

Mandelaism in newspaper advertising that ‘pays tribute’ to Mandela after his death

Abstract

Celebrated, Former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela’s death in 2013 saw an outpouring of local and global grief and emotion. This reflected how Mandela became iconized as a popular cultural and political symbol for human rights, political messiah-hood, sainthood, dignity, peace and forgiveness. Even Mandela attempted to deflect and qualify this iconisation. Taking critical views into account, we propose ‘Mandelaism’ as a term to describe the cultural practices and sign systems that surround and mythologize Mandela, intermeshing with, feeding into and parasitically drawing on patriotic sentiments. Mandelaism magically invokes powers and forms of what Mbembe (2001: 25) calls the *commandement* – to conflate and inflate often weak notions and practices of the right. Popularly, these powers are invoked for nation building. However Mandelaism is also tightly associated with self-serving machinations that deform and weaken this right which legitimates it. This study explores advertisements from selected national English-language newspapers published in the two weeks that followed his death, subjecting them to a semiotic analysis. It thereby aims to recognize aspects of Mandelaism and of the parasite behaviors which we claim are appended to it. The unprecedented scale of the news-event that was Mandela death and funeral assures that the study is set in one of the greatest known nationalistic imaginariums.

Introduction

Nation and national identity involve symbolic processes. Nations are social and political constructs (Gellner 1983) that are based on narrativised constructions (Bhabha 1990) and on ideas of “imagined community” (Anderson 1983). National identity is variously defined by such scholars as Anderson (1991), Hobsbawm (1983) and Smith (1989) as a dynamic and fluid entity that changes at any time. Hutchinson and Smith (1994) view national identity as a phenomenon rooted in a past shared by individuals in a community. Kang (2008) conceptualises national identity as something that arises in ways of “thinking and talking about nationhood” and Smith (1991, p. 9) reckons that national identity suggests the existence of a social space in which members claim belonging using the value of subjective and intersubjective productive activities by which members contractually bind themselves to discursive orders that constitute the nation. This is to say that nationhood is set on and establishes imagined (Anderson, 1991) spaces that are symbolically achieved using as symbolic currency flags, myths, styles of dress, currencies, heroes, sports etc. This study examines presentations of the late former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela as an icon or symbol of South African nationhood. Specifically, focusing on advertising put out in the aftermath of Mandela’s death, it attempts to see how what we call Mandelalism is used by corporate holdings to manufacture their own legitimacy and belonging in the space of the imagined mythic nation of South Africa.

Meanings of national symbols are not fixed. They polysemically bear multiple, contested, negotiated, enacted, given and manufactured meanings. National symbols tell stories by that imaginatively locate people in histories, presents and futures. After all, “In the beginning was the word or, more accurately, the logos. And in the beginning, ‘logos’ meant story, reason, rationale, conception, discourse, thought.” (Fisher, 1987: 5) This suggests that symbolic forms work to construct realities and in the upshot also to direct the practices that people engage in. After all, as Giddens (1985: 19) has observed, human interaction inescapably involves communication and its significations that produce acts and systems of domination or power, using resources and permitting modes of sanctioning.

In established democracies the routinized form of everyday life is produced and reproduced *as though* tradition is marginal to the enactment of law and order. This illusion is shattered in events which threaten the ontological security of members, driving members turn to ideas of leadership that hark to historical orders (cf. Giddens, 1985: 218-219). In African settings, where

nations are still often in nascent stages of development amidst colonial boundaries that contain a rag-tag of disjointed national bodies, it is often still politically necessary for those who wield the legal monopoly of power to try to invent traditions within which belonging can be constructed. Hobsbawm's (1983: 1) definition, of the invention of tradition, is quite exact and attractive in how it reflects on how such traditions direct or seek to inform behaviours: "Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past."

This article is concerned with the symbolic representation of Mandela, with what we call Mandelalism, as it manifests in English language South African newspapers on the occasion in the ten days following this hero's death. Specifically it is interested in how these images are deployed by corporations which appear to pay homage to an iconic Mandela while failing to elude the accusation that they were simultaneously using this act to manufacture nationally sanctioned legitimations.

