

https://dspace.org/

Land as a Site of Remembrance: An Ethnographic study in Barkly East

Nortje, Karen

2007-03-01T12:43:07Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/2184

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Abstract

This thesis is an examination of the ways in which people in Barkly East, a small town in the Eastern Cape, attribute feelings of belonging to the land they own and work. In a country such as South Africa, where the contestation of land is prominent and so integral to the political and social discourse, questions related to the idea of belonging are necessary and important. Significant questions addressed by this thesis are: Who belongs and why do they feel they belong? More importantly, the question of who does not belong, is addressed.

In Barkly East a tug of war exists between groups and individuals who want matters to remain constant and those who need the status quo to change. What stands out, moreover, in this community, is its duality on many levels of society, which is played out both consciously and unconsciously. This duality is also manifested through social, racial and economic relations, and is supported by an unequal access to land.

This thesis identifies three main elements which contribute to the creation of narratives of belonging in Barkly East. Firstly, history and the perception of history create strong links between personal and communal identity, which in turn reinforces and legitimises claims of belonging. Secondly, hierarchy in terms of gender and race plays an important part in this narration, as some residents are more empowered in this process due to either their gender or race. And three, the connection to the land that people appear to have, plays a definitive role in narratives of belonging. Those who feel they have a heritage in this place also feel a connection to the land. For this reason, land for these people embody, not only the physical space of 'somewhere to belong to', but becomes an integral ingredient to the act of belonging and even identity formation.

Declaration

I declare that this is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the requirements of the Degree of Masters in Social Anthropology, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

Karen Nortje
30 June 2006

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many to thank. First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Rehana Ebr. Vally. Her support and guidance has kept me going since my Honours project and has never wavered. Thank you Rehana for *'sticking with me'* and always knowing what to say!

Secondly, I would like to thank Ms. Nicole Ridgway and Dr Andre Czegledy for their input to my thesis at the initial stages.

I would also like to extend my utmost gratitude to all my respondents and friends in Barkly East who have shared their lives and stories with me. In particular, Mr Peter and Mrs Marietjie Dormehl, Reece and Blaine, Dawn, Wynn and Tannie San. Thank you for sharing your lives with me. A big thank you also to Naledi who taught me a bit about "driving in the township".

I must also acknowledge my support system at work. Thank you to Thea, Kelly and Yvonne for believing in me, and to all those students and friends who have shared my anxiety.

Also, to the parents and Gran, thank you for your unwavering support and putting up with me and my papers. It is appreciated!

Lastly, Liz it is always your support that gets me through the long hours and self doubt. Dankie!