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Role of documentaries in the construction of national identity: Project 10 documentary series, South Africa

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> *A common allegiance is what helps to define a nation; you either have divided loyalties on fundamental questions or an overwhelming sense of pride and belonging. A nation-state without this attribute exists only in name. It survives by coercion and subterfuge. It is a time bomb waiting to implode upon itself.*[1]
>
> *Nelson Mandela.*

Debates abound on the question of the nation and national identity not only in the postcolonial states of the developing countries, but also in some of the nation-states of the developed world. Scholars still continue to theorize on whether contemporary nation-states can be regarded as nations, whether the notion of the nation can be (re)constructed and (re)imagined and whether disparate communities falling within a state can be persuaded to perceive themselves as having one national identity or conversely, whether similar communities falling in two different state boundaries can perceive themselves as belonging to different nations.

In addition to examining the aforementioned debates, this research report analyzes the potential role that the media, and specifically the documentary genre, plays in the process of constructing a national identity in post-apartheid South Africa. As a case study, a critical thematic analysis of the documentaries in the Project 10 documentary series, developed and commissioned by the South African

[1] Cited in Robert Mattes, 1999:264

Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) 1 and supported by the National Film and Video Foundation (N.F.V.F), will be carried out. This research report will examine the mission and objectives of the documentary series *vis-à-vis* the achievements and setbacks it has experienced in the process of contributing to the construction of a post apartheid South African nation and national identity.

The Nation

Before delving into the debates and discussions on national identity in Africa, this chapter will explore some theories and definitions of the notion of the nation and nation formation.

Benedict Anderson defines the nation as,

> …an imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.
>
> (Anderson, 1991:6)

For Anderson, the nation is a construct of the minds of a group of people who believe that they share certain similar qualities. The nation, therefore, is not a natural phenomenon but one that is created by the human mind. He further asserts that the nation is 'imagined' because,

> …even the members of the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear of them yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.
>
> (Anderson, 1991:6)

Hall (1992) expands on Anderson's concept of the nation arguing that a nation is not only a political entity but also something that produces meaning - a system of

cultural representation. People are not only legal citizens of a nation; they participate in the idea of a nation as represented in its national culture. A nation for Hall is a symbolic community and it is this which accounts for its power to generate a sense of identity and allegiance.

A.D. Smith (1991) goes a step further in his definition of the nation to include a common origin and descent. His argument is that a nation has to have a confluence in culture, ideology and in aspirations as well as sentiments that unite people in their homeland. He sees a nation as a fictive "super family" whose members can trace their origin to a common ancestry and, therefore, all its members are related in some way. This definition, however, heavily borders on mythology. It is an implausible definition even for the early western European nations such as Spain, England and France, among others, from where the notion of the nation is modeled. It is almost impossible - and highly impractical - to prove that members of a nation have a linked ancestry. Even where this linked ancestry could have been proven, the constant invasions and migration of people over the years would make such proof questionable.

Stuart Fowler (1991) points out some multiplicity of meaning in the current usage of the term nation. He believes that on the one hand, the term is used to refer to a political community of citizens united in a sovereign state such as the Ugandan nation, the Greek nation etc. On the other hand, he sees it as a word used to signify a community whose existence is independent of a relationship with a state such as in the Scottish nation or the Welsh nation, or it may straddle the borders of more than one state as in the Basque nation.

Fowler also defines a nation as a community of people founded in kinship and united in bonds of comradeship characterized by a common history and tradition, a common language and a common culture, including a common social order,

established over a long period of time. He clarifies that by "community of people", he means a group of people bound together in a shared life, and stresses the idea that his use of community does not carry any connotation of political organization. This argument, however, does not hold when considering the circumstances under which African and other colonized nations came to exist.

Patrick Chabal (1994) writes that most African nation-states belong to a group of countries which issued from colonial territories formed after the scramble for Africa. His argument is that 'the birth' of most contemporary nations in Africa was preceded by the establishment of a state unlike in most Western European nations where the nation existed before the state. The African nations, therefore, had to be moulded to fit within the confines of the state boundaries. The creation of these boundaries, on the other hand, was done arbitrarily since the colonial powers created the boundaries without a thought for the communities falling within them. This resulted in severing previously homogenous communities into different nation-states as exemplified in communities such as the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania, the Hutus and Tutsis of Eastern and Central Africa and the Sotho in the Southern African states while some communities that had no previous relationship were lumped together as one nation. In Kenya, for instance, the Kikuyu *Maumau*[2] freedom fighters had absolutely no connection - be it through camaraderie, history, tradition, language or culture - with say, the Luo or Turkana, yet they are all considered members of one nation[3]. These nations hardly subscribe to the features described by Fowler above.