Mandela: Heroic Icon of South Africa

Heroes give the nation a reference and connection to ancestors. Anthony Smith (1999, 65) defines heroes as models "of virtuous conduct, their deeds of valour inspire faith and courage in their oppressed and decadent descendants". South African nationalism is partly anchored in narratives iconography that harks to heroic, messianic and other mythic associations pertaining to 'the founding father of the nation', and 'son of the soil', Nelson Mandela.

The idea of Mandela as both the quintessential father and son of South Africa is quite profound. From both sides of the filial relationship, it locates him an extraordinary patrimonial set of bonds with South Africans. For Lodge (2014: 8), Mandela arises as a leading figure of a ruling political elite, the African National Congress (ANC), which has a patrimonial pedigree that originates in how historically power in the organisation was accrued 1) through networks of "notables" whose relations centred on having gone to the same schools, churches or from having family ties; and 2) by means of "clientelistic expectations" that were developed in various relations with financially resourced partners and associations. These networks and expectations constitute the basis for a patrimonial system of exchange within which people assume father and son relationships that are pregnant with the obligations that, as Mauss (1990)

rightly recognised, mark all instances of gifting and giving. What also bears recognising in the way Mandela is canonised as both father and son is that it locates him in a nativist historiography that works to naturalise him as the leader South Africa had to have. In other words, this iconography invents a tradition within which Mandela is a given eminence.

It is indisputable that Mandela lived an extraordinary life:

- Rob Nixon thinks that from the outset Mandela seemed to possess “a talent for immortality” (1991, 42). One could think that Mandela came to the fore of the South African national imagination first as the mysterious figure, The Black Pimpernel, who eludes apartheid rule. He was, for this moment, the ideal honourable enemy of the state, who cleverly fought for freedom by flashily breaking the law and getting away with it. “South African newspapers dubbed him the “Black Pimpernel,” an allusion to the Scarlet Pimpernel who rescued people from the guillotine during the French Revolution” (Crompton, 2007: 7). Sublated, in this mythic narrative role, Mandela had a mystique and aura that accompanies brigands, pirates and other outlaw figures.¹
- At the Rivonia Trial Mandela dares death, and beats it, after telling his persecutors that freedom and equality are values he is prepared to die for.
- During 27 years of life imprisonment Mandela disappears. He is excommunicated. But he overcomes this too by being iconically amplified as champion of the forces against apartheid.
- Upon exiting prison, Mandela frees his people and his oppressors – mythically becoming the icon of what is called the rainbow nation. He gained wide praise for the reconciliatory symbolism of acts, such as those of drinking tea with the widow of the architect of apartheid and of wearing a rugby jersey embossed with the number of springbok captain – when rugby had been reputed to be the sport of the Afrikaaner community who symbolically, politically and bureaucratically were associated and blamed for apartheid (Naidoo 2010, p. 246). For Bornman, the image of Mandela in the Springbok jersey symbolises the birth of the South African nation after apartheid.

¹The South Africa black township *tsotsi* (thief) of the apartheid era assumes greatness for the ways in which they contests, challenges and traverse boundaries of the oppressive state (Morris 2010, Hurst 2009).

- Mandela is known for an inclusive rhetoric that is recognised by many as key to achievement of a less bloody transition from apartheid than may otherwise have occurred (Lodge, 2006: 208; Moriaty, 2003).

The above list is an incomplete reduction of feats and observations around which Mandela is mythologised. In looking at this list it is worth thinking about myths as signifiers of beliefs “held in common by a large group of people that gives events and actions a particular meaning; [they are] typically socially cued rather than empirically based” (Edelman 1971, p. 14). This is to say that mythical order of things is developed in accordance with social cognitions that variously stand in dissonance or consonance with other cognitions (*ibid.*, p.18).

