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The Invisible Faith in Democracy *Ekas'lam*

An Exploration of Public Ethnography as a form of Protest in an Arts-based Research Methodology

Research Report

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Master of Arts in Applied Drama: Theatre in Education, Communities and Social Context

In the Department of Drama, Faculty of Humanities

15 March 2021

Abstract

The Invisible Faith in Democracy *Ekas'lam* is an exploration of public ethnography as a form of protest in an arts-based methodology. This exploration is from a South African context in the artistic medium of applied theatre making. The initiative stems from the need to have radical protesting alternatives, for those that are being failed by the system, precisely those from *ekas'lam* Ivory Park, township. To have ways that can expose and contest the democratic system when it is failing to serve its people as it is meant to, based on the Republic of South Africa's Constitution.

The exploration uses *Mr. President* - a composition that exhibits still and moving images to illustrate the conditions that suppress the mindset of *abantu base kas'lam*. Through the pictures, embodiment, and the voice, a collage is used to create an abstract image of the mindset that reflects the reality of *abantu base kas'lam*. To achieve this, it puzzled together the reality of the people from Ivory Park - to create a museum to explore public ethnography as a form of protest in an arts-based methodology to disclose the invisible faith in democracy towards *abantu base kas'lam*.

This project has achieved all its aims and objectives because of the 'fire' that is burning in the dialogues and conversations about its importance, urgency, and universal relevance. It reminds us that we are still building a tradition as South Africans and our situations change radically all the time. We are always plunged into new surprises that disguise the sameness of the old. That is the essence of why public ethnography as a form of protest is relevant, necessary, and fundamental because of how it is relevant to the current times (Democracy) and how it relevantly speaks to the times before (Apartheid). The combination of the practice and theory is what gave this study the acquired product (Theory + Practice= Praxis).

Acknowledgements

This research report would not have been possible without the guidance, support, care and love of specific individuals, the people of Ivory Park and the academic institutions to which I am ceaselessly grateful.

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To the National Arts Council South Africa, all my lecturers, colleagues, the editor, artists, academics, activists, the community of Ivory Park, friends, family and Facebook community, radio stations and everyone who gave his/her support. Your contribution throughout this journey, your comments, constructive criticism, ideas, recommendations, to name a few in making this process become a success - I am truly honoured and far beyond appreciative.

To my mother, Thabitha Catherine Ngomane, thank you for your prayers, your teaching, support, your love uyosibusiso kimina. I love you mom. Mrs Moticoe kea leboha mama.

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Plagiarism Declaration

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Research Report

Due Date: 15 March 2021

Research title: The Invisible Faith in Democracy *Ekas'lam*

(An Exploration of Public Ethnography as a form of Protest in an Arts-based Methodology)

Plagiarism Declaration

I know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is to use another's work and to pretend that it is one's own.

I have used the author date convention for citation and referencing. Each significant contribution to and quotation in this essay from the work or works of other people has been acknowledged through citation and referencing.

This Research Report is my own work.

I have not allowed and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

I have done the word processing and formatting of this research myself. I understand that the correct formatting is part of the mark for this research paper and that it is therefore wrong for another person to do it for me.

Signature: 

Date: 15 March 2021

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

This is a creative exploration study for a Master of Arts in Applied Drama: Theatre in Education, Communities and Social Context research report. The work was conceived through the acknowledgement that the qualities of the work done previously and still is being done by the researcher are of an ethnographic spectacle, protesting socio-political issues that are affecting the marginalised groups in South Africa. The study was inspired by the coursework that I was introduced to in my master's course which included Performance Ethnography, Performance as Research, Critical Reflexive Praxis, and the course that I was enrolled into at The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (Research Theory and Practice -based Methods in Drama and Theatre). All these practices and theories were ingredients added to the research report contributing towards what became a fruitful journey I embarked on.

The Invisible Faith in Democracy *Ekas'lam* is an exploration of Public Ethnography as a form of protest in an arts-based methodology. The research is located *ekas'lam* trans: 'my hood', a colloquial word that refers to one's own township. It is an ethnographic study that viewed a practice within the South African democracy by the marginalised, that was daunting and concerning to me – a practice of invisibility; a faith in a democracy that recurrently fails to serve its people. In my view this practise was emergent and needed to be researched and understood further.

In my studies I stumbled upon a method that deals with socio-political issues and aimed at dismantling systems that promoted inequality. I wanted a method that was already familiar to the people *ekas'lam* (non-academics) and the people at the academic institution where I study (academics). One of my aims being to accommodate both academic and non-academic communities in the study.

Accordingly, protest, as legal and familiar practise in South Africa, became the focus of the research. I thus looked at protest as a culture and protest theatre as a medium of expression.

Additionally, I questioned if public ethnography could be used as a form of protest as they both have similar objectives and qualities. One difference, perhaps being that public ethnography is not practiced as a form of performing art to protest socio-political issues in South Africa.

In the process of further researching these two methods, to see how I could utilize the methods to prove this invisible faith in democracy *ekas'lam*. I recognized that the manner of conducting data through the method public ethnography and protest theatre steered away from a resonance between complimentary writing and the practice itself. That is how I ended up employing arts-based research as a methodology to balance the practice and complimentary theory to retain a praxis.

The entire process required me to be reflective and reflexive, to report back the findings and the impact they may have had on the body, space, and time. This resulted in using the theories of contemplative practices mainly the self-compassion theories which consists of three components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. Self-compassion was an alternative conceptualisation of a healthy attitude towards oneself (researcher) when collecting data and getting into the composition process.

The research report consists of five chapters. The introduction/background defines all the technical or specialist terms. Furthermore, it outlines the scope of the report. It outlines the survey of key literature, summary of major themes, and concepts. It situates current research in relation to existing literature e.g., it explains where the research began, where it is and where it is headed. That consists of the research aims and objectives, all the research questions followed by the rationale for the study. The rationale focuses on wider issues for the exploration and their importance or significance.

Followed by the theoretical framework which in this report, is inclusive of the Know – How. The Know - How is normally identified under the methodology, fortunately, for the nature of this study it was appropriated as part of the theoretical framework instead. Chapter three is the methodology which details and gives the procedures that were followed on how the study was carried out and how the data was analysed. This is followed by the discoveries, that present the results objectively without any discussion, though it includes explanatory information and supporting data from the interviews, arts composition and the comments generated. Lastly, is the conclusion, which briefly restates how well the study design met the study aims and emphasises the major findings with the implications of the findings.

The overall approach of the research adapted was a creative exploration that used multi - methods to interrogate 'The Invisible Faith in Democracy *Ekas'lam'* the choice stemmed from the desire to thoroughly unpack, explore, and discover creatively if public ethnography can be used as a form of protest in an arts-based methodology. There are many deliberate choices in this research report that are not necessarily conventional but are substantiated to help the reader understand. The research report is a reflective and reflexive documentation of what I did on my journey of collecting data, into how I used the data to create an artistic composition and finally documented by reporting back my findings and every stage as it occurred with clear explanations, academic support, and absolute transparency.

Practical Composition Link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_ZbUtaOfLg

The Invisible Faith in Democracy Ekas'lam: Invisibility and Faith, Demokratia, Ekas'lam and Public Ethnography

The Invisible Faith in Democracy *Ekas'lam* (Township, Ivory Park) is a cyclic participation in democracy. It is not lingering externally, but rather an individual internalised belief that stems from the faith that the democratic system will fulfil its promises, as promised, yet it never does. *Abantu base kas'lam*[1] continue to participate in the acts of democratic notions in the belief that change will come someday.

'The invisible faith' referred to in this paper is the ability or belief to have resilience and optimism that is hard to oversee. The Cambridge Dictionary (2019) defines 'invisible' as the "impossible to see" and 'faith' as "complete trust or confidence in something". There have been theories and research made about 'invisibility' in different disciplines. Practitioners, such as Yoshi Oida, speaks to actors about becoming an invisible actor and its importance. The fundamental elements about his teachings on invisibility were best simplified by Peter Brook when he stated:

[1] The words *Abantu base kas'lam* refers to the people from the researcher's community in Ivory Park.

> The invisible actors are inseparable from a very precise, concrete, and detailed science learned in the heat of experience. The vital lessons he passes on to us are told with such lightness and grace that, typically, the difficulties become invisible. Everything seems so simple but there is a catch: In the East as in the West, nothing is easy (Oida & Marshall, 1997: viii).

'The science learned in the heat of experience' *yabantu base kas'lam*, can be recognised in standing, queuing to vote every five years. Factually, being burned by the heat as they re-experience the faith in democracy.

Democracy that has obviously failed to serve them for more than twenty-five years. Perhaps Yoshi Oida is correct, the biggest lesson about invisibility is the recognition of the difficulties that come with invisibility. So, standing in that line for *abantu base kas'lam* may seem like the easiest thing to do to achieve the fruits of democracy that is meant to serve them. However, as Oida said "everything seems so simple but there's a catch…nothing is easy" (Oida & Marshall 1997: viii).

Hence, this paper identifies that action and choice to participate in the elections every five years, irrespective of the fact that no promises previously were fulfilled or not as 'invisible faith in democracy' by *abantu base kas'lam* (Township, Ivory Park). There is no direct academic nor urbanised definition of 'the invisible faith' that I found, thus the choice of this paper to connect the two words (invisible + faith = inability to see the impossible trust and confidence in our democracy). This means that people *base kas'lam* by queuing during the elections to vote for the democratic government based on its promises that are never fulfilled, are constantly perpetuating a cyclic notion[2] of 'change' that never seems to serve them.

The 'invisible faith in democracy' that *abantu base kas'lam* have, can be compared to the type of faith seen in the play *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett (1955). Symbolically, it is so cyclic, yet in its literalness, it teaches the lesson of patience

[2] The cyclic notion emphasises repetition and is influenced by the cycles of the democratic time, e.g., election campaigns promising relief, hope, voting, exploitation, broken promises, more election campaigns, rekindling of hope etc.

toward the unknown. Godot seems to be, is omniscient, and omnipresent, a personal God without extension who exists outside the boundaries of time. It is therefore impossible for him to take physical form and exist in any given moment to interact (Beckett, 1955). Seemingly like the 'invisible faith' that *abantu base kas'lam* have towards democracy, they also believe that Mr President holds the power that can bring change to their suppressive conditions.

In a South African context, this faith can be compared to the faith we see from the devised protest theatre piece, *Woza Albert* by Mbongeni Ngema, Percy Mtwa and Barney Simon (1993). This political satire production imagined the second coming of Morena during the apartheid–era in South Africa. The tragedy is the constant hope of His arrival that never prevails, but nonetheless never changes the possibility of Him arriving, bringing a significant change in their circumstances. The work inspired the demonstration of modernisations and creativity during the devising process by portraying much truth and elucidates an unpretentious approach to the human conditions, thus, pertaining to the South African assimilation and relevance to the contemporary time in relation to *abantu base kas'lam* and democracy. The work also takes on an ethnographic approach, taking responses from interviews and revealing a culture of 'invisible faith' in a saviour. The characters speak to basic rights as human beings: food, education, employment, etc.

The consistent participation in democracy is not so much false faith as it is omnipresent because we live in the present time of democracy, so its existence and presence are embedded in daily life. The complexity comes with the understanding of where we used to be in comparison to where we are now. Hence, 'the invisible faith' remains because the bigger rock of oppression seems to be lifted off, when, it is just suppressed with the notion of 'change is coming', using our social circumstances now to show us the exit road that we may never reach without the assistance of the government for the people. The symbolic purposeless nature of man's existence continues (Beckett, 1955).

Demokratia

What is this democracy? According to the South African Parliament "the word 'democracy' comes from the Greek word *demokratia* which means 'government by the

people'" (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). In essence, what this definition immediately tells us about democracy is that there is no democracy without the people. The existence of democracy is by the people for the people. Therefore, its first prerogative duty is to serve the people who cement its existence.

> Democracy is a balance between 'might' and 'right'. The state takes all the power (it has all the 'might'), but its power must be limited so that it does not abuse this power (to make sure it does 'right'). The Constitution guarantees the independence of the courts and establishes six independent institutions to protect citizens. […] Democracy is about balancing rights and responsibilities. Citizens can expect the government to do things for them like providing protection, health services, education, and housing. Citizens also have responsibilities like obeying the law and paying tax to the state. Democracy is about balancing the rights of the majority with protection for minorities. Democracy is about achieving a greater balance in society so that there is greater equality for all over a period of time (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

The underlying question that this paper concerns itself with, is deeply rooted in the greater period. One could question, how long is this 'greater period'? or perhaps is the greater period, the democratic zeitgeist that brings not greater equality for all, to achieve a greater balance in societies, causing an imbalance to the rights of the majority for the protection of the minorities. How long can the citizens wait in expectation for the government to provide the promised basic rights?

There are many generalisations about common understanding of democracy at *ekasi*. (Township). Dalton et al (2007: 146) define democracy as a "…concept with a variety of potential meanings, and it is not simple to grasp or define". Based on observations, interaction through dialogues and participatory performances with the people living at *ekasi*. I have remarked on the residents of Ivory Park's understanding of democracy as freedom, liberation, and the human rights. It includes institutional elements (all the social or cultural elements of a community, from its technology to its shared beliefs) or social benefits. Therefore, I support the *ekasi* people's understanding or definition of democracy because it is directly relevant to the South African constitution, which was the dawn of democracy through the 1993 interim constitution.

> The Republic of South Africa is one, sovereign, democratic state founded on the following values: (a) Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms. (b) Non-racialism and non- sexism. (c) Supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law. (d) Universal adult suffrage, a national common voter's roll, regular elections, and a multi-party system of democratic government, to ensure accountability, responsiveness, and openness (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

The trajectory is between what is stated to be an expectation in a democratic country or the right that comes with the democratic expectations in relation to *abantu base kas'lam*. People of Ivory Park are ironically suppressed openly, perceived with the eyes, and evidently discerned visually through their below-poverty living conditions; the ever-rising tragic statistics of unemployment informed by the circle of perpetuation that descends from the unfulfilled governmental promises. There is a contradiction between the constitutional rights and the conditions that *abantu base kas'lam* are living under, which leads to the questionable 'Invisible faith in democracy' that is not serving them.

This paper understands 'the invisible faith' to be consistent in its consistency of loyalty. This may be seen through the actions of the majority that help in the progression of the system of democracy- to- be: through voting, which is a form of participatory performance done with the belief that the circumstances will change, but they never seemingly do.

Abantu base kas'lam at Ivory Park do not enjoy the fruits of democracy, based on what the researcher has observed and endured, having lived for many years in Ivory Park. Others agree too. According to the City of Johannesburg, "Despite its poverty and lack of services, its housing shortage and hunger, there is a resilience and optimism in Ivory Park that is hard to beat" (Mkwanazi, 2019). The people of Ivory Park live below the poverty standards. Their right not to be tortured in any way and not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman, or degrading way according to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) is constantly violated.