[2] Maumau is an acronym for the Swahili words Mzungu Arudi Ulaya, Mwafrika Apate Uhuru which means, the European (must) go back to Europe, (for) the African to get Independence. It referred to the freedom fighters mainly from the Kikuyu tribe in Kenya who lived in Kenya's Central Province around Mt. Kenya.

[3] Kikuyu and Luo are numerically considered as among two of the biggest tribes (communities) in Kenya's approximately 42 tribes. Turkana are considered among the smallest tribes.

Fowler similarly envisions a nation not as an organization but as an organic social entity characterized by a shared life. He feels that it is unsatisfactory to talk about nation building since, for him, the image of building suggests a mechanical rather than an organic structure. He sees nations as capable of growing, flourishing, decaying and even dying just like any organic being. His argument is that a nation is a living organism capable of assimilating new, foreign elements into its kinship relations without losing its national identity. The notion of constructing a nation, for him, is a fallacy and he would rather view its development as a process of natural growth.

Fowler's argument above sharply contradicts Anderson's definition of a nation since if the nation is a construct of people's minds, then it would not be expected to grow naturally. In Anderson's arguments, the nation's conception, as well as its conceptualization, is intrinsically and innately artificial. The contemporary nation in Africa similarly defies Fowler's logic of a naturally growing nation since most of them were artificially constructed as mentioned earlier. The perception of nations as having a natural growth is highly contestable and arguable and this research report would rather slant towards Anderson's as opposed to Fowler's arguments.

Fowler's sentiments, however, were supported by the premodialists, also known as the perenialists, albeit more radically as Shils (1957) and Simmel (1964) write. These schools of thought argue that nations are natural units of history hence integral elements of human experience and societies. For them, nations are both natural and perennial and cannot be artificially constructed.

In very few exceptions, if any, would it be plausible to argue that nations, as Fowler and other proponents of his argument above argue, are organic social entities that grow naturally without interference from external forces. This,

however, can hardly be the case for majority of nations including those that fall outside the Third World. Many nations have been artificially 'grown' and moulded through 'unnatural' means. Historical developments in nations such as the Nazi Germany and the Soviet socialists were shaped and manipulated by the media and the ruling elite. Films such as Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (Germany, 1934) and other propaganda films made during that era helped in constructing the Nazi German nation, while the works of Dziga Vertov similarly helped mould the (then) Soviet nation. The post-Saddam Hussein Iraqi nation, Sudan, Afghanistan and Somalia, for instance, cannot claim any natural growth. The media, especially the international media such as the American controlled CNN and the Arab funded Al Jazira, played significant roles in the construction of the Iraqi nation.

Similarly, the concept of the nation is almost always tied to social organizations be they within a small community of people or amongst several million people spanning over several continents, as Anderson argues, and this inevitably involves politics. Now, the term politics is fairly ambivalent since there is no generally accepted definition or uniform understanding of the term. The rather fruitless search for a definition of the term has been wisely abandoned. However, for the purposes of this research report, politics will refer to that part of ethics which has to do with the regulation and government of a nation or state, the preservation of its safety, peace, and prosperity, the defence of its existence and rights against foreign control or conquest, the augmentation of its strength and resources, and the protection of its citizens in their rights, with the preservation and improvement of their morals. (www.brainydictionary.com)

Where politics is involved, Fowler's concept of a natural growing state crumbles since a considerably large amount of political influence from both within as well as from outside the nation comes into play. These external influences, where politically motivated as in the post Saddam Hussein Iraq and the "new" American-

backed Afghanistan, obviously interfere with any natural development in the nation. In such a scenario, there is always some interplay between internal and foreign ideology and influence.