South African myths that acclaim Mandela the agent of a transformative long walk to freedom that erased apartheid inequity and segregation are not consistent with the everyday cognitions of many continue to witness and experience structural violence. From Cassirer’s magisterial account of symbolic forms and myths, we learn that myths nevertheless construct spaces within which spaces are schematically constructed to not only appear as though they are geometrical and empirical nature, but to functionally interrelate and mediate diverse elements (1955: 84) according to a logic that always goes back to an imagined original identity or essence (89). To imagine the nation state, symbolic ideations are constructed to buttress discursive enactments into which utopian ideals are situated as foundational ground onto which present or ‘here and now’ realities are insinuated – in a manner outlined in Manheim’s (1998, p. 209-210) seminal *Ideology and utopia: An introduction to the sociology of knowledge*.

It ensures that the meanings, or patterned cognitions, that people mythically experience fundamentally contradict environmental informational disturbances which mark how South Africa remains violent and unequal, and separate. Thus while South African identity itself may appear meaningful and self-evident, the evidence of history and everyday experience impinges to disturbingly say that it is important to ask who South Africans are and that it is in fact reasonable to recognise that South Africanness is imagined and contested (Chipkin 2007). Where the myth of Mandela says he led South Africa through a reconciliation process that brought peace and harmony, evidence abounds that violence is the order of the day. In fact Karl von Holdt argues that Mandela actually midwifed South Africa into a “violent democracy

characterised by violent pluralism” (2013, 5910)². After a particularly gruesome murder of a foreigner on South Africa’s streets, Tromp (2015) was driven to say the country has a “Kill thy neighbour” culture (THIS NEEDS US TO SHED MORE LIGHT). The suggestion here is that the Mandela is involved in the articulation of the myth of national identity. As such Mandela, to use Guibernau and Goldblatt’s (2000, 125) account of nationalism, is invoked for the establishment of an “emotive identification with a nation, (that is a community of named people who acknowledge a shared solidarity and identity by virtue of a shared culture, history and territorial homeland) and a political project to secure an independent nation-state for a nation”.

Knowingly or not, Mandela was instrumental in establishing a quiescence by which, after 1994, oppressed South Africans no longer fight for control of the political levers of power. Observing Mandela from close range, a minister in Mandela’s government, Naidoo (2010, p. 240), argues that Mandela had an imperious streak that, while aimed at achieving desirable goals, led to him twisting arms to get his way so that under the moral pressure of Mandela business executives, for example, often acquiesced by funding his projects. In this environment, Naidoo started to recognise an emerging climate in which the will of the people was being drowned out by “a now legitimate and democratic state” (*ibid.*, p. 240) which increasingly served as a centre, people who were increasingly disempowered. Going further than Naidoo, Pilger (2006, 282) makes the pointed accusation that Mandela played a central role in inspiring a new post-apartheid cronyism when “he formed close personal relations with powerful white businessmen regardless of whether they had profited during the apartheid years.”

Mangu (2014, p. 18) has written about Mandela as a contradictory man who could not be categorized with finality as having served one ideological position, in part because he bore an ill-fitting messianic characterisation that served those who want to maintain the status quo which continues to reflect continues with apartheid injustices and inequities. Hence Slavoj Žižek (2013) argues that

If we want to remain faithful to Mandela’s legacy, we should thus forget about celebratory crocodile tears and focus on the unfulfilled promises his leadership gave rise to. We can safely surmise that, on account of his doubtless moral and political

² Von Holdt, Karl. 2013. ‘South Africa: the transition to violent democracy.’ *Review of African Political Economy*. 40(138): 589 – 60.

greatness, he was at the end of his life also a bitter, old man, well aware how his very political triumph and his elevation into a universal hero was the mask of a bitter defeat. His universal glory is also a sign that he really didn't disturb the global order of power.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni argues that some radical scholars like Frank Wilderson "even accuse Mandela of being a sell-out who squandered the revolutionary potential of the ANC and ignored the Freedom Charter as he compromised with white and global capital" (2014, 48). What is not in dispute is that the post-apartheid socio-economic environment, which emerged under Mandela's rule, is characterised by extraordinary poverty among blacks amidst one of world's largest rich-poor gaps. White capital continues to dominate post-apartheid South Africa at the expense of the majority who remain largely poor. Lukhele (2012, 293) subjects the project of nationalisation of resources to scrutiny when he says it:

