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Raising a thousand Tutu voices: reflections on the Truth to Power exhibition

ABSTRACT

This article explores the lifework and legacy of Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu who passed away on 26 December 2021. It relates the reaction of visitors to the newly installed exhibition, Truth to power: Desmond Tutu and the churches in the struggle against apartheid, in the historic Old Granary Building, home of the Desmond & Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation in Cape Town. The Victims Wall forms part of the exhibition, in a room dedicated to the unfinished business of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The article argues that the cries and bruised bodies of the victims of apartheid, such as those of Mrs Calata, widow of Fort Calata, one of the Cradock Four victims, and of thousands of “ordinary people”, are still reverberating down the decades to be heard and acknowledged by specifically White South Africans. The example and the courage of the poet and journalist, Antjie Krog, who covered the TRC hearings and who is still speaking poetry to power as a public intellectual, are used to reflect on the author’s own culpability and that of other White Afrikaans-speaking South Africans and their involvement in the TRC process. The article concludes with the immense and joyful task of the Foundation to raise a thousand Tutu voices, in an attempt to answer questions on how to keep the memories of the bodies of those who suffered under colonialism and apartheid alive, while seeking reconciliation and fighting for a just, equal, and inclusive society in a deeply divided South Africa and how to become more fully human.

1. INTRODUCTION

As a theologian and a beneficiary of the Vrije Universiteit (Free University)/ NRF Desmond Tutu Doctoral Scholarship Programme, I feel quite humbled, as a White, middle-aged Afrikaans-speaking male, to work at the Desmond & Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation in Cape Town. In the exhibition, *Truth to power: Desmond Tutu and the churches in the struggle against apartheid*,¹ installed in the historic Old Granary Building, home of the Desmond & Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation (DLTLF), there is a version of a holocaust wall – a wall inscribed with the names of the living and the dead. On this stark black wall are the names of the nearly 20,000 people declared by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as victims of human rights violations.

It is touching and deeply disturbing to observe how visitors to the exhibition scroll down the columns of names with their fingers, trying to locate the name of a family member or friend, some with a silent tear ambling down their cheek. One of the visitors wrote the following:

The pain of Apartheid still haunts me, and I cried at the Victims Wall.
Desmond was the greatest leader we ever had, and I honour his legacy
in the way I live!

Another visitor wrote:

So important to never forget the sacrifices made by so many to achieve
freedom. So important to honour them by continuing to fight for a more
just and a more equal society.

At the opening of the exhibition on 25 March 2022, three months after the passing of the Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Mpilo Tutu on 26 December 2021, Archbishop Thabo Makgoba stated, in reference to the Victims Wall, that the Arch (as he was fondly known) used to say that, in his theology, there are no ordinary people and that all people are created in the image of God. Makgoba (2022:n.p.) commended the foundation for lifting up

not just the political actors and the heroines and heroes of the struggle,
but people of all political persuasions and of none, who suffered in the
conflict generated by apartheid.

Archbishop Makgoba then continued to “speak truth to power”, arguing that he “would not be true to the Arch’s example if I did not end with a sting in the tail”. Referring to the war in Ukraine and Russia’s invasion, which is a flagrant breach of the UN Charter, he condemned the South African government for

1 The exhibition was curated in collaboration with the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg.

abstaining to vote on a UN resolution demanding Russian unconditional withdrawal of its forces, decrying the government's silence on the horrific bombing of health facilities and civilians, asking:

Where is our ubuntu, our humanity? We Africans complain of the appalling indifference of many Europeans to the suffering of Africans when there is conflict on our continent. Are we seeking to mimic the Europeans in their lack of compassion, their lack of outrage at the suffering which women and children are subjected to? Do we want to reduce ourselves to their level? ... If war is too deeply embedded in Europe's bloody history for them to take such an initiative, maybe we ought to take the lead in Africa.

Long live the values embodied by Desmond Mpilo Tutu!

This followed a media release by the DLTLF, issued on the day of the invasion, condemning Putin's act of aggression that severely undermines Ukraine's sovereignty and is a devastating blow to world peace, quoting Archbishop Tutu on the issue of war, peace, and security: "We in South Africa learned that true security cannot be gained from the barrel of a gun." (Tutu.org.za 2022b). In solidarity with the Ukrainian people, the Foundation is holding a series of webinars between activists in Ukraine and Africa and showcased an art exhibition on "the womanly face of war".

