

**“TO HEAL THE WOUNDS”: NAMIBIAN OVAHERERO’S
CONTESTS OVER COMING TO TERMS WITH THE
GERMAN COLONIAL PAST**

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Abstract

KARIE L. MORGAN: “To Heal the Wounds”: Namibian Ovaherero’s Contests over
Coming to Terms with the German Colonial Past
(Under the direction of Margaret Wiener)

This dissertation describes why events of 100 years ago, during the German colonial period, remain so salient for many Ovaherero today as well as what it means to them to come to terms with that past. A national contest emerged about whether and how to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 1904-1907 Herero genocide, or war, in Namibia. These commemorations and their planning illustrate some of the social and political context in which restorative justice has proceeded. Fissures among Herero and Namibian communities emerge in the commemorations as well as contests over the production of accounts of the past within Namibia. Different versions of the past circulated within different communities and came into conflict in the context of the commemorations and the broader restorative justice project. These divergent histories all had to be reconciled, even if temporarily, for the purposes of bringing multiple parties together to address an agreed upon past through restorative justice. Remembering for the past for Ovaherero, generally and 1904-1907 in particular, incorporates narratives, embodied memory, and daily practice. Because remembering for Ovaherero makes such use of contemporary contexts of suffering as prompts to talk about the past, remembering the past has much to do with how the past is felt in the present. As some Ovaherero pursued restorative justice with Germany, meanings of these attempts were constantly framed and re-framed and restorative justice ideas were

negotiated with Herero understandings of the impact of the past in the present. Finally, I argue that restorative justice as cultural practice produces new social forms—understandings of the past, relationships, and subjectivities. For Ovaherero, this process has created new “truths” about the past, shaped the role of their ancestors as *victims*, and focused the forms of violence remembered into those pertinent to claims of genocide.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| ACTA | Alien Tort Claims Act of 1789 |
| BAB | Basler Afrika Bibliographien |
| DTA | Democratic Turnhalle Alliance |
| Genocide Committee | Coordination Committee for the First Official Commemoration of the Ovaherero Genocide |
| ICC | International Criminal Court |
| ICJ | the International Court of Justice at The Hague |
| NBC | Namibian Broadcasting Corporation |
| NUDO | National Unity Democratic Organisation |
| NaDS | Namibisch-Deutsch Stiftung (Namibian-German Foundation) |
| NPCC04 | National Preparatory Committee for Commemoration of 1904 |
| OPO | Ovamboland People's Organization |
| PLAN | People's Liberation Army of Namibia |
| SWA | the German colony of Südwest Africa (South West Africa) |
| SWANU | South West Africa National Union |
| SWAPO | South West African Peoples Organization, the organization working towards Namibian Independence |
| Swapo | South West African Peoples Organization, the political party that succeeded SWAPO with the first Namibian elections |
| UNAM | University of Namibia |

INTRODUCTION

I think we're here, but only in a statistical way. Something like that rock over there is just about 100% certain—it knows it's there, so does everybody else. But our own chances of being right here right now are only a little better than even—the slightest shift in the probabilities and we're gone—schanpp! like that... Forty years ago, in Südwest, we were nearly exterminated. There was no reason. Can you understand that? *No reason*. We couldn't even find comfort in the Will of God Theory. These were Germans with names and service records, men in blue uniforms who killed clumsily and not without guilt. Search-and-destroy missions, every day. It went on for two years. The orders came down from a human being, a scrupulous butcher named von Trotha. The thumb of mercy never touched his scales... We have a word that we whisper, a mantra for times that threaten to be bad. Mba-kayere... It means "I am passed over." To those of us who survived von Trotha, it also means that we have learned to stand outside our history and watch it, without feeling too much. A little schizoid. A sense for the statistics of our being. One reason we grew so close to the Rocket, I think, was this sharp awareness of how contingent, like ourselves the Aggregat 4 could be—how at the mercy of small things... what was alive is only an Aggregat again, an Aggregat of pieces of dead matter, no longer anything that can move, or that has a Destiny with a shape...(Pynchon 1973:362).