worked for the Afrikaners during apartheid and that worked for the Germans, the British and the Japanese in the aftermath of a global conflict is ruled out when it concerns Africans victimised by white oppression for centuries. The economic interests of black South Africans are subordinated by the power brokers to the interests of globalisation. Exactly who is globalising and who is benefitting and who is losing? The road to African sovereignty has always been strewn with all sorts of obstacles. Initially they, (Africans) were not quite human; when that was on the verge of being settled and they were on their way to political liberation, they were made to understand that it was necessary to embrace multiracialism and communism as the only way to their liberty... The Afrikaners were operating a nationalist economy with a significant nationalization of key industries all for the purpose of promoting Afrikaner economic welfare.

Lukhele (2012) argues that the sainted Mandela of today is a creation of global American capital which manufactures a lionized Mandela while driving observers to ignore the information about many things that he chose to do and not do that deferred many poor South Africans' dreams of freedom. Something of this sceptical view of Mandela is captured by Gumede when he argues that "by the time Mandela was sworn in as South Africa's first black president in May 1994, the ANC had undergone a dramatic shift towards economic conservatism" (1997). In his last month in prison, Mandela said "nationalisation of the mines, banks, and monopoly industry is the policy of the ANC, and a change or modification of our views in this regard is inconceivable" (2007, 79-80), but soon after coming out of prison he

was forced to recant these words, and by June 1998 Mandela was berating left leaning opponents who were criticising his liberal economic policies (Bond, 2000, p. 84).

The harshest line of accusation is one that we have already indicated with references to Lukhele and Pilger, for example. This line is most strikingly linked to Thabo Mbeki, Mandela's successor. Mbeki biographer, Gevisser (2009, p. 264-265), writes that

Mbeki called this attitude “Mandela exceptionalism” when he was being polite; the “one good native” syndrome when he was not. The argument went like this: Africa was irredeemable, and Mandela was the only good leader ever to come out of it; once he left office, South Africa would sink like the rest of the continent into the mire of corruption and decay, as Nigeria had. It seemed to Mbeki that Mandela was actually colluding in the world's impression that he was the “one good native,” the consequence of which was the perception that all other black leaders—Mbeki foremost—were incompetent. Mbeki believed that Mandela's complicity in this syndrome came from the way he sent the message to white South Africans that nothing was going to change: Mandela's mantra of “national reconciliation” had become debased into meaning nothing more than “maintaining the status quo.”

The accusation is that Mandela is used to symbolically perpetuate a racist binary of colonial and apartheid yore. Where “[t]he binary language of democratic communication is not an empirical description of real political action but a set of pre-existing and prescriptive judgments” (Alexander 2010, p. 11), Mandelalism perpetuates colonial and apartheid Manichean logics:

The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil. He is the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind forces. (Fanon 1963: 41)

In being constructed as the ‘reasonable exception’, the unexpectedly peaceful and undisruptive leader, Mandela is ‘sainted’ for being supposedly different from other Africans who are thus

re-inscribed into racist binaries. Recognising this, we share Lukhele's (2012, p. 289) scepticism about how there has been "a respectful reluctance to countenance any scepticism with [Mandela's] saintly stature" as doing so would be to tread where angels shudder to tread. It is thus necessary to challenge the global stature and sainthood that has been thrust onto Mandela especially by white corporates, the West and some of those who benefitted from his transformation especially after prison.

In this context we think of Mandelalism as a constellation of political imaginations, behaviours, ideas, philosophical utterances, messianic and other actions that have coalesced and crystallised around the person, name, and images of Nelson Mandela. Mandelalism forms cognitive grounds that resound with myths of South African harmony, peace, reconciliation and success, denying the significance of informational disturbances that contradict these narratives. Mandelalism thrives to the extent that there is intellectual reticence to rehumanise Mandela by situating his great feats within the extremely limiting conditions he acted in.