Ekas'lam

Ivory Park is a densely populated residential area to the east of Johannesburg. Occupied by more than 182 000 black people and located in the town of Midrand, in the city of Johannesburg, Metropolitan municipality, Gauteng province. Ivory Park is an apartheid township that was established around the 1990s at a site where an informal settlement had emerged (Monaheng, 2017).

> People of Ivory Park occupied a piece of land along the Eskom line, and they put up shacks. This action was criticized by other community members [...] the desperation of needing a space to stay supersedes the potential dangers. The cost of living goes up daily and so does the level of unemployment. Nobody should expect any other person to stay as a tenant forever. […] The risks and dangers, including those of the law such as brutal Metro police did not deter occupiers (Monaheng, 2017).

"The unemployment rate is too high," says Zitha (Mkwanazi, 2019) the ward counsellor of Ivory Park. At some point, it was around 47 percent.

> The unemployed are predominantly those who completed matric or are unsuccessful job seekers, resulting in the average household income to be between R9 601 and R19 200 annually. Many households do not have any income. Most people live in a state of dire poverty. The area is geographically remote from the stronger economic nodes in the city centre, and the settlement is plagued by myriad socio-economic challenges, including illiteracy, child-headed households, and hopelessness. There is a battery of social ills, like drugs and alcohol abuse, peer pressure and petty crimes (Mkwanazi, 2019).

This is precisely the purpose of this research: the call for change to explore Public Ethnography as a form of protest, and to disclose[3] the Invisible Faith in Democracy that fails to serve *abantu base kas'lam* who are subjected to such repressive conditions informed by socio-political issues.

Public Ethnography

According to Bailey (2008: 265), Public Ethnography is a "Conducted research on and participation in [the] fight against repressive conditions". As an applied theatre student

[3] The choice to use the word disclosed is because the invisible faith is an individual internalised belief that cannot be externally seen. Thus, needed to be disclosed because it is hidden.

using ethnography as a core research method in practice, I have the desire to change the world with my art. The goal is to simply help in creating a positive social change *ekas'lam*. That is what public ethnography stands for - a drive rooted in the "desire to change the world" (Bailey, 2008: 265). Accordingly, an artistic composition titled,' *Mr. President' - a museum*[4] *of illustration in the mind of the poor that serves to protest* was created to change the suppressive circumstance of *abantu base kas'lam*.

Mr. President aimed to fight against suppressive conditions, critique the structures of societal processes that promote inequalities and allow for engagement with artists, academics, activists, the people of Ivory Park and the public at large for critical dialogue on social issues. This presented a leeway for critical observation. It was a call for criticism towards the government that is meant to be for the people because they are in existence because of the people. Criticism to bring consciousness of the cyclic notions of empty promises through public ethnography, that prides itself in "the critique of the structures and social processes that promote inequality" (Bailey, 2008: 266). As Desmond Tutu, a peace Noble price winner, once stated:

> We learn from history that we do not learn from history! The paradox in that is to be independent of public opinion. The first formal opinion of achieving anything great. What experience and history teaches us is that people and governments have never learned anything from history or acted on principles deduced from it (Debate Motions Headquarters, 2019).

Alude Mahali (2013: 1) agrees with Desmond Tutu, "in South Africa, we, the nation's majority black citizenry must acknowledge that there are connections and continuities between the apartheid past and the present". The researcher concurs with both the statements as the significant core of what they are proclaiming is, the only thing we learn from history is that we never actually learn anything from history. If we do not call for the emergency of the lack of services pertaining democracy to its people, the people who keep it in motion, then we are as good as the oppressors of history itself.

This reflects to the researcher's role as a self-motivated public ethnographic practitioner-researcher. Public ethnographers "…use public ethnography to explore

[4] I have adapted Foucauldian definition of the museum as a space of difference and space of representation.

issues of racism and economic inequality and critiqued the social institutions that contribute to them" (Bailey, 2008: 268). This research has adopted a compelling writing style and utilised a variety of outlets and formats. This was to disseminate its findings. So that an engagement in dialogue with other academics and the public at large may fire-up in a form of protest (Brady, 2004; Sanday, 2003; Tedlock, 2005).

There are innumerable directions to which this research in its broad nature may form a guide. Bailey explains the broadness of public ethnography in definition; she states "part of the difficulty with discussing public ethnography is that a well-codified definition of it does not yet exist. However, there are general conditions that identifies if the work is public ethnographic or not" (Bailey, 2008: 266). The method is big, broad, detailed, intentional, and it makes a significant effort in criticising from an informed perspective but most importantly, it is ethnography. So, the researcher must be a part of what they are criticising and not only informed theoretically.

Aims and Objectives

The main aim of the study is to explore Public Ethnography as a form of protest. This exploration is from a South African context in the artistic medium of applied theatre making. The initiative stems from the need to have radical protesting alternatives, for those who are being failed by the system, precisely those from *ekas'lam* Ivory Park, township. To have ways that can expose and contest the democratic system when it is failing to serve its people as it is meant to, based on the Republic of South Africa's Constitution. Through this aim, the intention is to give a voice to the voiceless and thereby, reveal the articulated 'invisible faith' to create an understanding of the necessity to protest suppressive conditions as a basic right.

Knowledge is power but the unfortunate quandary to *abantu base kas'lam* is that knowledge is not continuously accessible. Thus, the need to inspire confidence to *abantu base kas'lam* and public ethnographers in South Africa, so that, they may regain legitimacy, the praxis of which can allow the public to blend their effort to reduce human misery and participate in an informed visible faith toward democracy.

Through the act of participating in democracy with an informed visible faith, a leeway for the exploration to reduce the persuasive power of politics through Public Ethnography as a form of protest is paved. Debates about socio-political issues that

concern *abantu base kas'lam* will be constructed. A possibility and a conversation that will lead to conceivable solutions and alternatives for the democratic system that is not serving *abantu base kas'lam* at present, will seek for immediate attention.

Distinctively, as Public Ethnography research aims to do, this bridges the gap between academics, artists and activists' research on social injustice and actively working to reduce them epistemologically, dynamically working together to create a balance between all mediums and pupils regardless of social circumstances or class. Protesting from an informed perspective to be heard, seen, and acknowledged, a call for change in unison. That accommodates both academics and non-academic audiences in the study, to bring socio-political knowledge to bear on issues of public interest.

This will then lead to the objective, which is to reveal the articulated 'invisible faith' from the majority of *abantu base kas'lam*, that contributes a great deal in the ongoing progress of the existence of democracy, that never serves them through public ethnography in a form of protest.

Question:

- How can public ethnography be explored as a method of protest to disclose 'The Invisible Faith in Democracy' towards *abantu base kas'lam* (Ivory Park)?

Sub-Question:

- Can Public Ethnography as a form of Protest voice out against suppressive conditions?

The problem statement:

The gap is in the current research using Public Ethnography as a form of protest, which directed the overall exploration of this research. Researchers have written about Public Ethnography but did not apply it in a South African context. Furthermore, they have written about protest, but did not make it into a public ethnographic exploration.

Rationale

Public Ethnography can be viewed as a form of protest because of its nature and call for change in which it is grounded. However, as stated above, the researcher has not yet come across public ethnography being used as a form of protest. The immediate difference is the reasoning for conducting the research which plays a significant role.

Consequently, the researcher then investigated Protest Theatre as a medium of expression because "Protest Theatre is a genre of theatre that manifests itself in many situations of political conflict and social oppression, and unashamedly calls itself by this name" (Van Graan, 2011: 278). South African Protest Theatre emerged in the 1970s, during a very particular political and social landscape; that of colonialism in apartheid. This theatre was used to voice the people's resistance to apartheid and to comment on and protest the government, the political and social state run of the country (The History of South African Theatre, 2014).

Public Ethnography and Protest Theatre can blend in their efforts to reduce human desolation. Their common goal is to challenge suppressive circumstances and critique the structures and social procedures that promote inequality. These suppressive circumstances drive the cyclic notion of 'The Invisible Faith in Democracy' that *abantu base kas'lam* participate in.

'The invisible faith' is the constant participation of people in this democracy that freed them from the times of oppression (apartheid times), but paradoxically, replays the times of suppression in the post-post-modern times. "indeed, the social manoeuvring and subjugation engineered by apartheid is so severely ingrained in the country's memory and history, that it is still flagrantly evident in contemporary society" (Mahali, 2013: 1), bearing the promise of 'change'.

One of the participatory performative actions *ya bantu base kas'lam* in democracy is seen through voting. When the period of voting comes, they wake up early morning, leave their shacks, RDPs, and big houses to go and stand in long lines to cast their vote. It is believed that through this participation, a voice to the voiceless is being adhered to. This is after a long persuasive campaigning to persuade *abantu base kas'lam* that change will be brought upon their circumstances of living. Every five

years, this campaigning is done similarly, yet so strategically different, with a more persuasive assurance and care shown to the people. These campaigns and their marketing qualities led me as researcher into asking if South Africa was registered as a corporation?

I discovered that South Africa was registered as a private corporation twice Once under the Queen of England (Commonwealth). The question was also asked whether it was just applicable to the stock exchange, that South Africa could trade government bonds? I found it relevant and insightful to compare the government's registration as a private corporation, with private companies' marketing strategy campaigns. According to documentation (Republic of South Africa SEC Registration, 2019) "0000932419 Republic of South Africa DC Registered as a corporation in Washington DC" (Republic of South Africa SEC Registration, 2019), the Republic is seen as a company in the United States of America too. The above citation raises a question. If indeed democracy, which is defined as 'a government of the people, by the people, and for the people,' is really for the people. If it is not independent on its own, how do we then begin to identify it and its existence through the people? All of its democratic political marketing campaigns used to persuade its people, are not for the people, but for the growth of the companies in ownership of the country. From this statement we can deduce that the government is not for the people but for profitability, for market shares.

According to *Your Article Library* (2019) shared by Smriti Chan. There are disadvantages to marketing that lead to very substantial drawbacks. The biggest implication of marketing strategies is that they disregard the aftermath and implications of possible fallouts, of promises not being fulfilled. Although this article speaks of goods that are sold to the customers who buy them, it can also be widely recognised as the campaigning that takes place before the voting for ruling political parties and the reasons why we do so.

The psychological impact of the strategies may seem weighty to the most vulnerable people. This is an effect based on these people being the least informed and who have less access to informative sites. These sites are meant to inform us either on the progress of this democracy that serves the people or/and where it places them, making them more prone to falling for these persuasive strategies. This is simply because they

do not know any better (for lack of a better description). As a result, they may be misinformed or misguided. (Keep this) hooking their beliefs onto something they are knowledgeable about, such as Apartheid and our roots as a country. That, in comparison to their living circumstances now, may seem better and so they constantly vote with

'the invisible faith', that stems from the hope that better change will come outside the spectrum of what they may already be believing to be better.

The biggest reason that informs the motivation to conduct this research is engrained in my recognition for the need of *abantu base kas'lam,* to not be subjected to being a weapon of their own kleptocracy, living in a pool of their own suppressed circumstances, and holding the notion of change so dear, a change they have never experienced.



Figure 1: Bongani Nicholas Ngomane in *Mr. President* poster: Photographer: Enock Shishenge

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK / KNOW-HOW

The theoretical framework of this research consists of the first section of the methodology, which is the **know-how**. This is because part of the theoretical framework is the beginning of the methodological structure that supports the theories of the research study. The theoretical framework and the methodology follow a similar structure to describe how the theories were incorporated into the practical application. This action impacted chapter two and three, making them dance to merge, then separate to merge again, allowing me to proceed into the world of the know-how incorporated with the theories that unpacks the study.

I used Nelson's (2013) mode of knowing methodology, and public ethnography as a method of research to be explored as a form of protest. Nelson (2013: 38) confirms that the mode of knowing "…involves a multi-mode approach to Performance as Research (PaR), and evidence produced through different modes of knowledge". This mode helped me to understand 'the know-how, know-what and know-that' of this research. The mode of knowing is specifically designed for arts-based research and embraces the method of knowing (embodied knowledge). I used the above three steps adhering to Robin Nelson's (2013) methodology:

Know - How: The knowing is the process of the how the doing is conceived. This is when Nelson (2013) speaks of the 'insider', the close-up knowing. My know-how stems from being a resident of Ivory Park *ekas'lam* since birth. I have lived there from a year after it was formed until the present day and I have had the privilege of being a part of other communities outside my own, in between, because of work and school.

The Know - How consisted of:

- **Experiential haptic knowing** is the embodied knowledge that I used to describe numerous sensibilities of the body to its position in the physical environment of Ivory Park and its own condition.

- **Performative knowing** is the nature of the artistic performance gained from years of practice and studying.

- **Tacit knowledge** is the kind of knowledge that I used that was difficult to transfer to another person by means of writing or verbalising it.

- **Embodied knowledge** is when I used the body indistinct from the mind in the artistic composition, *Mr. President*.

The four elements of the know – how will be explained in-depth in the methodology section. This part will show how the theory impacted the journey of the data collection in the know – how section. Fundamentally, this was a discovery on its own during the process that brought me to the realisation that the theoretical framework and the know – how work parallel to each other and that one can only exist with the other.

Public ethnography is a methodology that prides itself on critical observation. I started by being at Ivory Park, not as a researcher or an artist, but by getting involved and being on the same level of hierarchy with other community members as a residential member in a democratic township. This created a space for me to interact with more people, not to be biased in any way, to evolve in current time and to be open to networking with the people of my community. I was practicing the practices of Ivory Park with a critical eye. Observation allowed me to have a momentary variation of the nature of reality and having many applications, interpretation and meaning of what democracy is in Ivory Park.

Public ethnography helped in dismantling the specific qualities that places the research under the umbrella body of public ethnography. As mentioned in the introduction/background section, part of the difficulties with public ethnography is that a well-codified definition does not yet exist. However, Bailey proffers that: (1) Its primary means of collecting data is in-depth field research (Bailey, 2008: 266). Accordingly, I then took a tour to different sections of Ivory Park: Ivory Park Ext 2, Themba khoza informal settlement, Ema 3 to Ema 15. To collect data through the sensation of being within the in-depth field through critical observation, adding to my perspective of being a part of the community of Ivory Park. This action has placed me in the depth of the research as a resident and a researcher and gave me the privilege to view the circumstances from the third eye, but fully involved in the community as a resident, and distinctly motivated by the desire to reduce social injustice.

After my tour of collecting data around Ivory Park, I was now prepared to do what Bailey (2008) refers to as (2) critiquing the structures and social processes that promote inequality within *ekas'lam.* I unpacked my observations and reviewed them

as though it was for the first time. This allowed me to critique the social structures and dismantle the placing and reasoning for the inequality *ekas'lam*. (3) Because ethnography includes active participation, I started engaging with scholars, activists, artists, and the public, at large. There was engagement through direct communications, academic books, social media posts and WhatsApp chats (including people from Ivory Park) - to discover how one can fight against repressive conditions that are affecting the community. It included active participation of the scholars in the fight against recessive conditions, and (4) extended furthermore my engagement to the public at large beyond academic circles to include some facets for my desired audiences, the people of Ivory Park (Bailey, 2008: 266). Then boom! An unforeseen event! Coronavirus!