In "speaking truth to power", and by living the example of the Arch, the DLTLF and the Tutu IP Trust also expressed their regret at the fatwa and guidelines issued by the South African Muslim Judicial Council on same-sex relationships, stating that those who engage in the sin of same-sex relationships have "taken themselves out of the fold of Islam", and that "our religion teaches us to hate the sin, not the sinner". The Foundation acknowledged that his view is by no means unique to the Muslim congregations of South Africa, pointing out that Tutu was so enraged by homophobia within the church that he declared that he would not worship a homophobic God; that, if Heaven was homophobic, he would rather "go to that other place" (Tutu.org.za 2022d).

How then do we honour the legacy of a man such as Desmond Tutu, a man whose life journey took him from a young boy born in the impoverished township of Klerkdorp to being enthroned on 7 September 1986 as the first Black Anglican Archbishop of Southern Africa; from a teacher in Munsieville High School to a courageous spiritual and human rights leader on the world stage? How do we deal with the lingering pain and trauma of apartheid? How do we fight for a more just and more equal society for the so-called "ordinary people"?

2. THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

The Victims Wall forms part of the exhibition space dedicated to the unfinished business of the TRC. Opposite the Victims Wall is a video playing scenes from witnesses, victims, and perpetrators appearing before the TRC, including vivid descriptions of torture by the security police, and heart-rendering appeals from family members to find out what happened to their sons, daughters, husbands, and wives. Another panel displays photos of the Cradock Four, four men working towards justice in the rural area of the Eastern Cape province, who were threatened, harassed, tortured, and ultimately abducted and killed by Security Police (Tutu 1999:147).

In his book, *No future without forgiveness* (1999), the Arch recalls the harrowing moment when Nomonde Calata, wife of one of the Cradock Four victims, Fort Calata, testified at the first hearing of the TRC in East London. At one point during her testimony, Mrs Calata broke down with a piercing wail. Tutu (1999:148) describes her cry

as the defining sound of the TRC – as a place where people could come and cry, to open their hearts, to expose the anguish that had remained locked up for so long, unacknowledged, ignored and denied.

The Arch then adjourned the proceedings with the audience singing “Senzenina” [What have we done?].

In February 2022, the DLTLF, in collaboration with the Foundation for Human Rights (FHR), hosted a conversation entitled “Accountability and justice: The need for an independent commission of inquiry into the suppression of the apartheid-era crimes”. The FHR, the Apartheid-Era Victims Families’ Group (AVFG), and civil society working on the issues of the Unfinished Business of the TRC have long believed that the suppression of the TRC cases by the Executive through the political interference into the work of the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) and the South African Police Services (SAPS) has been a form of state capture. For this reason, the FHR and the AVFG together and with support from the civil society organisations, including the DLTLF, have called on the President to establish an independent commission of inquiry to investigate the suppression of TRC cases. The former commissioners of the TRC addressed three letters to the President calling for the establishment of the independent commission of inquiry, in 2019, and two in 2021, which fell on deaf ears (Tutu.org.za 2022a).

During the conversation, Lukhanyo Calata, son of Fort and Nomonde Calata and a social justice activist, stated that it saddens him that families still have to go through this pursuit of justice some 27 years into democracy. He called for any secret amnesty deals done to be exposed in the spotlight of a public inquiry.

It's time for those deals to be brought into the light. The only way that we can shine a light on them is a public independent commission of inquiry (Tutu.org.za 2022c).

Writing on the power of apology, Judge and Smith (2022:2) contend that the relatively peaceful transition from apartheid is strongly linked to the work of the TRC chaired by Archbishop Tutu, regarded as a “definitive moment of truth-telling, contrition, and forgiveness”. For many, this process is “unfinished”, as it failed to deliver justice for apartheid atrocities. The TRC had an ecumenical approach to reconciliation and the search for truth; in the process, however, it glamourised forgiveness. The granting of amnesty for perpetrators within a confessional frame created a justice deficit (Judge & Smith 2022:6). Judge and Smith (2022:6) contend that reparation cannot be reduced absence or presence of truth, since “the expression of contrition for the suffering inflicted on another is not a matter of truth alone”.

