who survived the violence should say to God: '*you have kept us safe up to this far*'[216].

The sermon was followed by the National Anthem rendered by the SAP Brass band and Choir. After the singing, the President of the country, Mr Thabo Mbeki, and the IFP leader Mangosutu Buthelezi saluted and advanced to the memorial where they drew back the curtains veiling the names of the deceased on the memorial. Emotions were released and relatives of the victims started weeping. Then the ANC and the IFP leaders were given wreaths, the ANC leader receiving the IFP wreath and the IFP receiving that of the ANC. This was a symbol of the cooperation and togetherness that was supposed to be born out of this initiative. After the National leaders, the Mayor of Alberton, Mrs Nomsa Maseko, followed with her wreaths as municipal leader. Thereafter the relatives and family members of the deceased followed with their wreaths.

At this stage the process was very emotional. People were weeping in large numbers. Long suppressed emotions of anger were at last released in a safer environment. The atmosphere was not characterised by anger, but collective grief as could be seen by people from different political organisations sitting together and expressing similar types of emotions. It was mainly ordinary people who lost family members who were sobbing.

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[214] Thokoza memorial unveiling ceremony: video record of the function.
[215] Ibid.
[216] Ibid.

In this kind of situations where people are overcome by emotions, the divisions between the ANC and IFP did not appear to be visible at all. This prompts one to wonders as to whether ordinary people were really divided like the ANC and the IFP, whether they were not merely caught in a cross fire? This question is even more relevant when one considers the fact emotions of pain seemed to dominate the occasion more than those of anger. There was no evidence of division in the memorial garden and at the stadium as people were sitting together in grief.

5.10 Speeches.

No formal speeches were made at the memorial garden. However, Obed Bapela, the Programme Director, gave a short message telling what the ceremony was all about. He stated that the memorial belonged to the people of Thokoza as a whole and that they should be proud of their own initiative, which had finally materialised. Speeches of the day were delivered at the Thokoza stadium. President Mbeki was conciliatory in his speech as he urged the people of Thokoza and South Africa as a whole to shift their attention from divisions of the past and focus on the fact that they originate from the same sources as a people. He further encouraged people to continue in their initiatives for peace and not to allow their political differences to cause them to kill each other as witnessed in the past. Buthelezi also echoed the necessity for unity and reconciliation as opposed to societal fissures and fractures. All these speeches were made at the Thokoza stadium where the third part of the occasion took place and the unveiling ceremony ended.

5.11 Conclusion.

In spite of a variety of problems and challenges experienced in the memorialisation process in Thokoza, the memorial was finally unveiled. The emotional unveiling ceremony went on smoothly with well timed and planned speeches from the political leadership who made it a point to emphasise peace and reconciliation. All that remained was for the people of Thokoza to continue with their ideal of peace.

CHAPTER SIX

6. LESSONS FROM THE THOKOZA EXPERIENCE

6.1 Introduction.

The Thokoza memorial project, initiated in an atmosphere socked in painful memories and wide political differences worsened by five years of political violence, is one example of what a determined community can do. It is a standing example of how former political enemies can work together after several years of indiscriminate violence and distruction. Communities with similar histories of bitter political divisions and violence can learn fromThokoza. According to John Khumalo, Chairperson of the TPDC, **'** *Palestinians and the Israelites can learn a lesson or two from the Thokoza experience***.'**[217]

This chapter will therefore look at lessons other communities can learn from the Thokoza case, be they negative or positive. In addition, the chapter will also isolate pitfalls that those who want to follow on the footsteps of Thokoza in commemorating painful experiences should take into cognisance in order for their project to succeed. Although each community that had been affected by violence has its own unique set of circumstances, it remains a fact that there are certain general and specific areas of commonality where relevant lessons can be drawn inspite of the difference. The hope is that some lessons from Thokoza will be relevant to other areas with similar experiences. As an approach, this chapter will draw most of its information from what Thokoza residents and other role players in the project say they have learnt from the experience.

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[217] Reverend John Khumalo, Chairperson of the Thokoza Phenduka Displacees Committee and Deputy Director of the Thokoza Monument Foundation (TMF), interviewed by Mokwena K.P., 15 May 2000.

