

There was this Goat

Investigating the Truth Commission Testimony
of Notrose Nobomvu Konile

Antjie Krog ~ Nosisi Mpolweni ~ Kopano Ratele

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Introduction

She lifts her hand to take the oath before the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. 'So help me God.' The date is 23 April 1996.

Although it is only the second day of the second week of Truth Commission human rights violation hearings, this woman is already, in a manner of speaking, falling through the cracks of the day's overwhelming traumas and competing dramas that are playing themselves out in front of, and inside, the Commission. On this day she is the fourth mother to testify about an incident that has become known as the Gugulethu Seven killings.

Of all the Gugulethu mothers she is presented without a first name. She is simply Mrs Konile. Thinner and much darker of skin than the others, dressed in clothes that are visibly less expensive, she looks as if she could disappear at any moment among the other victims and survivors with their accompanying briefers, the hustle and bustle of Truth Commission staff, journalists and audience. Speaking fast, her teeth at times flashing in her dark face, sometimes holding a big white handkerchief over much of her face, she testifies about the death of her son, Zabonke.

The oath is led by Alex Boraine, and although Commissioner Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela later carefully tries to press for more clarity in the testimony, most of Mrs Konile's interpreted English, in comparison to the other mothers, seems incoherent.

An interested listener might have wanted to go back to her testimony, but his specific day, like every day of the first round of Truth Commission hearings, was crammed with powerful testimonies and incidents. In addition to the vivid testimonies of the other mothers of the Gugulethu Seven, Mrs Nonzwakazi Eleanor Juqu described how, after having waited the whole night for her fifteen-year-old son, Fuzile, to come home, she started walking, beside herself, in the direction in which he was said to have disappeared, simply shouting his name into the wind:

He loved me very much. I knew that everyday when I come from work he was going to meet me halfway . . . [After two days when my husband came back with my son's clothes, when I saw his shirt, I have never seen a shirt like that with so many holes as if rats were eating on it.

Joan King testified how she decided to save the R1,00 in her purse for bread, instead of buying the day's newspaper. That evening her family brought her the same newspaper to her – it had her husband's picture (Henry Kwisimba) on the front page describing his death.

Ms Quay described how, after shooting the fifteen-year-old Sonny Boy Zantsi in her back yard, a policeman was dragging him by the legs: ' . . . we saw him – we saw him digging up the hole for the brains of this other boy'.

After the emotional breakdown of Archbishop Desmond Tutu during the first week of hearings, this day also saw Commissioner Mary Burton breaking down as she was describing the abnormal society the majority of South Africans had to live under:

. . . When your children were late home, you knew right away that there was a real problem. And you knew the places you had to go looking for them. One of the things that we hope for in the future is that we can create the kind of society where, when your 15-year-old children come home late, you know why it is, they are with friends and not in danger.

It was also on this day that most of the evidence about the feared policeman, who named himself Rambo Barnard, came to light. A phrase here, another description there, painted a man who preferred to enter the township in his own red Valiant, leading the Casspirs into killing sprees, red bandanna around

his head, 'speaking Xhosa like a Xhosa'. He was also present at the killing of the Gugulethu Seven.

Another feared security policeman, Gideon Nieuwoudt, appeared in the testimony of Tango Lamani who vividly explained how Nieuwoudt created the impression that Zenzile May, an important role player in the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), was a police informer:

[A]s they were sitting down Nieuwoudt had a packet of cigarettes in his shirt in his front pocket . . . So he took out this packet of cigarettes and this small pieces of papers then he put them on the floor.

. . . So they stayed there for a period of about 20–30 minutes. You know just talking nonsense. And after some time they said okay they are leaving now, as they were leaving so Nieuwoudt bent down to pick up the packet of cigarettes and the small pieces of papers. I was standing across him on the other side.

So as he was picking up this packet of cigarettes and this small bits of papers he left one piece of paper on the floor. He took all the others and the packet of cigarette and he put them back in his shirt pocket . . . Then there were this small piece of paper he left there. At that stage I couldn't say, sorry lieutenant, you've left that piece of paper there I couldn't do that because I was also interested, and we were all interested – interested to see what's in the paper you know.

. . . we said okay good bye, whatever, then they left. After they left . . . we jumped for that piece of paper and when we got this piece of paper, it was a receipt.

And the receipt had a name there Zenzile May, and on the amount side there was an amount of R500,00 or R600,00 . . . and some signature at the bottom. And many of us were present in the house we were mainly executive members of COSAS. And immediately this created an impression, it implied that Zenzile was a paid police informer . . .

[T]here were those . . . who believed that Gideon Nieuwoudt deliberately left this note to create a confusion and the impression that Zenzile May is a paid police informer. And there were those of our members of the executive who believed that, it was so fortunate for us to bump into this kind of information.

It was among these vivid and visceral testimonies that shocked, connected with and created empathy within a wider South African audience, that Mrs Konile seemed to have disappeared. On the website of the Truth Commission later, there was no trace of her name in the index. Under the heading of the Gugulethu Seven incident, her surname was given incorrectly as 'Khonele'. Mrs Konile's real name is Notrose Nobomvu Konile, but even in her official identity document, as she pointed out many years later, her second name was given incorrectly as Nobovu.

'So what?' you might well ask. Why is it important to try to understand this unmentioned, incorrectly ID-ed, misspelt, incoherently testifying, translated and carelessly transcribed woman? In the pages that follow, we have tried to give our reasons.

I

One thousand rand for every dead body

The Gugulethu Seven incident was one of the better known killings in the Western Cape, which was probably the reason why it was chosen as part of the very first Truth Commission hearings in Cape Town. An estimated 30 000 people attended the funeral of these young comrades in the mid-1980s, which underlined the perception that the tide against the apartheid system could no longer be stemmed. The Gugulethu Seven killings 'showcased' like few others the fatal mix in the townships of poverty, anger, unemployment, dreams of taking up arms, change and liberation – all fuelled and manipulated by operations of the police and security forces.

Volume Three of the final Truth Commission report describes events as follows:

Around 07h30 on 3 March 1986, seven young men were shot dead at the corner of Gugulethu's NY 1 and NY 111 and in an adjoining field. They were Mr Mandla Simon Mxinwa (23), Mr Zandisile Zenith Mjobo (21), Mr Zola Alfred Swelani (22), Mr Godfrey Jabulani Miya, Mr Christopher Piet (23), Mr Themba Mlifi (30), and Mr Zabonke John Konile. All seven were shot in the head, in addition to numerous other gunshot wounds. Police officers at the scene were Warrant Officers Barnard and McMaster, Majors Johan Kleyn, Dolf Odendal and Stephanus Brits,

Captain Charles Brazzelle, Sergeants John Sterrenberg, Andre Grobbelaar [*sic*] and Riaan Bellingan, and Constable Thapelo Mbelo.

The police claimed that the deceased were known terrorists who had been killed during a legitimate anti-terrorist operation. Security forces had allegedly acted pre-emptively to prevent these terrorists from attacking a police bus ferrying senior policeman to the nearby Gugulethu Police Station that morning.

The 'Gugulethu Seven' were the subject of an inquest in 1986, a trial in 1987 and a re-opened inquest in 1989. Forensic pathologist Dr David Klatzow seriously challenged the evidence of the police, demonstrating unequivocally that the victims were shot at very close range. In the case of Mr Mandla Simon Mxinwa, Klatzow's evidence was that shotgun cartridge wads were found inside the skull of the deceased, indicating that he had been shot at point-blank range. The medico-legal post mortems stated further all the deceased sustained multiple and extensive gunshot wounds; Mr Christopher 'Rasta' Piet sustained twelve bullet wounds in the head. The outcome of both inquests was a finding by the Wynberg magistrate, Mr Hoffmann, that the seven men had died during a legitimate anti-terrorist operation.

Cape Times journalists Tony Weaver and Chris Bateman published an eyewitness account indicating that the police had shot the victims at close range and that police had shot a man as he was attempting to give himself up. Further eyewitnesses reported seeing a white man shooting a man in the head while he was lying motionless on the ground. Weaver was charged with printing untruths about actions of the SAP [*South African Police*] and was acquitted. These accounts, together with Dr Klatzow's evidence and allegations by the parents of the deceased that weapons had been planted on the victims, provided the first serious counterpoint to the official version. The post mortem photographs, photographs of the deceased as found at the scene, photographs of Sergeant Sterrenberg posing over a body and of a policeman stepping against the head of a deceased in the mortuary, combined with the celebratory atmosphere of police after the event as captured on the police video of the scene, also raised questions about the attitudes of the police toward victims. The truth remained buried for a decade until

the Commission's investigation revealed an extensive cover-up by the security forces involved in this incident, even at parliamentary level.

A dramatic escalation in armed attacks by MK [*Umkhonto we Sizwe* – the military wing of the African National Congress] operatives in the mid-1980s led General Griebenouw of the Western Cape security police to call Brigadier Schoon at the Security Branch headquarters in Pretoria and request the assistance of Vlakplaas. Vlakplaas commander Eugene de Kock evaluated the request and chose Bellingan to lead a team of operatives. Other members were a black security policeman known as Thapelo Johannes Mbelo, white Vlakplaas operative Joe Coetzer and several Vlakplaas *askaris* [*former guerrillas recruited by the security forces*], including Mr Gladstone Moss, Mr Eric 'Shakes' Maluleke and Mr Jimmy Mbane.

In early January 1986 they drove to Cape Town in three vehicles including a minibus modified to conceal weapons and explosives. They were based at Koeberg and briefed by members of the security branch. After a failed attempt to infiltrate Mbelo into a group in Gugulethu, Mbane and Maluleke were sent in. They were given weapons and grenades and went to [*the*] home of squatter leader Yamile claiming to be commanders from exile. They opened a concealed panel in the minibus, showing their weapons. Yamile believed the *askaris* and introduced them to Christopher 'Rasta' Piet. They soon had the core of the group which became known as the Gugulethu Seven.

The *askaris* started by fixing Christopher Piet's faulty AK-47, then got the youths to write their biographies, as was standard practice in the liberation movements. Mbane claims that he handed these biographies to Bellingan and the latter conceded at his amnesty hearing that this may have been so. Mbane and Maluleke were reporting to Bellingan and Liebenberg on a regular basis and informed both Bellingan and Liebenberg that these were merely youths, not hardened 'terrorists'. Mbane said he specifically informed them that 'Rasta' Piet was the only one among them with any training. Mbane was tasked to train the youths and gave them basic training in military combat over two months while Eric Maluleke provided political education.

When their training was complete the youths, together with the *askaris*, planned an attack on a police bus which took senior policemen to Gugulethu police station every morning. This plan was reported to both Liebenberg and Bellingan by Jimmy Mbane. Bellingan has admitted that Mbane pointed out the location for the proposed attack.

Senior officers met the night before the incident, and more than twenty-five heavily armed policemen were deployed after a briefing at Wingfield Naval Base at 03h00 on 3 March. They were aware that two *askaris* would be part of the group of 'comrades'. The entire area was encircled and saturated by police from 05h00.

Just after 07h25, Jimmy Mbane, driving a stolen bakery van, began dropping off the seven youths at the site. A grenade was allegedly thrown and the deployed policemen started firing from all sides in a small area of combat. It is alleged that the only one who had time to fire back was Christopher Piet.

The two *askaris* who had set up the ambush were able to escape and were later rewarded with seven thousand rands each – one thousand rand for every victim. In a process presided over by former Minister of Law and Order Adriaan Vlok, security police headquarters used the video of the incident to get Cabinet to increase the Vlakplaas budget.

THE OUTLINE OF EVENTS REPRESENTS ASPECTS OF THE COMMISSION'S INVESTIGATION INTO THE GUGULETHU SEVEN INCIDENT. WILHELM RIAAN 'BALLETTJIES' BELLINGAN, THAPELO MBELO AND XOLA FRANK 'JIMMY' MBANE APPLIED FOR AMNESTY FOR THE KILLINGS.



Despite the complexity of the case, the Gugulethu Seven incident not only made headlines for the Truth Commission hearings on that day in April 1996, but it subsequently became the focus of two highly acclaimed documentaries. *The Gugulethu Seven* by Lindy Wilson follows the Truth Commission's investigation into the case until its breakthrough into the previously unknown Vlakplaas connection. This documentary was one of only a handful made by South Africans during the lifespan of the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission. In the prize-winning documentary *Long Night's Journey into Day*, by Frances Reid and Deborah Hoffmann from the United States of America, the Gugulethu Seven forms one of the four cases the filmmakers explored. The documentary ends with the reconciliation scene between Thapelo Mbelo and the Gugulethu mothers.

The Truth Commission itself uses the words of the mothers in its report when it refers to reconciliation. In his critique, Alejandro Castillejo-Cuellar has pointed out how little effect, in terms of the production of knowledge, the testimonies of the Gugulethu mothers had on the final report. He says their testimonies became 'plotted into the Commission's historical narrative, where the testimonies were either exiled from the findings or strategically used as a moral bedrock or emblem'.

What contributed even further to the visual prominence of the case was old South African Broadcasting (SABC) news footage. After some guns and hand-grenades had been planted on the seven young people, the police had the SABC on standby to record the final scene of the incident entailing the use of a rope to pull the corpses around from a safe distance in case a hand-grenade exploded. This footage was shown on the seven o'clock news on the day of the killings and played a substantial role in the testimony of the majority of mothers. Cynthia Ngewu, Irene Mxinwa and Eunice Thembisa Miya all recalled the devastation this news bulletin caused in their lives, and it seemed that, despite the fact that some of them had already identified their sons' bodies in the mortuary, it was the news bulletin that brought the real horror home as to what was happening to them.

In a very powerful testimony Eunice Thembisa Miya described how she first heard about the killings:

[A]round half past ten my boss Ms Van Horvet ... came to me and she said Eunice, I looked at her, I said madam in response.

I just heard from the news that in Gugulethu there are – there are Russians in Gugulethu who have been killed. ... [A]nd then [s]he said is your son involved in politics, I said no, I don't have ... a son involved in politics.

[Later, at home w]e switched on the TV for the news ...

When the music started for the news, then in the news I was told that there are this seven children who were killed by the Guerillas from Russia. And one of the children was shown . . . He was facing upwards and there was a gun on his chest and now we could see another one and the second one only to find that it's my son Jabulani.

We were arguing myself and my daughter, she said it's him, I said no it can't be him, I just saw him this morning, it can't be him. I can – I can still remember what he wore this morning. He had navy pants and [a] green jacket and a warm – and a warm woollen hat. I prayed I said oh! no Lord, I wish – I wish this news can just rewind. Why is it just him, why were the others not shown why is it just him.

This pleading of Mrs Miya for the news to 'rewind', gave rise to a piece of music called 'Rewind: A Cantate based on TRC testimonies' composed by Philip Miller and performed for the first time in St George's Cathedral on Reconciliation Day, 16 December 2006.

Both Mrs Ngewu and Mrs Miya were traumatised by the use of the ropes to pull the bodies around. They regarded it as the ultimate evidence that white people so despised black people that they could only touch a black body via a rope and therefore could also pull it around as if it was not a person but an animal. Mrs Ngewu asked:

[W]hy would they drag my son, was he a dog?

Were their hands better than mine, better than my son's[?] Were their hands so clean that they couldn't even touch my son, why did they have to drag him?

Mrs Miya expressed it like this:

What makes me to cry now is that these policeman they were treating people like animals, that's what makes me cry right now.

But even a dog, you don't kill it like that. You even think that the owner of this dog loves it, even an ant a small ant you think you have feelings even for an ant. But now our own children, they were not even taken as ants, if I say they are treated like dogs are, that's not how it happened, I am actually honouring them they were treated like ants.

Another important factor that kept the Gugulethu Seven in the public mind, was Mrs Ngewu's remarks on reconciliation. Initially, at the first hearing, Mrs Ngewu said:

During that time when all these happened, I was too weak. What I – what I knew is that I didn't want to see any white man in front of me, because I was – I was full of hatred at that time because of the way my son was – was killed.

Her sense of what should happen to the perpetrators on that day was equally succinct:

I personally feel what the Commission can do for me is that these people should be brought to justice. The whole nation must see these people and they must say why they shot our children, they must account for the death of our children . . .