The post-apartheid government had grand ambitions to undo racial discrimination, as well as gender and sexual inequalities through the law and rights. Now, however, the political narrative has

turned away from ‘soft option’ remedies such as apologies to the hard retributive edge of law – and particularly criminal law – as a way to address dignity harms (Judge & Smith 2022:2).

It is turning away from forgiveness and apology as a mechanism for reconciliation.

The poet and journalist Antjie Krog was present during the TRC hearing in East London. She covered nearly all the hearings and travelled with the TRC commissioners. Writing in English, in the first double-page spread for the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper in 1996, about the effects of reporting on the TRC hearings on her as a journalist, she reflects as follows:

The words splintered into the harrowing wail of Fort Calata’s wife as she threw herself back into her chair – this cry of distress and uncontained grief ushered in an experience which changed my life (Garman 2009:162).

In the third piece for the *Mail & Guardian*, Krog speaks to readers on how the TRC reporting was beginning to take a heavy toll on her (Garman 2009:163):

The months that have passed proved my premonition right – reporting on the truth commission has indeed left most of us physically exhausted and mentally frayed.

Because of language.

Week after week, from one faceless building to the other, from one dusty godforsaken town to the other, the arteries of our past bleed their own peculiar rhythm, tone and image. One cannot get rid of it, Ever.

It was crucial for me to have the voices of the victims on the news bulletin. To have the sound of ordinary people dominate the news. No South African should escape the process.

It is as if the piercing cry of Mrs Calata is still reverberating down the decades, splintering the sensibilities of those who desperately want to forget or ignore what happened during apartheid and in post-apartheid society, blending in with the voices of all the other “ordinary people” still suffering under the effects of oppression. For me, that is the unfinished business of the TRC – the voices of people on the Victims Wall, together with thousands of others, who still need to be heard – and those who should still acknowledge their culpability, guilt, and privilege.

I was fascinated by the courage of the 17-year-old Antjie Krog (now turning 70) who, as a high school pupil from the rural, farming town of Kroonstad in the Free State, published her first Afrikaans poem in the 1970s in the school magazine, expressing her desire to

build myself a land/where skin colour doesn't count/only the inner brand/
of self; where no goat face in parliament/can keep things permanently
verkramp/where I can love you./can lie beside you in the grass/without
saying 'I do'/where black and white hand in hand/can bring peace and
love/to my beautiful land (Garman 2022).

Garman (2022) writes that Krog's passions, forged in the 1970s, indicate how a poet can play a crucial public role in “public life in a fractured country”. In her role in public life, Krog views

the literary as a resource for social and political life, bringing the personal into the political by asserting its messy, emotional and passionate dimensions, and by insisting on the very great value of open-hearted encounters with others.

For decades, Antjie Krog has been “speaking poetry to power” (Garman 2009:208). Gqola (2010:107) views Antjie Krog as “arguably the most visible post-apartheid white imagination on contemporary South Africa”, although she criticises Krog for misusing the testimonies of the survivors of apartheid atrocities as mere “backdrop” when reflecting on Afrikaner and White identities.

Krog’s book, *Country of my skull*, was published in 1998, wherein her reportage on the TRC was filtered through her personal account, “a hybrid blend of reportage, memoir, fiction and poetry” (Garman 2009:164). This book enables ethical self-reflection by personalising history, often centralising the experiences of the mostly female body (Garman 2009:220). Van der Westhuizen (2022:159) cites Lütge Coullie (2014:5) who argues that, in this book, Krog is bearing witness “in an attempt to bring individual memories of apartheid trauma into national remembrance”, rendering the victims’ traumatic experiences part of the readers’ memories. She also cites Graham (2003:25) who holds that *Country of my skull* speaks

to humanisation and mutual recognition in the face of apartheid dehumanisation of black people. Krog does not seek ‘easy closure through artificial mourning’.