I turn here to my research journal of the time to capture how I adapted my research method in response to the changing environment.

Once bitten, twice shy, said the ancient people when democracy was welcomed. It is the post-post-modern time, democratic time, yet dreadfully feels like standing in front of a mirror on a stage where the world is still yet simultaneously replaying the past oppression times promised to no longer be. Due to this, I am left with a lot of questions and misperceptions. Is this the 4th Industrial Revolution? Has it begun? Are we living in a distant future? what does this mean for a world and the people of Ivory Park that were still on a journey to finding themselves in a new culture, named democracy? (Research Journal, 6 March 2020).

It all started with fearing a Chinese man because of the stigma that the virus began in China, so, a lot of people were rejecting the Chinese people around them. While I was trying to wrap my head around all this stigma, I received an email from the university requiring me to prevent, contain, prepare for, respond to, and recover from the potential effects of this emerging infectious epi/pandemic. I sensed a discomfort within me and an immediate concern of what this meant for the country of a rainbow nation. I feared the unknown in silence as I thought of all the possibilities of what this means or could mean. That is where the urgency to understand and seek information on possible alternatives to conduct and present this investigation digitally began (Research Journal, 6 March 2020).

In response, I used WhatsApp and my Facebook page to interact with artists, academics, activists, people of Ivory Park, and the public at large. Based on my findings through chats, I also found that the pandemic affected the marginalised groups which involved the people of Ivory Park more than the non-marginalised. Street venders had to close their businesses, people did not have food, they lost their jobs, there were no educational alternatives in their schools, they were expected to wash their hands, but they were facing water and power cuts for weeks. Social distancing was impossible since some of the shacks in informal settlements are attached to each other.

The arrival of the pandemic forces the research to adapt to the new developing digital world and retreat from the initial plans of how I have planned to collect data. I must find new means driving me to use social media platforms… At heart, above all, I know my desire to bridge the gap between artists, activists, and academics and from time to time, I remember who I am. I am a citizen who understands that my voice may speak for the voiceless and strive for change always, thus I listen, observe, and question. I follow my heart, my gut and remain cognisant always (Research Journal, May 2020).

I thought about ways about how I could explore the research to address the socio-political issues in the status quo, without any physical contact, but still tackle the difficulties that hinder *abantu base kas'lam*. I then explored the research and attempted to use public ethnography as a form of protest for *abantu base kas'lam* in an arts-based methodology through Facebook and created one to two-minute videos and protesting images with heightened captions that questioned, provoked thoughts around what is happening in the country. I proceeded to share the posts in artistic, political, and social groups. That is how the quarantine progressed. The first post began with me a performer pleading to the president as an activist:

> Dear Mr. President I am writing to let you know that I am eating pap and cockroach (posted a picture with pap and cockroach inside a bowl and a spoon) to prevent coronavirus known as COVID-19. The family of viruses has arrived to assist its brothers and sisters as we welcome it. The question is how many people are going to die now while we are washing our hands with sanitisers. Africa, COVID-19 is calling for the closing of continental borders. Investors will go, and we will continue eating our pap and cockroaches, our daily meal. Then we will lose our elders and/or professors with their minds that are defeating universities. Then we are losing our sisters and brothers who

> are fighting diabetes and lung diseases and our families living with HIV & AIDS. Mr. President, the dead Africans are becoming louder than the living, with the words and foreseen disasters to come that they predicted. So, choose a side right! We are not panicking Mr. President. We are scared! Video loading... (Facebook, 14 March 2020).

The rest of the posts became stanzas of my confusion which were supported by videos of me acting out different conventional citizens of Ivory Park characters. The videos disclosed my perspective as an academic, artist and activist (public ethnographer) expressed through words. The heightened caption stanza's serving as an internal concern of his perceptions and what I had been hearing in conversations *ekas'lam* and reading on social media - of what was happening in the world. I was now attempting to be reflexive about the ongoing journey of the pandemic that will forever remain in the history books and its effect on the already existing stagnant conditions of *abantu base kas'lam* building up to the progression of the research. The captions attached to the videos read as follows:

> This is when we say congratulations you doing well for the country??? OK than, congratulations papa Motsepe, the Rupert's, Oppenheimers, Bill Gates and others… #let the silent bodies speak out more and the dead yell out their Graves (Facebook, 21 March 2020).

> Fire on the wealthy soil of Azania - the paradox of the post-post-modern times. Lies are covered in man-made toxins to murder our people, to welcome a world of technology that will only leave this beautiful mother nature barren in red tears (Facebook, 27 March 2020).

> We are approaching the DEAD day's disguised as BETTER OXYGEN. May all the people who are affected by this crisis...Ikakhulukazi if they die before their voices are heard. Before the truth is narrated. May their silenced voices become louder under the soil of Azania. Louder than the brown dried DEAD leaves ahead of time (Facebook, 28 February 2020).

> The third day in quarantine. We connoted the deception behind the name - isolated querents. We played the possibilities of the suppressed tragedies. Mystery remains a seed of the dried dead leaves of Azania. Kodwa impilo mele iqobeke... #noincomefortheartists the narrators of the world. We sing a melody of heavy-hearted possibilities. Welcome to the contemporary times, the post-post-modern times of Azania (Facebook, 29 March 2020).

> Throwing it back to this conversation as we prepare our hearts to lay the Great Sanusi to rest. In this spiritual season of mourning the departure of the Sun, we acknowledge the magic of Bab' Credo's timing. Long live the spirit of Vusamazulu Credo Mutwa, long live! (Facebook, 1 April 2020).
>
> Ezibuhlungu azipheli-the candles of hope remain switched, but the light shown is scarier than the prayer of a wicked blind man...first week and the question of essence is lingering. When did traditional ways become the enemy of perseverance??? Somebody forgot to answer the phone call of truth. Nature vs man made have become Azania 's tragic narrative (Facebook, 3 April 2020).
>
> From Oppression (Apartheid) to Suppression (Democracy) Our faith keeps us attuned as we wait in the silence for the dead bodies to be heard for all the fruits of wisdom, they left us with. Until then makubenjalo, the rhetoric wrath of a dying nation. Say a prayer to a dying world that was once filled with voices of Hope. Place the pedestals on a coffin of their attempts because blinded they were not! Helpless they were placed. Nkosi sikelela (Facebook, 6 April 2020).
>
> We die voicing out. While others claim we do not research because the truth is, they are suppressed by the capitalist system that they get to gain from occasionally. It's alright, congratulations dear human, you are the deceiving change you appear to be. Remember, perspective is the death of what we believe. Did somebody say vaccine??? Baleka...Baleka...ngenyawo zombili! (Facebook, 6 April 2020).

These captions were a summary of the dialogues that were happening in Ivory Park through verbal conversations and social media platforms, although the videos showed the real characters and realities of Ivory Park.

Additionally, it is imperative to acknowledge that in this research, broadly speaking, there are very similar yet specifically different methods or qualities of methodologies that it may seem to be, but it is not. Therefore, I referred to Bailey yet again, in the *Historical Context of Emergent Methods and Innovation* where he clearly extrapolates what public ethnography may seemingly appear to be, but it is not.

> Public ethnography is not just one but many things. It is, and yet it is not, public interest anthropology, public anthropology, public sociology, participatory action research, activist anthropology, collaborative action research, critical medical anthropology, action anthropology, queer methods (Plummer, 2005), critical humanizer (Plummer, 2005), scholar-activist approach (Kershaw, 2005), [...] interpretive ethnography

> (Denzin, 1999), [...] institutional ethnography, political anthropology, public voice ethnography (Denzin, 2003), public interest sociology (Klein, 2005), engaged anthropology, and applied ethnography, among others. Important subtle and not so subtle differences exist amongst these variants (Bailey, 2008: 266).

As stated previously, one of the research aims is to bridge the gap between academics, activists, and the artists. The theories of public ethnography already see a non-existent line between them as they are all actively working together to conduct research concerned with social injustice. Furthermore, this non-existent line played out as an immense unifier in my practice that created a universal language through performance, which is further elaborated in detail in the methodology section. It is partly with this in mind that I attempt, even in my writing, to flow between researcher, performer and activist exemplified by my weaving of research journal writing, text from my community engagements and write-up within this report.

I further referred to Conquergood (2003) in Dialogical Performance (Genuine and conversation). He articulates the struggle of, worldview, beliefs, and values to bring together different voices. The aim of Dialogical struggle is to create a debate that engages everyone. It is an open text; it never ends with empathy. It is always left with an open room for further interrogation which bridged the gap between academics and non-academics (Conquergood, 2003: 9).

To apply these, I must understand common humanity as a prevention of my own opinion, or biased notion that might come from an uninformed perspective. This allows me to have endless possibilities for this investigation. At times, I find it scary when critically observing others as this, in some people, bring self-realisation. I see a better reflection of myself, but it is an encouraging experience nonetheless, a whole different situation from what I think I know because of familiarity. I had intimate engagement, which created dialogue (Research Journal, May 2020).

Through these dialogues, there were a lot of relations I used to create a world of fiction, embodying the lived experience. In other parts, when I was informally having a dialogue, I became personal and some of the things people would say were hard to swallow. This exhibited for me a new notion that there is everything to learn in every voice and people deserve to be listened to. Respect for me was the driver of the dialogue, through an open mind and respect, comfort and willingness were created,

allowing the dialogue to expand to new discoveries. I recognised through these dialogues how research to reduce social injustices epistemologically became possible and imperative. Engaging with activists, academics, artists, and the public at large, motivated others to join in the struggle, especially in using social media to fight repressive conditions, both through images and videos with captions.

The next important stage was to probe deeper and go back into the core of what it was that I was doing; what does public ethnography as a form of protest stand for; what makes it unique from other theatre forms; how does this work locate itself in communities?

In interpreting and devising the composition, I studied Van Graan's (2011) journal. He states the advantage of Protest Theatre in the times of the contemporary and the constituent characteristics. He explicates that "history itself has not really ended. Rather, we have simply entered a new chapter. A society in transition has much to offer its theatre-makers. There is greater complexity, more irony, many contradictions, allowing for characters to be less one dimensionally good or bad" (Van Graan, 2011: 276). The following steps were followed to achieve the above devising process:

- I used a didactic approach where the audiences have a limited space for the interpretation but made the message both vocal and physical to heighten the interpretation. Theatre remained the main message.

- My form is a stylistic approach; it is a direct confrontation. As an actor, I was addressing the audience directly through the lens, it is dramatic and confrontational. The inevitable is that it is through the camera lens that is making it an active exploration of what theatre through a lens may or could be in the future.

- The set, props, and deco symbolise and/or display the suppressive conditions (A museum created in a shack).

- I played one role through multiple characters - that of the suppressed or representing the marginalised.

- I used my actor's skills combined with his lived experience, to portray characters like the people from Ivory Park.

- This composition was performed in a real home of a member of Ivory Park, where the family of that person were the only audience members watching live as the performance happened. The live moment was captured via a video camera for the broader audience members on social media fora.

- The show is devised from an informed perspective, using material conducted and converted into documentary material, then changed into a script. Therefore, the performance incorporates both a collage postmodern style[5] with embodiment. *Mr. President- the public ethnographic museum of illustration in the mind of the poor that serves to protest* is a combination of still and moving images, not just embodiment.

Moreover, in relation to what Mike Van Graan (2011) stated, Purkey (2014) further elucidates that 'the inference of Protest Theatre means that it was against something, it was not active, implying that it had its time, and it is finished'. However, that is not the case, as Protest Theatre pieces, this work is also authentically itself, it has a life on its own as a piece of art, making it a treasured token of historical magic "(The History of South African Theatre, 2014).

Oida and Marshall (1997) say 'the invisible actor has the magic, the magic potential that appears when they grasp that there is no difference between them and the stage, audience, and the role they play. All of that combined without the symphony of every action in the moment expressed in the performance, will appear to the spectator's[6] ability to transport his audience, through body, space and time', in this case through a collage as well. He makes the audience forget themselves in the performance; a one moment expressing itself; a profound manner to understand and perform 'the invisible faith in democracy' through a magical catastrophe, yet realistic, reality of *abantu base kas'lam* (Ivory Park).

I utilised the body as my primary means of creation to articulate the invisible faith arisen through the body rather than mind. This means that I used somatic ways in the creation process. I interpreted my composition movements from the text, and some were

[5] A collage postmodern style in definition is a "verbal and visual medium, that epitomises the heterogeneity, indeterminacy and fragmentation of the postmodern moment" (Halse, 2006: 3).

[6] The usage of the words 'spectator' and 'audience' is deliberate as this research process required both. In the final presentation and throughout the process the researcher involved 'spect-actors' as Augusto Boal refers to them entailing that they are spectators. This is because the research gathered data through performance in public spaces during its first stage and people would instinctively intervene.

devised. This intends to make the audience members more noticeable or prominent to trigger imagination to be involved and engaged in an action taking place in space. Since it is public ethnography as a form of protest, I created the world in space and a design to provoke the imagination of the spectators. This was done with consideration that the performance will be viewed digitally yet a theatre format must be maintained, and I did not want to take away the nature and live-ness of theatre that lies at the core of my work.

I have put more emphases on the use of emotional memory whereby (the researcher) recalled his life experiences and what he has been told through the informal interviews by the people *base kas'lam.* To capture the memories, re-create and to bring the feeling of live-ness on stage in a form of an expression which he believes captures the nature of theatre. These emotional memories required commitment and honesty for one to be truthful and demanded one to take a risk, no matter how difficult the situation was. He had to take an extra mile to break free from the strong holds that his situation placed him in.

Today, in the moment of creation, I regarded myself as a ground-breaking and prominent theatre-maker. I completely avoided the stereotypical culture of theatre by moving away from the traditional dependence of drama productions being performed in a theatre space. I tried to find a relationship in a home, theatre, digital and everyday life. I took theatre to its location where the real suppression issues are and moved away from the theatre space mentally. This was a collaboration of theatre, digital and the shack (wherein some of the people of Ivory Park live). *I infused daily movements in the space, to find the theatre in a real space (Research Journal, May 2020).*

Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett (1955) is a significant title and theatrical art piece that supported me in this research to comprehend fully and expand on the ideology of 'faith'. Derived from my research title, 'Invisible faith' is analogous to *Waiting for Godot,* meaning or describing a situation where individuals are waiting for something to happen, but it probably never will. This brought me to the parameters of democracy and what it is or truly means. In the composition, this is compared to that of the Christian religion. The church being rallies, constitution being the bible, and the priest being the president. The concept of the church became a metaphorical symbol.

Through informal WhatsApp chats and messages for this investigation, I found myself grounded towards a different way of knowing, digitally, which was far more intimate, active, and personally connecting. This was done with some of the community members of Ivory Park and outside of Ivory Park in the town locations, with different genders, different age groups, artists, activists, academics, and the community at large. Several people were active, informally so.

These were the questions designed to engage with the public:

- What is democracy, according to you?
- Do you believe in democracy, if yes why, if not why not?
- Has democracy served you, in what way?
- Why do you vote or not?
- Why do you trust in democracy or not?
- Do you feel like you are influenced to vote?
- Does democracy influence your lifestyle?
- What would you prefer between apartheid and democracy; please state why?
- Do you protest, if yes, how, if no, why not?