6.2 Differences and divisions.

Desmond Molatana, Dr Margaret Mojapelo, John Khumalo and Sam Theron are unanimous on the point that it is difficult to have one memorial structure that covers everyone's needs, particularly in a situation characterised by wide divisions, hostilities, and conflict like Thokoza. The first difficulty for a collective memorial project lies in the fact that Thokoza as a location, is by its nature a heterogeneous entity composed of people from different political, religious, cultural, economic and ethnic backgrounds. For instance, it was political and ethnic divisions that played central role in the violence that ripped the bowels of the community apart. Since these differences and divisions did not die away with the demise of violence after the 1994 election, they were the first and most obvious hurdles to surmount if this kind of conciliatory project was to succeed.

The fundamental lesson to be learnt in this regard was the need to acknowledge the existence of divisions and that they may pose difficulties in the future. Ignoring them and their ability to undermine the project would have been a colossal mistake for the project leaders. According to Khumalo, in any project of this nature, existing divisions must be addressed through carefully arranged discussions with all affected parties represented[218]. In Thokoza, one of the first areas where there were almost irreconcilable differences was on the concept of an all inclusive and collective memorial itself. This was met with stiff opposition, especially in the beginning of the project. Even the ANC is said to have opposed the idea of a collective memorial in the beginning, especially because they felt

[218] Reverend John Khumalo, Chairperson of the Thokoza Phenduka Displacees Committee and Deputy Director of the Thokoza Monument Foundation (TMF), interviewed by Mokwena K.P., 15 May 2000.

the project was going to put them on the same memorial pedestal with the IFP whom they accused of attempting to torpedo the struggle[219]. The irony is that the ANC is the same organization that received international acclaim for choosing peace to vengeance, reconciliation and nation building to narrow partisan solutions on problems of national importance, and giving amnesty to perpetrators of some of the worst atrocities in human history. Khumalo is supported by Mojapelo on the ANC's lack of cooperation, particularly the SDUs who are said to have maintained an ultra belligerent stance towards the IFP whom they accused of being enemies of liberation and change[220].

When the existence of deep divisions became apparent to the leadership of the project and proponents of a unitary memorial, a decision was taken to address the challenge as a matter of urgency. According to Kgalema, Mojapelo decided to hold serious talk with the ANC, the IFP, SDUs and SPUs and other community members to try and show them the need to have one memorial[221]. The Thokoza Phenduka Displacees Committee was involved in such efforts to get organisations to agree to one memorial for the sake of peace and reconciliation. It was only after the differences were ironed out that the project proceeded. Some of these differences did resurface at a later stage during the preparations for unveiling of the memorial as seen in the previous chapter. However, by the time this happened, the project was at a final stage and as such they could hinder its completion[222].

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[219] Ibid.

[220] Dr Margaret Mojapelo, Project Director TMF, interviewed by Mokwena K.P., 5 March 2000.

[221] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of Hope. Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation, an occasional paper written for the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR).

[222] Ndzipho Khalipha, a community leader from Thokoza, interviewed by Mokwena K.P., 15 May 2000.

In addition to that, the re-manifestation of differences took place at a time when some sense of trust between the ANC and IFP had developed.

Khalipha Ndzipho and Theron are in accord that the reason the memorialisation process succeeded in Thokoza was due to the fact that potential pitfalls such as divisions from the past were quickly identified and addressed in time.[223]. This view is supported by Desmond Molatana who said that the TMF decided that the project be run in a consultative manner[224].Khumalo states that as a way of avoiding a situation that could have plunged the project into irreconcilable difference, they agreed as the TMF that no party politics and ideals should be discussed at the meetings of the memorial project, and that no organisation's political views about the future of Thokoza were to be given a platform during project meetings[225]. This was decided upon during the process of isolating threats to the project wherein an observation was made that most of the so called problems were mere party political difference in tastes rather than anything major[226]. In conclusion, the key lesson for future projects is that divisions and conflicts need to be acknowledged and addressed before they deepen into an unmanageable stage.

6.3 Collective ownership.

In addition and related to problem of historical divisions, the other problem facing collective memorialisation in societies previously divided by violence like Thokoza is

[223] Ibid.
[224] Molatana Desmond, a member of the Civic organisation in Thokoza, interviewed by Mokwena K.P., 15 May 2000.

[225] Reverend John Khumalo, Chairperson of the Thokoza Phenduka Displacees Committee and Deputy Director of the Thokoza Monument Foundation (TMF), interviewed by Mokwena K.P., 15 May 2000.

battle for ownership of both, memory and the process of its construction. According to Mahlomola Mabote, a local Councillor resident in Thokoza, in the beginning stages of the project there was a group of residents and organizations that wanted to have exclusive ownership of the memorial project[227].