Some critics have argued that African states should not be considered as nations since they do not conform to the ideals and yardsticks on which the early Western European nations were modelled. Fowler believes that in the case of African states, there may have been insufficient time to achieve the desired coalescence of nation and state that makes the nation-state idea a reality. Chabal (1994), however, argues that the difficulty arises from the fact that nations in Africa were invented to justify their capture of the colonial state and to fit in with the existing models of the 20th century nation-states. The process through which this was done was complicated, inadequately planned and hurriedly implemented. This, however, does not imply that these African nations are any lesser nations since there is no prescribed formula and criteria towards nation building, nor are there any ideal nations in existence.

Furthermore, the definitions of a nation have been quite fluid and in some cases contradictory. The criteria for defining the concept as A. D. Smith (1991) rightly notes have been vague, shifty and arbitrary. This analysis will steer clear of attempts to prescribe what a nation is and the process through which African nations were invented, since the reality facing the African continent is that the African states are also considered as nations by citizens, leaders and some scholars. This research report's concern will be an attempt to engage with means through which these African nation-states generally, and South Africa specifically, with all their diversity and complications, encourage their members to cultivate a sense of national identity in the process of building their nations.

National Identity

Collective identities continue to be an intrinsic part of human beings. People, over the years, have identified with religion, gender, age, race and class among others. Smith informs us that,

> …in the name of national identity, people have allegedly been willing to surrender their own liberties and curtail those of others. They have been prepared to trample on the civil and religious rights of ethnic, racial, and religious minorities whom that nation could not absorb.
>
> (A. D. Smith, 1991:17)

What then is national identity and why does it arouse so much emotion? And is the concept of national identity always a positive attribute to a social community of people?

Bill Nichols (2001) sees national identity as a sense of community, which invokes feelings of common interest and mutual respect. It involves reciprocating obligations between its members. For Nichols, national identity is closer to family ties than contractual obligations. What this argument elucidates is that national identity involves emotions rather than just imaginations. It is more about feelings as opposed to mere perceptions.

Anthony D. Smith (1991) argues that national identity draws on other forms of collective identity and in many instances, can never be completely divorced from these forms of collective identity. He believes that national identity is founded in culture in contrast to the concept of nationalism, which is a political movement. For Smith, national identity involves both cultural ideas such as those on common ancestry and history and cultural symbols such as monuments, architecture and poetry among others. He points out five features, which he believes are

fundamental in a national identity: (a) a common historic territory or homeland, (b) common myths and historic memories, (c) a common mass public culture, (d) common legal rights and duties for all members and (e) a common economy with territorial mobility for all members.

Smith further believes that a special category of people, the intellectuals, is needed to articulate these ideas and create new symbols of the assumed old common roots. The latter part of his argument seems to conform to the theories of the traditional Marxists, who in an attempt to explain why people in modern societies have organized themselves more in terms of national identity rather than class identity, assert that national consciousness is manipulated by the ruling class in order to prevent the formation of class consciousness. What this implies is that politics has a hand in national identity formation and this counters Fowler's assertions that national identity is not political.

Fowler, however, believes that national identity cannot be imposed on a people. His argument is that,

> A legal enactment can recognize a nation but cannot make one. Neither can a nation be created by a process of indoctrination or demagoguery, or education designed to persuade a group of people that they are one nation. By the same token, no act of cohesion or legal enactment or persuasion can dissolve a nation. Indeed, coercive acts that repress national identity commonly strengthen the bonds of nationhood.
>
> (Stuart Fowler, 1991:12)

South Africa

South Africa was ruled by the apartheid regime that ravaged the country for a long period of time until the country's first democratic elections in 1994. This apartheid regime deeply polarized and divided the South African people along ethnic and racial lines. Gerhard Mare (1991) notes that segregation and apartheid left their mark not only at the level of material discrimination but deeply in the radicalized identities of the self and of others that were created. Mai Palmberg argues that South Africa is an extreme case of usurpation of national identity by one minor group – the white Afrikaans speakers. He laments,

> …this group saw themselves as the true South Africans … the black majority was suppressed through a more or less artificial divisions into the ethnic groups each given an extremely artificial constructed set of homeland territories while the Indians and the coloureds were accorded no territories but were covered by a number of rules setting them above the black majority and below the whites.
>
> (Mai Palmberg, 1999:8)