Some time later, at a Truth Commission public meeting, a member of the TRC Human Rights Violations Committee, Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, asked Mrs Ngewu for her view on the position of '[m]any people in this country' who would prefer perpetrators to receive lengthy prison sentences. Mrs Ngewu responded:

I do not agree with this view. We do not want to see people suffer in the same way that we did suffer. We do not want to return the suffering that was imposed upon us. So I do not agree with that view at all. We would like to see peace in this country . . . I think that all South Africans should be committed to the idea of re-accepting these people back into the community. We do not want to return the evil that perpetrators committed to the nation. We want to demonstrate humaneness towards them, so that they in turn may restore their own humanity.

At this same event Mrs Ngewu responded in Xhosa during a radio interview. Her words were translated as:

This thing called reconciliation . . . if I am understanding it correctly . . . if it means this perpetrator, this man who has killed Christopher Piet, if it means he becomes human again, this man, so that I, so that all of us, get our humanity back . . . then I agree, then I support it all.

In the documentary *Long Night's Journey into Day*, the viewer is taken into the room where one of the perpetrators, Thapelo Mbelo, asks forgiveness of the mothers. The meeting started off with immense hostility. The mothers not only asked questions, but looked at and spoke to Mbelo with open disgust. It was again Mrs Ngewu who brought a turn to the event when she said that he was the same age as her murdered son. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela analysed the event:

'It is as if you are my son – you are the same age as my son,' says Cynthia Ngewu in welcoming Mbelo and opening the door for him to re-enter the moral realm of humanity. The point where she is able to match part of her son's identity with that of the man who murdered him is the high point for Mbelo, for he needed her forgiveness to cleanse him of the blood on his hands and to make him human again.

A Google search of 'Cynthia Ngewu' in August 2008 produced 406 entries and, although some of them make us seriously wonder about the origin of the items, there is no doubt that Mrs Ngewu has, since the Truth Commission hearings, become one of the key formulators of perceptions on forgiveness and reconciliation.



So it is within this cluster of finely articulated, convention-challenging and visceral voices, that Mrs Konile had to make her contribution. First, Commissioner Alex Boraine assisted the Gugulethu mothers to take the oath and then led them into testimony. After Mrs Cynthia Ngewu, Mrs Irene Mxinwa and Mrs Eunice Thembisa Miya had testified, Boraine turned to Mrs Konile. What follows is the 'official' testimony as found on the Truth Commission website:

DR BORAINÉ: Hello Ms Khonele [sic], can you hear me all right?

MS KHONELE: Yes I can hear you.

DR BORAINÉ: Tell us where you come from, where you've been about your family before you tell what happened in 1986.

MS KHONELE: I am Ms Khonele from [indistinct] I have three children the fourth one who was shot, they are all daughters, they are all married. The one I was living with was my son, because I didn't have a husband, he was the one who left us, he passed away quite early. I was living with my son, just the two of us.

When he came to Cape Town we were going to be given sites here in Cape Town, but he decided no we must come to Cape Town. Now – or he wanted to come here because he wanted to join his brother-in-law. We were told to go and register – to go and register all our sons, because as woman we were not allowed to have sites on our own. So he said to me I am going to work here in Cape Town, because he knew that we are going through a miserable life, he thought okay the best thing is to go to my brother-in-law in Cape Town.

Indeed he went, I heard this from his brother-in-law that yes he is working, he use to usually give me a little of what he was working for. And yes I got myself a site. People's names were being called, but mine was not one of those during that process. During that process Peza [sic] arrived, we were on our way to get pensions, if I am not mistaken it was on a Thursday, I was on my way out. Peza said to me no here he is, quickly I was scarred.

But I never thought that because Peza was usually coming to Cape Town I am not – I don't even know Cape Town and now we went on to the pensions. We went and came back from getting our pensions. I said oh! I had a very – a very scary period, there was this – this was this goat looking up, this one next to me said oh! having a dream like that with a goat looking up is a very bad dream.

When we saw on TV – I am sorry Peza came in, I was very scared when I saw Peza and I said Peza what is it that you have to tell me. Say to me now – say it – say it now, Peza said he asked me where is Zabonke,

I said he is in Cape Town. Then he said I am here I am sent by the comrade in Cape Town the ANC.

So I asked where is that, he said among – among the shacks. I asked what happened, he told me that my son has been shot. He said let's go now, I am here to fetch you. Your son before he left, he said your name. He said because he has this shack which is his place now, he said that seeing that he left his own mother without any place, his mother must be brought into shack.

This place – this new place that he got because he is a comrade. So I asked to Peza, I asked to Peza – Peza what is a comrade. I said do you know this place that you taking me to, he said yes I know this place I am taking it – I am taking you to it. These – these are the houses belonging to the comrades, Peza didn't tell me that he is taking me to a mortuary. He just said to me – told me that he is taking me to places of the comrades.

When we left, I didn't even know what Cape Town was and I didn't even know what a town looked like. He took me to Cape Town. When he would hold my hand, I would just shiver, my whole body would just shiver. He took me to the hospital he spoke English for a long time, and I was taken, I was getting tablets and I was getting an injection. He was told that to leave me alone for a while, well I stayed there just for while.

Then I started to sweat, well I was starting now to be conscious, I wasn't sure whether I lost consciousness, I don't know when I lost consciousness. I wasn't alone we were, I was with other woman. We [*indistinct*] Cape Town I wasn't even shown what was going on. When I got there, there were lots of comrades all – it was woman and men. And young men and boys, Peza – okay Peza had dropped me at this place.

Then I was told that your son Zabonke has been killed, there were seven. I was told that they were in a certain forest, him and somebody else. Him and someone else were asking for forgiveness, they held their hands up asking for forgiveness. I asked them where is he now, where is this new home that he has. So they took me to his place, that is now where – where I saw the mattress.

When I saw him, I had this vision – after I was told and I regained my consciousness, I remember people were praying there. A Kombi arrived,

people asked if I had arrived already and they were told yes I have. We were four mothers, then we were told to go to the mortuary. We all left for the mortuary and now my – my grandson was at work. I was asked who will accompany to the mortuary.

Now these men, these men in the mortuary says he will – one of them will accompany me. When we got there – when they opened the door I felt this cold breeze that's when I lost my consciousness. Then they took me to some place that I don't know, they took me some pills and they asked me do you still want to back there. I said yes I do, so I went and I saw him.

When I looked at him, his body, I couldn't see his body. I didn't want to look at his body. One of his eyes was out, there was just blood all over. He was swollen, his whole head was swollen. I could only identify his legs, because they were just thrown all over the place, one of his eyes was out. His whole head was swollen.

What I can only remember now are his feet, I could only identify his feet, that's how I could see my son. They asked if I am satisfied, I said yes I am. And in the morning, in the morning we were told that these children should be buried now because after all – after all these dogs have been dead for a long time.

So this – the comrades went I don't know where they went, they came back they said you don't have to bury him whenever – when somebody else says you must bury him, bury him when you want. So we decided we will bury him on Saturday. We went to fetch him at the mortuary. Zabonke was the first one, they were arranged according to the – to their lengths.

Zabonke was the first one because he was the tallest. He stood out of everyone else. Now I – what I don't know was he was already working or he had stopped working by the time he died. Okay we chose the boxes of our children, we could see the *boers* had – somewhere at the back there, on the gravel road.

The youth – the youth just was scattered all over the – all over. The youth now was throwing stones to the police, we were left on the gravesides with the priests and the youth were throwing stones to the police. After that now we went back – the funeral was a big-big occasion.

I wanted to go back with my son – the *boers* told me that you can never go back [*indistinct*] these *boers* have already communicated with the other *boers* at [*indistinct*]. They said that my son has a bomb, they said he will never – that's how I gave up. So now this comrade said okay he will be buried where he was shot, that is what I know about my son. I don't know all the other details that's all I know.

After that I was so miserable. I had no where to go, I wanted that house, that shack, it was very difficult. Something told me to go and pick up coals, it was on a Thursday. I was knocked down by a rock, and this big rock hit me on my waist. I tried to move so that I can get some air, it was at eleven at that time, but they could only get me out of that rock around 5pm.

When I woke up, I felt like I was just getting out of bed. And there was a continuous cry that I could hear. It felt like I was going down – down – down. When I looked, I was wet – wet – wet – I was wet all over the place. I asked for water, they said no we don't have water. I said – I was talking to one of the women who was with me. I said please – please urinate on a plate so that I can drink, she did and I – then regained consciousness, I woke up.

When I was awake they put me into a van and I was taken to hospital. The doctors said to me I must just go away, I must go back under those rocks where I was before, I am no-one – I am nothing, what is ANC, what is ANC.

He said this woman's son is the one who was – who appeared on TV. You must be aware that I didn't even see my son on TV, I don't even have a TV, I still – I didn't have it then. Somebody pleaded with the doctor and then they admitted me. On Christmas I spent my Christmas in the hospital, I even spent New Year in the hospital, two months there. My children were trying to fend for themselves while I was – while I was in hospital.

It's very difficult in the township if you have no-one to take you. And now I haven't left out anything, I have said anything – everything right now.

While Mrs Ngewu was very precise in what she wanted to hear from the perpetrators and what she wanted to be done in the name of justice, Mrs Konile simply said:

I wouldn't be able to talk to them, it is their fault that now I am in this misery, now I wouldn't know what to do them – to do with them. I wouldn't know, I would never be able to say what – I can never tell them what to do, I've just given up everything, I don't know. I don't know anything. I will be just – be grateful if I can just get anything, but I personally cannot do anything.

2

A possible white conversation

It is said that we *tell* stories so that we do not die of truth. But we also tell stories to know who we are and to make sense of the world. We constitute our social identities through narrative and, although life is much more than stories, stories also try to create order in the chaos of our lives. Stories in their widest sense can be used to bring order, or tell about chaos.

We *listen* to one another's stories so that we share carrying the truth. But we also listen to stories in order to become, for one brief moment, somebody else, to be somewhere we've not been before. We listen to stories in order to be changed. At the end of the story we do not want to be the same person as the one who started listening.

I [*Antjie*] imagine a Toyota bakkie on that endless stretch of road between Colesberg and Beaufort West in April 1996. The only radio station the bakkie can pick up is Radio 2000, with its eight-hour Truth Commission hearings. I imagine two white researchers, returning from a field trip, who have decided to give the 'new' South Africa a chance, listening to the translated testimony of Mrs Konile on the radio. The afternoon sun is behind them, the first autumn chill is in the Karoo air, and I imagine them talking.



FIRST WHITE: You know, we hear these people, but we don't understand them.

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*We have three kinds of people in South Africa: The People, MY people, and these people.*

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SECOND WHITE: Ja, but do they understand us? Every morning when our domestic worker comes into the house I wonder what she thinks about me sitting in front of the computer the whole day. She must be asking herself, 'What on earth can he do on that computer that earns him a house, a car and a life like this, while I, who work very hard the whole day, can't make ends meet?'

FIRST WHITE: I know, I know! But remember, working in your house she knows you better than you think. While I, as a white person who grew up under apartheid, do not know black people. I hear and understand their political aspirations, but I don't really know on a personal level the ways in which they are just like me and not like me.

SECOND WHITE: Of course! How can you, we, us, 'know' black people? We are still living very much apart and mainly access one another's being through the media, radio phone-ins or literature. But even that doesn't help: the majority of journalists are white; the majority of literature in South Africa is written by white people and hardly any of these writers speak an African language. So you're right, it's a problem: how do white people 'hear' black people? But then again, do black people *care* to be heard by whites?

FIRST WHITE: That is *their* problem. My problem is that I have to share a country and live my daily life among black people – I need to understand them like I understand myself. That's why I was pleased that the Truth Commission hearings were open to the public, translated into English. For

the first time I, as a white South African, could access some of the deepest thoughts, traumatising events and personal experiences of black South Africans in their own words – people could express themselves fully. Frantz Fanon said, 'Mastery of language affords remarkable power'. But listening now to this Mrs Konile, I am left with a feeling that no, I am *not* like her! Even more serious, I don't want to share a country with this kind of 'blackness'. To tell you the truth, there is a kind of callousness, a non-logic, a superstitious senseless world in her testimony that I really want to flee from.

SECOND WHITE: But you need to take into consideration that she, like the other women, was traumatised and in pain. And that one of the things that physical pain does is first monopolise and then destroy all language. Mrs Konile *could* not speak!

FIRST WHITE: That's precisely where my problem lies. If I accept that Mrs Konile's testimony was indeed stripped of effective language and what she was narrating was not learned or manipulated, but her authentic, damaged and vulnerable self, then I find her testimony frightening in its confirmation of every stereotype I have of blacks.

SECOND WHITE: Like what?

FIRST WHITE: Like her sense of space. In her testimony she seemed to have no clue where she was, physically or mentally. One moment she was registering for a site in Cape Town. The next she said something about not knowing what Cape Town was. One moment she was seeing a goat, the next she was fainting in a mortuary. One moment she was at the funeral, the next she was lying under a rock.

Was she fainting, dreaming or unconscious, or was this her life? It is as if in her brain she has no structure to cohere her life. She was simply hurtling from one incident to the next without the psychological ability to form a skeleton or an outline to which she could attach the muscles of her life. It is not possible to live a planned life in a country where people have no sense of structure or consequence!

SECOND WHITE: But you know that people living in the townships often do not regard themselves as part of the city or town. So it might be that Mrs Konile felt herself to be 'outside' Cape Town.

FIRST WHITE: The confusion was much more than that. She said something about they 'came' to Cape Town and then shortly after they found work they decided to come to Cape Town. And then suddenly that garbled sentence about not even knowing Cape Town. And then later on someone called Pheza asked her where is Zabolke, and she said 'in Cape Town', but then asked 'where is that'? To crown it all she said she was pinned down by a huge rock while digging for coal. You couldn't dig for coal anywhere in Cape Town, and the only place a rock could pin you down is maybe on Table Mountain.

SECOND WHITE: Don't forget there also might be translation problems from the original Xhosa. But I want to know more about what stereotype about black people you are talking about.

FIRST WHITE: That black people and black women, in particular, do not have the capacity to think three-dimensionally. That is the reason why – and forgive me for saying this, but it was the way things were explained to me when I was growing up – they often break things or cannot drive a car well, or step in front of cars, or crash into driveways, or put bedspreads, duvets and embroidered cloths upside down.

When this statement about white people's perception of black people's grasp on three dimensions was vehemently denied by a white colleague, I [Antjie] phoned a cousin. The conversation went like this:

Antjie: Can black people think three-dimensionally?

Cousin: No, definitely not.

Antjie: Can you give me an example?

[Long pause.]

Cousin: I can't immediately give you one, but we all know they can't.

SECOND WHITE: Remember that one of the attributes of pain is that to have pain is to have certainty; to *hear* about pain is to have doubt.

FIRST WHITE: Ja, I'm in doubt. I find myself wanting to use phrases like 'her so-called pain', 'her so-called trauma'. I mean, this was her big moment. She sat before a mighty Commission. Thousands if not millions of people have just listened to her, even two white oles in a bakkie. She could have talked about her son's death by apartheid and have demanded justice. She could have described a brave activist.

But what did she do? She talked mostly about herself and the bizarre things that happened to her, which had nothing, absolutely *nothing*, to do with gross human rights violations as far as I can tell.

SECOND WHITE: I think you misunderstand. When intense pain begins, it is something separate, but as the suffering continues, it begins to eliminate everything. In other words, there is nothing left of yourself.

FIRST WHITE: I know that theory, but it deals with physical pain during torture.

SECOND WHITE: I think Mrs Konile's trauma manifested itself as a physical affliction and it exhausted and displaced everything in her life. I think pain had become the single omnipresent fact of her existence.

FIRST WHITE: The only part where I find myself able to hear her was when she talked about her son's body – the swollen body, the swollen head, the removed eye, the unharmed feet. A few sentences, but that was it! This was what she had to say about her son. The moment he was buried, she stopped talking about him – the rest of the time she talked about herself, lurching from one far-fetched situation to the next. Of all the testimony and questions, such a short time was spent on her son, on Zabolke.

SECOND WHITE: You are again ignoring the issue. She says that when she looked at his body, she 'couldn't see' his body. Maybe pain had destroyed her ability to see.