Even Mojapelo was once accused of handling the project as if it belonged to her alone, and in the same manner, she also accused the Thokoza Phenduka Displacees Committee (TPDC) of pretending to be the sole originators and owners of the memorial project[228]. This kind of attitude had the potential to obstruct inputs from other parties thereby reducing the entire project into a monopoly run without transparency and accountability to the public. If not identified and dealt with speedily, it can scare away potential investors resulting in divestment by communities. It is against this background that the TMF had to spell out clearly that the memorial project belonged to the people of Thokoza as a whole and not to individuals[229]. Everyone was encouraged to participate and this helped to rally people behind the project.[230]

The problem with collective or community ownership is it rests largely on agreement based on consensus amongst members of the collective. This can be a problem in the sense that no one can guarantee that such consensus will be achievement, especially in cases like Thokoza where people harboured feelings of hatred,towards one another. For

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[226] Ibid.
[227] Mahlomola Mabote, a local Councillor, interviewed by Mokwena K.P., 15 May 2000.
[228] Dr Margaret Mojapelo, the Project Director Thokoza Monument Foundation, interviewed by Mokwena K.P. 05 March 2000.
[229] Dr Margaret Mojapelo, the Project Director Thokoza Monument Foundation, interviewed by Mokwena K.P., 5 March 2000.
[230] Ibid.

instance, Mojapelo states that when the project started there was still a lot of distrust between role players and the first task of the TMF was to ensure that all structures work together[231]. Since battles over ownership were a potential hazards to the project, it was decided that everyone be told in no uncertain terms that the project belonged to the people of Thokoza as a community and not to any individual organization[232]. The challenge facing the leadership of the project was how to get organisations to support or be part of the project without allowing them to own it as their own individual property.

City Vision Newspaper is quoted in Kgalema as confirming that one of the reasons for the second postponement of the unveiling process was that Khumalo was not allowed to speak to the people as the father of the monument (memorial)[233]. The ANC and IFP also held the project to ransom by insisting that the unveiling not occur in the absence of their leaders, Mandela and Buthelezi prompting Kgalema to say that he cannot comprehend why the project was held at ransom by the absence of political leadership if it belongs to the community[234]. In the long run the message of collective ownership seemed to have sunk in and got accepted by all.

A lesson to be learnt in this regard is the danger posed by a contradiction between individual ownership and collective ownership. This happens mostly when dealing with public structures that are not initiated by the government, but where residents initiate the

[231] Dr Margaret Mojapelo, the Project Director Thokoza Monument Foundation, interviewed by Mokwena K.P., 5 March 2000.
[232] Mahlomola Mabote, a local Councillor, interviewed by Mokwena K.P., 15 May 2000.
[233] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of Hope. Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation, an occasional paper written for the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR)
[234] Ibid.

project themselves. Community ownership can be a problem when it comes to practice, particularly when roles and investment is not separated from ownership. It can lead to a situation where the project becomes a domain for vociferous statements and endless mudslinging. This happened in Thokoza when the memorial was supposed to be unveiled. Kgalema states that an unhealthy competition developed amongst the project leadership which culminated in resignations and finally the dissolution of the TMF[235]. However, the success of the project in Thokoza seems to have comes as a result of sober compromises on the side of the parties involved, and an adherence to a collective vision centred on the need peace. For this to materialize, it was necessary for the concept of shared-ownership in a project belonging to the collective to be adopted and internalized by all role players. This is a vital lesson for future memorial projects!!

6.4 No problem is impossible to solve.

Given the seriousness of the political differences between the ANC and the IFP in Thokoza and protracted violence, it was as if there would be no life left for Thokoza after the violence.Today, all that is water under the bridge. Life continued as if nothing had ever happened. In Ndzipho's words: ***'*** *It shows that there is no problem that cannot be solved in life, and no differences between two parties are totally irreconcilable. It takes determination and at times a bit of compromise to achieve unity***'**[236].

[235] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of Hope. Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation, an occasional paper written for the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR)

[236] Ndzipho Khalipha, a community leader from Thokoza, interviewed by Mokwena K.P., 15 May 2000.

He further stated that the Thokoza memorial is an example of what a determined community can do even when they are totally divided. This is supported by Kgalema who argued that once the conflicting groups decided to put aside their differences and work for peace, reconciliation would automatically start irrespective of the magnitude and seriousness of the problems[237]. The lesson that can be learned from the Thokoza experience is that with determination, even the most difficult problems can be resolved.