Just over a decade after the collapse of apartheid and the introduction of the first 'democratic' leadership in South Africa, the country is arguably at the height of its national consciousness. The question of national identity lingers in the minds of many of its citizens not only because it is the 'youngest' democracy in Africa, having shed off the apartheid tag only in 1994, but because of its immensely diverse citizenry as well as its political history. This diversity in gender, race, culture, ethnicity, religion, language and class, among others, has led to the coining of the term 'rainbow nation,' itself a form of constructing a sense of national identity. This is in addition to a world-wide perception that South Africa is the heart-beat of Africa's economic and political development, and the model to most government policies and ideologies in the continent. The question of national

identity, however, is not the preserve of only the 'new democratic' space in South Africa because as Brendan Boyce (1991) informs us, it existed even during the apartheid regime where it stirred up many debates on the issues that arose from the project of cultivating a sense of nationhood out of the diverse ethnic, racial, class and gender identities that pervaded the country at that time. The agenda for nation building during the apartheid and post-1994 eras, however, were completely different. Whereas the contemporary post-1994 process of nation building aspires to unite all the different communities and races living in South Africa and equitably share the nation's resources, the apartheid agenda for nation building was to create divisions among the different ethnic groups within South Africa in order to sustain the ruling group's political and economic advantage.

Fowler argues that there is no doubt that issues of national or ethnic identity will be a significant factor in South Africa's future. He argues that the key question is not whether such issues will be significant but how they are to be handled. Brendan Boyce poses a very challenging yet relevant question that should be carefully examined and debated upon not only by South Africans but by other nations as well. He wonders what the post apartheid South African nation should look like.

> Should the emphasis fall on multiracialism, cultural rights and ethno-politics echoing the apartheid discourse and, therefore, rendering it immutable … or whether to draw the sting out of ethnicity by advocating the transcendence of differences including race, class, gender, ethnic, religious differences and realize their essential unity and negate the balkanization of the South African state into separate racial and ethnic enclaves.
>
> (Brendan Boyce, 1999: 236)

Boyce also writes that since the successful completion of the multiparty talks, the 1994 elections and the finalization of the 1996 constitution, South Africa has been dubbed “the political miracle”. He further argues that these events have removed the spectre of racial and ethnic civil war and have given way to unbridled optimism for the future of the nation. This argument, however, comes across as highly optimistic and very debatable since it is unlikely that the events he mentions above, that took place slightly over a decade ago, can completely wipe out the effects of the apartheid regime both on the perpetrators and the victims of its atrocities. His optimistic assertions about South Africa’s future as well as the race question are also challenged by the documentaries in the Project 10 series – as will be discussed in subsequent chapters of this research report - suggesting the possibility that his optimism for the “new South Africa” is not shared by all South Africans.

That aside, Boyce believes that the new political elites are intent on engineering a new homogenous South African society. This is not only exhibited by slogans such as the rainbow nation, which elicit a sense of unity even in diversity, but also in policies such as black empowerment aimed at elevating the marginalized communities to a par with other communities in South Africa. This is exhibited in many policies developed by the present South African political elites, leaders and other like-minded citizens who have, for instance, come up with an initiative such as ‘Project 10’ to harness the diversity in the country. Critical analyses of the documentaries in the Project 10 series again challenge some of these assertions as will be discussed in chapter four.

The Documentary

The documentary practice is as old as the motion picture camera. Erik Barnouw (1977) argues that the first documentary films were produced by the French Lumière brothers (Louis and Auguste) using their *cinematographes*[4] and he considers the brothers as the pioneers of the motion picture camera and, therefore, film. Barnouw argues that the short films produced by the Lumière brothers such as *Arrival of a Train* (1895), *Feeding the Baby* (1895), *Leaving the Factory* (1895) and *Ladies and Builders on Wheels* (1895) can be considered documentary films.

So what is a documentary?

Scholars and documentary filmmakers have over the years attempted to define the documentary film. What many have ended up doing is to either broadly outline features that are exhibited by documentary films - which to some extent are exhibited by other non-fictional films (other than documentaries) as well as fictional films. Some of these definitions have tended to be so narrow such that they exclude features exhibited by films considered to be documentaries. Carl Plantinga (1997), for instance, points out John Grierson's definition of documentary as "the creative treatment of actuality" as being too broad because this raises the question of what is "actuality" and why documentaries that do not creatively treat actuality should, for instance, be excluded from such a definition of a documentary.