The *Truth to power* exhibition does what Krog’s book *Country of my skull* intended to do, namely to lead to critical and ethical self-reflection. Among the visitors to the exhibition have been elderly White liberal English-speaking Anglicans, who afterwards contemplated on how, despite their sometimes progressive world views, they bought into the vilification of Tutu when he advocated for disinvestment in South Africa during the 1980s. A group of *dominees* [pastors] of the Dutch Reformed Church visited the exhibition, being confronted in the first room, *Apartheid education: The most evil act of all*, with how the apartheid-era policy of Bantu Education changed Tutu’s life and South Africa’s history. On one of the purple walls in an adjacent room, they faced a black and white photo of students carrying placards during the bloody June 1976, which declare in bold letters: “we do not want Afrikaans” and “To hell with Afrikaans”, in reaction to the compulsory use of Afrikaans in Bantu Education. Six weeks prior to that, Tutu as the first Black Dean of Johannesburg, wrote a letter to the then Nationalist Party prime minister, John Vorster, prophetically warning:

Unless something drastic is done very soon then bloodshed and violence are going to happen in South Africa almost inevitably. A people can only take so much and no more ... I am dreadfully frightened, that we may soon reach a point of no return, when events will generate a momentum of their own, when nothing will stop their reaching a bloody denouement (Tutu 2006:11).

The next room in the exhibition, entitled *The struggle in the church: Fighting a false Gospel*, showcases the church as a site of struggle between those who supported colonialism and racial oppression (such as the Dutch Reformed Church and other Reformed Churches) and those who fought against it (such as the South African Council of Churches). In one section, the group of Afrikaans *dominees* were challenged by a huge campaign poster of the Christian Institute of Beyers Naude, on it a straw broom in the shape of a cross, reading:

what are you doing
in the house
of god
asked
the white man

i have come
to sweep the floors
said
the black man

oh
said the white man
for a moment I thought
you had come
here
to pray

Around the corner, there is an explanation of black theology, and photos of Desmond Tutu and Steve Biko at the University of Fort Hare in approximately 1968. Tutu wrote a paper on black theology while he was working for the Theological Education Fund as Director for Africa, stating that black theology is concerned with human liberation, that it calls man to

align himself with the God who is the God of the Exodus, God the liberator, who leads his people, all his people, out of all kinds of bondage – political, economic, cultural ... (Tutu 1973:6).

For Tutu, black theology enquires whether it is possible to be Black and a Christian, to ask on whose side God is, since it is a theology that is concerned about “the humanisation of man, because those who ravage our humanity, dehumanise themselves in the process”. Tutu (1973:6) continues that the liberation of the Black man “is the other side of the coin of the liberation of the White man”. These words contain the seeds of Tutu’s *ubuntu* theology, and one of the key principles that guided the work of the TRC, which commenced under his leadership 22 years later.

As my colleagues and I occasionally escort foreign dignitaries, African American college students, interfaith leaders, and others through the exhibition, I am constantly confronted by my own *aandadigheid* [culpability] and that of my ancestors in the oppressive and dehumanising system of apartheid, especially when viewing the video on the TRC hearings, and the photos in the display cases in the red room. The theme, *Faith in action: The campaign for sanctions*, explores how apartheid's policy of forcibly removing people of colour from areas designated for White settlement sparked international sanctions against South Africa's apartheid state. The more support the disinvestment campaign garnered internationally, the more brutal the security forces of the Nationalist government became, with soldiers patrolling townships under a state of emergency. I was a 22-year-old officer patrolling Atteridgeville township on the outskirts of Pretoria on the back of an armoured military vehicle. Who was the brave one – me, and others such as me, or an Antjie Krog?

The Arch (Tutu 2008: 61) recounts an incident in his book *Truth to power: Human right defenders who are changing our world*, when he was preaching at an affluent Dutch Reformed congregation, the first Black preacher to do so. He spoke about the horrible things they unearthed during the TRC process, a programme for a chemical and biological warfare with a plan to poison Nelson Mandela after his release from prison. The pastor of the congregation, who was a military chaplain for many years, broke down and admitted that they were unaware of these things. He asked for forgiveness and Tutu embraced him, writing "there are others who have been less than forthright ... Most of our people are ready to forgive."