This conversation between the Herero leader of the *Schwarzkommando* (Black Command)¹ and a US Army lieutenant is extracted from a fictitious account of the final months and the immediate aftermath of the second World War in Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* in which Germans formed exiled Herero survivors of the 1904-1907 genocide in the German colony of South West Africa (SWA) into a Schwarzkommando. It is surprising that Hereros (which I refer to as *Ovaherero*)² and the colonial war, or genocide that their ancestors fought with German colonial troops 100 years ago should appear in American fiction.³ Both had largely escaped the notice of the rest of the world until recently,

when talk of healing metaphorical social wounds of this past has captured national and international attention.

The passage above is telling of a sense of the precariousness of communities and cultural practices for Herero descendents of the 1904-1907 genocide in SWA (now Namibia). Namibian Ovaherero cannot conceive of why German colonists went from being their purported friends one day to their betrayers or even killers the next, much less make sense of the causes of such extensive brutality a century ago. Herero deaths, poisonings, incarcerations, and their incorporation into a system of forced labor were perpetrated by real people, soldiers and others who represented Germany and who had previously pretended partnership with Ovaherero.

Unlike Pynchon's character Enzian, however, Ovaherero today do not stand aside from their history, they live with community, family, and individual wounds of these past experiences. In many ways, Ovaherero today live a present formed by these experiences of their ancestors 100 years ago. This past continues to be construed as a source of suffering for descendents of those who experienced German colonialism. So long as these "wounds" fester, many Ovaherero feel they cannot move on and make good lives for their families or see their communities thrive. "We can forgive, but we cannot forget," explained many Ovaherero.

While the history of German colonialism and the Herero rebellion or war in SWA had been largely forgotten in Germany by the end of the Second World War and was subsequently eclipsed by the immediate needs of contending with the Holocaust, Pynchon imagines a wholly different role for Germany's forgotten colonial subjects. For the Nazi regime in *Gravity's Rainbow*, Ovaherero in Germany play a role as future executors of Nazi

expansionist strategies. For the British, the matter of Ovaherero residing in the land of their colonizer is mobilized as a tactic of psychological warfare, to suggest German vulnerability in the presence of seemingly domesticated former colonial subjects.⁴ The exiled Ovaherero themselves, however, live a bitter political struggle, emphasizing in symbolic practices⁵ a sense of cultural despair with some even adherent to a seemingly ironic program of racial suicide, to “finish the extermination the Germans began in 1904” (Pynchon 1973:317).⁶ Pynchon’s characterization of these various players’ regard for Ovaherero offers a concise illustration of an instant of a present reality, to be discussed later, of the use of the past of 1904-1907 by other parties as Ovaherero themselves attempt to engage Germany and the Namibian government in a struggle for control over the use of “their own” past and to recover an imagined cultural life of the past.

Colonial War and Genocide

Between 1904 and 1907⁷ in what was then German South West Africa, 60,000 to 80,000 Ovaherero perished (approximately 80 percent of the Ovaherero population at that time) as a consequence of fighting with German *Schutztruppe* (colonial troops) (Drechsler 1980:214). Some Ovaherero died in direct combat with German troops, others starved and dehydrated after they fled into the Kalahari Desert to escape German troops, and still more perished from brutal conditions in German *Konzentrationslagern* (concentration camps). Since the 1960s, this series of events has become widely known as a “genocide”; however, certainly not by all to whom this history holds meaning.

Several professional historical accounts and Herero oral histories suggest that Ovaherero revolted against German colonial rule (and a land shortage, in particular) to begin

the fighting in Okahandja on January 12, 1904. However, a recent account that builds on another historian's work, finds that the war arose out of a series of misunderstandings due to German settler paranoia about rebellion (Gewald 1999:141-191). Attempts at negotiating an end to the fighting were thwarted by the German Kaiser Wilhelm II's order to engage in an offensive against the Herero population, for the pursuit of which he soon appointed Lieutenant-General Lothar von Trotha.⁸ German troops and Herero fighters engaged in a number of separate battles in the following months as Ovaherero retreated northeast across central Namibia towards the Waterberg plateau.