We are concerned about how Mandelalism locks Mandela into a narrative order of forgetting and ignoring apartheid oppression. It humanises Mandela by constraining him to a monotone set at the start of his presidency. Gevisser (2009, p. 265) identifies the root of this tone in "two extraordinary lines, delivered spontaneously in Afrikaans to the crowds at his 1994 inauguration: "Laat ons die verlede vergeet! Wat verby is verby!" (Let us forget the past! What's done is done!)." This is to say that Mandelalism erases the revolutionary heritage of a Mandela who famously dedicated his life to struggle against suffering and oppression. In his own most famous words:

This then is what the ANC is fighting for. Our struggle is a truly national one. It is a struggle of the African people, inspired by our own suffering and our own experience. It is a struggle for the right to live. During my lifetime I have dedicated my life to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons will live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal for which I hope to live for and to see realised. But, My Lord, if it needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die. (Mandela 1964, 60)

In Mandelaism, the iconicity of Mandela as a man who made personal sacrifices remains central to the dramatic construction of the Mandela myth. By saying forgive and forget, Mandelaism works, for example, to exonerate corporate South Africa from blame and from the responsibility to work towards a genuinely new South Africa characterised by justice and equity. Below we will examine how Mandela was used, even in the moment of his death, by corporate holdings, to establish discourses that align or not with Mandelaism.

“You made us one big family”: Appropriation of Mandela in Corporate advertising

This section attempts to use semiotic and iconographic analysis to deconstruct how the South African and multinational corporates doing business in South Africa appropriated Mandela's death, imagery and statements to celebrate and honour Mandela. At the core of this analysis is the exploration of how commercial interests are aligned to Mandela's selected philosophies, commercial nationalism and the imagined location of these corporations in society. According to van Leeuwen iconography and semiotics are two approaches to visual analysis which focus and “ask the same fundamental questions: the question of representation (what do images represent and how?) and the question of the ‘hidden meanings’ of images (what ideas and values do the people, places and things represented in the images stand for?)...iconography also pays attention to the context in which the image is produced and circulated, and to how and why cultural meanings and their visual expression come about historically” (2001, 93).³

For the purposes of this research we looked at tabloid and broadsheet English newspaper advertisements from big corporates like Sasol, Coca-Cola, Nandos, Lonmin, Barclays/ABSA, SAB Miller, KFC, AngloAmerican, Nedbank, Pick ‘n Pay, BAT among others spanning from the time Mandela died until he was buried. Some of these companies do not have a glorious past in as standing for those things Mandela advocated for is concerned (Barclays –slave trade; Lonmin-Marikana massacres, Big5-FIFA stadia corruption). Few adverts are selected to illustrate that corporate advertising was used to mask certain negativities sponsored by corporates in society and this, in a way, failed the Mandela legacy that the corporates claimed to be upholding or advancing. In an opinion column, *The debt whites owe*, Mondli Makhanya argues that most whites and corporates (the two are interlinked in the post-apartheid South

³ Van Leeuwen, Theo. 2001. ‘Semiotics and iconography’. In Theo van Leeuwen and Carey Jewitt, eds. *Handbook of Visual analysis*, 92 – 118, London: Sage

Africa) were allowed, through Mandela, to explore “their potential without the guilt of being beneficiaries of apartheid. He gave them human worth... But in the quest to celebrate the sweet and lovable Mandela, there is a risk of losing sight of overall agenda and the reason he went to jail in the first place. Mandela was jailed for wanting to transform South African society, to do away with racial inequality and build a non-racial society. So in appreciating Mandela, white South Africa has to ask itself how it will repay its debt to him by embracing that for which he sacrificed his life... Contrary to popular myth in this community, economic and other opportunities still overwhelmingly flow their way’ (Makhanya 2015).⁴