Plantinga also argues that Raymond Spottiswoode's definition of documentary is too narrow and therefore exclusive[5]. Spottiswoode defines documentary as,

[4] One of the earliest motion cameras that pioneered the film industry. The camera designed by Louis Lumière weighed just over 5 kg and concurrently served as a projector and printing machine.
[5] Spottiswoode criticized Grierson's definition of documentary as being too vague and as embracing as art itself.

> Being in subject and approach a dramatized presentation of man's relation to his institutional life, whether industrial, social or political; and in technique a subordination of form to content.
>
> (Carl Plantinga, 1997: 13)

As Plantinga notes, this definition excludes what he calls the 'lecture' documentary films since they are not sufficiently dramatized or the 'nature' documentary films and 'personal' documentary films since they are not primarily involved with institutions, etc.

Bill Nichols - probably one of the foremost scholars on documentary - argues that the definition of documentary is always relational or comparative, i.e., it takes on meaning in relation to fictional film or experimental and *avant garde* film. He argues that,

> Documentaries adopt no fixed inventory or techniques, address no one set of issues, display no single set of form or styles. Not all documentaries exhibit a single set of shared characteristics. Documentary film practice is an arena in which things change. Alternative approaches are constantly attempted and then adopted by others or abandoned.
>
> (Bill Nichols, 2001:21)

Jack Ellis (1989), on the other hand, defines the documentary in relation to several elements i.e. subject, purpose, form, production method and technique, and the audience experience of the documentary - what he calls the five-part formula. He sees the documentary as focusing on something other than the general human condition involving individual human actions and relationships. Its purpose is to record social and cultural phenomena and this is done to inform or persuade the

audience to change, accept, adapt or develop a particular point of view. He feels that the form of the documentary is derived from and limited to actuality. It uses what exists rather than making up content. He also sees the documentary as a film that uses non-actors and is shot on location and not in a studio or sound location[6]. To the audience, the documentary has an effect on attitudes possibly leading to action and he sees it as a form of communication rather than one for artistic expression.

Nichols (2001) feels that the politics of the documentary film and video addresses the ways in which documentary helps give tangible expression to the values and beliefs that build or contest specific forms of social belonging or community at a given time or space. Nichols (2001:145 – 148) points out that Dziga Vertov's theory of the *kino eye*[7], contributed to the construction of a new society by demonstrating how the raw materials of everyday life as caught by the camera could be synthetically reconstructed into a new order. He informs us how John Grierson persuaded the British government "to do with film in the 1930 what the Soviet government had done since 1918, i.e., make use of an art form to foster a sense of national identity and shared community commensurate with its own political agenda." He further believes that "the construction of a sense of community and national identity revolves around the coordination of individual aspirations with government policies and priorities." Nichols (2001:145).

Project 10 Documentary Series

The Project 10 documentary series was commissioned in 2004 by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) to coincide with the tenth anniversary

[6] He defines non actors as real people who play themselves.
[7] That which the eye can not see in real life but that can be made clear by a montage of shots to bring in a new meaning.

of South Africa's first democratic elections after the end of the brutally dehumanizing and minority-led apartheid regime that isolated the South African nation from the rest of the world.[8] The project aspired to encourage South African individuals to tell their own personal and intimate stories on the theme of 'ten years of freedom' in the nation. To achieve this, thirteen South African filmmakers were accorded the opportunity and the funding to tell their stories. In the Project's website, it is stated that Project 10 was,

> An initiative to deliver strong, personal, narrative-driven films, and to develop a new generation of South African filmmakers brave enough to take risks and able to recognize the power of their own voices in a free society … The concept was to give 13 filmmakers the opportunity to make films about how they have experienced or understood the last 10 years of freedom [in South Africa].
>
> (www.project10.co.za)

The initiative was developed and Commissioned by SABC 1, a public broadcaster, and supported by the National Film and Video Foundation (N.F.V.F). The training, which ran concurrently with the commissioning of the documentaries, was developed by the Amsterdam-based Maurits Binger Film Institute and supported by the Netherlands Culture Fund of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (Project 10:2004).