Writing about reconciliation and forgiveness in the wake of the TRC during a visiting professorship to the Candler School of Theology at Emory University (USA), Tutu (1999:231) admits that the

greatest weaknesses in the commission was the fact that we failed to attract the bulk of the white community to participate enthusiastically in the process.

While these could have been mistakes on the part of the TRC, Tutu chides that it definitely was on the part of White South Africans, who on the whole rebuffed the new dispensation. In his view, Whites spent too much time

whining, being quick to find fault and gloating shortsightedly ... filled with too much resentment at the fact that they have lost some political power (Tutu 1999:231).

Prof. Piet Meiring (2003:254), a Dutch Reformed theologian and TRC commissioner, echoes the sentiment of Tutu expressing the disappointment of the TRC with

whites in general, Afrikaners and English – and the DRC, in particular – for remaining aloof, for not using the opportunities given to them, for not entering into the spirit of truth and reconciliation. Too often the conspicuous absence of whites at the hearings were painful and confusing to black South Africans.

In the *Truth to power* exhibition at the DLTLF, there is a video on the hearings of the TRC, including the appearance of former president F.W. de Klerk in front of the Commission. Van der Westhuizen (2022:142) argues that the ongoing resistance of White people in South Africa against the idea that apartheid was a “crime against humanity” is demonstrated in F.W. de Klerk’s stance, expressed in 2020, that White people are being stigmatised by “associating them with genuine crimes against humanity”. This is in line with his long-held position that guilt should not be cast on “whole classes of decent people and communities” who were not aware of apartheid violence. Van der Westhuizen refers to the public outrage and the pressure from the DLTLF, which led to an apology from F.W. de Klerk.² Van der Westhuizen (2022:163) concludes that the TRC, without intending to do so, established “a false division between apartheid state brutalities and the everyday reproduction of apartheid violence”. When White people claim ignorance about “the social wreckage in the wake of white domination”, it demands concerted unknowing. By claiming ignorance, through unknowing, they plead innocence and are, therefore, not responsible for racial injustice. White people withdraw the recognition of the humanity of Black people.

Reflecting on his personal journey, Meiring (2018:5) writes that

this process is far from over. In South Africa today we are still in dire need of reconciliation. There are still millions of stories to be shared by victims and perpetrators, by the marginalised and the poor, the destitute and the angry, young and old, by the many for whom the dream of a rainbow nation has paled.

2 The full statement from the DLTLF can be viewed at: <https://bit.ly/3o9F4Mb>

3. ON THE TRC, BODIES AND MEMORY

Writing on how Black bodies were perceived during apartheid and specifically insights concerning the body that came to the fore during the TRC process, Meiring (2014:118) cites Bethlehem (2006:89) who states that the “moral signature” of the TRC was the employment of two visual “tools”, namely the practice of exhumation and “of one body held by another”. The exposure of the scar in public also became an act of purification and a purging of the social body. The focus on the body during the TRC hearings delivered a “mnemonic production”, where the surface of the body became a site of memory. The sight of the violated body allowed the body to be “stabilised as the site of memory”. The pain of the body is shared.

Bethlehem (2006:89) refers to Vera Das who writes that a response to this call of pain from another body is to move away from

the singularity of the body-in-pain ... the experience of pain cries out for this response of the possibility that my pain could reside in your body.

This idea ties in with the theological reflection of Ganzevoort (2008:24) who puts forward a reinterpretation of scars as stigmata. Ganzevoort (2008:23) writes that “the scars on our body and soul tell the story of wounds inflicted upon us”, and that traumatic experiences are accepted and integrated as identity markers. Stigmata then transcend the scars of individual traumatic experiences and become “prophetic markers of resistance against the normative cultural stories of wholeness and perfection” (Ganzevoort 2008:28).

The sociologist Didier Fassin also works with bodies and memory, and he is concerned with the “inscribing of historical time onto flesh, the social determinations of individuals’ biological fate” and meaning making of the present through remembering (Fassin 2007:xv). He cites Mbembe (2001) who writes that the West still finds it difficult to recognise “the body and flesh of ‘the stranger’ as flesh and body just like mine”, as well as the idea of a common humanity shared with others. Fassin (2007:127) quotes Sandile Dikeni’s poem “Whites”:

whites shall not be drowned
nor will they be tanned
or banned
only humanised.