The Barclays/ABSA bank advert celebrated and mourned Mandela as a light. They ran full page advertisements in most newspapers depicting Mandela as a light. The candle has not yet died and the accompanying text reads: ‘Lala Ngoxolo, Tata. You’ve left behind a nation inspired by hope. Rest peacefully Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.’ The candle denotes the undying ‘hope’ that Mandela has inspired Barclays’ imagined ‘nation’. The candle also denotes Mandela. Two more adverts, one by Nandos and another by SAB Miller argue that Mandela is immortal and this is demonstrated by their use of infinity signs. Nandos mourns Mandela through a whole page advert with a black background denoting death with white text in a Nandos font that reads ‘1918 – forever.’ The Nandos one does not make reference to the advertiser (Nandos) nor does it make explicit references to Mandela. The only reference for the former is what is commonly known as the Nandos ‘font’ and for the latter we draw inference to Mandela’s year of birth and the period (mourning) within which the advert is flighted to conclude that the advert refers to Mandela. On the other hand SAB Miller uses an infinity sign to demarcate Mandela’s historic moments like going to school, getting married, being imprisoned etc.

Another symbolic representation used by one of the corporates, Pick n Pay to refer to Mandela is a bridge. The advert depicts the Nelson Mandela Bridge that links Braamfontein and New Town in downtown Johannesburg. The caption reads: ‘Rest in the peace you gave us: From the heart of South Africa to all corners of the land, your loss is felt. Our greatest tribute to you is to carry on in your memory by continuing to work for peace, understanding and freedom for all. By living up to your legacy, we promise that you will live on.’ The representation of Mandela as a bridge is profound. Read in tandem with the text, there is a suggestion of Mandela

⁴ Makhanya, Mondli. 15/12/2015. The debt whites owe. City Press.

as a unifier who brought everyone together. This assessment also applies to the KFC advert which declares: Hamba kahle Tata: You've made us all one family".

The advertisements, as already suggested, demonstrate an appropriation of Mandela's values and aligning these to their mission and core values, at least in what is presented to the reader. The companies use the deidactic 'us, we, our' to imagine themselves as representing South Africa and all peoples who live in it. This is used to manufacture consent and togetherness of the companies and South Africans in the loss of Mandela. In some cases the prominence is either given to Mandela's imagery and company logos. This could be informative as it lays bare the main thrust of the advertisements.

Lonmin posted, in company colours, the words: "Thank you for changing the world, Mandela. We'll continue to be the catalyst for change." To the casual observer, the "we" referred to could be speaking of the global collective of people dedicated to creating democratic change, it could be referring to the progressive national forces that partnered Mandela in the fight for democratic change and national development, or it could refer to individuals variously involved with Lonmin who are united in working towards the kinds of change that Mandela fought for. The advert does not offer a qualifying description or explanation. It simply works with the assumption that there is a "we" that can be taken for granted here. However, the ambiguity of the "we" is realised when one notices that the advertisement is signed off "From all the workers at" Lonmin – where Lonmin is embossed, set apart or ensconced in the plain blue rectangular logo frame of the company. This makes it clear that the workers and Lonmin are somehow not together even though the company is defined and achieved through the efforts and sacrifices of the workers and the workers are in dialectical relations with the employer (Lonmin). Similarly, one cannot but notice how the "we" is simultaneously supported and contradicted by the use of English in message when the wish for Mandela to "rest in peace" is translated into four other languages. All this is set against a blank white page, shorn of any images that could remind readers of events that took place about a year before Mandela's death, on August 16 2012, in which 34 workers were massacred at Lonmin's Marikana mine while fighting against the company's refusal to pay decent wages. Perhaps one could start thinking that the word "catalyst" is in this advertisement to mostly reference how the platinum mined at Lonmin mines is used in motor vehicle catalytic processes? Surely the advert does not infer that the company is labelling itself an agent for the kinds of paradigmatic social-political and anti-apartheid change that Mandela fought for? The absence of background imagery denies the reader any

further clues. Lonmin, its workers and Mandela are hence, in this ambiguous way, tied together. There are, hence, no images of mine workers in their mining gear – which could have reminded readers of how miners have died for change that the company has resisted. The workers and their history of struggles, harking back from colonial and apartheid discriminations, to finally gain a fair share of their productive labour are thus cut out from an advertisement that ties them together with their employer and Mandela.