The answers that were given about democracy, thereafter, were thematically analysed in accordance with the research questions, aims, objective and incorporated as an embodied illustration of what this democracy means to the people, particularly those from Ivory Park in the composition *Mr. President*.

Additionally, it is vital to state that there are various theories about democracy that have been documented, even debated upon, but for the purpose of this research, I did not dwell on that because of the meaning of what the study has cemented its connotation of democracy to be. This is based on *abantu base kas'lam* and what they view democracy to be. The complementary definition to the constitution as expressed under the *Demokratia* section, proved relevantly appropriate. This is shown in the performance *Mr. President* through the usage of images that are suggestive to the conditions of *abantu base* Ivory Park and questions the fairness of what their realities are in comparison to what the South African constitution promises.

Every research has a background, or/and historical roots from which it bases its context. I applied Monaheng's (2017) research on the City of Johannesburg website,

to receive what the councillor of Ivory Park, Petros Zitha testifies on about the repressive conditions and the ever-increasing unemployment rates. Mkwanazi's (2019) website is where I received a thorough background of how Ivory Park came into existence and the disadvantages of their residential location and the socio-political circumstances they experience (Monaheng, 2017). He states that:

> Demographics of Ivory Park has an incredible increase population growth every year. The massive population is motivated by strategic location between two major cities which are Johannesburg and Pretoria. Now it has even become worse because it is about 15 to 20 minutes away from the Mall of Africa. The attractions sites in this district are recognised globally. There are many immigrants, according to the case study. In 2008, about 20% of the population in Ivory Park were foreign nationals. Ivory Park have beautiful big houses, RDP houses surrounded by shack structures, growth of informal settlements and backroom shacks.

Monaheng (2017) further explains that Ivory Park is characterized by high levels of unemployment, low annual household income, inadequate access to housing, basic services, and the proliferation of informal settlements. As a result, many residents are unemployed, and some depend on informal businesses, like car mechanics, street venders, *kota* places: bunny chow and shoe repairs. Similarly, some households lack sufficient water for family use, access to improved sanitation, security of tenure and housing in a permanent and adequate structure in a non-hazardous location. Yet ironically, the people are being promised better living conditions in every election.

Smriti Chan in (*Your Article Library*, 2019) speaks to the disadvantage of marketing strategies and the implications they may have if they do not reach the promises or hopes given to the people. This proved vital for the research to understand how the people *base kas'lam* might be at the risk of circumstances. By not understanding the implications of the campaigning that happens before the elections, leads to their ever-waiting progressions of change, that enhances the circle of perpetuation on the wait for better conditions, bringing about the invisible faith. I proceeded to look at the performative paradigms.

Arts-based research is "...a resonance between complementary writing and the praxis itself. A typical balance between practice and complementary writings..." (Nelson, 2013: 11). Nelson (2013), in his model, served as a method for the researcher to follow

in his journey of collecting material, for what resulted in a performance research. He does not advocate the ‘know-how’, rather he is advocating the ‘doing knowing’, for example, knowing how to act is ‘doing-knowing’, chiefly beyond verbal explanation. Reading before practice to acquire information is still essential as a tradition, though using performative paradigms to discover through doing is stupendous (Nelson, 2013). In addition, performative paradigms require the researcher to be reflective and reflexive.

Dawson and Kelin (2014), on the reflexive teaching artist, speak to the power of reflecting and offer a reflective framework – a series of foundational concepts, including intentionality, quality, artistic perspective, and praxis – illuminated through reflexivity. The authors write a dual perspective of artists and educators to raise fundamental questions about the complex intentions and functions of research, etc.; their contributors closely examine the practice of teaching in, through and about drama and theatre. This obliged as a design for me to critically reflect and be reflexive towards the work to illuminate and recognise any biased notions. This was complementary to the research method, as arts-based is about the ability of the practitioner - researcher being able to be reflective and reflexive.

I had proposed to conduct documentary material, direct observation (eyewitness observation), indirect interviews (through informal conversations with people from the township). The most relied on material was the interviews and articles that had been previously and recently published about the conditions and circumstances of *abantu base kas’lam*. However, because of the drastic changes of digital learning caused by the pandemic (Covid-19), I could not continue with the exact planned method; I then adapted an online version of collecting data (as mentioned above on my personal Facebook page and WhatsApp). This was until the stage three of the pandemic lockdown announced by the President of South Africa. This allowed for me to interview a few members of Ivory Park using these interviews together with the online articles to further the findings. Although the methodology remained moderately the same, the approach was now executed online.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The concept of learning is being tested on the knowledge acquired. Through a test, persons look up for stimulation, down in nervousness, left and right for information. This research study used the central concept of arts-based research as a methodology. The use of arts-based research books and supporting material were referred to, to conduct clarity upon arts-based research. I have chosen Nelson's (2013) – *'Practice as Research in the Arts'* to serve as a guide and a thorough articulation towards understanding the process of this investigation.

The privilege of being in a higher learning institution does not make you an academic any more than going to a laboratory or the field and practice as you research. The central concept of arts-based research is that in which practice is a crucial method of investigation to generate and re-generate knowledge as substantial evidence of a study as a request for information (self-evidence truth). "…the concept of 'performance' has contributed a new concept map – and mode of knowing – to the academy and to research" (Nelson, 2013: 3).

Originally, the method was founded in Finland during the 1980s and has lasted for three decades since. Although some academics argue that the method had been in existence in the United Kingdom, initiated by Professor Brad Haseman[7] at the same time Nelson introduced it too. This method has empowered me as a performing artist to move from being a practitioner to practitioner-researcher.

As a performing artist, I started engaging in traditional objective inquiry years back. Through my practice, I took a view that practice alone was quite weighty without a documented counterpart. Coming to reflect now, I realise that I had not ever considered or thought what I did to be practicing as a form of research. This was also because there were arts practices on the one side and academic research on the other. However, I was conscious of my ability to explore forces towards my work to address matters which were arising in my country, socio-political issues to be exact,

[7] Professor Brad Haseman, is a profound advocate for the Practice as Research paradigm, http://eprints.qut.edu.au/3999/1/3999_1.pdf

and the impact those issues had on *abantu base kas'lam* in the post-post-modern times.

Nelson elaborates on the importance of 'doing' to generate the knowledge, rather than just reading, and hoping reading on its own can be a way of generating enough knowledge. This was a 'light bulb' moment for me as it began to make sense why my own work was feeling weighty. It is because there was no balance of what is known as praxis, a combination of theory and practice coming together to create a new form of knowledge. I had to learn that that arts-based knowledge is also generated from the outside to the inside (Practice + Theory = Praxis)?

The performative paradigm is relevant for drama and theatrical research for it to distinguish itself from qualitative and quantitative models that constitute the leading research patterns in a study. According to Bolt Barbara (2009), "a performative paradigm potentially offers the creative arts a radical new version and a way of distinguishing its research from the dominant models of knowledge". Hence, the work of a practitioner-researcher should be in a lineage of practice to be additionally valuable to the literature review though it aims to balance the two. Moreover, Nelson has developed a mode of knowing, a multi-mode, an epistemological mode for Performance as Research (PaR) to contribute to the existing knowledge. However, this is not the mode of knowing I used. As elaborated clearly in-depth at the theoretical framework above, I utilised the three modes of knowing: The Know-How, Know-What and Know-That.

The know-how forms part of the theoretical framework, based on the findings of this paper, as elaborated on in the theoretical framework introduction section. Thus, in this section, I further summarize what it stands for, what it consists of and most importantly, how it was further used but do not repeat the 'how' that has already been expressed above. The other two modes of knowing (know-what and know-that) is thoroughly explicated here.

Know - How

The body is the knowing source of the knowledge. **The experiential haptic knowledge** that is accumulated through experience, indistinct to a prior knowledge.

Hence, the know-how has aided the theoretical framework because the work done by the researcher had been practised long before the research without the knowledge of what it is exactly by name, though a recognition and practice of its kind had been acknowledged. “Drawing upon contextualization in relation to what is already known, and on critical reflection on what we might call practical experiments…” (Nelson, 2013: 40). The experiential haptic knowledge may be constructed with the prepositional knowledge and the practical knowledge.

Performative knowing is highly inclusive in the activeness of the ‘now’ and the repetition of the ‘then’ and now daily activates for insistence. This study identifies it as the knowledge of fact that is articulated through the body and the senses that are engaged. In other words, to a certain extent, the theory is proclaiming that knowledge can be related to a daily activity. Nelson (2013: 39) states that “… ‘we know what we know’ and that knowing in the arts is personal, embodied and tacit.” That is, it can appeal to reality, being a part of the actions that are ‘normal’ or ‘identical’ to the actions, to the extent that it modifies reality.

Tacit knowledge, on the other hand, Nelson (2013: 38) states that tacit knowledge “at one extreme, it is almost completely tacit, that is semi-conscious and unconscious knowledge held in people’s head and bodies”. In *Mr. President*, I used the bodily knowledge as a representation and then articulated it through reflection. By being reflexive in using a passive voice, I embraced all the possibilities that came with the process of creation to articulate the tacit. By being precise and systematic I made it holistically accessible to the people other than those of Ivory Park alone. In my reflection, this added to the substantial new insight of knowledge.

All the types of ‘knowing–how’ are a summary of one element, **the embodied knowledge** that comes from my experiences of living under the suppressive conditions and experiencing at first hand, the empty promises of change that never come, which became the research and critical exploration of the socio-political manipulation of *ekas’lam*. Furthermore, I performed live in public spaces around my township and uploaded the videos of those performances on my social media platforms to create dialogue, debates and receive critical feedback or comments from the public. This was a way to generate research material that was utilised for

conducting documentary material. My observations (eyewitness observation), the interviews and the material that had been previously and recently published about the conditions and circumstances of *abantu base kas'lam* were merged to create a performance text that was thereafter embodied in the composition, *Mr. President*.

Some of the text was in a form of prose and poetry that also served as a prayer to or for *Mr. President*, to perform as part of the investigation of the 'invisible faith in democracy' *yabantu base kas'lam*. This was an exploration to use public ethnography as a form of protest. The overall 'Know–how' was derived from my experience of being empowered in creativity, practical application, analytical dynamics of drama productions in a collaborative environment during my working and studying days.

Know - What

The 'Know–What' is the analysis of what works and what does not, through critical reflection; the principles of composition, knowing what the impact is, the tacit made explicit through critical reflection. As a researcher, it is important for me to critically reflect on every stage of the process. The 'Know–What' is a stage where I track back on my previous work that has already been done. The work that has guided/ led to where the research is now (it is surfing time!). I investigate specifically the qualities that makes my work unique. The main theme that drives the overall piece of text. In my case, as Purkey (2012) stated, that if it does not stand for something, it is not against something, if it does not expose, soothing harshness and the brutality of a system, then it is not the kind of work I aim to do. My work calls for change from a critical perspective. This consists of the following:

Know What works

> Know – What is an informed reflexivity about the process of making and its mode of knowing. The key method used to develop Know-What from Know-How is that of critical reflection – pausing, standing back, and thinking about what you are doing. […] in addition, as Haseman and Mafe formulate it, '[t]he reflexive defines a position where the researcher can refer and reflect upon themselves and so be able to give an account of their own position of enunciation' (Nelson, 2013: 44).

My experience of gathering data at Ivory Park incorporated readings from critical reflection theories to respond to the suppressive conditions at Ivory Park. Furthermore,

my reflection used the concepts of self-compassion to elaborate in-depth on the exercises, using a variety of media to interrogate my own positionality, both from the internal and in relation to others, the Ivory Park community, and the national issues that concerns the study. Self-compassion was an alternative conceptualisation of a healthy attitude towards oneself (researcher) when collecting data and getting into the composition process (Neff, 2003: 85).

Self-compassion consists of three components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. Neff (2003) sees self-compassion as a performative involvement: Being touched by and open to one's own suffering, not avoiding or disconnecting from it, generating the desire to alleviate one's suffering and heal oneself with kindness. Self-compassion also involves offering non-judgemental understanding to one's pain, inadequacies, and failures, so that one's experiences are part of the larger human experience (Neff, 2003: 87).

Neff states that "Common humanity perceive one's experiences as part of the large human's experience" (Neff, 2003: 85). Thus, understanding common humanity, prevailed fruitful it was the start of me embracing the public common humanity and articulated 'I suffer with…' meaning one and all have a mutual experience of suffering. Suffering is for the whole world, and one needs to be acknowledging to be mindful this served a breakthrough to a whole new perspective about myself toward how I receive and see the Ivory Park and that in it.

Primarily, my overall reflection towards the critical observation of Ivory Park was observed and undeniably digested as reflected in my research journal:

The site visit to Ivory Park sections was an affirmation for me that as South Africans, we have moved from oppression (apartheid) to suppression (Democracy)[8]. I saw busy bodies walking in great discomfort constantly looking over their shoulders for the police to arrive as the hustle for their next meal continued. I saw the silenced voices and their bodies crying suppression out louder than their silence itself. I noted that the spaces were clothed by religion and culture. This felt as though the welcoming to the zeitgeist

[8] Suppression democracy refers to a system of governance that consciously undergoes a process of pushing unwanted anxiety provoking thoughts, memories and emotions, out of awareness and oppression apartheid is a system of segregation that causes mental pressure and distress.

of had just pathed a road map to a deceptive notion of subtle calamities (Research Journal, February 2020).

Moreover, because of the aforementioned. I could not have felt more in agreement with Neff (2003). He emphasises that in the zeitgeist in which we live, with all the pain and much failure, our dark experiences, our feeling disconnected and secluded, with all the stumbling blocks that hold us back from painful thoughts and feeling unwarranted awareness, “Holding painful thoughts and feelings in balanced awareness rather than over-identifying with them” (Neff: 2003:88). I felt deeply the need for an emotionally positive self-attitude to protect myself from all the emotions that were sensed, felt, and realised against the narrative significances that could lead to depression. As a human being, it is essential that I show kindness to myself and develop a sense of self-understanding to my emotions and to be confronted and dealt with in the most sensitive and sensible way by myself.

In Ivory Park, Johannesburg. I felt the need to de-role myself from the experience in its entirety. I was concerned about the constant reflective sessions I delved into at the end of each day, with no consideration of the impact on the body that acquires all the experience. Now I was looking at it with a critical eye and serving as a third eye and not just as a resident.

I was left to question and be concerned about the fine lines between reflecting and de-roling and if reflexivity was enough to heal myself, the researcher, as one of my peers, Tshepang Moticoe, in her master’s paper, has questioned. Additionally, I was concerned for myself as a black body, seeing my own people being the statistics of tragedy in a place that was referred to as the centre of the South African economy (Midrand, between two major central business districts’ economic nodal points, Pretoria, and Johannesburg). The economic nodal points create a tragic tension for me because no life was felt in the spaces, I was observing just bodies suppressed to circumstances. I found clarity in the importance of my research which I will elaborate on later, in relation to the experience specifically.