SABC 1, being a public service broadcaster, also explored the opportunity presented by the decade of freedom theme to diversify its programming and fund-raise resources from both within and outside the country to invest in the local film and television industry so as to meet its mandate to the public. In the project 10 website it is stated that,

[8] The first democratic post Apartheid elections in South Africa were held on 27th April 1994 where the African National Congress (A.N.C.) party/ movement won and formed the new government led by President Nelson Mandela.

> It was also clear that SABC had to begin to further invest in local content and the local film and television industry. SABC1 had to move from being primarily a soap channel, with predominantly foreign programming, to a more diverse channel. It was important to ensure that our audiences could see their real lives reflected on national television.
>
> (www.project10.co.za)

The NFVF saw the Project 10 initiative as key in their development of local talent. They became the South African partner on the production side with further financial support from the Department of Communications, South Africa. The NFVF is a statutory body mandated by a progressive act of Parliament to spearhead the equitable growth and development of the South African film and video industry. Its mission is to create an environment that develops and promotes the South African film and video industry both domestically and internationally, while its vision is to have a quality South African film and video industry that mirrors and represents the nation, sustains commercial viability, encourages development and provides a medium through which the creative and technical talents of South Africans are able to reach the world. (www.nfvf.co.za.)

The Maurits Binger Film Institute was established in 1996 to provide screenwriters, script editors, directors and producers with the opportunity to upgrade their skills under the guidance of prominent filmmakers and experienced tutors from around the world. This wealth of experience in the craft of filmmaking provided by the institute was pertinent in the development of the Project 10 documentary series, bearing in mind that a number of the directors were first time filmmakers. (www.binger.ahk.nl)

Commissioning the filmmakers in the Project 10 documentary series was a rigorous process that had to conform to the principles of affirmative action so as to provide a fair opportunity to South Africans of all colours and backgrounds. In this regard, the series had to portray a national outlook by broadly accommodating the diverse cultures, races, religions, gender and age groups among others. These had to be manifested in the films' content, themes and the demographic composition of the filmmakers. What this implied is that a balancing act was necessary to accommodate the diverse groups within the South African nation. In the Project 10 website it is stated that,

> The final selection of filmmakers was difficult in that the panel had to ensure that the films chosen were able to sketch a broad canvas of South African experiences in the last 10 years. The filmmakers chosen were predominantly women and from previously disadvantaged backgrounds.
>
> (www.project10.co.za)

The thirteen documentary films in the series had a total of 15 directors since two of the films, were co-directed by two directors each. Those co-directed were the films *Belonging* by Kethiwe Ngcobo and Minky Schlesinger and *Umgidi (The Celebration)* by Sipho Singiswa and Gillian Schutte. Of the fifteen directors, nine were women from diverse backgrounds while the remaining six were men. The films also "tried to balance" the racial equation and ended up having eight black directors and seven white directors[9]. A number of these directors such as Omelga Hlengiwe Mathiyane who directed *Ikhaya,* Asivhanzi Mathaba of *Solly's Story and* Khulile Nxumalo who directed *Nabantwa' Bam* were relatively young directors in their twenties and early thirties. There was also an attempt to include various religious groups in South Africa through both the content and composition

[9] Black as used here refers to all those people who were previously disadvantaged during the apartheid era i.e. Africans, Coloureds and Indians.

of the directors. This was achieved in films such as *Through the Eyes of my Daughter* by Zulfah Otto Sallies, which was predominantly based on the Malay Muslim way of life and *Umgidi,* which had African rituals and traditions. An oversight that emerges in this series though, is that most of the stories told in the documentaries are 'black stories', i.e., the themes, the major characters or the setting of the stories are black. Chapter four will discuss this issue in more detail.

Synopsis of the Documentaries

The first documentary in the Project 10 series is *Being Pavarotti* directed by Odette Geldenhuys[10]. This is the story of a poor but talented 13-year-old boy, Elton Nkanunu, who sings opera in Hermanus, a small seaside town in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. Hermanus is popular with tourists for whale sightings. Nelson's love of opera music begins after his cousin gives him a tape by Italian tenor Luciano Pavarotti. His passion leads Elton from performing solo stints at open-air festivals to opening acts for established opera singers from nearby Cape Town.[11]
The second documentary, *Belonging,* by Kethiwe Ngcobo and Minky Schlesinger is the story of Kethiwe Ngcobo, a 39 year-old woman, born in exile to parents who fled South Africa during the early 1960's because of political reasons. In 1994, her family moved back to South Africa and she had to grapple with the intricacies and difficulties of her history (as a South African born into exile in England), her new environment and her attempts to fit into what she perceived to be her homeland.