British American Tobacco (BAT) put out an advert which draws attention to the Legacy Canvas, featuring a series of hand-prints of famous world leaders, including Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, that was put together and sold as part of the historic work of South Africa hosting the Soccer World Cup in 2010. The hands prints of the advert form, in outline, the colour scheme and arrangement of the South African national flag. With the use of this canvas for purposes of paying tribute to Mandela, BAT was ‘worming’ its way into a brand association with FIFA Soccer World Cup and with Mandela when international and national pressures have driven away tobacco companies, using legal measures, because their products harm the health of consumers. The advert carries the words: “Every morning, we pass by your canvas. Every morning, we are inspired. To do better, to be better, to make our country what you dreamed it would be. Every morning you are with us.” It is signed off: “Rest in peace, Tata Madiba. From the employees at British American Tobacco South Africa.” The intention to create a bond of common purpose and identity between BAT and South Africa, using Mandela, is quite plainly visible in the use of the first person plural, “we” and its possessive form, “our”. Indeed, Mandela is referred to by the affectionate terms: Madiba and “Tata” (father). But all this only works to the extent that the company is able to erase the historical backcloth on which its history of harming the health of many South Africans is really located. Similarly, the attraction of the brand association with FIFA and the soccer World Cup is only attractive as long as one forgets the corruption and abuse of national resources that accompany this global showcase.

Discussion and conclusion

From the foregoing, it is clear that big business appropriated Mandela’s death, imagers, philosophies selectively and selfishly to advance capitalist agenda. The construction of South Africa as a nation has been episodic and characterised by ups and downs. Most importantly there are mega events like soccer, cricket and rugby that have been at the core of national identity construction. Mandela’s death provided South Africa with another event at buttressing

and constructing the fragile and mythic South African national identity. Global corporations operating in South Africa saw themselves as citizens, what Koji Kobayashi (2012)⁵ calls ‘corporate nationalism’ where corporates adopt local identities where the nation “becomes exteriorized through, and internalized within, the promotional strategies of transnational corporations” (Silk et al 2005, 7)⁶. Corporates, by fashioning themselves according to local identities, become central in national identity debates as an “analysis of corporate nationalism enables a critical inquiry into a contemporary articulation of the nation as a site of symbolic negotiations and struggles by various interest groups seeking to capitalize on national sensibilities, identities, and politics” (Kobayashi 2012, 44). When we speak of the nation we speak of insiders and outsiders. The nation exists in the context of outsiders. As Makhanya suggests, there is need for corporate South Africa to explicitly spell out how they intend living and fulfilling those deferred ideals in the Mandela legacy. Mandela’s death presents a moment of re-imagining the nation. Of course there had been a widely held myth that at his death blacks will wage a war against whites.

However, it seems the legacy and ideals espoused by Mandela that big business appropriated are those that make it convenient for business to operate. As Pilger (2007) suggests above, during his presidency Mandela enjoyed a cozy and close relationship with business. The advertisements fail to speak to decades of injustices perpetuated by some of the companies that celebrate Mandela’s legacy. For example the Group 5 engineering firm was accused of colluding with other companies in the construction of 2010 soccer World Cup stadia claims to have learnt how to make a difference in the lives that the company touches and yet corrupt practices not only benefitted the companies unfairly but robbed the government and the poor in the process. To many, Nelson Mandela sacrificially lived his life as an embodiment of suffering, triumph, selflessness, equality, human rights, democracy, justice and perseverance. Probably one of the most captivating moments was when, despite ailing health and having lost a granddaughter through a motor-accident, he braved a chilly evening to attend the opening ceremony of the 2010 World Cup which was hosted by South Africa. The hosting of the event was itself attributed to his magicity couched in the phrase ‘Madiba magic’. Therefore such commemorations which thoroughly depoliticise Mandela, empties the status quo of any

⁵ Kobayashi, Koji. 2012. ‘Corporate Nationalism and Glocalization of Nike Advertising in “Asia”: Production and Representation Practices of Cultural Intermediaries.’ *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 29: 42-61

⁶ Silk, M.L., Andrews, D.L., & Cole, C.L. (Eds.). (2005). *Sport and corporate nationalisms*. Oxford: Berg.