My reflective guide on this critical observation and direct engagement was conducted in the following way: I noted down how I felt before, during and after the various spaces

or site visits. I did this for two reasons, first, to evaluate my biased attributes towards the history I may have and second, to recognise the effect and affect of the experience in its entity towards my mind and body. The musician Bob Marley was correct when he stated, 'if you pay attention, everything becomes your teacher'.

Generally, my critical observation and direct involvement was unpleasant, and I felt suppressed. This meant to me that history was indirectly replaying itself. It felt utterly suppressive not to become troubled when several resident members were expressing their constant fear their seeking help or speaking of their realities. More than that, I questioned if a black person was meant to suffer. I then came back and wrote a text, a part of which served as the artistic composition text which is later unpacked in the section '*The museum exhibition of ekas'lam – Modalities'* under text. Here a short excerpt from my reflections pointing to the need for self-care and compassion, because of having to embody all these experiences acquired in the marginalised communities.

All these experiences were and still are, always in mind. Some I dream of during the night, which might have a negative impact upon myself. Nonetheless, I have learned to understand that some things are out of my control and it is okay, or rather I need to let it be okay, because attachments with no solutions are as painful as not mourning a loved one (Research Journal, May 2020).

I felt overwhelmed with gratitude towards critical reflexive teachings, because before I never understood the agony and the fiasco. But… now I can purely say 'IT IS OKAY'! Neff (2003: 87) clearly explains the need for such to be felt and acknowledged; he says "self-kindness is extending kindness and understanding to oneself rather than harsh judgment and self-criticism" (Neff, 2003: 87). I used to disapprove of myself more than I ever did towards others, even in situations that were beyond my control. It is only now that I am exposed to contemplative practices that I comprehend the ins and outs beyond my hypercritical attitude towards pain, insufficiency, and disappointments. The concept of self-compassion was slowly penetrating inside me through the component of common humanity.

These critical observations have contributed much to my research topic. It was also interesting to experience how the practice itself can be affected by the space. That

was the most beautiful section of the observation, in my opinion, listening and receiving (responding rather than acting). The feeling of emotions, and the lived experience for the people of Ivory Park are painful, especially for the black bodies there. I wanted to understand why I stood so firm in my desire to explore, comprehend, and seek to know the possibilities of the occurring changes hoping to re-learn and teach the black body out of the entrapped mind of apartheid and the suppressed post-post-modern times.

The parts of me that used to think I was the only one encountering catastrophe and hurt almost slew me with complex trauma. Neff states that “Common humanity perceive one’s experiences as part of the large human's experience” (Neff, 2003: 85). Thus, understanding common humanity, proved fruitful. It was the start of me embracing the public common humanity and articulated ‘I suffer with…’ meaning one and all have a mutual experience of suffering. Suffering is for the whole world, and one needs to be acknowledging and to be mindful of that fact. This served as a breakthrough to a whole new perspective about myself as to how I receive and see the world and all that is in it.

Through mindfulness, one can distance oneself from psychologically harmful experiences, whereby the sense of self-kindness and common humanity dominate.
Neff explains mindfulness as “Holding painful thoughts and feelings in balanced awareness rather than over-identifying with them” (Neff, 2003: 88). Through mindfulness, I was able to acknowledge the past and worried less about the future and that allowed me to be in the moment. I understood myself and others without being judgemental and/or harshly criticizing them. Hence, I saw the need for myself to now embody self-compassion practices according to how best they will work for me, to attempt a balance within my inner self, the world around me and those who exist in the world with me.

What I found most challenging was ‘settling the mind’ during my observation. This practice of reflection and being reflexive to end my day was not necessarily very helpful to me. I also realised that when the mind was quite busy and the body in shock, nothing was useful or helpful. During the nights when I got time for myself, I rolled up and down through dulation and adulation, sang and danced just to release the tension and move on. Though, I was extremely tired, it was the least I could attempt to make sure I get some sleep.

What I found out about myself is that I never truly gave myself a chance to let go of the past and allow the process of healing to transpire, let alone confront or question the feelings that the experiences furnished me with. I kept worrying about tomorrow and forgot to appreciate the now or even indulge in it for what it is. Kabat-Zinn (1994) articulates that “Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994: 4) will provide oneself with the neutrality to be and become. At this stage, I was aware of myself and my surrounding. I acknowledged with understanding without being overly critical of the situation because I came to the realisation that we see the world as we are conditioned to see it.

This was a point where as a practitioner–researcher I had arrived at what Nelson articulates as being ‘informed by practice review’. He states that “it is possible gradually to identify what is distinctive about a given practice and the substantial new insight it yields” (Nelson, 2013: 44). In my instance, mindfulness gave a different insight that contributed greatly to what I knew as a resident of Ivory Park, as opposed to when I viewed it as a practitioner–researcher, granting a considerably new perspective.

Know the Method

Knowing the method entails comprehension of the existence of other materials that intercept with yours. The acknowledgement of needing other ways of knowing - how to fully grasp and holistically see beyond the proposed plan, as opposed to the bigger picture to the plan. In my process that meant using other methods that are complementary to my proposed method, methods that helped me, as the researcher, to deal with all that is endured in the process, so it does not blind me into biased or judgemental alternatives. Nelson (2013) corresponds and states that:

> To achieve a profoundly critical reflection, an additional dimension is required to dislocate habitual ways of seeing. A dimension may be mobilized from within, from an element of playfulness in the know - how process, and from without, through engagement with a range of other perspectives and stands points to promote the interplay with fresh ideas (Nelson 2013: 45).

Public Ethnography defines the quality and content of the work I produce. It fights against suppressive and recessive conditions. It critiques the social structures of inequalities and fights to create deliberate discourses to reckon the imbalances and calls for change upon these inequalities. Consequently, that is the emblem of what protest is: to voice out against and make commentary that calls for the dismantling of inequalities, social injustices, and inferences. Protest and Public Ethnography are active in themselves, indicating they are authentically themselves, and that they have a life in their own existence as a piece of artwork that gives a voice to the voiceless.

The repercussions of both methods leave the researcher in overwhelming need to shed the heaviness. Thus, critical reflexivity proved worthy as it allowed a confrontational attribute and critical unpacking of the self in relation to others. This also allowed the researcher to be accepting of and with the circumstances of the repercussions of the emergent necessary work. That is where arts-based becomes the umbrella that presents the opportunity to practice and write about the practice to make the research documented both physically and historically in the knowledge of praxis.

Know the Principles of Composition

The journey of the research was conducted by the guidance and professional rule of actions and conduct. It was through exceptional morale and principles that the generation of its data stemmed from the truth towards the intentions and objectives of the research. Transparency railed the ethical consideration, protection and set clear boundaries for the researcher and the participants involved. Ethical clearance was obtained prior to the proceedings of the field work.

The following are some of the interviews conducted by the researcher to collect data. These interviews were captured on camera from the various sections of Ivory Park, and they were loosely translated into English to accommodate the readers for academic purposes. The concern and discomfort from these documentary materials, was in the moment when the researcher had to ask to interview the participants. Many of them refused, not because they did not want to share their problems and circumstances. Their reason was because previously they have been exploited in the name of change and promised better living circumstances, only to later be troubled by

the police and shown on the news to be immiserated by the world but no help ever came.

Interviews

Question*: what would you do if Mr. President came to Ivory Park?*

First respondent*: I would be pleased and my only cry to him would be concerning hunger because we are starved and there is no employment. Otherwise, I would be very happy!*

Second respondent*: There are many things I would do. Mostly ask him concerning the bad things that are happening around Ivory Park regarding to community halls and the playgrounds for children. There are no spaces for children to play. It is not safe and the community halls as people of Ivory Park we pay for them of which we the people of the community pay services for like the streets lights which are not working but, on our statements, they appear that they must be paid. Crime is too much. The police are not doing anything about it, all they want is bribe money. The community is not safe. We need many facilities that the President must adhere to, thank you.*

Third respondent*: The President must fix everything he has messed up. There is a lot of things happening in our houses we are crying as the municipality said they must not add rent money because of the Covid-19 but the statements come showing an increase in depts. There is no water, we must go to the mozabalazong to get water. The mozabalazo have water but we the people who have title deeds do not have water. We must go get water from mozabalazong, yet the municipality is demanding money for water. He must fix all those things or the people that deal with water services must get an instruction from him to fix those things. They must not cheat people. (And she walks away aggravated)*

Forth respondent*: Our children have gone to school received certificates. Today they are in dire poverty struggling. They end up dealing with drugs such as Nyaope because of poverty. Those who smoke Nyaope it is not just those who do not have education, there are those that have education who need employment. Our children are up and down during the day looking to gain… iii… experience. I-experience bazoyithathaphi when they just finished school because they are meant to learn and be taught the work and then receive the job. Not that a child finishes school then demanded of experience.*

No…Mr. President pull up your socks! Khuphula amasokisi wakho. Its bad out here, we are starving.

***Fifth respondent**: (Doing laundry) Okay firstly, the way we are situated jah…as you can see it is not okay. We are clustered. I would tell him that it would be better if he places us nicely and give us RDP's jaah and fix a place where we can fetch water so kube yi-better place like other places. Sharp!*

The interviews were captured on video, but for ethical reasons, the videos will not be shared. The rest of the shared concerns of the people from Ivory Park were instead embodied by the researcher in the final research presentation *Mr. President*. The interviews were thematically analysed together with the other interviews that are not included in the above shared interviews. The interviews were analysed as follows:

I started by reading all the transcripts and viewing the captured videos. I analysed and browsed through all the transcripts, the videos and made notes about my first impression of them in relation to the questions, aims and objective of the research. I continued to read them again one by one, line by line. This was so that I may label the relevant pieces such as words, phrases, sentences, and sections. This was the process of coding down (repeating information, surprising, what was already documented and what was relevant). This served as an outlook for conceptualisation of underlying patterns with regards to invisible faith, democracy, protest, public ethnography qualities and suppressive conditions. I countered my biased notions by staying close to the data.

Furthermore, I then noted all the important codes and categorised them accordingly to my key words. This forced me to be creative and open-minded which allowed me to find the connections of the key words which became the findings of the study that was transposed into a performance composition *Mr. President*. This brought up a whole new knowledge from the perspective of the participants. What was common about these interviews was the suppressive conditions that the residents of Ivory Park are experiencing daily, the trust they have in democracy, the belief that the president holds the power to change their circumstances and the fear to practice their right to protest for service delivery. All these findings were then used to create a composition *Mr. President* that served protest.

Know the Impact

> The more embodied experience moves away from the proximal, the more it becomes possible to articulate its import in additional modes, including the intellectual, as pattens 'emerge' into discernible forms. In several disciplines, 'emergency' marks the way pattens and complex systems are formed from apparently simple actions and interactions (Nelson, 2013: 46).

"We do not see the world as it is, but as we are." (Maturana, & Varela, 1987). This quotation made me realise that, when we start expressing ourselves describing what we see, we are unfolding who we are, our perceptions and our archetypes. From self-understanding, this quote means that we are the lenses of the world. What bothers us about others is a direct reflection of what we may need to interrogate within ourselves. If I want to become the change that I want to see in the world, the mode of action would have to begin with the 'I' before transposing into the 'we'. Hence, I was personally impacted by the circumstances of *abantu base kas'lam* in this process.
Thus, the contemplative practice literature played a significant role.

On a personal level, the contemplative practice literature impacted me by enabling myself to reflect on my observation at Ivory Park and to use the knowledge to better understand myself in the spirit of the times in which we live and the complexities of our communities at large. Contemplative practice literature taught me critical thinking.
Zajonc (2018) articulates that '…students use critical thinking to discover their connectedness to each other and the world, empathy and compassion.' Throughout the use of contemplative practice literature, I felt obliged to take my time, independently have deep thoughts and think for myself. This thinking further helped me to think deeper about my practice and my intentions through my practice.

The similarity I noticed between contemplative practices and applied drama was the capacity to reflect dialogically. The application and progression of applied drama and theatre are evaluated through practice and then reflected upon during and after practice. Contemplative practice gave me, as an applied drama and theatre student, a platform to critically reflect on my experiences. Through critical reflexive praxis, I am, as a student, being encouraged to be more self-aware and metacognitive. Contemplative practice and applied drama and theatre are directly integrated (Balfour, 2010). In every experience or journey, one is or ought to leave inspired or heavily

burdened, specifically with field work experiences and considering we exist in the times of a democratic system. For me, I was burdened by my critical observations at Ivory Park.

All of which are the embodied knowledge that comes from my experiences of living under the suppressive conditions at Ivory Park for years, experiencing at first hand the empty promises of change that never came. Furthermore, hearing the community speak out loud about the conditions themselves reminded me of the urgency of the research and its importance, which led to the research composition *Mr. President,* a critical exploration of the socio-political manipulation of ***e****kas'lam* to reveal the invisible faith in democracy, reviewing how their socio-political rights are being violated. "Reflexivity, then, concerns not only reflecting on what is being achieved and how the specific work is taking shape but also being aware of where you stand ('where you are coming from') in respect of knowledge traditions more broadly" (Nelson, 2013: 44 - 45).

Know - That

To know the perspective of the 'we', a distance needs to be created for a conceptual framework, that is cognitively propositional. This is known as the 'Know-That' when the 'outsider' distance for knowledge is incorporated. This was the final stage of the theatrical piece where I opened my work online to other people to view and critique. All academics, activists, artists, students, and the public were welcomed on different platforms, namely: my coursework presentations (in Performance as Research, Performance Ethnography and Critical Reflexive Praxis), my social media and the people of Ivory Park, to comment and give feedback. A questionnaire was issued to be answered after watching the video.

Questionnaire

This is a call to all academics, activists, artists, and the public at large to assist in critically responding to the following questions after watching the video recording. You may use any language or any form of expression such as: voice note, text, poetry, song, drawing or anything else that might best express and articulate critically how you feel from what you have received or viewed from the video in relation to the following questions.

1. *Did any of the following themes appear to you: Invisibility, Faith, Democracy, Protest and or Suppression?*
2. *Do you think this video can create debates about socio-political issues to reduce the persuasive power of politics?*
3. *Are you responding as an Academic, activist, artist, or an ordinary citizen?*
4. *How has this motivated your responds?*
5. *Do you have any advice, general feedback, or questions with regards to the video?*

NB: This video is in partial fulfilment for Master of arts. Please note that no form of identification will be used in the writing of the research report. I can guarantee your anonymity in direct communication.

These sessions were treated as a theatre preview. In this process, I presented what I have, without an explanation of what it is or is meant to be. The purpose was to receive honest raw responses that would guide my process to a place of realisation and acknowledgement of what works or does not. This section of the methodology consists of:

Conceptual framework

In this research, a conceptual layout of the work was vital as it informed the basis of this research concept. It guided and led the researcher to what the research paradigms are, by explaining how they are related to other existing paradigms "…knowledge does not arrive fully formed in neat parcels, clearly bound and visually available to more than one person at a time" (Nelson, 2013: 46). This was the analytical tool that involved numerous dissimilarities and frameworks. It used conceptual distinctions and organised similar ideas in relation to the research. It captured existing artwork and executed it in a manner that was comprehensible to recall and apply.