FIRST WHITE: She was the only mother to give such gory detail. The other mothers talked about the kind gestures of their sons, their last words, the clothes they were wearing and the things they did around the house. Mrs Konile had none of this, as if she had no real relationship with her son. Worse than that, she seems not even to realise that it was not a relationship.

Her story is supposed to impact on my relationship with her so that I can start living a caring and empathetic life in this country. But how am I ever to become a participant in her testimony? I feel like it's my duty to listen to her but how can I be taught by her? By this garbled narration? I *want* to be taught by her, because this will help me to see her and others as human beings and stop us from hurting each other. But how do I do this?

SECOND WHITE: Apparently, as you come to know a survivor of trauma, you really come to know yourself, and that in itself is not a simple task. Perhaps you are busy forestalling the impact of 'hearing' Mrs Konile by becoming obsessed with the facts – it's often a strategy, you know, interrogate the facts to circumvent the experience of you really listening.

FIRST WHITE: I am trying to say that because of my past as a white person, because of the way narration within and about this country was and still is structured, I simply cannot hear Mrs Konile. Why, for example, did she have absolutely no clue what the ANC was? In the mid-1980s, in one of the most politicised townships in South Africa, her son was killed for trying to become an MK soldier, and she asks, 'What is a comrade?' She talks about 'comrade ANC'. I thought maybe it was a form of irony, but her last comment on the ANC sounded absolutely desolate when she said that the doctors told her to go away, to go back under the rocks and then, 'I am no one – I am nothing. What is ANC? What is ANC?'

Testimonies are not monologues! They do not take place in solitude. The witnesses are talking to somebody. Must I conclude that Mrs Konile was not, and never will be, speaking to me? That my thoughts that she personifies the

stereotype of dull-witted black women who want to have sons for the sole reason that these sons should look after them when they are old, should never be formulated openly, especially by a white person?

SECOND WHITE: You could argue that she was specifically talking to the commissioners of the Truth Commission and was desperately trying to 're-externalise' what happened to her. The killing of her child took place outside the parameters of her 'normal' reality, and whatever that is, you and I, Alex Boraine and Mary Burton, had a harder time establishing it than, say, Desmond Tutu and Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela.

But we can assume that, for Mrs Konile, the event had no beginning and no end, and nothing to link it to her personal experience and comprehension. The death of her son had no conclusion and as far as she was concerned, continues into the present and is current in every respect. Now, through her testimony, she literally had to transfer this event to another person outside herself; she had to transmit her story and bring it into a kind of coherence through the use of language, making it part of the parameters of her reality, before she could take it back inside again in a reasonably contained and hopefully stable entity. So, in fact, it had nothing to do with you, she was trying to start a process of healing.

FIRST WHITE: I disagree. She told her story in public. The public is still dominated by the white ear. What is more, I as part of the white ear, am implicated in her trauma and black people are very much part of my being and future. I find it crucial for me to understand Mrs Konile. I thought that the public narration of trauma could form a bridge between our disparate historical experiences, because with the testimony of the other three mothers, I was there! I felt that through my empathy and careful listening I could form a kind of cross-cultural solidarity that could enable us to create a new community. But Mrs Konile's story was just one big barrier! She made it impossible for me to hear her as a fellow human being.

SECOND WHITE: Although Mrs Konile seemed to me like a solitary figure thrown around in an incoherent and cruel landscape, her testimony was indeed problematic even for a possible reading as a counter-narrative to the

main racist narrative of the apartheid government. But it isn't clear whether she was reverting back to, as you suggest, stereotype or was she unconsciously exposing the Truth Commission's counter-narrative to the apartheid narrative as a new master narrative? Or was she merely an exception not to be bothered about?

FIRST WHITE: My problem is that deep down I know that I have to learn to live as an unimportant and powerless person within a large black community. I am willing, until I hear a story like Mrs Konile's, and then everything in me says that it's futile. Rather create your own enclave! Emigrate! Ensnore yourself with money! Globalise!



At the Truth Commission hearings Mrs Konile was constituting an identity for herself at that moment in that particular context. But she was not the only one who was narrating. Everyone who listened to her was interpreting her narrative – literally, the official interpreter, and, figuratively, the Commission and the audience – and drawing conclusions about her and 'those like her'. While listening, people were also reformulating their own identities in response to her. Listening to Mrs Konile's testimony or, subsequently, reading it on the Internet, you could start relocating yourself within other broader public narratives, while re-adapting smaller personal narratives to empathise with her – all the time being aware that no one is a static entity with a fixed core.

Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub suggest that

[t]he task of testimony is to impart . . . knowledge: a first-hand, carnal knowledge of victimization, of what it means to be 'from here' . . . a firsthand knowledge of a historical passage through death, and of the way life will forever be inhabited by that passage and by that death; knowledge of the way in which 'this history concerns us all'.

Mrs Konile's testimony was clearly a first-hand knowledge of something; but of what? When we listen to or read the translation of her testimony, we

are left with a number of questions. Are the goat and the rock two images that enable Mrs Konile to bring the unconscious to the conscious? There is no evidence of sighs, crying, stuttering or inarticulate sounds in the transcription of her testimony. Did she cry and, if so, where? How well was the translation done? Even more pertinent, understanding so little of what she was saying, dare we discuss her testimony using the same theories and categories identified in severely tortured people and traumatised Holocaust victims?



As my colleagues and I [Antjie] started to discuss these various theories, we made interesting discoveries, but at the same time felt that they did not really bring us closer to a better understanding of Mrs Konile.

3

A possible black conversation

Among the many conversations about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that still swirl around in South African society, perhaps there has been a conversation like this one. Perhaps there has not been simply one but a series of conversations from which I [*Kopano*] can sieve and construct a conversation such as the one that I imagine taking place. Conversations between friends or acquaintances unafraid to speak earnestly with one another – now with rage, then with laughter, now exaggeration, then vulnerability. Conversations that were, are, to be heard all over the land were we to be listening – in kitchens and after lectures, at funerals and weddings, in living rooms and restaurants.



FIRST BLACK: As a black person, I found it quite confusing to read the testimony of Mrs K. There are parts of what she said that just did not make sense – that were even downright unbelievable. I felt myself cringing, thinking about how white people would be thinking about us given what she said. Do you think she was telling the truth and nothing but the truth? Like when she said this Pheza said to her that before he died her son, Zabonke, said because he had the shack in Cape Town and seeing that he had left his

own mother without any place, she must be brought to Cape Town to take over the shack? I am unable to believe that. Do you?

SECOND BLACK: Do I? Do not get me started. It's all bogus. The whole Truth Commission was one phoney hula-hoop show. You know it. I know it. All of us know it. It was staged for the world and for whites, not for us, sister. Don't smile as if you have heard it all before. You haven't.

If it was for all of us why did we get no official translation from isiXhosa to Sesotho at the Commission? And did we get any from Setswana to Tshivenda? Capital NO. Was there even anything from Afrikaans to isiZulu, the home language of most people in this country? Anything? No. Not A. Word. What does that say to you?

It says to me that the entire thing was mostly for the benefit of whites. And for English-speaking South Africa, a linguistic, political and economic class of interests which brought together one section of the former oppressors and the new ruling elite.

FIRST BLACK: So the Truth Commission was a conspiracy among the white and black elite! Lately blacks like seeing conspiracies all over the place. You can't be serious.

SECOND BLACK: There doesn't have to have been any conspiracy to appreciate why the Truth Commission failed to satisfy the hunger for justice of many indigenous people of this country. What went wrong with the Truth Commission and what's going wrong with this country right now? Nothing was hidden.

If the Truth Commission had been centred in the fibre of pain and anger, not the former oppressors' fears and avoidance tactics, it would have been very different. Many incidents from the Truth Commission are illustrative of this. Recall, for instance, the interaction between Commissioner Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela and Ms Nomakula Evelyn Zweni during Ms Zweni's testimony in Cape Town on Day 1 of the hearings on 22 August 1996; and that between Advocate Dumisa Ntsebeza and Mr and Mrs Juqu on 23 August. I like what Ntsebeza and Gobodo-Madikizela were trying to do there and elsewhere, switching between languages, like when Gobodo-Madikizela said

to Zweni that she did not need headphones because 'the two of us are going to understand each other'. And then saying she also needed to talk to the others, in the audience and on the podium, in English because she wanted them to understand the story fully.

Now if only that same effort were put in by all the others we would have a little less gripe about the hegemony of English; if only a little more courtesy was extended by all to all, we would know that everyone is really interested in reconciliation.

FIRST BLACK: Okay, maybe the language issues could have been treated differently. But Mrs K spoke in her own language. She was confusing in her own language.

SECOND BLACK: Exactly my point. She spoke in her language, but what you read are not her words but a translation of what she said. Language is not a by-the-way issue here. Neither is it a side issue in any communication. Language is not simply a tool that is transparent and through which feelings and ideas and truths pass unchanged. Language changes reality; it constructs what counts as effective or failed communication, what is true, what we see and fail to see, our identities, the universe itself. Language shapes us and our world. That's what you have to understand even before you start talking of the Truth Commission or of Zabonke's ma.

FIRST BLACK: Reality may be culturally constructed, but I don't subscribe to the notion that truth is relative in this case. Either Mrs K's son said there was a shack which his mother was to inherit or he did not. How can he have said that in his dying moments? There is also the confusion or lies about places and events and experiences. She told the Commission that a big rock hit her on her waist at 11 a.m. and they could only get her from under the rock after 5 p.m., and then when she woke up she felt like she was just getting out of bed. And there was a continuous cry that she could hear, and she felt like she was going down, and when she looked she was wet all over the place. You can't say this makes sense, however much you defend and love black people.

SECOND BLACK: Anyone who knows anything about the constructive powers of language, let alone about the nature of how we talk, will tell you that truth is disputed territory and so we, as a people, are wary of approaching truth blindly, unguardedly. Give a moment's thought to what you are saying about believability – that for a long time under apartheid truth could get you to *hangman* [*to be hanged*], to be murdered by the regime or sent to jail for a very long time; just look at the cases of Steve Bantubonke Biko and Nelson Mandela. To fully appreciate our words you have to understand a whole history of fear, hiding, running, evading, and still trying to maintain a sense of dignity and a life worth something.

To truly hear Mrs K's truth, and the truth of most of the black people who testified at the Truth Commission hearings, you have to work hard to understand it, you have to gain our trust. It's not going to be given to you just like that, because you may turn and use it against us, as happened many, many times under apartheid. Don't you know that? I think most of us know it. And most of those who went to the Truth Commission knew that before they arrived, or soon realised that the truth and reconciliation in the Commission were sham performances. Yet we tried to play along, knowing that playing along does not mean that the stakes were not high, but we failed to change things fundamentally.

FIRST BLACK: Come on, I know nothing of the sort. The point is that some of the things Mrs K said don't help in educating whites about us, or even me about her. Maybe you don't like it, but we need to educate whites about how to live with blacks and blacks how to live with whites. If we don't do it, who is going to? The fact is, Mrs K was part of a project of compromises we had to make, which if we hadn't made, would have seen this whole place go up in flames.

SECOND BLACK: The aim of this project was to show how reasonable we are – we can handle our anger; we sure are civilised. No *sisi*, we were just the entertainment before dinner. It was not about us. Even if somebody could convince me it was about us, it would be hard to persuade me it was truly *for* us. No, it was not about our pain, not about how we could really overcome the brutal history of the white racist regime.

FIRST BLACK: What is wrong with being reasonable? And it's not true, we were not mere entertainment. That is a cynical view to take of the efforts of people like Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission *was* our thing. We all put forward some of the best of our people to guide us through what is tough terrain. There were many fine people – Reverend Khoza Mgojo, Advocate Denzil Potgieter, Dr Alex Boraine, Yasmin Sooka and Mary Burton, as well as the political heads and others who put forward and accepted to have a Truth Commission. These folks believed, as I do, that the Truth Commission was a project for all our good.

SECOND BLACK: You don't understand. Why should it always be the indigenous people who have to reconcile and teach whites about the pain that apartheid inflicted on us? Tell me why? It's not as if the stuff isn't in books! Apartheid hurt, sister. It still does. Sometimes its memory still hurts badly – makes you want to kill. And then the Truth Commission says you have to tell the truth and all will be well. Damn lies! White people are not interested in understanding anything if it does not serve to maintain their privileges, *suster* [*sister*].

FIRST BLACK: Look, you can't be serious. No, you can't. Of course not all white people are the same, just like all black people aren't the same. There were white commissioners at the Truth Commission – I just mentioned Alex Boraine and Mary Burton. They are white people aren't they? There have been white and Jewish liberation fighters who fought on the side of black people.

SECOND BLACK: The exceptions underline the rule: white people will always make conclusions about black people that serve their white interests. 'Black women don't make sense' they say, when they mean, we wish everybody spoke Afrikaans or English like us. Or, 'Black men are always *toy-toying*', when there are so many exploitative practices and racism is so rife in institutions that it's a daily miracle the country is not ungovernable. Or, 'They don't understand that change takes time and they make too many demands', or, 'There is a shortage of skills in the country', when they mean

there are not enough white people or white-sounding people or black people that they don't feel threatened by to give jobs to.

'Black people this' and 'Black people that' – on and on. I don't see white people making fine differentiations about us. Why should we treat whites as individuals when they treat us as a group?

FIRST BLACK: That may be true to a certain extent, but it doesn't mean we have to imitate the prejudices some white people have about us.

SECOND BLACK: Some white people? There you go again. White people in general are racially prejudiced against blacks. At best most whites would be happy if all blacks vanished from South Africa.

FIRST BLACK: Maybe many whites do feel this way, but that still doesn't mean there aren't white people who are ordinary and well-meaning and want to learn.

SECOND BLACK: You are contradicting yourself, *sisi*: you can't be well-meaning and want to learn. For people to wish to learn they must experience a gap between their world and the world out there. In South Africa, whites are still way too comfortable in their whiteness to want to learn anything about the pain the white regime inflicted on black lives in the name of whites. Not only will whites not learn that someone like Mrs Konile was deeply affected by the brutal murder of her child, they have not forgiven black people for the end of sweet apartheid.

FIRST BLACK: You are exaggerating as usual. Most white mothers can understand the pain of a mother who loses a son in the prime of his life. You can't understand it because you are not a mother, but women all over the world who are mothers and love their children can understand that pain.

SECOND BLACK: Well, yes, I might not know how mothers feel on losing their children, but I know white callousness when I see white security policemen dragging young black men with ropes; when they burn their bodies; when they have braais while carrying bruised bodies and corpses in

their cars. That tells you of the depravity of white society, because those who did these things were the very people who were supposed to protect whiteness and uphold white privilege.

FIRST BLACK: Then you should see that there is a need to show white people that something went wrong in the way they saw themselves.

SECOND BLACK: The burden to change is again shoved onto us, onto the indigenous people. Why can't white people educate other whites to change their stereotypes? You can't win with whites, because in the final analysis, if it is not in white interest, it is not of interest. You shouldn't try so hard, madam.

FIRST BLACK: If we stop trying, we are headed for another bruising. You always tell me about the healing place that black people – no, the Indigenous People – have to get to. That we need to forgive ourselves before we are truly free. We are not out of the woods yet, which is why we need to keep working at building our communities and society.

SECOND BLACK: My heart has changed. Forgive ourselves? Hmmp! Forgive ourselves for what? We need to kick some white arse!

FIRST BLACK: I have changed too. I think you were onto something. I now understand. We must forgive ourselves for not being what we could have been, were it not for a past that we couldn't prevent happening. Forgive ourselves for colonialism. For apartheid. We, and the Gugulethu mothers, and all the mothers and fathers and daughters and sons, we should let go of our hurt because we could not prevent such inhumanity from happening. We should learn from it and grow from it. Whatever you think, Mrs Konile and the mothers from Gugulethu can learn from what happened to their sons. And if they do, they can learn to forgive themselves for not protecting their children. For not staying the hands of the killers.

SECOND BLACK: Maybe.

FIRST BLACK: I am not done yet. We must forgive ourselves for not becoming what we dreamt we could be and for our failure to live up to the pressure of properly defending our families, our communities, even our country and continent. And more, we also have to forgive ourselves for failing ourselves.

SECOND BLACK: Damn. You are on fire! And I am burning up. I am listening, but only with one ear, and it won't be for too long. So, to indulge you, how do we forgive ourselves?