abusive and race-based power reducing it to a mere failure to take advantage of the level field Mandela created through reconciliation and the mythic rainbow nation. As Hickel (2010) says:

The reduction of racism to a color problem led the African National Congress to forsake its radical vision for a just society and satisfy itself instead with the darkening of the nation's political and economic elite. In the wake of that betrayal, the vast majority of black South Africans remain deeply impoverished, uncertain of how their new non-racial human rights have improved their lot. While mining magnates and plantation barons continue to rake in obscene profits, as glitzy malls rise and roads swell thick with luxury vehicles, poverty rates hover as high as 65%. The Rainbow Nation version of racial reconciliation exists at the expense of the millions that constitute this figure... By irresponsibly erasing the relations of power, exploitation, and domination that underpin structural racism like that which characterized apartheid, [these advertisements] dole out cheap reassurances and unwittingly [justify] white [capital's] fantasies about racial reconciliation.

To conclude, the corporates' commemoration of Mandela may also be related to the need for them to be seen aligning themselves with the correct political system on the one hand and the burden of guilt that Mandela afforded them, that of privilege and exploiting the poor masses into modern day slavery. Mandela, even though stripped of his political belonging by whoever appropriated his image and name for different ends, belonged to the ANC and in celebrating his death some companies were cementing their relationship to the ANC. Thus the "we, us, our" that the companies used in their advertisements may also refer to the perceptions of the powerful, thus the powerful in society speak for the powerless masses. Anderson (1983) argues that such formations of the nation draw from threats and fears from exclusion and marginalisation from the emerging nationally imagined community. To protect themselves, corporates marshal symbols that resonate with society aligning them with the 'South African experience'. As shown in the advertisements, they give an impression of advancing the elusive South Africa that Mandela imagined.

Thank you for
showing the world
Madiba.
We continue to
be the catalyst
for change.

Hamba kahle
Tata
1918 - 2013
You've made us all one family.



1918 - forever.



1918 - forever.

Pick n Pay



**Rest in the peace
you gave us.**

From the heart of South Africa to all corners of the land, your loss is felt. Our greatest tribute to you is to carry on in your memory by continuing to work for peace, understanding and freedom for all. By living up to your legacy, we promise that you will live on.

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela 1918 - 2013



The Legacy Canvas was purchased in August 2011 by BAT South Africa and is housed at its head office in Stellenbosch.

Every morning, we pass by your canvas. Every morning, we are inspired.
To do better, to be better, to make our country what you dreamed it will be.
Every morning you are with us.

Rest in Peace Tata Madiba. From the employees at British American Tobacco South Africa.

World for have an enduring reference across the region. While Mr Mandela's overseas trips to the UK and US also being during and after his presidency in various capacities. His visits left his home with long lasting memories and the inspiration to...

... as well as later being awarded the Gandhi Peace Prize in 2000. The high esteem in which Mr Mandela is held in India is evident...

... Madiba's deeds and cause found themselves projected onto Asian popular culture. Beyond a famous Hong Kong rock band which receives about 300 million search queries a day, turned its home page all grey in mourning, while its death dominated major television stations.

... Via de Wash is group MD of The Beijing Auto. He can be reached at chelo@group5.com

... the European measurement of the demands of former Soviet master Russia, which controls the flow of cheap natural gas needed to avert off bankruptcy.

... At City Hall, demonstrators lobbed a Molotov cocktail from a window into a police truck before the officers finally withdrew.



Farewell Tata

As we mourn the passing and celebrate the life of this great human being Nelson Mandela, we should take time to reflect on what we can do to better the lives of those we touch in celebration of his memory.

Madiba you have taught us all tolerance, humility, forgiveness and selflessness, but also to be bold and stand firm for what is right and what we believe in. Thank you for what you have given us.

Our sincere condolences to the Mandela family.

Lala ngoxolo Madiba lala ngoxolo (Rest in Peace).

GROUP FIVE
structured ingenuity

On behalf of Group Five Management and Employees

Discussion and Conclusion

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