The main inspiration for *Mr. President* was *Strange Fruit,* a performance about identity politics by E. Patrick Johnson. He protests in this piece and does it from a critical perspective that is rooted in the desire for change. Johnson (2003: 90) states that "subversive potential of performance, the interventions and "radical research"" stems from "commingling […] analytical and artistic ways of knowing that unsettles the

institutionalized knowledge and discipline" (Conquergood, 2002: 151), allowing the magic of unconventional truths to be a daily conversation and eventually a norm.

The performance *Mr. President* accomplished what I have always intended, which is to raise questions around faith, democracy, and protest. I chose public ethnography because I had been contemplating the relationship between the physical and social location and identity, which stemmed from being brought up in a socially marginalised black community. This meant my choices about socio-political issues, religious and identification had been mapped out long before I could consciously make up my own mind (Johnson, 2003: 90), leaving me a curious individual with a desire to be a voice to the voiceless of *ekas'lam*.

Spectatorship studies

The tacit knowledge is so immersed in the doing, that the researcher may overlook imperative elements that create the work to be universal and non-biased. Thus, the need to move from the tacit proximal into the distal, to make and create a distance that will add explicit input into research. Nelson further explains its importance:

> In all formulations, the oscillation of thought from the proximal concrete to the more distant abstract and back again not only clarifies but also enriches through a layering of multiple resonances as the tacit doing – thinking in the creative process is made explicit (Nelson, 2013: 46).

The experience of opening my work to the public, brought a realisation about perception and the role that it plays in trying to create a language understood by everyone. Including those who live outside the community to which you are being a voice. This realisation stemmed within the conversations that took place during my online presentations. I found myself in an internal conflict with what I was receiving as feedback, not because it was not valuable, but because it appears it was taking a different form of direction than that of the research. I was delighted it happened, as it gave a different approach and preceptive to the ongoing journey. Thus, adding to this section of the methodology where another perceptive is received without the audience members knowing the depth of the research. This was so that I may later reflect and review from their thoughts if the direction or approach taken reads as what it is attempted to be.

In one of the presentations, the realisation of the outside perspective sat beneath my feet, giving me a feeling of pins and needles as I sat, listened, and read the comments. It was uncomfortable, it made me feel on edge, wanting to object and defend myself from time to time, but I restricted the sensation. My body was familiar with this feeling, this sensation and that is when I recalled that it was in this feeling of discomfort, I first found the right words to describe the circumstances that people from Ivory Park were enduring. '*The Invisible Faith in Democracy Ekas'lam'* was conceived from the uneasiness that sat beneath my feet as I walked around and observed my people's realities as they held onto the notion of change that is still to come. Reflecting on the moment, I recognize a growth in me that made me understand that all perceptions matter.

The lesson earned from this realisation taught me to humble myself to another's opinions and perceptions, that. I discovered that what bothers us about others is often what we internally need to confront about ourselves. In the moment of being enrolled into the presentation, I came up as a sponge ready to absorb, but it was not long until I sensed the disadvantages of being open to receiving. A wide range of possibilities comes up and suddenly everything makes sense as a possibility. This shifted my train of thought by trying to seek others' confirmation, while attempting to be very precise in the goal I aimed to reach. I learned to trust my body and all it knows. If people do not know the inside information of what you are doing, it could be misleading, but it is my responsibility to be firm and clear about the goal I aim to reach through the research composition It has to be clear to the people watching it, who may not know the depth and detail of what I am doing or why. I have learned that there is truly nothing new under the sun. The magic lies in the body that endures the experience and that is what I needed to document.

Mr. President is the kind of knowledge that swims in the pool of sameness. It feels redundant but its essence is in the redundancy. The realities of what is articulated, of people of Ivory Park had been the same for years, yet nothing changes. If we turn a blind eye or rush to make the protest too evolved, we risk the chance of not reiterating the truth in the stagnation that they are within, while chasing the evolving world. The type of protest language I am committed to use is between the lines of peace and war. Peace, because I am aiming not to be violent in fighting for change, but war, because

nothing new has happened. Nothing different has occurred and so through a still protest underneath the mental noise that is within, underneath the pain, is the freedom of yearning for a salvation and enlightenment, leading to a better Ivory Park.

This is based on the methodology where Nelson calls to the researcher to open up the 'I' to the 'we' and receive constructive feedback to better comprehend their research from an 'us' perspective and not just the 'I'; this eradicates biased notions from the research and the performance as well and aims to improve the findings.

Cognitive propositional knowledge

The ability of the researcher declaring the knowledge acquired is important for the growth of the process and the researcher in the process. "In Schon's[9] account of the reflective practitioner, a play element is required, to "surface and criticize the tacit understandings... and make new sense of the situations of uncertainty or uniqueness which he [sic] may allow himself to experience" (Nelson, 2013: 46). This has enabled me to perform cognitively the documentary material which included knowing – how to embody it skilfully.

As a researcher, what I brought going into the research was the assumption that no one understands the pain of the people from Ivory Park. I needed to conquer this belief soon after being introduced to common humanity theories and how it unpacks the existence of pain as a common feeling experienced in different forms. What this taught me and made me realise was, that everyone suffers, and everyone has a struggle. The determining factor is not so much my pain, but the pain itself.

This belief affected me in such a way that I was narrow-minded to the existence of similar situations affecting others in different ways. However, I realised that they were the same, in the sense that they too yearned for some sort of change. It was because of this that my questions constantly emphasised 'my people' and 'my 'hood', leaving out the potential of a universal relationship. I now recognise the shift in my thoughts and willingness to hear and listen to what other people's opinions and perceptions of my work are. I am now able to reflect without criticising and ruling out before thoroughly

[9] Schon, Donald. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner*. New York. Basic Books/Perseus.

comprehending and trying to find association. Perhaps, even finding the gaps and relations in what they express.

Now that I have acknowledged and accepted my biased opinions, the research has presented itself with numerous possibilities that make me understand the essence far beyond my comprehension and the urgency that lies beneath the cry that makes this research universally important and relevant. The biggest contradiction I see looking back at where I was, in comparison to where I now am, being that the lived experiences are never an 'I' factor but an 'I' for the 'we'. The concept of interconnectedness is my biggest shift, realising that a problem that affects the world begins with one community.

Common humanity truly is about understanding that we are all sailing in the storm, just not in the same boat.

The process moving forward was all about embodying my discoveries and thinking about how the work could exist on bigger platforms, beyond my Facebook and the research itself. The methodology was connected to the research and has in fact, allowed me to realise the connection of how a museum has been an exploration from my previous performances using the body, space, and time. As it stands, I now fully grasp the potential and effects the museum has in relation to public ethnography as a form of protest and so, the revelation moving into the embodiment process from the data collection phase was more theoretical and critically informed. It has been suggested that' much of what is required by way of documentation may already be a part of professional process but that anticipation, preparation and 'sixth sense' awareness can assist in capturing key insights" (Nelson, 2013: 47).

The Artistic Composition: *Mr. President*

The title *Mr. President* stems from the recognition of how *abantu base kas'lam* assume Mr. President to be the one who holds the power that will bring the change to their suppressive conditions. "… 'Strategic knowledge' is knowledge inseparable from relationships of power" (Foucault, 1980: 145). In employing the Foucauldian quote from his framework, it necessitates the recasting of the field of public ethnography as a form of protest to discursive formation. *Mr. President* was founded through the actions of numerous discourses; to an equal degree, one that does not merely reflect

‘real’ peculiarities between people from Ivory Park but creates them (Hall, 1997: 186).

Sub-title

The public ethnographic museum of illustration in the mind of the poor that serves to protest - draws on semiotic theories which remind us of the importance of treating exhibition as an art performance, context, text, and visual illustration to position and to hypothesise. According to Hall (1997: 186), “Ethnographic displays are drawn from semiotic theories to show how the performance can trace a path through meaning and motivation to reveal presence, presentation and re-presentation”. *Mr. President* is a composition that critiques and reasons that the exercising of accumulating and exhibiting are powerful activities and that an analysis of the association between power and knowledge should be incorporated into any investigation into exhibiting/museums (Hall, 1997: 186).

The difference between this public ethnographic museum in the mind of the poor that serves to protest and those of the western ethnographic museum is that this museum attempts to serve the realities of *abantu base kas’lam* from the inside as I am a resident and refrains from ‘othering’ the culture of the people of Ivory Park.

Composition Summary

The pre-set of the performance was an exposition that served as an artistic statement which read:

NB! Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen! The show, ‘Mr. President’ is about to commence in five (5) minutes. While we wait, please do read the artistic statement that aims to reveal the research knowledge being performed and to acknowledge the process. If you do not manage to read the artistic statement before the show, time will be provided right after the show before the post is deleted.

Mr. President is the public ethnographic museum of illustration in the mind of the poor that serves to protest. It is a composition that exhibits still and moving images to illustrate the conditions that suppress the mindset of *abantu base kas’lam*. Through the pictures, embodiment, and the voice, a collage is used to create an abstract image of the mindset that bases the reality of *abantu base kas’lam*. The aim was achieved through puzzling together the reality of the people from Ivory Park - to create a

museum to explore public ethnography as a form of protest in an arts-based methodology to disclose the 'invisible faith in democracy' towards *abantu base kas'lam*.

How it works as a piece of knowledge is that it makes artistic expressions as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both the researcher and the people who are involved. As President Kennedy once stated in a national televised speech on the 11th of June 1963 "Those who act boldly recognize right as well as reality" and that goes with no doubt that, this is what I am intended for, the recognition that the protest stems from a true place of the realities of people from Ivory Park.

Practically, the knowledge is layered in three domains: the seeing, the experience and the knowing. When we do the protest, the community will see, when they join, they become part of the communal cry and therefore, it remains embedded within them and so it becomes an experience seen and knowable. All of this requires presence; thus, I have incorporated the theories of presence as being present has allowed me to be within the moment and to be mindful in the moment.

"Mindfulness is a balance of state of awareness that avoids the extremes of over–identification and disassociation with experience and entails the clear seeing and acceptance of mental and emotional phenomena as it arises" (Neff, 2003: 88). Mindfulness is like openness. However, the people of Ivory Park cannot be open about their circumstances as their realities provoke pity upon them. Hence, the responsibility of me, the intervener being present and aware, proved crucial.

This performance was created through an impulsive trust in the embodied knowledge, experience and understanding the extent of wanting to create truthful conversation of what democracy is failing to do for the marginalised. The material of the composition was collected from the 'pot of gold' where the researcher has been for years storing this knowledge, these observations awaiting an opportunity to ripen the fruits of his patience. to become a voice for the voiceless of *abantu base kas'lam*. This means that my intentions needed to be clear of biased notions and judgement. Kabat-Zinn (2003: 32) speaks to intentions and its likelihoods that "your intentions set the stage for what is possible. They remind you from moment to moment of why you are practicing in the first place". My personal vision will always be the core to the creation and my outcomes

will be related to the interconnectedness of my intentions to the realities of the people of Ivory Park.

The composition of *Mr. President* utilises the concept of distortion, as it is a descriptive manner to express the condition experienced by *abantu base kas'lam* as the world continues to move and evolve. In the composition, a prayer is used as a signifier of the peace in the war and most importantly, a symbolic representation of the invisible faith that remains within the people of Ivory Park. I have used texture to fabricate and balance the rawness of creating the composition and the technicality that may come with the editing process, to serve both as a live and a digital artefact.

The creation process was guided by one word which is protest. The style is rooted from the understanding of the relationship between *abantu base kas'lam* and the democratic system that is failing them. The style that the work of art will present and intend from the performance is immediate and authentic which serves to reflect the invisible faith towards democracy that *abantu base kas'lam* have. It is the representation of the internal and the complexities of the relationship that *abantu base kas'lam* have with the democratic system.

The discovery that came with the representation of the internal and its complexities, was that internally, we are layered with conversations and reflections that are almost impossible to articulate at times. Through artistic composition of song, pictures, prose, and poems, a language familiar and relatable to artists, academics, activists, people of Ivory Park and the public at large, is composed to understand the invisible faith that *abantu base kas'lam* have towards democracy, thus created a stimulating video with a universal language and a conceptually firm artistic composition.

The exhibition created a value in its layering of meaning of the invisible faith in democracy and narrated a tale that formulates a texture of unique social experience. This was done to expose multiple truths that are covered with unspoken realities to construct a collage. Mindfulness was vital in this to help me accept and tolerate painful thoughts and emotions rather than drastically attempting to change them. This has assisted me to view the realities of people from Ivory Park in a wider perspective rather than a judgemental or biased one.

The exhibition makes use of real images, living spaces, neighbourhoods, and people but also the researcher's voice, the media voice overs, and the old television frame to the images to speak the narration. All these performative elements were incorporated to activate the viewers' thinking and trigger them to respond critically as the presentation is a collage style post-modern. The layering of song, still and moving images, recorded footage, voice in prose and poetry are constructed in such a way that they consciously present the artist researcher's signature. A performance prayer. Truths of the dreams is what the performance is reckoned to be. This brings me to the overall responsibility of my intentions as the intervener to understand the process.

Furthermore, this installation involved observing the operations of one's moment to moment, internal and external experience. The factor of attention works hand in hand, it is linked to intention as Husserl (1969) refers to it 'returning to things themselves'. I have placed aside my embodied knowledge or what I know to allow myself to immerse into understanding what I am critically observing with a fresh eye. Being attentive in the moment is a form of embodied presences. According to Fritz Perl's, the psychotherapist's "Attention in and of itself is curative" (as cited in Shapiro and Carlson, 2009: 18) and the processing of thoughts, feelings and activating the five senses is of absolute importance, where the magic of creation lies.

According to Cunliffe (2004: 407) "Critical reflexive practices embraces subjective understanding of reality as a basis of thinking more critically about the impact of our assumption, values, and actions on others". This quote helped me find assurance in the creation process and to experience self-compassion to reflect and connect the critical reflection practices content with my everyday life and the process of creation. It is importance stems from the comprehension of how we constitute and create meaning in the realities and identities rationally and finding ways to develop more collaborative and responsive habits of managing ourselves.

The artistic statement was followed by a disclaimer, that aided to clarify the ethical protocol since the artistic composition was presented on a public platform. However, the disclaimer also served as the beginning of the still protest to the performance that was posted on the 18th of July 2020 to contribute to the 67 minutes of service for the Mandela day. The disclaimer was five minutes of waiting in commemoration of Nelson

Mandela's legacy but also a representation of the ongoing wait for the democratic system to serve *abantu base kas'lam* based on its promises.

The Museum Exhibition of Ekas'lam - Modalities

The museum exhibition of *ekas'lam* consisted of three modalities: the body, text and visual. These modalities were experienced and expressed in the artistic composition *Mr. President*. Furthermore, the three modalities relied on each other to bring out the essence of what is being researched. Admittedly, opening for the researcher to use the text to direct the body, while the body told a tale of the internal unspoken realities. The visuals created meaningful aesthetics through the body derived from the interpretation of the text. The three modalities designed a systematic effect that revealed the truth and reality of *abantu abse kas'lam*.