Cinderella of the Cape Flats, the third documentary, is directed by Jane Kennedy. It is the story of the working class in the South African textile industry who meet once a year to participate in the annual Spring Queen pageant that brings together

[10] Odette Geldenhuys is a human rights lawyer who has embraced the craft of filmmaking. She says that her background (as a human rights lawyer) inspired her to expose the inequalities and oppression in the South African society by making *Being Pavarotti*.
[11] http://www.project10.co.za

workers from several textile factories. The story follows the lives of several contestants from their families to their workplace and into their brief moments of fame and glory on the catwalk parades. The film shows their experiences in the factories, the long hours they have to work and the meagre incomes they earn.

Lederle Bosch's *The Devil Breaks my Heart – Ten Years Later* is a sequel to the documentary *The Devil Breaks my Heart,* made in 1993 by Zackie Achmat. It tells the story of four young men now in their late teens and early 20's who were featured in the original 1993 documentary. The four young men include 19 year-old Tshepo Mmola, who has now lost his father and lives in brutal poverty in the Northern Province of South Africa, which is enduring one of its worst droughts in history. Donovan Rhode, 21 years old with two children, still lives in the same conditions he lived in 10 years previously. He has now drifted into a dangerous life of crime and has a criminal case pending against him. Heino Benard, now 16 years old, spends all his time drinking and hanging out with his friends at their houses. Bolla Conradie, now aged 24 years, is a Springbok rugby player. He has moved out of his old neighbourhood and bought a house where he lives with his family.

Hot Wax directed by Andrea Spitz is the story of Ivy Lakaje, a beautician who runs her business in the up-market Rosebank area of Johannesburg. The story chronicles her life both in her business and at home with her family.

Ikhaya, by Omelga Hlengiwe Mthiyane is the story of Zimbili Kamanga, a school teacher who fled her home after violence erupted in Bambayi in Kwa-Zulu Natal just before the 1994 elections. The story documents her journey back to Bambayi where she re-lives her experiences and meets her old friends as well as the new occupants of her 'home'.

Meaning of the Buffalo is a story about the Balete - the people of the buffalo - who live in the remote arid village of Lekgophung in the North West Province of South Africa. The director of the film, Karin Slater, tries to find out how the people become associated with the totem of the Buffalo.

The eighth documentary in the series is *Mix,* directed by Rudzani Dzuguda. It tells the story of Tumelo and Dominique, two young female disk jockeys (D.J's) and the dilemma they find themselves in when their parents refuse to acknowledge their chosen lines of profession.

The next documentary, *My Yeoville,* by Sello Molefe is a story revolving around living in Yeoville, an area that the director describes as a tiny cultural enclave in Johannesburg. It tells of the changes that have taken place in the area in the post apartheid era and its downward trend towards increased urban decay.

Solly's Story, by Asivhanzhi Mathaba, is the portrait of a life in the new South Africa. It is about a young man's quest to follow his dream, a tale that does not shy away from dealing with the complexities of that search. Solly Luvhengo, a young man from deep rural Venda in the Northern Province, has defied the odds to survive poverty and marginalisation, and seems poised for greater things. The only child of a single mother in rural Venda, sickly Solly was brought up by his grandparents and nursed a vision of becoming a soccer star. He turned his hand to coaching when a regular coach could not make it for a soccer match, and found his niche coaching youngsters. He now coaches the under 12 and under 17 South African national soccer teams.[12]

Nabantwa' Bam - which means 'with my children' - directed by Khulile Nxumalo revolves around the family of 60-year-old Beatrice Kubheka, a mother of two

[12] http://www.project10.co.za

sons, Nhlanhla and Miles, and her granddaughter Aaliyah[13] who all live in Soweto Township[14]. Miles is an articulate, well-travelled and still upward mobile young man while Nhlanhla is a more township-savvy person who is unemployed and home-bound. Nhlanhla, the older brother, perceives himself as having grown up in a different South African era from his younger brother. He believes that he grew up in the apartheid era that oppressed black people denying them numerous opportunities in life and suppressing their social advancement, while his younger brother Miles grew up in the post-apartheid era and has had numerous opportunities to advance both his social, academic and ultimately economic life. The story juxtaposes the lives of the two brothers. It tells of their ambitions, their tribulations, their successes and their setbacks.