FIRST BLACK: I thought you were the critically conscious one, the son of the soil? When last did you read Du Bois and Biko? Or Fanon? Or Mandela? But there is this guy, Kraybill, I think, who I may be bastardising. He says that reconciliation happens in the form of a cycle and is an ongoing process, not something that erases the past. To be able to reconcile, people and groups have to go through this cycle. First there's a redefinition. We redefine ourselves, start calling ourselves African, or black and gifted and funny and all that. Like Mbeki did with his 'I am an African' speech and the whole African renaissance project.

SECOND BLACK: Okay. And after that?

FIRST BLACK: Then, after that, second, we undertake an act of trust. We show we trust each other. This is what has been happening since about 1990. Our people ran the elections and they are running the country.

SECOND BLACK: *Running the country!* Have you read the newspapers lately?

FIRST BLACK: Yes, of course, we are now living with all manner of negative politicking, with accusations and corruption scandals, as well as purgings and counter-accusations flying all over. But since Mandela was released, we have been engaged in a process of relearning to trust each other, to accept that we are fine people, haven't we? That we are capable.

Running South Africa from day to day is our biggest act of learning to trust and to *be*. *Kaka* [*shit*] will happen from time to time. But we must go back to the beginning of the cycle. Learn to care for ourselves and others.

Or the *poo-poo* will turn into a gush of blood and *trane* [*tears*]. And then we will need another Truth Commission.

SECOND BLACK: Okay, I am still mad at the Truth Commission and what we got from it. But my heart has not changed completely. I agree with some of what you are saying, I do. We need to forgive ourselves, but only because we will not get any meaningful request for forgiveness from our former oppressors and exploiters. The only lasting meaning to be got from our oppression is how to be free. Mrs Konile and the Gugulethu mothers, the Cradock parents and children, the people in Sharpeville and Soweto and Langa, and all over this land, we all need to have a different Commission, one that will be about our *anger*. And our internal reconciliation. And our hopes. Ja, that's what we need.



I suspect that there have been many such conversations. A few of these may have found public airing in some form, articulated in different ways in scholarly papers, newspapers, on television and radio. But most of the feelings, ideas and perceptions that prompted the carving of a South African space where truth could be told and heard, and reconciliation helped along, never went beyond the small groups – the many two- and threesomes and intimate gatherings – that discussed the Truth Commission. In addition, there are many other conversations, thoughts and emotions that remain unexpressed, which I suspect continue to feed into the interracial misunderstandings, fears, suspicions and hatred that simmer below the many skins of South Africa.

4

The goat

During the two years of weekly Truth Commission hearings that followed Mrs Komile's testimony, her narrative stayed with Antjie as one of the most incoherent testimonies she had had to report on as a journalist.



I remember thinking that if I did a normal reporting job of Mrs Komile's narrative on radio, it would only strengthen the racist views that the Truth Commission was so successfully deconstructing and removing. At the same time, I suspected that her testimony was important, precisely because it was different from the others, and considered the possibility that, perhaps, you needed other tools to make sense of it. I wondered whether clarification could be found in the original Xhosa, or was everything that she said actually an indication of deeper psychological problems; were the puzzling aspects purely cultural, or was she mentally disturbed, or was it that I still had some vestiges of racism in me? Was she perhaps as clear as a bell to black people? I felt that I had reached a dead end.

Despite having access to all the knowledge in the world on trauma and testimony – an area extremely well developed after the Second World War by haunting content, insight and dedication – to 'understand' Mrs

Konile's testimony, I initially felt reluctant to use these theories. Because how do I use them without riding roughshod over her 'strangeness', or without usurping her 'Otherness' via all the studies of Otherness, without interpolating what I, with my background and history, wanted to hear, without assuming that, if you work on it, whiteness could be well-informed neutrality. I felt I had to be careful.



When Antjie was appointed at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), she asked Nosisi Mpolweni, from the Xhosa Department, and Kopano Ratele, from the Psychology Department and Women and Gender Studies, to join her in a reading of Mrs Konile's testimony. She presented the possible conversation between two white people (see Chapter 2) to explain the problems that Mrs Konile's testimony poses for people brought up and educated within a racist system and ideology. Nosisi and Kopano became interested in Mrs Konile's testimony and soon the three met weekly around the testimony, becoming a team with its own constantly changing dynamics and progress.



From this point onwards, the journey will be made mostly by 'we'. At times the three of us would make contributions as individuals, but the bulk of this book was built up over two years of weekly conversations, readings, discussions, writing together, presenting and talking.

Apartheid and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

South Africa gave the world the word 'apartheid' – declared by the United Nations as a crime against humanity. Although different kinds of discrimination and exploitation had existed since the first Westerners set foot in southern Africa, the National Party that came to power in 1948 turned it into a vicious legal system in which an individual's civil and political rights were determined by skin colour.

The early legislation passed by the newly elected National Party in 1948 demonstrates how the state took control of people's lives. Every aspect of political, economic, cultural, sporting and social life was segregated, using what had become the bedrock of the apartheid state, namely, the Population Registration Act of 1950. This law provided for the classification of every South African into one of four racial categories. The Group Areas Act (1950) demarcated urban areas into zones for exclusive occupation by designated racial groups. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949) and the Immorality Amendment Act (1950) prescribed who you could marry and who you could have sexual relations with, while the Separate Amenities Act (1953) determined where the activities of the different groups should take place. The Suppression of Communism Act (1950) effectively outlawed opposition, while the Bantu Education Act (1953) laid the basis for a separate and inferior education system for African pupils.

Apartheid, in the words of the Truth Commission's final report, brought about a

social engineering project of awesome dimensions through which ... the inherited rural and urban social fabric of South Africa was torn asunder and recreated in the image of a series of racist utopias. In the process ... millions of black people and a handful of mainly poor whites were shunted around like pawns on a chessboard. Forced to relocate to places that often existed only on the drawing boards of the architects of apartheid, entire communities were simply wiped out. These included urban suburbs and rural villages, traditional communities and homelands, schools, churches and above all people. Sometimes the demolition was total ... These [deeds] may not have been 'gross' as defined by the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] Act, but they were, nonetheless, an assault on the rights and dignities of millions of South Africans ... Amongst [apartheid's] many crimes, perhaps its greatest was the power to humiliate, to denigrate and to remove the self-confidence, self-esteem and dignity of its millions of victims.

In the year after South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, parliament's Justice Portfolio Committee drafted legislation to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The seventeen-member Commission was given

the task of establishing as complete a picture as possible of the causes, nature and extent of the gross human rights violations committed in the period between 1 March 1960 and the cut-off date of 10 May 1994, by conducting investigations and holding hearings. It also had to grant amnesty to people who made full disclosures of all the facts relating to those violations committed with a political objective. In addition, the Commission was required to restore the human and civil dignity of victims by recommending reparation measures. The Commission had to compile a report of its findings and activities and recommend measures to prevent future violations of human rights.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission consisted of three committees. The first of these was the Human Rights Violation Committee, which had to look into the accounts of victims, such as Mrs Konile, through hearings and investigations. The second was the Amnesty Committee, which evaluated amnesty applications, such as those from the men who killed the Gugulethu Seven. The third committee was the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee. This committee formulated a reparation policy, which in the end recommended that reparation be paid to Mrs Konile.

The first hearings were held in April 1996 in the Eastern Cape where most of the harshest human rights abuses took place over the years. The second hearing took place in Cape Town. That was the hearing at which Mrs Konile testified about the killing of her son, Zabonke John Konile, one of the seven men killed in the Gugulethu Seven incident, as it came to be known.

Three other mothers also came to testify: Cynthia Ngewu (mother of Christopher Piet), Irene Mxinwa (mother of Mandla Simon Mxinwa), and Eunice Thembisa Miya (mother of Godfrey Jabulani Miya). (Apart from misspelling Miya, the transcript also mistakenly changed Mrs Miya's surname into Thembiso, despite the fact that she introduced herself as Eunice Thembisa Mia [or *Miya*]).

The families of Themba Mlifi and Zandisile Zenith Mjobo and Zola Alfred Swelani could not be traced.

How do we hear one another?

How do we 'hear' one another in a country where the past is still so present among us? How much of what we hear can we translate into finding ways of

living together? How do we overcome a divided past in such a way that 'The Other' becomes 'us'?

To identify some of the stumbling blocks towards understanding one another in a society with a divisive history, we embarked on an effort to hear as clearly as possible one single incident in a single testimony among the many delivered to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission between 1996 and 1998. As we progressed on our project, we became aware of the barriers we have to overcome, as well as the lengths we have to go to, in order to arrive at some understanding of our fellow human beings.

We realised acutely the need to make use of indigenous languages and knowledge systems to access greater understanding and respect for one another. Bit by bit we learned how to better 'hear' one another from different cultures and personal backgrounds. We talked, read, listened, disagreed and journeyed together. We are not there yet, but something important was happening. We found, unexpectedly, that our working method became not only learning but a source of enrichment and friendship.



The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission is often discussed as a possible 'model' of how societies can deal with their pasts, but we need to bear in mind that frequently there are testimonies that do not fit the general framework. It is important to reread these 'non-fitting' testimonies in particular ways, in order to arrive at a fuller knowledge of who we are as individuals. Only then can we begin to say that we know one another.

In the South African context it has become crucial to look critically at the way in which research into the Truth Commission's testimonies has been (and is being) done. The majority of research has been approached from a particular point of view that potentially excludes factors that are pertinent to our African context.

At the risk of oversimplifying, and in the face of the centuries-old entanglement of Europe with Africa, as well as taking into account globalisation, shifting identities and notions of hybridisation, we feel that there is still value in speaking about 'Eurocentric' or 'Western' and 'Afrocentric' or 'Africentric' culture.

Talking about Mrs Konile as if her rootedness in Xhosa culture were irrelevant would be unhelpful when trying to understand her. The entangled African identity of Mrs Konile is not the same as the entangled identity of a woman living in Sweden. They are, quite simply, not similar, globalised, rootless individuals.

Johan Degenaar formulated the difference between Eurocentric and Afrocentric cultures as follows. Eurocentric culture is based on 25 centuries of Greek culture (philosophy), Roman culture (jurisprudence) and Judeo-Christian cultures (religion). It places high priority on individuality and reason and is inclined to presuppose that European values can be applied universally. The tension between the particular and the universal is assumed to be dissolved, since the particular is supposed to be universal.

Afrocentric culture, by contrast, reflects the cultural values, symbolic forms and achievements of Africa, which claim recognition and respect for being the cradle of humankind – both physically and spiritually. With its rich source of oral and other literature, indigenous artworks, plurality of religions and languages, Afrocentric culture places the emphasis on communality and a view of a human being, which presupposes interpersonal relationships as expressed in '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*', meaning, a person is a person through other persons.

Our working method

Our method of working was as important as what we found. We first discussed the official version of Mrs Konile's testimony on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission website, and all three of us found it largely incoherent and incomprehensible. Among the possible explanations were faulty translation or an unintelligible witness, which in turn opened up another set of questions. Was Mrs Konile unintelligible because she was traumatised or because she simply did not understand what had happened and what was happening around her?

We ordered the cassette with the original Xhosa version from the South African National Archives and used our different disciplines, backgrounds, cultures and languages to gradually devise a way to 'hear' Mrs Konile. Nosisi transcribed Mrs Konile's original Xhosa testimony, joining a group of students under Zannie Bock at UWC who were the first to transcribe Xhosa testimonies in full.

Then Nosisi and Kopano retranslated Mrs Konile's testimony into English. It soon became evident that incomprehension had been created at different stages of the process towards an official version. There were ordinary interpretation mistakes and transcription mistakes, as well as a third category that we called 'cultural untransferables' – in other words, cultural codes and references that did not survive the interpretation process. The process we engaged in was rather like an archaeological excavation – every weekly session unearthed a new reality closer and closer to a multifaceted and complex original.

We also complemented one another in unexpected ways. Nosisi was the first to put in long solid hours transcribing and translating. Working right there at the edge where the text was starting to open up, she was the first to identify decisive elements for our research. Nosisi also played an important role in determining and easing our interaction with the Konile family and their original context.

Kopano was the interpreter. With a vast knowledge of contemporary theory on psychology and gender, blackness, the black body, male and female, Fanon, Du Bois and others, he formulated complex positions and interpretations of what we were looking at.

Antjie asked questions – she recorded our discussions, transcribed them, sent them to Nosisi and Kopano and finalised them as texts. And Mrs Konile was a constant presence. She was, in a way, as much an author of the manuscript as any of us.

This final manuscript arose out of four kinds of texts: original primary texts of testimony gathered by the Truth Commission and also by ourselves; texts we wrote personally by ourselves focusing on something particular in our different fields; texts written physically together in the office, with everybody talking and formulating, and with either Kopano or Antjie typing; and, finally, texts made from recorded and transcribed discussions/interviews/conversations/opinions/emails.

In the beginning we found Mrs Konile's testimony so ill-fitting and strange that we assumed it was more of an intuitive and spontaneous expression of her inner self, than a deliberate and conscious construction of a narrative identity. But the more penetrating our analysis into the original Xhosa testimony became, the more we saw that Mrs Konile was not only narrating coherently within particular frameworks, but was also resisting other frameworks from being imposed on her (frameworks that initially we had suspected she wasn't aware of). Many of the discoveries were only uncovered by our study of the original Xhosa version – this strengthened the notion that the meta-codes that could have transmitted her shared reality with many South Africans, were greatly hampered by the different processes her testimony had to live through in order to become an official version, as well as the absence of cultural and psychological contexts.

In a country emerging from a divisive past, some narratives, such as that of Mrs Konile, are likely to reproduce old cultural, racial and geographical divisions. To overcome that, as well as inevitable interpretation and transcription mistakes, there is almost no other way to proceed than by *collaboratively* working within a communally-orientated, human-centred methodology.

By this we mean that every narrative is rooted. In order to really 'hear' a story we have to take its rootedness into account – especially in the light of a divisive past. Understanding the 'ground' from which narratives sprout is sometimes only possible through the input of those who have deep knowledge of this 'ground'. By ignoring the 'ground' of her narrative we would be cutting Mrs Konile from her roots as well as a larger humanity. In other words, we would be trying to interpret her without taking into account all that makes her herself.

As we worked together, we realised that the dominant discourse at the Truth Commission had no way of 'hearing' Mrs Konile. Her narrative defied all the elements that render narratives 'audible' within what we considered to be the dominant discursive framework operative at the hearings. With at least two of us able to traverse culture and language in order to move in and out of both the dominant Western-orientated or Eurocentric discourse and the dominant Indigenous or African-centric discourse, we could 're-code' Mrs Konile from the 'incomprehensible' into a new space that values her resistance to master narratives. This challenged, among other things, cultural and racial stereotypes. It assisted us to come to a radically different interpretation from

that which we initially had. In this way, knowledge of Mrs Konile opened up ways for people emerging from a context of conflict and estrangement to access understanding and respect for one another.

We became deeply influenced in our own 'listening' to one another as cultural psychological work was happening in ourselves too. Mrs Konile had made us hear her, and through her we believe we have started to 'hear' one another.

The 'goat' paragraph in the official version

Initially, we decided to focus on the goat paragraph, and it soon became clear that this formed the key to Mrs Konile's whole story. The preceding paragraph in her official testimony reads:

During that process Peza arrived, we were on our way to get pensions, if I am not mistaken it was on a Thursday, I was on my way out. Peza said to me no here he is, quickly I was scarred.

Without any introduction, Pheza entered Mrs Konile's narrative. In the testimony of one of the other mothers we learned that Pheza was an ANC activist on the Cape Flats. He said to Mrs Konile, 'here he is'. We do not know who the 'he' is or why she was 'scarred'.

But I never thought that because Peza was usually coming to Cape Town I am not – I don't even know Cape Town and now we went on to the pensions. We went and came back from getting our pensions. I said oh! I had a very – a very scary period, there was this – this was this goat looking up, this one next to me said oh! having a dream like that with a goat looking up is a very bad dream.

For the first time in the testimony Mrs Konile locates herself: Cape Town, but that in itself raised a whole lot of spatial questions (see Chapters 2 and 3).

Should the word 'scarred' in the first paragraph not have been 'scared'? Nosisi pointed out that gender is not indicated in Xhosa which lends itself to confusing 'he' with 'she'.