Visual

The 'now' is put on pause as layers of images and affects accumulate in our hours of contemplation. The composition began with a clock count down. The clock was a blend into the method as it is emergent and spoke to the urgency of the composition that was about to be witnessed. The clock was a symbol of pressure, of essence in the time for change. It indicated the need of giving up the self to focus into a world of story, that could resonate and awaken the invisible faith that stems from the individual internalised belief, that change will come someday, but it never does. It was also a reminder that time is limited and if not used wisely, the moment lost can never be regained but only in the repetition of history, shall it be re-lived. This moment was followed by a black out to bring about the anticipation of a theatrical feel before the show begins.

The opening sequence was an old television frame showing a direction sign board on the top left and a barricaded road by protestors burning a tyre. It is black and white filled with the smoke of the tyre. On the television, we see a headline with the title of the composition, and we see the television distortion accompanied with its sound and music by Simphiwe Dana *Umthandazo wase Afrika* translates: an African prayer. This opening sequence was a literal articulation of what to expect, what the composition stands for and its essence.

This was an introduction to the setting of Ivory Park in its broadness and showing the different locations of Ivory Park. The moving cars, the bodies, and the setting of the location. Towards the end of the opening sequence, the colour changes from black and white to colour. This is to zoom the viewer clearly into the circumstances of Ivory Park, the world of the marginalised into the museum where the internal is exhibited through embodiment and visual installations. This leads us into the establishing shot of the researcher from Ivory Park holding a light bulb in silence, a profound moment of processing imagery, the art of invention that transferred his artistic idea to the audience.

We are journeyed into an establishing shot, a refurbishing of an old museum with prestigious events with a high public profile. It involved existing buildings, shacks, and demographics, which are preserved and still are of their own historic and architectural significance, also a new artistic premise is designed to reflect the realities of people from Ivory Park. The shack houses are items of suppressive conditions that match the qualities and distinctions of the people from Ivory Park. It provides an open space to accommodate the embodied knowledge, and this is captured via camera to accommodate the broader audience globally.

This societal setting of a museum is aimed to bring considerable challenge to *Mr. President.* Suppression has ranged across Ivory Park for more than 29 years, yet no one calls it suppression, instead it is renounced as a minor struggle, that might as well be just another challenge offering resistance. No one calls it suppression because it does not threaten to destroy the plan of the future in these democratic times.
It is an empty field, filled with silent suppression's - an internal battle. It is not suppression in the physical form, rather it is a silent suppression storm, that weighs on the mind and the spirit of the body that takes in all the heavy burdens of the daily life. The outlook of the people from Ivory Park's realities is a battle on our perception of reality.

The embodiment portrays the feeling of the democratic times which brings a feeling of new approach that is distorted with the notion of change. Though its strategy is progression, the embodiment uses the democratic times' favourite weapon, which is knowledge, symbolised through the books. Qualifications are hung on the shacks as decorations, trophies, and medals; all the achievements of life that are meant to plant

a seed of progression but instead are a constant reminder of a sad reality of stagnation. This is what *Mr. President* refers to as a new dawn of democracy. Technology is used to capture the museum of illustration in the mind of the poor as a form of theatre. Democracy has constituted better living conditions for *abantu base kas'lam* after apartheid, that is, when the suppression out of oppression begun.

The bible was a symbolic destructive force of Ivory Park, the unprecedented symbol in the ability to fragment the human consciousness. The bible fleshed the invisible hope, faith and trust that lies on the researcher. Instantly, followed by powerful words that states 'our daily prayer as our mothers taught us comes from a higher power we have never met' as the flag of the rainbow nation comes up with trash, dividing it in half with the sad reality of what is presented versus the reality. Before the character in the frame (I as researcher-performer)) knew what hit me, I was intensely irradiated by an empty pot of food and a cold shack filled with knowledge that cannot fill his stomach.

The imbalance creates an atmosphere of judgement and agony, silent cry into a foetus position, beer bottles an endless juxtaposition of the democratic times.

Mr. President is the re-creation of worlds in a simultaneous act of self-consolidation, the presence of real people in acts not so much the authentication of reality, but as a provocation to think about the complexity of realities and their fabrications. The impulse to critique a non-serving government of its idealised democracy for those who keep it in existence and have the invisible faith in it.

Body

The prayer was a reconnection to the self from the painful abstracted reality. It was a fall-out of the invisible faith, illustrated and embodied in the most excruciating attention of the discursive artefact. It reflected self-compassion, mindfulness, and common humanity in the mind of the poor to reconnect and reconcile with the self and its circumstances. The embodiment was the painful distracted nature of the community of Ivory Park.

The moving from moment to moment in and out of the museum to the realities and the characters that live in these conditions, represented the ever-evolving world with no significant changes to the majority. The silence of these circumstances is a call for protest on its own. An introspection into the discoveries of what this democracy truly

means when there are people still living below the poverty standard in a democratic nation.

In African cultures, a clay pot is one significant element for storage and preservation. In the embodiment, the character is in a spinning motion, struggling to maintain balance and stillness. This motion symbolises the cultural interchanges of the people of Ivory Park, the lives they live, the path they travel daily, and the history of their never-evolving lives, abstractly portrayed and signified by the mystery of the emptiness in the pot. How the character holds the clay pot, is so imbalanced, unstable that it secretes out the unsettling daily struggle to get hold of the needs they have in a democracy they so yearn for.

The resilience, will, was excessively expressed in the constant running embodied by the researcher-performer. It was utterly symbolic of the never-ending hope and faith that change will come and that better living circumstances will one day be provided.

The irony is that too much of anything is said to be bad, which causes discomfort to the viewer. The character seemed in dreadful hope as he kept running in suffocation. The constant hope in the hopelessness.

There were three quite profound elements that were embodied. It was a representation of healthy daily activities that may be undermined but played a significant role in the ongoing representation and the resilience of people of Ivory Park. They were a portrayal representation of a balance, between taking out and taking in the unforeseen circumstances. The taking out was represented by bodily secretions, that help the body to recover, the vomiting and the urination. Both those elements help the body to get rid of the daily burdens and prepare to carry on. The taking in, is a healing element, the water that helps cleanse the bodies that must live with the daily struggles, that dent the internal. Equally, when the external is viewed as dirty it affects the internal, thus, the significance of a daily cleanse proving crucial.

Text

The piece of text below comes from the play script developed for *Mr. President* and exists separate from the video recording. It serves as one of the languages embodying the ordinary. it was written after my critical observations and my direct involvement at Ivory Park, which were unpleasant. I then further listened to Barack Obama's speech

and Professor Lumumba's speech about Mandela and his legacy to try and understand what he stood for and why he believed in democracy for his people. The writing style aimed to add pace and flow which included character, setting, plot and the point of view, and the mood to create a complete literary work out of real situations.

The text was created from what was seen, explained and my embodied knowledge of having lived in Ivory Park for years. It aimed to articulate what is a 'normal' life to an ordinary Ivory Park citizen but also to reveal what keeps their faith intact in the belief in change that will come. The descriptions of why they keep going and believing in democracy added to the text but also the one common thing they have was prayer and trust in that their prayers will be heard and answered someday. Thus, reflecting the spirit and morale to wake up each day and keep pressing forward as they wait for *Mr. President* to release and utilise his powers to bring change.

(A drunk man opens a door to his shack. The shack is filled with pictures of political party leaders and rich people who have a helping hand in ruling the economy of South Africa. Holding his beer bottle, he says).

Dear white man now is the time to change marobalo. Since 1994 we made a deal that prioritised the expansion of civil rights and democracy. Now it is time for radical equitable distribution of wealth and economic opportunities. Thank you in advance for your understanding.

(Walks into the shack, switches on the candle, pees in a bucket, puts his beer down and kneels, and starts to pray).

I pray Mr. President, after I have listened to the great leaders, great Africa Prof Lumumba. The great African leader Obama. After having a better understanding of Mandela's legacy, Mr. President I pray, I pray that you be truly alive in the moment. I pray that you suppress your inner fears, I pray that you be brave enough to inspire confidence in the young people. Nelson's dreams were shared with everyone even the enemies, our enemies. What are your dreams Mr. President? What broken institutions do you want to fix Mr. Presidents? Bring back the hope to young people, God will test you to the limit.

The gods await the ritual promised to be performed. Mr. President, the hopeful are hopeless. Your people are living below poverty standard. Your people have become

foot soldiers fighting every fly they come across. People are angry in the inside. Mr. President, I pray you become the servant of the people, I pray you ground and humble yourself, for sure you are not a saint but please blow the seed of Nelson's magic. Run away with Nelson's achievements. Free your people, Mr. President. Your people deserve respect. They must live with dignity and freedom for all men are equal. Bring back the spirit of rainbow nation. God will help you if you help yourself, Mr. President.

Help your people produce what they do not consume and consume what they do not produce. I pray for gate keepers to open the flooded gates, shift the economic power from the few because your people need economic freedom Mr. President. I pray for change; I pray for the worst into the better, so God help Mr president (He vomits and switches off the candle and sits on the sponge).

NB! The invisible faith is an individual belief that stems in the inside, it differs from person to person. The aim is to show the internal belief regardless of what is being shown externally.

Dear Mr. President

My nerve sent an impulse to my brain that it is the coldest season of the year and I ask myself what about those with no shelters. If my face is swelling, if my hands are affected by frostbite, feeling so cold and firm with white plaques. What about those living in Shanty davelling shacks built out of scrap metal, card box and anything else available? Mr. President your people are living below poverty standard.

The text was written to verbally express the faith but at the same time it was to reveal the invisible faith that is lingering inside the individuals, to show how many of them do not wish to fight, but be recognised and considered.

For the bodily interpretation of the material gathered from observations, interviews and the used material that was already documented about the conditions of the people of Ivory Park, I used abstract elements in the performance to tell their narrative and did not just rely on the text. I was truthful and did not want to be literal and give away what seems to be the inevitable of their circumstances. I challenged myself as the researcher by using my body to tell the story and immerse myself into the unknown in order to discover the internal, unspoken realities of people from Ivory Park and to disclose this invisible faith that they have in democracy.

Kemp (2012) says

“the difference between the way that the brain processes written and spoken language is at the heart of the challenge that actors face in bringing a script to life”. He continues to explicate that

“current research sheds light on what has previously been an unconscious process for actors - that of converting thought to expression.” (Kemp, 2012: n.p).

I allowed my body to become the vessel of communication. The theories of the cognitive linguist show that even though language and gestures are one mental system, they function in predominantly different ways to complement one another (McNeill, 1992).

The value of being abstract to us as the actors, allows the live-ness to come forth when we perform. It challenges our creative abilities by communicating through body only and not verbal communication; it expands on the ideology of body language and unintended expressive emotion to come alive. As Kemp (2012) in *Embodied Acting* mentions the connectionist view of the brain, “The model of the brain’s operation offers us a way of understanding how abstract concepts are linked to motor activity which is a fundamental feature of the body mind concept” (Kemp, 2012: xxi).

Through the observation of the residents of Ivory Park, I understood their everyday movement and the variation of gestures that are universal. I then drew from observation of the real lives of people from Ivory Park, the fundamental bodily elements for the composition. This has enhanced my physical performative skills and the style of dramatic expressions. The everyday movement remained my main source to generate everyday gestures, the attitude and the movement presented by the people of Ivory Park.

The “primary means of creation occur through the body rather than the mind” (Callery, 2001: 8). That is the reasoning why in the art composition, *Mr. Presiden,t* the researcher used somatic to create and interpret the composition from the text and observations.



Figure 2: Bongani Nicholas Ngomane in *Mr. President* poster: Photographer: Tshepang Moticoe

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCOVERIES

Public Ethnography, as a form of protest, has proven itself to reveal the articulated 'invisible faith' from the majority of *abantu base kas'lam*, that contributes a great deal in the ongoing progression of the existence of a democracy that never serves its people. How it achieves this is through the in-depth field research, active participation, critiques of social political structures and deliberate creation of discourses that disrupt the imbalances created by inequalities.

Its technique allows for a more communal and deliberate commentary towards social injustices that affect the majority in protection of the minority. It voices out suppressive conditions and works actively towards dismantling them through various media. It stands for equality for all and exposes the unfairness of a system. Public Ethnography as a form of protest is authentic, and it has a life in its own existence. As a method of arts-based research, it uses critical praxis which is inclusive of self-reflection, reflective action, and collaborative reflective action upon the lived experiences of people to develop a voice for the voiceless.

Invisible + faith = inability to see the impossible trust and confidence in our democracy. It is true, that there are none so blind as those who will not see. The ability or belief to have resilience and optimism that is hard to overlook was evident from *abantu base kas'lam.* Their (our) Invisible faith is because their (our) daily lives are carried out with such lightness and grace that the difficulties become invisible.

After the arts composition *Mr. President,* the people *base kas'lam*, artists, activists, academics, and the public have regained legitimacy through which this praxis can allow the public to blend our effort to reduce human misery with our participation in an informed visible faith toward democracy. Apart from myself, several more individuals began to create work based on the composition, such as videos, documentaries, online magazine articles, invited the work to be published in artistic works that speaks to theatre in democracy and made explicit commentary on their social media personal accounts.

In the background section of this study, I have remarked on *abantu base kas'lam's* understanding of democracy as freedom. Including the liberation, and the human rights

that it conveys, the institutional elements (all the social or cultural elements of a community, from its technology to its shared beliefs) or social benefits, which was proven to be factual through the interviews. The answers that were given all expressed a clear discomfort in the lack of balance that there is no assurance, accountability, responsiveness, and openness from the government.

Public Ethnography's, as a form of protest, theoretical framework, and the Know-How, work parallel to each other; it proved that one can only exist with the other, making it complementary to arts-based methodology (Theory + Practice = Praxis). During my reflection phase, I have discovered that as South Africans, we have moved from oppression (Apartheid) to suppression (Democracy). Bodies in Ivory Park are suppressed by circumstances that we ourselves have the power to change. If we could reveal our invisible faith in this democratic system and protest it as our basic right for better living conditions, we would taste the fruits of our harvest from apartheid times. We might never have to be subjected to being a weapon of our own kleptocracy, living in a pool of our own suppressed circumstances and holding the notion of change so dear, a change we have never experienced.

I discovered that as practitioner–researcher, it was imperative to find de-roling alternatives from my site visits. Reflecting alone at the end of the day was not enough to detach me completely and comprehensively from the experiences endowed in the field work. Public Ethnography as a form of protest is indeed effective, necessary, and emergent. This was evident from the comments received from the artists, academics, activists, people of Ivory Park and the public at large. Below are some of the comments that were received:

Comment 1: *I enjoyed the use of camera. It really allowed me to just be drawn into that room filled with hopes and dreams but unable to be freed. I think the ending also made me uncomfortable where he was vomiting (crying emojis). I just figured he has reached a point of refusing to keep on swallowing this fake dream, our politicians sell us. I am hoping for him it was a moment to remove the lies and empty promises.*

Comment 2: *Ahhh such a beautiful piece (crying emojis) I felt like ke nna in that shack broken and losing my mind with qualifications that cannot free me.*

Comment 3: *I watched this with my mother, she was blown away. A re she hopes Mr.*

President gets this message.