He writes that the body is not simply a manifestation of a person’s presence in the world, but it is also a site where the past has left its mark or, as he puts it,

the body is a presence unto oneself and unto the world, embedded in a history that is both individual and collective: the trajectory of a life and the experience of a group (Fassin 2007:175).

According to Vosloo (2001:39), the triune God is a “Gifting God” and the first gift is that of time and the second one is that of the body. He continues that there is a discrepancy in time between those who want to build a new future with haste without lingering too long in the past, while others want more time to remember the injustices of the past and seek the truth. The triune God endows the gift of time to find time for reconciliation. The gift of the body is a gift that was tortured and scarred under apartheid, and so many people carry the pain of the past in their bodies. He finds a link between the way in which torture was used in Chile and South Africa as a social strategy that atomized the citizenry through fear and thereby dismantled other social bodies that could rival the state’s authority over individual bodies.

The memories of scarred bodies do not allow any talk about reconciliation as cheap or effortless, since “alongside the powerful testimony of those who em-body forgiveness and repentance we have the painful memory of dis-embodiment” (Vosloo 2001:40). He continues to argue that the body of Christ creates the space where people can express grief for the injustices to bodies “and keep the memories of those bodies alive”.

Performing part of her poem, *We speak in the shadow of the tongues they took*, at the 12th Desmond Tutu International Peace Lecture on 7 October 2022, Jonas (2022: 24) mentioned the following:

My sister is a new recruit to a post-TRC world
 where searching for a better life still left us sitting at the back
 of Oom Koos’ red botsotso bakkie as red as our school ties
 Nathi singamakhaphetshu. We too are cabages.
 Two for R1!

Later on, Jonas (2022:25) reflects on the scars of the ravages of apartheid:

We do not “get over”
 The fettered trunks of our lost histories,
 naked roots and fallen family trees,
 In this unapologetic winter,
 we recast what remains of black bodies as fuel,
 weigh which of our ancestors’ bones are still good for wood
 and inherit their propensity to survive the fire.

4. WHAT ABOUT *UBUNTU*?

In a recent magazine article, Chigumadzi (2022) asks the pertinent question as to whether White South Africa can live up to *ubuntu*, the African philosophy that Tutu globalised? Chigumadzi (2022:n.p.) argues that

just as Black people have been dispossessed of their land, Ubuntu has been dispossessed of its deeply radical demands for ethical historical and social relations among people.

He refers to the Kenyan theologian John Mbiti who interpreted the notion of *ubuntu* as philosophy of mutual personhood, by translating “*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*” as “I am because we are”. Mbiti’s humanist translation of *ubuntu*, however, obfuscates the fact that the African belief of the person is a social being who is always becoming, in contrast with Western notions of personhood. He refers to the 1986 report of a Black Sash fieldworker who was surprised to hear that Black people did not consider White people to be people – they are not *abantu*. To be a person among people (*abantu*), someone should continually uphold the personhood of others. While the notion of *ubuntu* is thriving in post-apartheid narratives, misusing the name for software, businesses, books, and philanthropic programmes, we inhabit a country where we strive for *ubuntu* without *abantu* (Chigumadzi 2022). Chigumadzi (2022:n.p.) concludes that

until there is a true reckoning with the reparations Ubuntu demands, Black and white South Africa will continue to live worlds apart as Abantu and abelungu. White South Africa, nixolisa ngani? What are you atoning with?

Is it not time that White South Africans should start singing a different version of the hymn “Senzenina”, asking with deep sincerity: What have we done?

Meiring (2015:7) also concludes that *ubuntu* is more of a globalised construct than it is connected to any authentic contemporary form of village life and world view. An indiscriminate and insensitive appeal to *ubuntu* as fellow humanity can suppress real situations of conflict and divisions in contemporary South African society. It can become a kind of disembodied *ubuntu*. As a globalised construct, *ubuntu* cannot be promoted without a profound consideration for the bodily experiencing of Black people in their concrete lifeworlds throughout the heart-wrenching history in South Africa from the time of the first explorers and missionaries in the 15th century, the colonial and apartheid periods, and in post-apartheid South Africa. Throughout this 500-year history, there is an implicit kind of bodily knowing in the continuous interacting of living bodies with their environment, a bodily knowing where the Black body has often been denied its dignity and humanity, where it has been

perceived as subhuman and uncivilised. Therein lies the deep and dividing irony – while, for centuries, White people categorised Blacks as lesser human beings, White people were considered not to be persons.