The Thokoza project was run in the midst of problems and many obstacles but due to the determination of those involved, it succeeded at the end. The project also granted the former enemies a chance to learn to work together. According to Nchangase, the process of memorialisation in Thokoza gave him and his colleagues from the IFP an opportunity to work with their former enemies from the ANC, something that was inconceivable the past few years. He is quoted by Kgalema as saying that attending discussions with the ANC helped him to develop some trust towards his former enemies[238]. It was because of this trust that the process finally succeeded.

If the people of Thokoza had focussed on their differences, divisions and history of violence, they would not have moved an inch from the tension that existed during and after the violence. Khumalo Street might have still been a no-go-area even today. Reverend John Khumalo viewed the success of the project as an indication that the

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[237] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of Hope. Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation, Occasional paper written for the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR)

people of Thokoza imaged victorious over many problems [239]. Mojapelo states that: **'***today many of us are proud that the monument has helped retrieve our identity as a strong community that is willing to rebuild itself and forge new bonds***'**[240].

According to Khumalo, Palestinians and Israelites can learn from the Thokoza experience that no differences between siblings are forever irreconcilable. The Thokoza people made it a point that the ANC and the IFP who have hated each other bitterly and butchered people in public, defying embarrassment in the media internationally, come together for a peace initiative in the form of a memorial[241]. This, to Khumalo and Ndzipho, is an indication that no problem is eternal. If Thokoza managed to achieve good results in the midst of such problems, anyone can do it, including the Israelites and their Palestinian brothers, the Angolans, Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone[242].

6.5 Psychological healing.

Mojapelo likens the situation in Thokoza after 1994 to a wound that needs to be tended through careful cleaning (see Chapter Two)[243]. By comparing the situation to a wound, she is saying that Thokoza as a collective was economically, socially and psychologically hurt during the violence, and its healing process is yet to happen. In her speech for the

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[238] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of Hope. Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation, Occasional paper written for the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR)
[239] Reverend John Khumalo, Chairperson of the Thokoza Phenduka Displacees Committee and Deputy Director of the Thokoza Monument Foundation (TMF), interviewed by Mokwena K.P., 15 May 2000.
[240] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of Hope. Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation, Occasional paper written for the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR).
[209.] Reverend John Khumalo, Chairperson of the Thokoza Phenduka Displacees Committee and Deputy Director of the Thokoza Monument Foundation (TMF), interviewed by Mokwena K.P., 15 May 2000.

[242] Ibid.
[243] Dr Margaret Mojapelo, (Project Director TMF) Speech for the Unveiling, 16 October 1999.

unveiling ceremony, Dr Mojapelo stated that Post Traumatic Stress had become prevalent in Thokoza since the violence, the rate of suicide had escalated and the culture of violence had overtaken schools[244]. These, according to her, were symptomatic of psychological problems resulting from a violent past that needed urgent attention and accordingly, she believed that memorialisation would help the community to get through the long healing process by providing a space for engaging with past memories[245].

Kgalema sees the memorialisation process as providing a platform for community reconciliation, which in turn provides a good environment for unobstructed psychological healing[246]. In the same manner, he believes that the Thokoza memorial was meant to have direct psychological bearing on the situation faced by the people of Thokoza, especially through the provision of an environment conducive to healing[247].

According to Hamber: **'***... the process of healing, does not occur through the delivery of an object (e.g. a pension, a monument, etc), but through the process that takes place around the object***'**[248]. What Hamber refers to as a 'process taking place around the object', in this case the memorial, is the interaction between people and the memorial. It is their perceptions about the memorial, what the memorial means to them that can contribute to the healing process. For instance, it is a common practice among Africans to

[244] Ibid.
[245] Ibid.
[246] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of Hope. Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of Reconciliation, Occasional paper written for the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR)
[247] Ibid.
[248] Hamber, B. (1998) Repairing the irreparable: dealing with the double-binds of making reparations for crimes of the past. Paper presented to the African Studies Association of the UK Biennial Conference Comparisons and Transitions at SOAS, University of London, 14-16 September 1998.

go to grave yards, (to a memorial in cases where the deceased's place of burial is unknown) to conduct a rituals as a way acknowledging the reality of what has transpired. It is this kind of activities around the memorial that contribute to healing of the individual. According to Kgalema, it is the safe environment provided by the acknowledgment that gives the victims space to grapple with the reality (tragedy) that occurred and this acknowledgment plays a therapeutic role[249].

A lesson we learn from the memorialisation in Thokoza is the role played by the memorial in the healing process. Such a healing may not be only that of an individual, but that of the collective whose sickness has been the divisions. The memorial, as a public space provides a point of convergence for people who were previously at loggerheads with each other. It fulfils the role of a uniting force, since people learned through its erection to work together and trust each other. This provides healing of community from divisions, and from misconceptions that different groups had about each other as a result of the perverse past.

