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WITS SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

Through a Saffron-Tinted Looking Glass

Reminiscing, remembering and melancholia.

The story of a small Indian South African town

22 years after apartheid.

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ABSTRACT:

Apartheid helped create enclaves of safety and familiarity for some communities in South Africa, making those communities impermeable to outside influences, preserving class, culture, caste, religion and race into neat little packages. The demise of apartheid broke those enclaves, changing the landscape of those comfort zones and forcing them to reimagine a new sense of community. Clutching onto the remnants of this past, yet wanting liberation and economic change, these communities are fast learning that some things have got to give. Tongaat, a town constituted like most other South African Indian townships, is one that I grew up in. This research project is my personal journey in which I recount my own memories of the town's culture, caste system and racial divides using the safety net of being an outsider yet having the privilege of being an insider. Through interviews I investigate if the residents of the town have taken possession of their new political freedoms since the end of apartheid from a class, culture, caste, race and economic perspective. I examine the policy interventions that were introduced in relation to land reform, housing, education and socio-economic empowerment to enable change on the social front. Have these interventions impacted on the lives of the towns inhabitants and what is the future of Tongaat?