For me personally, this process of becoming fully human, becoming a person, is tied in with the process of transfiguration. I am fully aware of my “outsider” presence as a White, middle-aged, Afrikaans-speaking male at the DLTLF, an entity that strives for societal healing under the vision – *nurturing the courage to heal*. My being in this space is that of a human, being transfigured. De Gruchy (2021:291) links the process of becoming to Tutu’s conviction that “the Transfiguration of Christ is fundamental for the Christian understanding of both personal and societal transformation.” Already in the early 1970s, in a conversation between the two of them, Tutu expressed his wish to write a book on the transfiguration. De Gruchy (2021:291) poignantly writes that, for Tutu,

no person is a ‘nobody’ because everyone is ‘made in the image of God’ and has God-given potential to change, and no society is beyond redemption because God’s purpose is to create a new humanity.

Tutu was engaged in the “transfiguration of politics”, which was an outflow of his belief in God’s love and justice, being a prisoner of hope “for the transfiguration of people and the world despite every contradiction, all opposition and rejection” (De Gruchy 2021:292).

5. CONCLUSION

At a memorial event held for the Arch’s friends and allies two days prior to his funeral, at the DLTLF, Cape Town, on 30 December 2021, his struggle companion Allan Boesak (DLTLF 2021) mentioned the following:

... so many that said to me, is it true that the last hope for South Africa’s future is now gone? Is it true that the last voice of [conscience] of this nation is now gone? Is it true that the last truth-speaker and fighter for justice is now truly gone? I must say to them no, THAT is not true ... We are angry, we are disillusioned, we feel betrayed, but what is it that we can do? And as long as there are young people who want to do what they want to do, I will never give up hope ... So, I think he died not just with tragedy in his heart, but he died with hope in his heart. Then I decided if there is nothing else, I have to do for the rest of my life, and you that are here who mourn his passing and celebrating his life, we can’t do that without making that pledge to him and his children, and to our children and to God, that we will not stop until we have raised a thousand new Tutu voices.

How do we keep alive the memories of the bodies of those who suffered under colonialism and apartheid, while seeking reconciliation? How do we hear the cry of Mrs Calata and the groans of other victims of apartheid, while seeking justice and forgiveness? How do we become fully human in this country? How do we, and specifically White South Africans, find the courage to listen to the forgotten voices and scarred bodies of all the other “ordinary people” on Victims Wall and elsewhere, while trying to raise a thousand new Tutu voices for a just, equal, and inclusive society in a deeply divided South Africa?

In her most recent poetry collection “Pillage”, Krog (2022:68) writes a praise poem, lamenting the death of Desmond Tutu as “this conscience” that was not afraid to stand on his own while “lies and insults struck him”. She describes Tutu as follows:

single-handedly he coined a language of us-ness
for a deeply divided country
he wanted us to be enraged by injustice
he wanted us to assent to the modality of caring
he wanted us to live in solidarity with sharing
he wanted to bind us together in embracing clusters
he wanted to build shelters with us
he wanted to raise great and mighty roofs with us
he wanted to recreate us in frameworks of humanity.

Then Krog (2022:69) laments:

we have failed him, honour him, Desmond Mpilo Tutu
we, in our despair, mourn him, Desmond Mpilo Tutu
for he is dead now – this conscience.

This work rests heavily, but also joyfully on the shoulders of the DLTLF, to not fail the Arch as we mourn him – to carry his conscience forward. While many extraordinary organisations and individuals work tirelessly towards equality, justice, and ensuring that all people can fulfil their potential through development work across the world, our mission is slightly different. At the DLTLF, we are working to build an ecosystem, in which the capabilities for reconciling, repairing damage, and reimagining new ways of being together are built and demonstrated. Our ultimate work is to create the conditions for inspiring new social change to emerge.

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