Comment 4: *Uncle Animal your research is fireworks.*

Comment 5: *Wow (hands up emoji) Ngomane, thought provoking Sir.*

Comment 6: *Amen. Powerful. Thought provoking. (emoji with a fist up)*

Comment 7: Cyril Ramaphosa *(A tag to the President)*

Comment 8: *FUCK. At one point I could not breathe. I am shattered. Because we are shattered. A powerful plea for moral leadership. Not power, but leadership in the dark of the night. Incredible rhythm. Editing. Focus. Twists and turns. Subverting images. Strong performance of vulnerability. Heartsore. Just Fucking heartsore.*

Comment 9: *It is the truth of his exploration and his undeniable passion that surpasses his limits. Mr. President Fucken powerful stuff!*

Comment 10: *I loved your show. That is really brave what you did (fist up emoji). Your research is powerful.*

Comment 11: *The work speaks to you hence the fire will constantly burn. (clapping emojis) Wonderful you are a fighter mchana. Always standing up for what you believe in. I learned a lot vandag.*

Comment 12: *An important piece of work!*

Comment 13: *There was that one thing that provoked my religion why did you guys nifake ukuphalaza? I watched it four - six times this research. I am happy but I was not happy because of Ukuphalaza, Eish… ivele yangithinta deep because to me it was like why they did not just go to the river and take a bath than ukuphalaza, namanzi because those elements really touched my religion very deep. Suka! That is why we send kids to school. Well done!*

All these comments were the comments that were directly from Facebook on the direct link. Immediately after the performance, I screen grabbed the comments that were directly on the video link. Thereafter, I deleted the video and the caption together with the comments for ethical reasons. The rest of the comments that were sent are all the comments that were detailed and spoke directly to the work. Unpacking what they saw

and what they received from what they watched and heard. Interestingly all of these were sent privately via inbox, WhatsApp, email, and text messages.

Below I have included an analysis of discoveries made from the beginning of the process and that were captured in the video that was the creative expression of this research. The discoveries come from observations, data collection, pre-presentations, presentation, and the reflection of the researcher after the embodiment. I incorporated them below as a brief reflective analysis in relation to the aims of the research.

The prayer of the song by Simphiwe Dana *Umthandazo wase Africa* which askes "what is it that you are saying about what is happening. It appears we have forgotten that the world is dying. We ask for knowledge as it seems we have forgotten for ever and ever from the beginning to the infinite beginning".

This song, beyond its relevance to the exploration, also served as a symbol of faith and where it stems from, it was a declaration of faith in the times of the post-modern democracy. The prayer of the song was an eye opener, an opener to our minds and souls to the challenges we face in democracy.

The images used show the conditions in which people live in Ivory Park township. The images reveal what the immediate health concern issues are. The devastation of the images is further heightened by the innocence of the children playing next to the sewage water while the mother is doing the laundry. The child is holding a tyre that symbolises the cycle of perpetuation as a reality they live in. This raised the question as to whether this place is a conducive environment for residents to live in.

The image of the child at the bottom of the screen proved significant. As the inside of that tyre that the child is holding fades, an image showing people protesting slowly appears and because it pops out from the tyre, which symbolises the circle of perpetuation, it is seen as a repetitive cry of the people to the government for better living conditions. This is followed by a black-out; a representation of the silence of a democracy that is meant to serve its people.

Faith is shown in various ways in this exhibition. One example can be seen from the qualifications hanging on the wall – faith from the books that provide the knowledge. Next to it is the flag and the T-shirt that represents the faith in the democracy that made it all possible but is failing to deliver.

A man-eating pap and chicken feet, wearing a representation of democracy and just before an image fades away between the two images, we see a representation of faith through the qualifications on the wall and the books. The trajectory, however, poses the question of what we trust and what we believe in offers us the freedom it represents. As some images fade away, others fade in, revealing the daunting circumstances of where democracy might be failing the people.

A quote by Nelson Mandela with his image that simply reminds us that

"artists reach areas far beyond the reach of politicians. Arts, especially entertainment and music, is understood by everybody, and it lifts the spirits and the morale of those who hear it." (Mandela, 1998) This quote proved important in a collaborated creation process to intertwine both music and abstracts derived from live entertainment, that depict the tragic realities of those from Ivory Park. The screen divisions, in particular the late Nelson Mandela on the left and an image of a barricaded road by people of Ivory Park protesting, is a contrast of what the dead fought for, against what the reality amounts to. It questions the change from apartheid to democracy in its entirety. It produces a conundrum. Inequality, caused by desperate circumstances imposes internalised suppression. Yet, the same suppression, when externally expressed, is unappreciated.

Mandela fought for such circumstances not to be our realities, leaving us with the right to protest, but protest from a peaceful perspective. When you remove the narrators of the world which are the artists, and you leave them stranded and heavyhearted by the stories they cannot tell and the only thing they have left to do is to sing while marching in hope to be heard. Are we not killing the morale and the spirit that connects us to the essence of being? The fading of the images makes you wonder what happens when you strip it all away - what makes democracy then?

Fate is inevitable, you cannot attempt to reason a man out of the thing he was never reasoned into. A disruption in a hopeful moment is like a television buzzing, making a distorted sound. Normally, the televisions that distort sound are the old televisions which were used in the past, in the oppressive times, black and white in colour. It now democratic times. However, the coloured televisions still lose signal from time to time, showing a blue screen replaying a cyclic notion of the past in a more advanced

manner. There is always a sameness in every change. There is always a reminder of difficulties of the sameness, about the past in the present. The repetition occurs because the same events play themselves overtly, the suppressive conditions – electrical wires, water, toilets, unemployment - it is all a cycle of perpetuation embedded in the notion of ‘change’.

The constitution can be noted as the bible which bears all the promises of achieving a greater balance in the society, in a greater period. That raises a question of when or how long is that greater period, that brings no equity and protection for the marginalised. A practical example is when elections draw near, the people are promised a better life and better housing, thereafter nothing happens, nothing is accomplished.

The trash is a symbol of all the places that are deserted, that are dry and have nothing to grow there. Those are the places where they dump the poor and call it a township. It is a place filled with unwanted waste that allows the people to blend into what they live next to and become as wanted as the waste they live around.

Every five years, the IEC runs elections for the people to vote. The same people vote for one organisation. There are different presidents every five years. There is the invisible faith that change will come and some of the people internally hold a feeling of hope that the organisation they so love, will fulfil its promised promises. It is a perpetuation of a toxic relationship that is maintained, because of the vows made of change. Figuratively, it is as though the people are in a relationship with the organisation and though the relationship is toxic, they remain loyal and hopeful that change will come someday - that is the invisible faith, maintained by fear of not wanting to go back to their previous relationship (Apartheid) that was brutal to them. In essence, this one (Democracy saved them from the previous relationship (Apartheid), leaving them blinded to the lack of effort in this current relationship, making the present seem far better.

A discovery from the video that was concerning was the price of essentials and made question how cheap is an unhealthy lifestyle to the vulnerable, how much does that make them susceptible to unhealthy circumstances? The liveliness of the ‘hood is shown by the morale of the community, seeing the community members cleaning the

streets together shows a communal struggle to strive for better living conditions. The reality of the squatter camps and informal settlements in Ivory Park leads those living there to feel less worthy to be seen, heard, and noticed. However, they never look at their circumstances. The reality is, as Professor Lumumba in one of his interviews once said, ‘those with power are not creative while those with the creative ideas have no power’, so they remain seeming less. In the minds of the supressed, the possibilities seem small, hence the little they have seems enough, though they are constantly striving for better.

Our identity is like our shadow. It is not always visible and yet always present. It is a silent reminder of our existence. There is no shadow without light just as there is no happiness without pain. The invisible faith is our shadow, always present in all we do, yet never leading, always following. It keeps pushing us to the ultimate possibilities on some days and on other days, it is next to us to remind us that we are never alone. That is what the image of a praying man in the shadow represents. The tearing of the image into two, is a symbolic representation of letting go and trusting in the unknown. After all, faith is not a belief without proof, but trust without reservation. The tearing of the image in half seen in the exhibition is a prompt that, the more we feed our faith, the greater the space we create for our fears to starve to death.

The yard is a representation of endless possibilities to the children; it is where they create a future they hope for and express their thoughts through whatever they find. It is a playground for mysteries to be created. For the mothers, it is a safe space to allow the children to be, while they can protect them against things of the world. To the fathers, it is an escape to be anything remotely close to freedom. To everyone, it is the escape to anything, it is the invisible faith - a prophesy for a freedom yearned.

The book by David is to understand the veil behind more than what meets the eye to the marginalised groups. Internalised oppression is the psychological effect of the abuse of power. Despite the prevalence of power and dominance in the human history, it is important as it hints to the theories ignored, that better explains the realities of the marginalised groups.

Ivory Park, is referred to by many as the heartbeat of the country, because of the resilience and optimism there that is hard to beat. They strive for a change they have

never experienced, with such lightness and determination. You would believe they have experienced the ‘change’ promised. Their circumstances do not define them, and the image of the community cleaning shows this in more ways than one. Indeed, if you stop and stare for a while, you see the beauty of what the bodies reveal about Ivory Park. *Nkosi Sikelela iAfrika*.

After the show, there was silence. Only a few people commented immediately out of more than 200 that viewed the video. Most people chose to comment privately and not on the direct link in public. This left me with a question regarding the silence and what it meant. Was it a form of a public silent protest, or was it a concern of some sort? What this offered to me was a possible reason for why the people of Ivory Park have an invisible faith in democracy.

The reason why *abantu base kas’lam* hold an invisible faith might be because they understand that universally there is a bond that connects all humanity therefore, their struggles are not better than those of the next person. This notion opens the possibility that everything we do matters, and that the effects of our actions spread far past ourselves. Public Ethnography, as a form of protest, exposes linking systems of power that affect the most marginalised in Ivory Park. “It is the feeling of interconnectedness with everything that allows us to feel empathy with, and sympathy for, other beings” (Kyabgon, 2007: 51). Whether this interpretation is true for *abantu base kas’lam* in general or not, it is true for me as one example of *abantu base kas’lam.*

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

The Invisible Faith in Democracy *Ekas'lam,* is an exploration of Public Ethnography as a form of protest in an arts-based methodology. It is a project that achieved all its aims and objectives because of its 'fire' that is burning in the dialogues and conversations about its importance, urgency, and universal relevance. It reminded me that the value of any protest piece is noted in trying to locate the works or in centring it in the current fire, while yet they speaking with the same passion and urgency and necessity as the previous protests did. It reminds us that as South Africans, we are still building a tradition…and our situations change radically all the time as we are always plunged into new surprises that disguise the sameness. That is the essence of why Public Ethnography, as a form of protest, is relevant, necessary, and fundamental, because of how it is relevant to the current time and how it speaks to the past.

Social issues remain front and centre in the type of work the researcher does. Of interest and concern are the realities that face those of the township. It has become almost impossible for the communities to disrupt cycles of poverty, in the marginalised areas. *Mr. President* is a unique composition that aims to disrupt the cycle of socio-political issues that affect those of the township, starting with Ivory Park. It addresses events beyond social issues. As a young person, artist, academic and activist, it is my desire to lead and to inspire confidence in young people. Most importantly, I desire to guide and show them how to lead themselves, as well as disrupting the cycle of poverty, in a language familiar to their realities. I, as one of the *abantu base kas'lam,* become an embodiment of the conscientisation I hope to release in my neighbours in Ivory Park.

Mr. President was a successful beginning in penetrating the spaces of recognition that are neglected, yet highly noticed by those who are in 'need'.
"Compassion is not extended to oneself because one is superior or more deserving than others, rather, it is done precisely because the individual recognizes his or her interconnectedness and equality with others" (Neff, 2003: 87).

My work as an artist, academic and activist is to gather the teachings from the education system and the field of practice. I need to fuse them together and link them

back to the language of those in the township in order to bridge the gap. They need to be drawn into participation, in the hope of change, starting with a form of protest.

“Self-compassion entails seeing one’s own experience in light of the common human experience” (Neff, 2003: 87).

The modification I found with my artistic work is that it is accessible and effective, as it is created in the communities, for the communities and for myself as embodiment of my own community.

It was necessary for me to bring the inner and the outer world together to do the social change intervention. The people of Ivory Park are very obedient to life although their circumstances are absurd. A commitment to contemplation leads to radical actions. Contemplative activism allows us to be supple in the hands of democracy. Contemplative activism is helping me to be committed to the process. It detached me from my egos and allowed me to see clearly. Through prayer, the people of Ivory Park find hope and strength. In *Mr. President,* hope is reflected for a better situation at Ivory Park. Thus, the choice to use prayer as a signifier of the invisible faith expresses and articulates the concerns that are affecting *abantu base kas’lam*. Interlinking praxis, both in terms of personal growth and in analysing more broadly the economic, social, and political dynamics. The question of how our practice can be used to resist systems of domination within ourselves, within society, within the context of national and global dynamics is crucial.

Critical reflexive practices created a conducive environment that allowed reflectivity. Utilising self-compassion for challenges that may impact me, the researcher, and the narrative of Ivory Park is a struggle I have discovered that through every struggle that I and the people of Ivory Park go through, there is always something which we can do ourselves, even while experiencing the emotions of the struggle. What this reflects is a leeway for transmission to our loved ones, and through this, we activate their process of empathic quality.

“We engage in anti-oppression action because we know that our fleeting lives are intricately tide up with the lives of others” (Kaufman, 2017: 15).

The magic of balance (arts praxis) is similar to the ingredients that are needed to bake a cake. The stove, too, is as important and the combination of the two is what gives

us the final product (Theory + Practice = Praxis). The theory is the lived experience of the outer small community and the transcripts that were translated into a text. become the 'what' on which the practice is based. Together, that gives us the production that was posted on social media, and the report written afterwards about the performance becomes theory of the practice that gives us the praxis (Nelson, 2009).

The concept of arts-based research is a fundamental methodology of investigation to acquire knowledge and contribute to the existing knowledge as substantial evidence of the performance and research, as a request for data (self-evidence truth). The paradigm of the method distinguishes itself from other research models**,** because it offers performing arts a radical new vision, in which the practitioner-researcher finds lineage of the practice to supplementary valuables, that on its own, gives an effect to the role of the researcher. My overall input about the method of Public e

Ethnography as a form of protest, is that it is a critical methodology that creates a language that is universal. Therefore, it proposes a new methodology that creates a language which is familiar to both academics and non-academics. As such, my own body became the crucible, where I, as *umuntu wase kas'lam (one person from my township)* and therefore on some level, non-academic, integrated with myself as academic. Integrating therefore, the roles of artist, activist, academic and public at large.



Figure 3: Bongani Nicholas Ngomane in *Mr. President* poster: Photographer: Unathi Mkhize

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APPENDIX: Artistic performance material mentioned in the study

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