Through the Eyes of my Daughter by Zulfah Otto Sallies is the story of the director's 15 year-old daughter Muneera, brought up in the predominantly Malay quarters of Bo-Kaap in Cape Town.[15] It tells the story of the young girl growing up in the new generation post-apartheid South Africa.

Umgidi, the thirteenth documentary, is a story told by an interracial couple, Gillian Schutte and Sipho Singiswa. Sipho goes back to Robben Island, the infamous apartheid political prison, where he was circumcised while an inmate. He wants to officially join his *Myirha* clan and symbolically unite with his ancestors and the rest of his clan members. *Umgidi* also tells the story of Sipho's brother Vuyo, who discovers that he was adopted by the family and, therefore, sets out to find who his real parents are. A further twist emerges when Vuyo reveals that he is gay and the antagonism this revelation creates in the strict and conservative African family and their *Myirha* clan.

[13] Aaliyah is Nhlanhla's daughter.
[14] Soweto (South West Township) is the South African township located in the South of Johannesburg, famous for its impassioned uprisings against apartheid education. (Project 10, 2004)
[15] Bo-Kaap is the Muslim Malay Quarter in Cape Town. (Project 10:2004)

Chapter Breakdown

This research report consists of five chapters. Chapter one, which is the introductory chapter, lays the foundation for the research report. Here, the concepts of 'the nation', 'national identity and 'nation building' are discussed. This chapter explores definitions of the highly debated concept of the documentary mode of film making, giving a brief history of the genre's development. Chapter one also introduces the Project 10 documentary series giving a brief synopsis of all the 13 documentaries in the series.

Chapter two argues that nations are in a constant state of rebirth, redefinition and reinvention. The documentary mode, therefore, contributes to the all important role of sustaining what Benedict Anderson (1991) calls a sense of 'imagined community' through protecting and promoting local industries, marketing nations both domestically and internationally and encouraging long term investment from both within the nation and from overseas. Here, the documentaries *Cinderella of the Cape Flats* directed by Jane Kennedy, and *The Devil Breaks My Heart – Ten Years Later* by Lederle Bosch are discussed.

Chapter three looks at the role of the individual citizen in nation building. This chapter engages with discussions on several questions revolving around whether individual identities, needs and diversities are acknowledged in African communities/nations. And if they are, then what choices and options do such individuals have to shape and determine their destinies and those of their community and nation? If they are not, then what should be given primacy - the individual or the community? Other questions include whether individual and communal identities (which include national identity) are concurrent and at par in their recognition within an African setting, and also, whether any equilibrium can be achieved between these two identities in an African society? This chapter

similarly advocates for the 'bottom up' approach in nation building, an approach that acknowledges and recognizes the individual in the process of nation building to complement the dominant 'top down' approach that frequently emphasizes the community and the nation at the expense of the individual. The documentaries, *Belonging,* by Kethiwe Ngcobo and Minky Schlesinger, and *Umgidi (The Celebration),* by Gillian Schutte and Sipho Singiswa will be discussed in this chapter in order to explore the themes mentioned.

Chapter four examines the effects and manifestations of previous leadership regimes in the present-day South Africa. Here, the absence of white South African stories in the Project 10 series (yet the project sets out to tell 'South African' stories) is examined. This chapter also engages with the relationship between the different racial groups in South Africa as portrayed in the different films in the Project 10 series. Chapter four also discusses what seems to be an emerging trend in South Africa where a new minority elite group of black South Africans seems to have replaced the previous white leadership, while for many South Africans, as seen in the Project 10 films, nothing much has changed in their lives and experiences. Conversely, the apathy, lamentation and lack of initiative among black South Africans, because of past injustices, will be examined. The documentary *Nabantwa' Bam,* directed by Khulile Nxumalo, among several other documentaries in the series, will illustrate these arguments.

Chapter five provides a summary of previous chapters. This chapter also offers recommendations for possible further studies and approaches on the topic of this research report. The limitations encountered while writing this research report will likewise be mentioned here.