Who went with Mrs Konile to get her pension? Pheza? A friend? Could we assume that she was addressing Pheza when she described a goat looking

up at her? Who or what was this goat? Was it a real goat Mrs Konile saw that day, which she simply made part of her Truth Commission narrative? Was she living in a world where goats and people alternate? Why would 'this one' suggest it was a dream? Was Mrs Konile known for day-dreaming or 'seeing' things? Was she using the goat as a psychological image to enable her to bring the unconscious to the conscious?

Was 'superstition' a word to be used in this context? Or should the goat be regarded in terms of universal symbolism: abundant virility, creative energy, superiority; or in terms of Christian symbolism: the devil, the sinner, the scapegoat?

Mrs Konile mentioned that the goat was 'looking up'. To where? To her? To the sky? Why was 'looking up' bad?

Exploring the original Xhosa testimony

After I [*Nosisi*] had read Mrs Konile's official English version and listened to the cassette of Mrs Konile's original Xhosa testimony, I realised that there were some gaps. Some of the reasons for the gaps could be attributed to the difficulty or challenges of simultaneous interpreting, but others seemed to be more problematic. An interpreter has a daunting task. He or she has to listen to the speaker, internalise what the speaker says and only then is he or she able to give an interpretation. The complexity of the work of an interpreter should not be underestimated because he or she has to restructure what the speaker says in a way that carries meaning to the audience.

In highlighting the importance of an interpreter, Claudia Angelelli has this to say:

The concept of visible interpreters goes beyond the fact that they are active participants in the linguistic interaction. It takes into consideration the power that interpreters possess.

Since it is never possible to recall everything that a speaker has said, a loss of information during interpreting is always inevitable. A similar scenario might have happened during Mrs Konile's testimony. The interpreters were working under great pressure trying to keep up with the relentless pace of the Truth Commission hearings. It is possible that a further loss of information occurred during the transcription and translation of the testimonies.

According to Theo du Plessis and Chriss Wiegand the nature of the testimonies put an additional demand on interpreters, because 'they were heavily laden emotionally'. It is understandable that as human beings, the interpreter and translator were sometimes unconsciously affected or had difficulty in maintaining a professional detachment from what they were hearing. Another obstacle to a good interpretation could be the fact that the techniques applied by the witnesses in presenting their narratives differed from one witness to another. This was an extra burden, because some witnesses provided too much detail, others were not very coherent and still others included explicit references to taboo or crude language.

The challenges mentioned above must have placed an additional responsibility on the translator who, despite all the obstacles, had to produce an account that was communicable and meaningful to the listener, reflecting a picture that was as close as possible to the aspirations and meaning of the witnesses.

Mrs Konile was to form part of what Geoffrey Bennington called the 'narration at the centre of the nation: stories of national origins, myths of founding fathers, genealogies of heroes', all those things providing a country with a history, a boundary and a name. We thought that Mrs Konile was not very successful in steering her story within this 'narrating the nation' context. She tried to tell a personal story, but it seemed to get lost among nightmares, seeing goats, being pinned down by a rock and collapsing.

If Mrs Konile's narrative sounded incoherent, as indicated earlier, could this be the result of some information that got lost in the process of translation? Or was it because the context in which she delivered her narrative did not fit in with or was outside the framework of the three other mothers?

And if information was indeed 'lost', how did this influence intercultural communication between Mrs Konile and the Truth Commission officials, on the one hand, and the audience and other possible readers, on the other? I wanted to determine whether or not knowledge of an indigenous context would lead to a fuller interpretation, which would do justice to the person who had testified.

The surprise

Mrs Konile's official version on the Truth Commission website starts as follows:

I am Ms Khonele from [*indistinct*] I have three children ...

What was indicated by '[*indistinct*]'? The Truth Commission hearing was held in Cape Town, the Gugulethu Seven incident happened in Cape Town and all the other mothers who testified, lived in Cape Town. Mrs Konile herself mentioned Cape Town repeatedly in her testimony, so we all assumed that she was also from Cape Town. We assumed that the '[*indistinct*]' referred to Cape Town.

But the rock incident was incomprehensible within a Cape Town context. There is no coal-digging activity in and around the city. Was Mrs Konile referring to picking up coal in a coal-yard? But where would a rock come from to pin her down for five hours?

When I listened to the original Xhosa on the cassette, I picked up that Mrs Konile was pronouncing the Xhosa word for 'mortuary' as '*moshani*' and 'comrade' as '*khombisi*' – a way that was peculiar to a rural environment. I went back to the beginning of the tape and, after listening to it several times, I heard her say:

NdinguMrs Konile eNdwe

[*I am Mrs Konile from Indwe*]

Now, Indwe is a village situated near Queenstown in the Eastern Cape, which is known for its coal-digging activities.

From the videotape on which both the English and Xhosa were audible, I could hear that Mrs Konile's words were correctly interpreted, so it must have been that the Truth Commission transcriber, perhaps not being familiar with this small hamlet near Queenstown, could not distinguish the word and therefore used '[*indistinct*]' in the official website version.

The discovery of the word 'Indwe' was a revelation. It swung the whole testimony from the realm of the incomprehensible to the comprehensible, and was the single biggest contributor to making the testimony coherent. It is an example of how a transcription mistake in the English version could be detected through pronunciation peculiarities in the original sound text. (This was also the case with 'scarred'. The original text made it clear that the word used by Mrs Konile was 'scared', but it must have been misspelt by the transcriber. This underlined the fact that mistakes could happen during the interpretation phase as well as during the transcription phase.)

The revelation of a rural Eastern Cape context radically changed the whole way in which we listened to and approached our analysis of the testimony. As a person living in the rural areas, perhaps Mrs Konile could never be as politically informed about Cape Town politics as her fellow testifiers from Gugulethu, but would be more closely connected to traditional habits. This was evident right through her testimony, not only through her particular pronunciation and expressions, but also through symbols, references and gestures.

The goat incident

Clarity around the goat incident was made possible after I discovered an interpretation mistake. The Xhosa word 'dream' was not interpreted, but the original made it clear that it was not an incident with a goat, but a dream about a goat that Mrs Konile was talking about.

The other three mothers described how they learnt of their sons' deaths through comrades and the television – Mrs Konile started with a dream. A careful reading revealed that this dream is also, in fact, an account of how she learnt of her son's death:

Heyi yhaz' umbilini wam, undiphethe kakubi. Phezolo ndiphuphe kakubi.
[*Hey! You know what, my heart is palpitating with a strange feeling and it persists. Last night, I had a bad dream.*]

Mrs Konile constantly interrupts her testimony by talking to herself in the way that rural storytellers do. Although these references may seem irrelevant, they are the markers that reflect pain and desperation, indicating the extent of loss and distress that she had to go through in the absence of her son.

OFFICIAL VERSION

We went and came back from getting our pensions. I said oh! I had a very – a very scary period, there was this – this was this goat looking up, this one next to me said oh! having a dream like that with a goat looking up is a very bad dream.

Sihambe sibuy' epeyini. Ndithi kulo ndihamba naye, ndithi, 'Heyi yhaz' umbilini wam, undiphethe kakubi. Phezolo ndiphuphe kakubi. Ndiphuphe apha ngasemnyango, kukho ibhokhwe, emileyo, eyenjenje, ehh-emileyo ethe, ahleke athi lo, athi 'Eyil Uphuphe kakubi nyhani.' Ngasemthini!

The retranslation is as follows:

We [Mrs Konile and her friend accompanying her] went and came back from the grants office. I said to her, the one I was going with, I said, 'Heyil You know what, my heart is palpitating with a strange feeling [after having seen Pheza who lives in Cape Town, but is suddenly in Indwe] and it persists. Last night I had a bad dream. I dreamt that here at the door there was a goat that was standing, like this [gesturing], ehh-standing like this' [gesturing with her hands], and my friend laughed and said, 'Eyil You really had a bad dream.' Next to the tree!

Slippages in translation

In the official version, the word 'dream' was missing. Only the words '... a very scary period' appeared and then continued, 'there was this — this was this goat looking up'. There seemed to be no clear connection between the scary period and the goat. The remark of Mrs Konile's friend, 'having a dream like that ... is a very bad dream' confused things even further: was it now a scary period or a bad dream, or was the scary period like a bad dream?

Bringing in the lost information via the original text, allowed for a more conclusive reading. First, Mrs Konile dreamt about the goat. Then, she went with a friend to get a grant. There she saw Pheza, who would tell her in the following few hours about her son's death. The dream of the goat led her to regard Pheza's presence as ominous. As the story unfolded, her foreboding plus the dream seemed to take on greater significance in terms of cultural habits.

Mrs Konile made use of exclamations to express her feelings about the terrible dream, for example, 'Heyi yhaz' umbilini wam, undiphethe kakubi. Phezolo ndiphuphe kakubi.'

As she related her story, she seemed to have a vivid picture of the events, because she even demonstrated how the goat was standing. For example, she said:

... emileyo, eyenjenje, ehh- emileyo ethe ...
[... that was standing, like this, ehh- like this ...]

The way in which the goat was standing seemed to be very strange as we saw how Mrs Konile demonstrated with her hands on the videotape to show that it was standing on its hind legs. In other words, the goat was not looking up, but was standing up. She used repetition in the form of three consecutive synonyms to emphasise the strangeness in the way it was standing namely, 'emileyo', 'eyenjenje' and 'ethe'. Her friend further highlighted the strangeness in the appearance of this goat when she said:

'Eyil Uphuphe kakubi nyhani.'
['Eyil You really had a bad dream.']

The word 'umbilini' in the original Xhosa testimony meant a very strange feeling, that could be read as a kind of foreboding — implying that the goat dream was picking up crucial cultural implications. By omitting these cultural allusions the interpreter removed important information that could be seen as pointers to the tragic death of Mrs Konile's son, Zabonke. She was not only talking about her own personal forebodings, but was trying to express her own pain.

Helen Kelly-Holmes and Christina Schaffner warn that '... translators (and interpreters) have to be aware of the fact that cultures not only express ideas differently, but they also *shape concepts and text differently*'. If we refer to Mrs Konile's testimony, this means that an interpreter who was familiar with her culture, would have understood that the sighs, repetition and exclamations in her speech, conveyed important information about her emotional state. But how were these indicators to be transferred into English and afterwards into written text?

Mrs Konile connected the goat with Pheza who frequently travelled between Cape Town and Indwe. Her own son was at that stage in Cape

Town. She connected the strange feeling with the appearance of Pheza and it seemed to haunt her as she remarked:

Xa ndizawuphuma, ndibon' ukuthi, ath' uPheza, 'Hayi nguye lo'. Ndi-
kuthi dwe ngumbilini ...

[Just when I was on my way out, I was just thinking, I saw Pheza and he
said, 'No, it's this one'. I – my heart just throbbed.]

On their way back from the grants office, they met Pheza for the second time and the strange foreboding persisted. Mrs Konile became increasingly impatient about this:

Xa sithi thu, Tyhini! Nank' uPheza kwakhona. He-e! Yhaz' uba yintoni na
lent' izawuthethwa nguPheza kum.

[Just when we were approaching the houses, would you believe it! here
was Pheza again. Hee! I wonder what is it that Pheza wants to say to
me?]

In the end, she anxiously burst out:

'Yintoni le nt' uzayithetha kum? Yithethe, yithethe ngoku'.

[What is it that you are going to say to me? Say it, say it now.]

Immediately after her remarks, Pheza related the news about the death of her son.

The sequence of forebodings every time Mrs Konile saw Pheza, plus the story of the goat dream, indicated that culturally these incidents were connected for her. Mrs Konile was communicating a message to the Truth Commission audience that effectively said, 'Long before I heard of my child's death, I was already in pain through the premonitions and the bad dream.'

But the interpreter seems to have either missed the cultural codes or was unable to find an effective way to transfer them into English.

Under normal circumstances, a goat in Xhosa culture is associated with ancestral rituals. These rituals are a way of maintaining a bond between people and their ancestors. Some families slaughter a goat when a child is

introduced to the ancestors, while other families use a sheep. The persistent strange feeling and the strange stance of the goat, could be seen as techniques of the ancestors to prepare Mrs Konile emotionally to receive the bad news about her son. Similarly, her concern about the strange feeling would also prepare other Xhosa listeners at the Truth Commission hearings that the goat was foreshadowing her son's death.



The recovery of the words 'Indwe' and 'dream' made it possible to bring a cultural reading to the paragraphs that brought a substantially greater coherence to Mrs Konile's testimony.

The above discussion highlights the fact that the processes of interpreting and translating (and transcribing?) should also be seen as cross-cultural communication. As there were slippages in the interpretation of Mrs Konile's testimony, the valuable information with regard to her feelings and aspirations could not reach many of the Truth Commission officials and the audience. Slippages in translation can lead to misinterpretation and misrepresentation of a testifier, while intimate cultural knowledge can lead to a fuller and more just interpretation of a mother-tongue testimony that could restore the dignity of the testifier.

An African psychological reading

On the eve of the day the news of her son's death was brought to her, Mrs Konile had a dream. In the dream she saw a goat. The animal was in a strange pose and stood under a tree next to her door. A goat in a strange pose next to a door was, to her, construable as an untoward sign. In her testimony, Mrs Konile said that on the day after the night of the dream she felt out of sorts, and it was the dream with which she associates her uneasy feeling.

At the level of deep affect, it was not strange when Mrs Konile said an animal was the sign of what she would learn about the next day. In both her individual conscious and 'cultural unconscious' the goat signalled something. The goat is *not* a goat. Like others in her culture, she perceives the goat in the night-dream to be something else in the daylight.

But the dream also functioned at a much simpler level. The word 'dream' was the vital missing link that could have made Mrs Konile readily intelligible to those who read her archived (English) testimony before we came to work on it.

A single line missing from the official English text ('Last night I had a terrible dream') brought Mrs Konile back from the psycho-pathological wilderness into which a reader of the English text might have cast her. That line, 'Last night I had a terrible dream', makes her psychologically sound and at the same time embeds her culturally.

Even if the words that follow might fail to make her *wholly* imaginable as an adult psychological subject, to the Western observer, these seven English words render her somebody whose story was 'followable'. Mrs Konile had had a dream – a bad, or strange, dream.

A resistant psyche

In identifying and calling the mothers and other family members of the Gugulethu Seven to give testimony, the Truth Commission was looking for a certain kind of story: that of a brutal regime, stoic struggle by the human spirit for truth and freedom, and an eventual triumph over evil. Mrs Konile and the family members of the Gugulethu Seven who testified before the Truth Commission were supposed to show how resilient and, eventually, how forgiving, they were. To a large extent, the Commission had already been given parts of this grand narrative by the other women before it got to Mrs Konile's testimony, but it did not get this kind of narrative from her.

Mrs Konile began her testimony by sighing heavily six times within five rather short sentences (as indicated in the *retranslation* in Chapter 5), as if she were saying, 'I am so tired – I'm tired even before this process, of which I already despair, begins'. While the Truth Commission hearings were meant to deal precisely with 'telling', its cathartic effect and thus forgiveness, the Commissioners appeared unprepared for and uneasy about Mrs Konile – they addressed relatively few questions to her. On the video footage, the discomfort of the other mothers with her testimony is also clearly visible. It was as if her story was resisting the imposed framework of the hearings – as if her mind resisted easy readings. She seemed to say, 'Mine is not part of what you want to hear. I will tell you of my dreams, my miserable life. I want to do my own kind of accounting.'

The realm of dreams

While many people of all colours and nationalities around the world use dreams to help interpret their everyday waking lives, I [*Kopano*] want to suggest that there are many more African people – although certainly not all African people – who use dreams in quite specific, very interesting ways to fashion their existence. In this scheme, dreams are part of the existential 'apparatuses' that many people use to make not just sense of their lives and the lives of others, but actually to go from day to day. Daily life in this cultural framework is replete with the inexplicable and possessed by magic, and dreams are able to explain that which is opaque.

In other words, dreams are used to endure suffering and to read happiness, to interpret losses and accomplishments, to bury the dead and to raise children, as well as to communicate with God and the neighbours.

It was, therefore, a completely ordinary thing for Mrs Konile to come to the Truth Commission hearings and talk about a dream. Despite the fact that it made so much sense, it would be easy for some readers to miss this part of her psychological make-up, which relates to the cause-and-effect relationship of things in her world. If someone does not have this understanding – perhaps because of the missing words in her testimony or because of having little personal regard for 'dreams' – then that person is unlikely to be able to 'hear' and 'see' the world within which Mrs Konile roots herself.