6.6 Keeping the memory alive.

Sam Theron, the Deputy Chairperson of the TPDC, states that the memorial was built with the believe that it is the only one representing the sad and tragic past, so that never should a second one be erected[250]. In other words, through the memorial, the people of

[249] Theron, Sam, Deputy Chairperson of the Thokoza Phenduka Displacees Committee, interviewed by KP, Mokwena 05 May 2000.
[250] Kgalema, L. (1999): Symbols of Hope. Monuments as symbols of Remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation, Occasional paper written for the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.

Thokoza are making a statement that they have seen and gone through the worst, and never should a situation arise where a second memorial is built for exactly the same reasons. In terms of Theron's reasoning, after the worst destruction, pain and ills experienced by Thokoza during the violence, the memorial is like a rainbow after a rainstorm heralding the dawn of a new era[251]. The memorial was placed in public so that even future generations will see it and do everything in their power not to allow what has happened to repeat itself again. Names of the deceased were inscribed on the memorial so that the past violence would be seen as a real tragedy that affected real people who were still loved by their families and communities they come from[252].

I guess this is the reason why the main message of the memorial reads as follows: **'***Thokoza Memorial: We honour their memories'*[253]**.** The Sowetan newspaper, 11 June 1998, quoted Mojapelo as follows: '*This monument is a commemorative process of putting their spirits to rest by bringing them home***'**[254]**.** This shows an influence of indigenous beliefs, particularly the role of symbolic objects such as memorials in honouring and recognising the peceived role the dead play amongst the living.

6.7. A community initiative.

The Thokoza memorial was a home conceived idea that was crystallised into a project by members of different communities in the township. When the project started there were

[251] Theron, Sam, Deputy Chairperson of the Thokoza Phenduka Displacees Committee, interviewed by KP, Mokwena 05 May 2000.
[252] Ibid
[253] Thokoza Monument Plaque
[254] Sowetan, 11 June 1998**.**

no resources since it was ordinary community members who hatched the idea[255]. It was only after advertisements appeared in the media that sponsors became interested. It is for these reasons I feel that the Thokoza memorialisation process introduced to us a total paradigm shift, from a culture of waiting for the government to give hand-outs, to a culture of self reliance. This township-crafted and backyard designed project was also financed by a combination of the local emerging businesses and the already advanced local corporate giants. Such projects should take centre stage in the heritage sector as a whole which has always operated in a mode of dependence in spite of its undeniable potential to be an asset.[256] Most projects await government to provide money and at times even for project management. The Thokoza case was run in different manner and therefore ground breaking in so far as none dependence on government is concerned.

[255] Reverend John Khumalo, Chairperson of the Thokoza Phenduka Displacees Committee and Deputy Director of the Thokoza Monument Foundation (TMF), interviewed by Mokwena K.P., 15 May 2000.
[256] White paper on Arts Culture and Heritage, 1995.

AGE GROUP	No of persons Interviewed.	VISITATION	OWNERSHIP	FUNCTIONS FULFILMENT	EFFECT OF VISITATION
18-25	10	A	A	A	B
25-35	10	A	A	B	B
35-45	10	B	A	B	B
45-55	10	B	A	B	B
55-65	5	C	B	B	B
65-75	5	C	A	B	B

APPENDIX I

I conducted a pilot study in Thokoza to assess the attitudes of the residents towards the memorial. The sample was very small and the results were therefore merely suggestive.

Diagram 1. Scores of people's perceptions of the Thokoza memorial

- 50 residents interviewed,
- 45 of them from Thokoza,
- 5 community leaders from outside.
- 4 age groups representing (18-25, 25-35, 35-45 and 45-55 years old), ten people were interviewed from each group.
- Diagram 1 was scored by looking at the following: visitation frequency, ownership, fulfilment of function (intended aims) by the memorial, and effect of the visitation on emotions.
- This part of the questionnaire was aimed at finding out how frequently people visit the memorial.
- A three options system was used to score this part of the research, namely A, B and C. A stands for frequent visitors, B stands for occasional visitors, and C stands for Seldom. Frequent visitors are those who visit the memorial at least once in a period of six months and less. Occasional visitors are those who visit the memorial at least once in a period of seven months to one year, while those categories under seldom are the ones who do not visit in a year and above.
- In short, the result suggests that resident do visit the memorial frequently.

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