When we recognised the dream – the goat in the dream – and its place in the story, much (but not all) of Mrs Konile's testimony fell into place. The dream of the goat had a central place in Mrs Konile's psyche and her world.

However, without language to access this, when dealing with missing words, someone is unlikely to know the importance of the dream of the goat. In accessing Mrs Konile's testimony in the language, Xhosa, in which she told her story, it became clear that underestimating this fact (of the dream and the linguistic access needed to get to the dream) is likely to contribute to misunderstanding Mrs Konile and her world.

Even the work of renowned Western psychologists such as Carl Jung or Sigmund Freud is of little help here. We need to understand what the dream meant *for* Mrs Konile and her mainly *African* audience. Mrs Konile's culture and worldview originated, accommodated and carried the dream of the goat.

to be regarded as 'familiar', will punish students for not treating them (their teachers) as, to all intents and purposes, strangers.

Given all of this, then, if I talk about African psychology I always feel a bit exotic. The exotica of African psychology is because it feels as if it is not psychology proper. The same applies to sociology and economics. It is as if anything other than Western/European/US American psychology (or sociology or economics) is a flavour, something 'Other' cultures do, not the *real* psychology (or sociology or economics).

In other words, the African psychologist and the African psychology student – like the African economist and sociologist and the economics and sociology students – conduct their work and studies on the horns of a paradox. They either have to disavow their culture and stand a chance of being taken seriously by the world, or they struggle to make the world understand the legitimacy of their culturally embedded worldviews and are always regarded as marginal to the true (Western) science.

In terms of psychology, the definition of its task is to study the individual mind – not the North American or the sub-Saharan African or the Chinese or the German individual mind. Supposedly, an individual is an individual is an individual, and a mind works the same in all cultures and all the worlds. Here then is the problem: how do we study Mrs Konile's so-called incoherence if we assume that there is no difference between her mindset and the mindset of the average North American person?

The cultural idea *motho ke motho ka batho* (a person is made into being a person, by other persons) is seldom fully comprehended. Even African intellectuals, because of the paradox I have alluded to, do not fully comprehend what is carried in that cultural idea. Perhaps Nhlanhla Mkhize is one of the few psychologists who has tried to understand fully the implications of studying the mind from the perspective of this cultural life-constituting idea. Mkhize has been trying to show that if we are unable to understand the self-in-community and the unity-of-the-world, we are likely to misunderstand the individual or mind and the world in which it gets structured and functions. As such, it is precisely because we cannot understand the self-in-community (I am because we are here) and the unity-of-the-world (we are all interconnected, even if we don't always know in what ways exactly) that make a person like Mrs Konile sound incoherent. Indeed, what racism, apartheid

and colonialism did was (and still is) to destroy those specific values, because it is often incomprehensible that a person lives for others. It is very difficult for the Western psyche to accept that others *make* a person. In Western psychology, the individual comes first (a really strange notion, but one which a person has to inhabit to be rich or powerful in our society), and the individual is foremost. The family is constituted by individuals and the world is made up of individual minds.

But what Mrs Konile brought to our attention is the very fact that for some people this idea of 'me-first' does not quite hold – does not hold them together as persons and does not hold their world intact. In fact, it was the other way round: if Mrs Konile, or another person, wanted to perform a ritual within which she slaughtered a goat, she could not simply get up one morning and declare, 'I have had a dream and I am going to buy a goat and offer it as a sacrifice to my ancestors and invite you people'. Instead, she would tell people about the dream. They would help her to decipher it. If she wanted a ritual they would have to agree and find a date suitable for all. Mrs Konile could not simply slaughter a goat and say, 'I have a dead goat; I have my ritual; come and eat'. People would stay away for they would ask themselves: who is this person?

On a deeper philosophical level, I interpret the dream as telling Mrs Konile about her wholeness with others being threatened, because she was not an individual, not in the way it is defined in the dominant frameworks of psychology. Rather, the dream revealed that she was still whole in that she was part of a world where she was in contact with the living and the dead. There was little existential loneliness here. It was only later, on learning of the death of her son, that her wholeness was ruptured, that she felt she was becoming an individual in a terrible way.

Mrs Konile's son's death introduced her to a deep loneliness. She experienced herself as being cut off from the community. She was sighing because she had become an individual through the death of her son – selected as it were to become an individual. She was saying, 'I am suffering, because I have been forced to become an individual. All the other mothers are together there in Gugulethu, they talk and support each other, but I am outside of it all.'

The word 'I' was actually not talking about her real psychological individuality. Mrs Konile was using 'I' as a form of complaint. She was saying,

'I don't want to be "I". I want to be "us", but the killing of my son, made me into an "I". This deed has removed me and I can't get back to where I belong. The last time I was whole, was when the goat spoke to me, since then I have been simply removed, cut off.'

In order to understand Mrs Konile, to arrive at a psychological comprehensibility, our approach needed to be founded on her reality, her notion of her position in a universe of people, animals and things, and her thoughts and feelings on how she related to others and the environment. In other words, meaning systems undergirded the possibility of being understood by others.

Restoring dignity

One of the specific tasks of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was to begin restoring the personal dignity of victims. We try to reconstitute the sensibility of one witness, Mrs Konile, because it seems easy to misrepresent her in ways that perpetuate cultural and racial stereotypes of black rural women in South Africa.

A first step towards the restoration and reconstitution of personal dignity started when people were allowed to testify at the Truth Commission in their mother tongues, thereby drawing on and accessing the dignity and wisdom of their own cultures. These testimonies were simultaneously interpreted, which meant that people's mother tongues were not treated as *culs-de-sac*, but were specifically used to open up hitherto unknown and silent spaces. This simply underscores the importance of the original mother-tongue audio version of the testimonies: all original versions of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission should be transcribed so that researchers do not have to rely solely on the official English translation on the Truth Commission website, but have original versions that could contribute to intercultural knowledge.

Restoration could only begin when the testimonies were 'heard' and 'understood', particularly those that fell outside the 'norm'.

By 'restoring' the official English translation and doing critical qualitative research into Mrs Konile's ontological framework(s), we have come to opposite conclusions from the 'white' reading of Chapter 2.

By analysing Mrs Konile's testimony through the notion of African individuality within community, we have taken a rather radical step. We are

saying that within a post-colonial context a woman might appear either incoherent because of severe suffering, or unintelligible because of oppression – when, in fact, she is neither.

Within Mrs Konile's indigenous framework she was logical and resilient in her knowledge of her loss and its devastating consequences in her life. She was not too devastated to make narrative sense; she was devastated because she intimately understood the devastation that had happened to her. However, the forum she found herself in, and the way the official version of her narrative was arrived at, made it very hard for her to convey the depth of this devastation.

5

Mrs Konile's testimony

The testimonies delivered to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were recorded by video camera and onto audio cassettes: one cassette for 'floor sound', one for English, and the rest for whatever other languages were used that day. Verne Harris, a staff member of the Commission working with archival material, said that as the Truth Commission was doing its work, it was engaging archive, rescuing archive, creating archive, refiguring archive. 'It was, profoundly, an archival intervention. A work of memory.'

The Truth Commission recommended that its archive be placed in the custody of the National Archives, but it soon became clear that the institution did not have adequate additional resources to ensure the effective processing of materials. Harris said that although preliminary archival processing of the Truth Commission's electronic records had been done, it remained uncertain as to how comprehensive, comprehensible and readable these records were. Beyond any deliberate bureaucratic barriers, the absence of detailed aids, such as a system of cataloguing, to find Mrs Konile's testimony made public access to the archive problematic.

Soon it was rumoured that only the English cassettes were carefully monitored and accurately marked, and that the person in charge of the recording process would sometimes not notice that some of the other cassettes needed replacing. Somebody swore to have seen the other language cassettes

simply dumped in boxes without any proper marking as to the date or names.

As we were planning to order a cassette of Mrs Konile's Xhosa testimony, we became aware of a fight between the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), which had the contract to record all the proceedings, and the National Archives about which organisation 'owned' the video and audio cassettes. The SABC had the right to keep its award-winning *Special Assignment* programmes, but seemed reluctant to let the rest of the recordings go to National Archives.

Very soon researchers using Truth Commission material began to exchange stories of desperation about their efforts to locate material. The SABC footage was expensive and you had to know someone willing to find the right material for you. The National Archives could be used for free, but invariably the person working with the material was on holiday, or the machine to dub the recording was occupied by government for a week, or the wrong piece was sent, or there were no empty cassettes. We also learnt of serious friction between the understaffed National Archives and the archivists for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission working at the National Archives. It took us several visits to Pretoria, as well as letters and recommendations to the top structure of National Archives, before we finally received the audio-recording in Xhosa with Mrs Konile's testimony – clearly and neatly marked. Nosisi took the recording home and began the work of transcribing and translating.



What I [Nosisi] immediately picked up was the pain in Mrs Konile's voice. Great pain, heavy swallowing and deep sighs. It seemed to me that her throat and chest was both blocked and compressed. She told her story like a rural person with lots of direct speech, hand movements (seen on the videotape) and interrupting herself continuously to follow the flow of her thoughts. She used vocabulary that placed her in a rural area with its own particular dialect and pronunciation.



Mrs Konile's Xhosa testimony

COMMISSIONER ALEX BORAINÉ: Hello Mrs Konile.

PUMLA GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: Ndiyabulisa Nkosikazi Konile. [pause]. Awundiva kakuhle?

BORAINÉ: OK. Fine. Eem, tell us where you . . .

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: Khawus' chazele ke mama ukuba uvela phi na? Us' chazele nje ngentsapho yakho. Us' xelele ukuba, ungubani na? Ngaphambi kokuba usichazele ngale nto ka-1986.

MRS KONILE: [a sigh] NdinguMrs Konile eNdwe. [deep breath]. Abantwana bam bathathu, bebebane ngalo wadutyulwayo. [deep breath]. Ngaman-tombazana, endile onke. [deep breath]. Oyena ke-e mntu bendihlala naye, ibingunyana wam ndingenamntu ke ungutata, utata wabo, wabhubha kuqala. [deep breath]. Ngoku ke, ibingunyana wam ke ngoku besimi kunye, sobabini. Ukuza kwakhe-e apha eKapa [deep breath] kuzawuca-ndwa ngevel' eRhawutini, uyakwakh' eRhawutini. Wafuna ukuza eKapa kuba uSbali wakhe, wentomb' enkulu elaph' eKapa, wafun' ukuz'aph eKapa ke ngoku. Kuthe ke, phantsi kokuba ke kuzawucandwa, kwathwa ke ngoku ke masiyowubhalisa, abantwana-a abangamadoda, asinawukwazi thina uzimela ekucandeni, sicanделwe. Bahambile ke nyhani, sawubhalisa ekhansaleni, sawubabhalisa. Wathi ke yena ke, 'Ndaba yokuba mandihlale apha, ndibe ndiphangela [pause] apha, ndayeka eskolweni, ndabhek' eRhawutini ngenxa yowuqond' uba kuza kuba lusizi, akukho mntu uza kuyimela le yokwakha. Mandibhek' eKapa kuSbali'. Ekunene k' uhambile ke, wabhek' eKapa ke kuSbali wakhe. Ndeva ke ngoku ngoSbali wakhe ukuba, uyaphangela. Wandithumelela ke, obo buncinanana ke baloo mali wayeyisebenza, ndacanda. Kwalile xa kuphakathi koko kucanda, ahamba ama -a- abanye, amagama, ahamba, alaphumi' elam. [Some words not audible in the following sentence.] Kwalile phantsi kokungaphumi kwawo, kuqhubeka njalo, kwafika-a, u-uPheza. Kusakufika' uPheza, sibheka-a, epeyini, loo mini leyo, ub'andiphazami, kwakungoLwesine. Xa ndizawuphuma, ndibon' ukuthi, ath' uPheza, 'Hayi nguye lo'. Ndi-, kuthi dwe ngumbilini, ndinga-a-, ndicinge ke mn'uPheza ngenxeni yentokuba engumntu ohamba aph' eKapa, ntenayi ke nm' andilazi neKapa elo. [deep

breath]. Sihambe, sowupeya, athi, 'Masinyeke'. Ndingazi ke ngoku ukuba, nguyena wuphina ke lo uye kwayo kuba sibabini mos. Sihambe sibuy' epeyini. Ndithi kulo ndihamba naye, ndithi, 'Heyi! Yhaz' umbilini wam, undiphethe kakubi. Phezolo ndiphuphe kakubi. Ndiphuphe apha ngasemnyango, kukho ibhokhwe, emileyo, eyenjenje, ehh- emileyo ethe', ahleke athi lo, athi 'Eyi! Uphuphe kakubi nyhani'. Ngasemthini! Ndibalisele lo ke ngoku ngeli xesh' uPheza sele ezile. Sowufika. Xa sithi thu, Tyhini! Nank' uPheza kwakhona. He-e! Yhaz' uba yintoni na leni' izawuthethwa nguPheza kum. Ndifike, ndingene. Ndale xa ndingena ndibe nomsindo, ndithi, 'Yintoni le n' uzayithetha kum? Yithethe, yithethe ngoku'. Ath' uPheza, 'Hlala phantsi'. Ndithi, 'The-e-tha, ndizawuhlala, the-e-tha'. Ath' uPheza, 'Mnx! Awu- u-u-uZabonke uphi? Ndithi mn'. 'UseKapa'. Athi-i-, 'Ndizokukuxelel' ukuthi, ndithumywe, ngamaKhombres aseKapa'. Phi? eANC. Kuphi? Iphi na le ndawo? I-i-kumatyotyombe, matyotyomb' amatyotyombe, He-e-e, Mnx! Utheni? Udutyulwe. Hamba ngoku, masihambe ngoku. Kuthwa mandize nawe. Unyana wakho uthe xa zavuhamba, wachaza wena, igama lakho kuba uze kuthi, njengoba enale-e, enalo nzi njena, eli tyotyombe akulo, uze njeng' ubunina ebemshiye [*pause*, a *sigh*, *deep breath*, *crying*] engendawo, uze athathwe eziswe apha, kule ndawo ayifumeneyo ngoba eliKhombres. Mnx! Ndibuze ke mna ke kuPheza, 'Yintoni-i, iKhombres?' Ath' uPheza, 'Masambe'. Ndibuz, 'Uyayazi, uyayazi na le ndawo undisa kuyo?' Ath' uPheza, 'Ewe masambe, ndiyayazi, ndikusa ku-u-kwindawo ku-ku- kwizindlu zamaKhombres'. Angatsh' uPheza ukuthi undisa [*pause*] bhathi, angatsh' uPheza ukuthi undisa eMoshani yamaKhombres. Ath' undisa, kwizindlu zamaKhombres. Ndihambe ke. Kwalile ndingazi, kuba kaloku andizazi nezi drophi mna, zange ndililamb' iKapa, ndaqal' ukuyibon' into yaseKapa ngoko. Ndingazi ne-e-dolophi emise kuyo. Andithathe. Aske ath' akundibamba, ndivukuzele ndonke, ndingcangcazele [*crying*] ndingcangcazele ndonk' andibambe, ondingenisa kwenye-e, kwe-kwe- kokwe-esbhedlele. Afik' akhumshe aph' uPheza, athethe na-naba bantu. Ndinikwe ipilisi [*pause*] ndihlatywe inaliti. Ndisawube ndihlatywe le naliti, kuthwe ma-makhe andiyeke unzuzu. Hayi ke, andiyeke. Ndibe ngathi ndiyalal' apha kodwa phofu ndilileli andilalanga. Ndizibone nok' ingathi, se ndibile! Ndizibone nok' ingathi ziyabuya, andizazi nokuba bezimkile na nokuba bezingemkanga, andizazi. Siphinde siqalise sitsale noPheza, size ngeneno. Bakhona ke nabany' oomama apha esihamba nabo. Hayi ke sivityhutyhe ke nantsika ke le Kapa ke ndingayaziyo nokuba

kubhekwa ngaphi na nokuba kuyiwa phi na, nokuba kutheni na. Ondibeka. Safika pha, ndifike amaKhombres ethe gwalakaxa, oomama, ootata, be-e-aba ama-a-a, isifana nesikhwenkwe. [*interruption*, *swallowing saliva*]. Hayi ke ndigxidiswe andis' uPheza, ndixcelelwe ke unyana wam, 'unyana wakho uZabonke udutyulwe, bebesixhenxe'. Endingayaz' ke mna ke, ndingayaz' ke le ndawo ke ngoku ke kuthwe kodwa ke, badutyulelwe, bebeselathini. Yena, be-e-e-babini, njeng' ba bebedutyulwa bebecela ixolo. Bemise isandla bethe [*demonstrating*], becel' uxolo, bemis' izandla zoz' bini bethe [*demonstrating*] becel' uxolo. Elam' end' phendule ngalo ndibuzile ke ngoku uba, 'Uphi na ke? Iphi na le ndlu yakhe?' Ndacima noko ke ngoku ndixcelelwayo. Ndahanjiswa ndasiwa kulaa ndlu yakhe [*pause*]. Kulapho ke, ndathi ndawubon' umatra-a-si [*crying*]. Ndathi ndawubon' umyi-i-nge [*crying*], umyinge wakhe [*crying*], ndanombono [*pause*], ndanombono [*sniffing*]. [*long pause*]. Ndithe ke, neth' ba ndigqitywe k' uwuxelelwa ke, ndawuqabuka ke, kwathandazw' a pha gqithi. Kwathwa ke ngoku ke, kwafika ke ngoku ke i-i-khumpi. Kwabuz' uba ndifikile na, kwathwa ewe. Kwathwa ke ngok' ke njengomaxana singomama, sasingomam' abane. Kwathwa ke masiqabele ke, sibheke ke ngok' ke emoshani. Saqabela ke sahamba sawutsh' emoshani. Waye ke ngoku umyeni wentombi yam ke yena ke enkulu engekho, esemscbenzini. Kwabuzwa ke ngoku ukuba, xa ndisiya phay' emoshani, ndiza kuhamba nabani na ozawuthi ke ngok' abe ngumntu wam? Athi ke la madod' ase-e-e- eMoshani, yathi' enye yathi, 'Ndizawuhamba naye'. Hayi ke sawufika pha. Xa sithi, uba sithi, si-si-siba singena sivul' umnyango, kwaphum' umoy' obandayo, zemk' apho, zemka kuloo moy' ubandayo, zemka ndaphakanyiselwa phezulu. Ndaphinda nawubekwa. Ndaphinda ndathathwa, ndaqabuka ndanikw' ipilisi ndaqabuka ndaphinda, kwabuzw' uba, 'Usafuna na?' Ndathi, 'Ndiyaafuna'. Ndahamba, ndafika ndambona. Ndathi ndamjonga [*pause*]. Umzimba lo, umzimba zange ndiwujonge. Apho ndamjonga khona, imehlho liphumile, i-i-i apha [*demonstrating*], igazi, intoni lomele, wonke udumbe wonke aph' entloko sendi-i sendiya ndimfanekisa phaa, aph' ekunabeni njeng' ba bejulwe bejulwe kwez' nto bajulwe nje bajulwe njee. Imehlho lon' alikho tu. Apha [*pointing*] udumbe ungaka [*demonstrating*], wonke ke apha ngase-e, nge-e ngasezantsi. Into ese ndinomfanekiso wayo kakhulu [*emphasising*], ziinyawo, ukuba nguye lo ke ngoku, ngumntanam. Babuza ke uba ndanelisekile na. Ndathi ndanelisekile. Saphumia sahamba. Xa sifika ke, kwakusa, kwathwa-a, kwafika intokokuba, mabangcwatywe ngoku. 'Mabangcwatywe ngoku, kuba kakad' ez' nto kudala,

ezi zinja kudala zifile. Esuka amaKhombres aya, abuya, abuya sesithi, sek'fakwe neesycile, abuya sesithi, 'Ma-a-zingafakw' iiseyile. Ngcwabani ngel' xesha nifunukungcwaba ngalo.' Kwathwa ke ngoku ke, kwangcwatywa ngoMgqibelo. NgoLwesihlanu sathathwa, iibhoksi seziseMoshani. E-e-e, ekaZabonke yayisekuqaleni, iibhoksi. Eyowulandela njengokuba besixhenxe, zazilandelelana ngobude babo. Yena uZabonke wayemde njengalo mntana wakhe uba emde. Wayemde yen' cnehambo, ephumi! apha kwabanye. Naxana wayesebenza, wayesebenza apha ecingweni yena, ngela xesha k' ebephangela. Ndingamazi ke noba ebeyekile na ke ngoku, or ebengayekanga na, andazi ke. Ngoku ke saboniswa ke, sazikhetha iibhoksi, sa-a, kwala ngoMgqibelo, kwange-e-, ngoMgqibelo say' eyemalindini. Kulapho ke ngok' k' emalindini, amaBhulu ke mna ke ndiwaz uwabona nangaya, kukho indaw' e-e-eluhlalutye ethe [*demonstrating*] phay' empampirini. Aqalis' amaBhulu. Lesuk' ulutsha olu lonke, hayi ke kwangusadalala ke phay' ethafeni. Kwangusadalala phay' ethafeni, ulutsha, lugibisel' amanye. Sashiyeka thina aph' emangcwabeni, naba badala, nabafundisi, nababa-a, neMoshani, sashiyeka nayo aph' emangcwabeni. Siphumile sahamba sizezo ntsalu, sesingasaphelelanga ngangokwehlobo loba umfihlo ihlobo owawumkhulu ngalo. Eneke-e-, unyana lo wam ndandifuna ukugoduka naye. Athi amaBhulu, akanawuze abambe, abhek' eNdwe. Kwaye kusitsho naseNdwe, sebenxibelelene nawaseNdwe amaBhulu, ethethi' intenye, kuthwa yena uneebhomba, 'Ngezahamb' apha' atsh' amaBhul' athi, 'Ngeke!' Kwabe ke ngoku ndiyancama. [*with emphasis*] Aye ke ngok' amaKhombreds esithi nawo, kuyafunek' ukuba mabangwcatyelwe kule ndawo badutyulelwe kuyo. Nalo ke elam ulwazi ke, ngomntanam kuba ndandingekho. Int' endingenawuyazi kukuthi yayitheni na, yayitheni na. Andiyazi olwam ulwazi lulwelo nje qha, lokoku lok'sokola oko ke k'ba ndashiyeka ndinjalo. Mven' kokok' ba ndigodukile, a-ndi-akukho cebo, ndiyay' funa la ndlu, ela bala. Ndadedisw' umva, Eyl! Ak'senzima, z'yahamb' iintanga zam noonyana bazo [*pause*]. Ndemka, kwakh' int' ethi makhe ndihambe ndiyowuchola. Ndenyuka ndahamba ndawuchol' amalable. Ndabethwa loo mini, kwakungoLwesine. Ndabethwa ilitye, wabuy' umgodi. Kancinci, okokuba, mawungandigqumeleli. Wahlal' es' nqeni, ndavela, ndavela kwel'cala, uk'ba umoya lo mawundifumane. Ndabethwa, ngoleveni, ndakukhutshwa-a-a . . . ngo-o-o- fo emaxesheni. [*crying*]. Ndathi xa ndi-i-qabukayo ndivuka, ndangathi ndingumntu nje-e, o-o-ohl'ebhedini. Kukho ke isikhalw' esitshoy' esithi, 'Yho-o-o! Yho-o-o!' Sangathi sitsho ke aph' ezindlebeni. 'Yho-o-o! Yho-o-o!' Ndath' uwuqabuka

kwam, ndangathi ndiyehla, ndangathi ndiyehla, ndangathi ndiyehla. Kwangathi kuphum'ums' obomvu. Ndajonga, ndathi ndawujonga, ndajonga ndimanzi, ndimanzi ndimanzi, ndimanzi, ndimanzi. Ndimanzi ndonke. Ndaf-ndaf-ukuqabuka kwan ndacel' amanzi. Ndathi mabandiph' amanzi, kwathw' akekhw' amanzi. Ndathi mna, 'Tsho kweny' inkosikazi endikunye nayo apha nakula madoda-a-a.' Nda-ndathi kwamna, ndathi, 'Chama ndisele, uchamel' epleyitini le sikhupha ngay' amalable'. Ndasela, ndaqabu-u-u-ka. [*pause, crying, deep sigh*]. Ndaqabuka, ndathi ndawuqabuka, ndaxhonyw' evenini ndahamba ndawulalisw' esibhedlele. Xa ndifik' esibhedlele ndagxothwa ngugqirha. Wath' ugqirha, 'Mandihambel' [*with emphasis*], ndiye phants' -kwamatye kulaa ndawo bendikuyo. Bendingengom-(ntu) yanto kakade, 'Yintoni iANC? Yinton' uANC? Unyana wakhe ngulo wayevel' ezithivini, 'unyana wakho, ngu-yilent' yayivel' ezthiveni'. Ndithi ke mna ke, 'Zange ndibone nezo thivi kuba ndandingenayo nalo thivi, kub'andinayo nangoku'. Nda-a-phiinda ndacengelwa ke, ndaphinda ndathathwa, ndalal' apli esbhedlele. IKrimesi yalala-a, ndayi-i-, iKrimesi yabetha ndisesbhedlele. Ndaphuma emva kweNyibdyala. Ndahlal' iinyang' ezimbini esbhedlele. Ndaphum' emva kwenyanga emva kwezo nyanga zimbini. Abantwana bam bephanda ke, bephanda bathi bengapha babe bengapha kuba kaloku kuselokshini. Elokshini kunzima, xawungenabani. Ndathi ke ngoku ke, ndiyayeka ngoku. Andin dawo ndiyilibalayo, zonke ndizithethile, okungangam.

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: Thank you very much. Ndibulela kakhulu mama, nge-ngcombo-lo osimike yona.

OFFICIAL: Nkosikazi uKonile, u-u- igama lonyana wakho yayingu-Zabonke.

MRS KONILE: John, elalapha eMlungwini.

BORAINE: How old, how old, how old was he—?

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: Iminyaka yakhe yayimingaphi-i, ukusweleka kwakhe?

MRS KONILE: Andiyazi mna iminyaka, kuba kaloku thina sivele sisi-i-, sibeke ngelaa xesha singajongi nadeyithi, singajongi naminyaka. Andiyohlul

'iminyak' endiyaziyo yeyokunge-e, yeyokwaluka kwakhe ukuba ebeyindoda, ibimithathu. Ndiyayazi ke yona.

BORAINE: Fine, so he was still a young man.

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: Wayesemncinnci ke, ngako oko.

MRS KONILE: Ndirhi iminyaka le, yeyokwaluka. Andithethi minyaka yakhe yoba ebengumntana. Yeyokwaluka lena iminyaka ndiyaziyo, qha ke.

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: Ndiyabulela mama, kulungile sivile ke ngoku. Bendicela ukuba ndikubulele kakhulu ke, ngale ngxelo usinike yona, sisazi ukuba ikukhathazile mama, yaye kudala usiva ubuhlungu. Sawucela ke abanye abalapha mhlawumbi bangathanda ukubuza imibuzo [pause], nakwabanye ke aba bebekhe baxela kuqala. Khululeka ke, ukuba umbuzo uza kuwe, uzawuxelelwa mama, enkosi.

... [details being clarified with the other mothers]

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: Ndingabuza? Ndiyabulela ukuba uzile, kuba ndiyayaz' uba kuye kwav' intombi yakho, nge-e-nkqubo yethu ebikwi-i-Radio Xhosa, yakubethela ucingo ngapha eNdwe xa iva intoba kukhona le ngxelo ikhoyo namhlanje. Sibulela ukuba uye wathath' inkxamleko yoba uze. Into esengqondweni yam endi-i-cel' ukuyibuza apha kuwe yinto yoba, njeng'ba iKapa ungalazi nje kodwa uyaz' ukuba unyana wakho useKapa, yakufikela kanjani intoba uve ngomntwana wakho, obhubhele elizwen' ongalaziyo?

MRS KONILE: Yandifikela-a, kabuhlungu. Kungeli xesha ndithi, ndingulo kaloku wawubethwa ngamatye, ngangentlungu endandinayo. Eneke, apho ndizoku-u—khathazeka khona kungoku sendisuka apha. Ndakhe ndathathwa [pause] ndasiwa, eCala [speaking with pain] esbhedlele. Ndaye ke ngoku sendisuka apha, sendinalo mntwana wakhe uyintonmbazana. Ndahamba ndawulal' esbhedlele sendisokolwa ke ngoku ke, kwanga-a-bamelwane naba bantwana, emizini yabo ke phofu. Ndaqabuka ke ndawufik' aph' eCala. Ndahlatywa ke lo-lo ndahlatyw' aph' ezinzipheni, apha kwezi ndawo, apha, apha, apha, apha ndonke. Ndahlatywa, sendikhala, zibuhlungu ezi iinaliti

zilaphi' emacaleni. Ndaqabuka ke, kodwa ke noko nda-a-weki, ndawiki ke, oko ndaba wiki. Akukho nto iqhubekayo ke, naxana ke ndandibethwe nangamatye ndiyiloo nto ndiyiyo.

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: Uziva njani ngoku mama, njengoba uthetha nje ngalo mzuzu?

MRS KONILE: Andizivi bheteri, andazi, andiyazi nje. Ndiva nj' uba ndinevalo andizazi. Andizaz' uthi ndinjani na.

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: Ungakwaz' usixelela kancinci ngomntwana lo ka-a-Zabonke? Uph i umntwana kaZabonke? Ungakanani?

MRS KONILE: Ulapha ke yena ke. Mdala ufunda ku-u-eyiti. Iminyaka yakhe ke ikwalingana nale kayise kub' ilishumi. [laughter in the background]. Andiyazi nokuba yekayise nokuba yekabani na ke.

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: U-umama uzam' ukuthi, ilingana nale minyaka eyadlulayo oko uyise waswelekayo?

MRS KONILE: Ewe. [with emphasis]

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: Hayi siyakuva mama, enkosi siyabulela. Mama umbuzo wowugqibela [pause]. Unjan' umama? Uziva njani?

MRS KONILE: Khawubuze.

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: Owowugqibela mama. Uba ubunowudibana nabo aba bantu [pause] benzakalisa unyana wakho. Yintoni umyalezo onobanika wona?

MRS KONILE: Owuu! [with a low voice]. Hayi andinawukwazi mna torho uthetha nabo [long pause, deep breath] kuba kaloku bandishiya kule, be-benza, ndashiyeka kule ndawo bandinike yona ngoba ke, andizukwazi noba ndithi, mabandithini noba bafanele kuske bandibone ukuba bafanele ukuze bandithini na, ngoba andizazi ukuba ndifanele ze ndithini na kuba [pause]

ngoba andinanto ndi-ndi-ndi- sele ndincame konk' andizazi ukuba ndingabenza ntoni na. [pause]. Andinanto ndiyaziyo [with a low voice], ndingaske ndibulele oko banga-baba- oko a-a-bandinika kona ndingenawubenza nto mma, hayi.

The process of translation

To translate from an African language is no easy task, as many of the words and expressions have both a literal and figurative meaning that are simultaneously present. For example, the Xhosa name of Nelson Mandela is 'Rolihlahla'. The name literally means 'the pulled branch' as it can be broken up into 'rholá' meaning 'to pull out' and 'ihlahla' meaning 'branch'. Figuratively it means 'troublemaker'. How do you capture both these meanings in translation? Another example of this kind of double-layering is the Xhosa expression often used for white people, 'OoNdllebe-zikhany'ílanga'. Figuratively it means 'white people'; literally, it means 'ears-that-shine-from-the-sun', or 'those-through-whose-ears-the-sun-shines'.

The French missionary, Eugene Casalis, who played an important role in recording Sesotho, formulated the presence of literal and figurative meaning as follows:

The language [with] its energetic precision, is admirably adapted to the sententious style, and the element of metaphor has entered so abundantly into its composition, that one can hardly speak it without unconsciously acquiring the habit of expressing one's thoughts in a figurative manner.

In her testimony, Mrs Konile used unfamiliar words, such as 'ikhombesi' for 'comrade', 'mashani' for 'mortuary', 'ikhumpi' for 'combi' and 'emalindini' for 'graveyard'. This indicated that these concepts entered her world at Indwe at a later stage, and that Xhosa versions were made instead of using the words in their English form as the people from urban areas were doing.

Retranslation of Mrs Konile's testimony

ALEX BORAINÉ: Hello Mrs Konile.

PUMLA GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: Hello Mrs Konile. [pause] Can you hear me clearly?

BORAINÉ: Okay fine . . . tell us where you . . .

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: Just tell us mama where you come from and tell us about your family and tell us who you are before you tell us about 1986 incident.

MRS KONILE: [a sigh] I am Mrs Konile from Indwe. [deep breath]. I have three children. [deep breath] They were four including the one who was shot. [deep breath]. They are girls and are all married [deep breath]. The only person I was staying with was my son. I didn't have anybody else. Their father died earlier. [deep breath]. And now it was my son and I, we were standing together [in supporting the family] – the two of us. When he came to Cape Town [deep breath] there was going to be allocation of sites in Johannesburg. He was going to build a house in Johannesburg, but then he decided to come to Cape Town because his brother-in-law of my eldest daughter is here in Cape Town and now he wanted to come to Cape Town.

It so happened that during the course of this allocation of sites we were told to go and register our names, but only the male children. We [as women] were not allowed to head the allocation, we could not be allocated sites. So we went and registered at the city council, we went to register then. Then he said, 'Instead of me staying here working [pause] here, [remember that] I left school and went to Johannesburg because I could see that things were getting difficult, no one would be able to take responsibility for building the house. Let me rather go to my brother-in-law in Cape Town'.

Indeed he left for Cape Town to his brother-in-law. I now heard from his brother-in-law that he is working. He sent me the little money that he was earning and then, I went to register. While in that midst of registration for sites, other people's names went through, they went through but mine was not there [not available] [some words not audible]. In the process of registering and my name not coming up, Pheza arrived. At the time when Pheza arrived we were on our way to the grants office that day, if I'm not mistaken, it was on a Thursday. Just when I was on my way out, I was just thinking, I saw Pheza, he [looked at us] and said, 'No it's this one!' I – my heart just throbbed. I thought maybe it's because Pheza was a person who frequented Cape Town, although I didn't even know Cape Town [deep breath]. We left and

went to the grant's office and he [Pheza] said, 'Let's leave her!' I didn't know now who is who, the one who must be left because there were only two of us *mos*. We [Mrs Konile and her friend accompanying her] went and came back from the grants office. I said to the one I was going with, I said, 'Hevi! You know what, my heart is palpitating with a strange feeling after having seen Pheza who lives in Cape Town but is suddenly now at Indwe, and it persists. Last night I had a bad dream. I dreamt that here at the door there was a goat that was standing, like this [gesturing], eh? – standing like this' [gesturing with her hands], and my friend laughed and said, 'Eyi! You really had a bad dream.' Next to the tree! Now I am relating this story [about the dream] to this one next to me when Pheza has already arrived. We now arrived together at this place. Just when we were approaching the houses, would you believe it! Here was Pheza again. 'Hee! I wonder what is it that Pheza is going to say to me?'

I arrived [home], I got in – as I was just getting in, I became angry and then I said, 'What is it that you are going to say to me? Say it! Say it now!' and Pheza said, 'Sit down.' Then I said: 'Say it! I'm going to sit. Say it!' Then Pheza said, 'Mnx! Are you – where is Zabonke?' And I said, 'He's in Cape Town'. Then he said, 'I've come to tell you that I've been sent by the comrades from Cape Town'. 'From where?' [Mrs Konile imitating her own voice during her dialogue with Pheza] 'Of ANC.' 'Where is this place?' 'The-e-e from the squatter camps, squatter camps, squatter camps.' He-e-e! Mnx! 'What happened to him?' 'He has been shot. Go now. Come let us go.'

'I have been asked to come and fetch you. Your son, just before he passed away, he's mentioned you, your name, that now that he has this house, this shack, that he is staying in, and as he left his mother [pause, sigh, deep breath, crying] no place of her own, that you should be fetched and be brought to this place that he obtained because he is a *comrade*.' Mnx! Then I asked from Pheza, 'What is a "khombres"?', and Pheza said, 'Lets go.' Then I asked, 'Do you know, do you know this place you are taking me to?' Then Pheza said, 'Yes let's go, I know it. I am taking you to that place, to-to – the houses of the comrades.' Pheza didn't say that he was taking me to [pause] but Pheza didn't say that he was taking me to the *moshani* [mortuary] of the *khombres*. He said he was taking me to the houses of the *khombres* that is why I went along with him. It so happened without me realising because I'm not familiar with the

cities and I've never been to Cape Town. I only knew Cape Town at that time. I don't even know what a city is or in which city it is situated. He took me along. When he touched me my whole body just shivered [crying]. I was trembling all over, and then he held me by [the] hand. He took me to one of o-o-ne of o-o-ne of, to the hospital. When he arrived there he started speaking English and he spoke to the people there. I was given pills and an injection. After the injection, he was told to leave me for a few minutes and he did as required. Then, I was just about to fall sleep, but I was not really sleeping, and I found myself sweating and then I saw myself as if I had regained my senses. I don't know whether I had lost consciousness or not, I don't know. We returned to our journey with Pheza on our way back.

There were also other mothers that we were travelling with. We travelled from one place to another but I had no clue as to what areas we were visiting because I did not know Cape Town. I did not even know whether to go this side or that side or what has happened or what brought me to this place. We arrived at this place and found a big crowd of *khombres* – mothers, fathers, there were young men and boys. [interruption, swallowing saliva] Mnx! Then I got out [of the car], and Pheza introduced me. I was told that my son, 'Your son Zabonke has been shot. They were seven.' I didn't know now, I didn't know this place. But it was said they were shot while in the bush. Him, they we-re two and they were asking for forgiveness, with their hands up like this [demonstrating], asking for forgiveness. With both hands up, like this [demonstrating], asking for forgiveness. My answer was to ask, 'And where is he now? Where is his house?' I lost consciousness while they were explaining to me. I was taken to his house [pause]. It is there that when I saw the matri- e-ss [crying] I could then recall his picture [crying], his picture [crying]. I had a picture of . . . I had a picture of . . . [sniffing, long pause] After I had been told, after I had recovered and there was a big prayer session. Then it was said – then there arrived a combi, they asked if I have arrived, the answer was, yes. It was said that since we were all mothers, we were mothers, four mothers. We were asked to get in [the car] to go to the mortuary. We got in on our way to the mortuary. At this time, my son-in-law, my eldest daughter's husband was not here, he was at work. I was asked who from my family will be accompanying me to the mortuary? But the men from mortuary, one of them said, 'I will go with her.'

Eventually, we arrived [*at the mortuary*]. Just when we were – as we were – about to – enter, as we were opening the door, a very cold air came out from the room and so I lost my consciousness from that cold air, I lost my consciousness, I lost consciousness until I was lifted up in the air. I was again put down. Then again carried, I regained consciousness and was given pills, I regained consciousness. I was again asked, 'Do you still want to go there?' I said, 'Yes, I want to.' I went in and I saw him. When I looked at him [*pause*], his body, I didn't look at the body [*pause*] where I looked at him, one of his eyes was out, the-the-the, here [*demonstrating*] the blood, you know what, it had dried out on his body. He was swollen all over, all over here on the head. I could identify him faintly here and there in the way he was lying as they were just thrown out there, as they were thrown in those things, thrown there just like that, thrown there just like that. The eye was totally out. And here [*pointing*] he is swollen like this [*demonstrating*], all over here on the lower – lower parts. The only thing that I could recognise clearly [*emphasising*] were the feet, where I could say, 'Now, this is my child'. They asked if I was satisfied. I said I am satisfied. We went out and left. When we arrived on the following day, it was said [*pause*] there was a message that they should be buried now. 'They should be buried now, anyway these things, these dogs have long been dead.' The comrades stood up in protest, they came back, they came back and tents were already been put up, they said, 'The tents should not be put up. You should bury at your own time.' Then it was said that they would be buried on Saturday.

On Friday we were taken to the mortuary, the coffin was at the mortuary. Zabonke's coffin was right at the beginning, then followed the next one as they were seven, they were arranged according to their length. Zabonke was tall just like this child, because he is tall. He was tall with a long structure towering above the others. Even when he was working he used to work at the electricity department at the time that he was still working. I don't know whether he was still working at the time [*of his death*] or not working. I don't know. We were shown to the coffins to choose from and we chose the coffins. Then we – then when it was on – Saturday, on Saturday we went to the graveyard. It was there at the graveyard that the boers and I know them well even there [*where I come from*], there is this place, which is a gravel road like this [*demonstrating*] there at the paper. The boers started. The youth

came in full force scattered all over. It was just chaos out there. It was just chaos out there at the bush. The youth were throwing stones. We were left here at the graveyard. With the old people and the church ministers and these ones, the ones from the mortuary we were left here at the graveyard. We came out and left in our separate ways and we were no longer the big group that came in together compared to the way in which the funeral was big. And . . . a . . . I wanted to go home with my son but the boers said, 'He will never leave here and go to Ndwe.' Even the ones at Ndwe were saying the same thing. They had already communicated with the boers from Ndwe and they were all saying the same thing. They said he has bombs. 'He will never leave here,' said the boers. They said, 'Never!' And so I gave up.

And the comrades were also saying they should be buried where they were shot. That is all I know about my child because I was not there. What I do not know is what actually happened. What had happened? I don't know. That is all I can tell you. It is this suffering that I experience now, because since then, I was left like this.

After I had gone home I don't – there was no plan – I want that house, that site. I was driven back. Eyi! It was so difficult. People of my age and their sons are progressing [*pause*] I left, something cropped up and said I should go and pick up coal. I was hit on that day, it was on Thursday, I was hit by a rock and the whole rock fell over me. I missed by an inch to be covered completely by the rock. The rock landed on my waist. I came out on this side, I came out on this side so that I could get fresh air. I was hit at eleven o'clock and was only taken out at . . . fo-u-r o'clock. [*crying*] As I was re-covering trying to wake up, it as if I was person who's just sitting o-n a bed. There was this cry, saying, 'Yo-o-o!' It was as if it is whispering in my ear saying 'Yo! yo! yo!' after I had recovered it was as though I was getting down, as though I was getting down, as though I was getting down. It was as if there was a red smoke coming out. I looked up. When I looked up, I saw that I was wet, I'm wet, I'm wet, I'm wet, I'm wet, I'm wet the whole body. I tri-ed, when I was recovering, I asked for water. I said they should give me water. It was said there was no water. I said, 'Say to this woman next to me and to those men,' I – I said, 'Urinate so that I can drink, urinate on the plate on the one that we use to dig up coals'. I drank. I reco-ve-red [*pause, crying, deep sigh*] I recovered. When I recovered I was put on the van and was taken to the

hospital. When I arrived at the hospital I was chased away by the doctor. The doctor said: 'I! Should! Leave! *[with emphasis]* I should go and hide under the rocks in that place where I am coming from. I am nothing anyway, What is ANC? What is ANC?'

Her son is the one who was on TV. 'Your son is – that thing that was on TV?' And I said, 'I did not see what was on TV, because I didn't even have a TV. I don't have a TV even now'. I-I was helped by the people who intervened on my behalf then I was re-admitted, I slept there in hospital. I – I spent Christmas day in hospital. On Christmas day I was already in hospital. I came out after the New Year in hospital. I spent two months in hospital. I was discharged after a month, after those months, two months. My children were trying to make ends meet, going from place to place because we live in the township. Life is very difficult in the township when you don't have anyone. And I said I have finished now. I haven't left anything. I have said everything that I know.

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: Thank you very much. Thank you very much mama for the details that you have given us.

BORAINÉ: Mrs Konile, yo-ur son's name wa-s Zabonke?

MRS KONILE: John, the name that was used at work.

BORAINÉ: How old, how old, how old was he—?

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: How many years was he – when he died?

MRS KONILE: I don't know the years, because we grew up at the-the-, we had children at the time when we were not even looking at the date nor the years. I won't be able to know but the years that I know are the time when he went for – when he became circumcised, it was three years. That one I know.

BORAINÉ: Fine, so he was still a young man.

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: He was still young at the time.

MRS KONILE: I am talking about the years after he became circumcised – I am not referring to his age. It is the years after his circumcision that I know, that is what I know.

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: Thank you mama. All right, we understand now. I would like to thank you very much for the information that you have given us. We understand, it is long that you have been in pain. We would like to ask the other people who may perhaps want to ask questions *[pause]* even from the people who testified earlier. Feel free, if there is a question that is directed to you, you will be told mama. Thank you.

... *[details being clarified with the other mothers]*

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA TO MRS KONILE: Can I ask? I'm happy that you came because I know your daughter heard about these proceedings from the announcement that was made in the Radio Xhosa programme and then she called you from Indwe when she heard about today's hearings. We are thankful that you made the effort to come. What is in my mind I would like to ask you is that, since you don't know Cape Town, but you know that your son is here, how did you feel when you heard about the death of your child, that he has died in a place that you don't even know?

MRS KONILE: It was sadness to me. It was at the time that I say I was the one that was hit by the rock, the way I was so hurt. And – a – where I really got hurt is the time when I had already returned from here *[Cape Town]*. At some stage, I was taken to Cala *[speaking with pain]* in hospital. At this time, I had already returned from here *[Cape Town]* and I came with his child, a young girl. I was taken to hospital and was admitted, being taken care of by my neighbours as well as my children who were now staying with their families. I recovered when I arrived in Cala, I was given the – injection here at the fingertips, here in these parts, here, here, here, here all over. I was given injections crying, because these injections were very painful, especially the ones on the sides. I recovered but I was we-ak, I was weak, since then, I was weak. There was no change, since I was hit by the rock, I remained just like that.

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: How do you feel now mama at this moment as you speak?

MRS KONILE: I don't feel better. I don't know. I just don't know. I just feel that I have palpitations. I don't know how I feel.

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: Could you tell us a little about Zabonke's child? Where is she [*Zabonke's child*] and how old is she?

MRS KONILE: As for him, he is here, he is old now. He is doing standard eight. His age is the same as his father's because he is ten years [*laughter in the background*] I don't know if it is his father's years, or somebody else's years.

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: Is mama trying to say that the child's years is the same as when his father died.

MRS KONILE: Yes. [*with emphasis*]

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: All right, we understand you mama. We thank you. Mama my last question is [*pause*], how does mama feel, how do you feel?

MRS KONILE: No, you can just ask . . .

GOBODO-MADIKIZELA: My last question mama: if you would meet the people [*pause*] that injured your son, what message would you give to them?

MRS KONILE: Ohhhhh! [*with a low voice*] No I don't know, I won't be able to speak to them. [*long pause, deep breath*] because they left me in this, what they did is, I was just left in this condition that they put me in because, I don't know what to say or what they should do to me or what they are supposed to do it is for them to see to what they should do to me because I don't know, I'm supposed to do because I have nothing. I—, I—, I—, I— have just given up everything. I don't know what I would do to them. [*pause*]. There is nothing that I know [*with a low voice*]. I can just thank them for what they — they — what they had given me but there's nothing that I can do to them, no, nothing.

6

The rock

Right from the time that Nosisi discovered that Mrs Konile came from Indwe, she suggested, 'I think Indwe has a story. I'm not sure what, but I seem to remember something.' In a subsequent discussion session we exchanged information.

The word 'Indwe' means 'Blue Crane'. The small town, named after a river that flows half a kilometre east in the Stormberg region, with Queens-town its nearest big town, lies sandwiched between the old Transkei border, the old Thembu location and the toes of the Drakensberg mountains. The river close by formed the border between the Cape Colony and Emigrant Thembuland during 1847 and 1883. After the Thembuland rebellion in 1880, several thousand people were driven out of Thembuland and the area was annexed to the Cape in 1883. For 300 years, the borders around Indwe were contested, changed and reinforced by, among others, the Gcaleka (who lost most of their land after the cattle killings), the politically favoured Mfengu, the politically influential Thembu, the Boer farmers, the white British settlers, the British government, the apartheid government and its homeland puppets.

Antjie found that the Truth Commission report quoted police statistics suggesting that a third of all necklacing and burning incidents over a period of five years occurred in the Eastern Cape — an average of 54 per year. In view of a massacre that occurred in Queenstown in November 1985, the