In mid-August von Trotha began his plan to encircle the Ovaherero at Waterberg for a final defeat and annihilate them, hunting down those few who may escape. Indeed, von Trotha's troops cordoned off other escape routes leaving defeated Ovaherero to flee towards the Kalahari desert (known as the *Omaheke* to Ovaherero), on the other side of which was the relative safety of British Bechuanaland (now Botswana). German troops pursued the Herero groups, driving them away from wells and poisoning the water. Some Ovaherero fled northward when war broke out or were even able to escape north once in the Omaheke. A few groups managed to hide out in central Namibia throughout the following several years. Many who were not killed or captured by troops died of dehydration and exhaustion and merely 1000 reached Bechuanaland (Drechsler 1980:166).

At the beginning of October, von Trotha's *Vernichtungsbefehl* (extermination proclamation) was read aloud in Otjiherero to prisoners of war after the hanging of some prisoners sentenced to death by a field court martial. Printed copies were distributed and the remaining prisoners were released into the Omaheke to carry the message. The *Vernichtungsbefehl*, now cited as primary evidence of Germany's intent to commit genocide,

declared that all Ovaherero found within German territory would henceforth be killed on sight.

By the end of 1904, social and political pressure in Germany forced the Kaiser to accept the surrender of the Ovaherero. He ordered the construction of five concentration camps⁹ to contain those who surrendered and to facilitate a system of controlled labor to meet military and settler demands in the colony.¹⁰ Conditions in the camps were terrible and the mortality rate high, although some escaped.¹¹ Documented medical experiments were conducted on Hereros who died in these camps. Later, Herero skulls and preserved bodies were shipped to Germany for research purposes (Gewald 1999:189 n. 256).¹² The camps were finally closed in early 1908. Many Ovaherero and historians argue that Herero society as it existed prior to 1904 was destroyed through the events of this period, including the loss of Herero rights to land and cattle, in particular.

Approaching the Past

The decimation of much of the Herero population at the time of German colonialism has become more widely recognized outside of Namibia in the last few decades. Particularly with the emergence of Genocide Studies as a cross-disciplinary academic field, Herero experiences with German rule have been compared with other genocide experiences. Even after the violent acts committed by the Nazi regime against Jews and other minorities were termed *genocide* and codified in the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, setting aside the Holocaust from other genocides was important to survivors for some time. More recently, understanding genocides for their particularities has waned somewhat in favor of approaching genocide as a phenomenon, with

an aim towards preventing future genocides for pragmatic and moral reasons. It is in part from this perspective that the Herero genocide has circulated globally more recently. For example, it is included in an exhibit about other genocides at the Kigali Memorial Centre in Rwanda.

However, it's chiefly the approach some Ovaherero have used recently to engage Germany in coming to terms with the events of 1904-1907, what I term below *restorative justice*, which has brought such attention from international news media, scholars, and organizations.¹³ For instance, some non-governmental organizations concerned with genocide or human rights have publicly supported this Herero movement and Herero claims were also discussed at the 2001 UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance as part of a larger discussion about reparations for colonial crimes.¹⁴

Discussions about Herero experiences under German rule certainly belong within broader critiques of European colonialism that emerged in concert with independence struggles in various parts of the world and, for Ovaherero, the Namibian liberation movement. However, such talk has been even more salient in the post-colonial era as nations struggle with how to contend with the legacy of colonialism for social relations and civil society. Wole Soyinka (1999), for instance, refers to this phenomenon of a “weighty” past that begs reconciliation in his book: *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness*.

In particular, these questions have highlighted the role or problem of memory in postcolonial transformations in Africa. Memory in this context includes individual recollection, but it is particularly social or collective memory that has been framed as a burden and its public practice “in crisis” (Amadiume and An-Na'im 2000, Werbner 1998)

To Address the Pain of the Past

The past, far from disappearing or lying down and being quiet, has an embarrassing and persistent way of returning and haunting us unless it has in fact been dealt with adequately. Unless we look the beast in the eye we find it has an uncanny habit of returning to hold us hostage (Tutu 1999:28).

Despite attempts to “forget the past” or “move on,” Desmond Tutu, Anglican Archbishop and chair of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, argues that all people feel affected by past injustices until they have somehow been contended with. While he speaks about the necessity of addressing the apartheid past in South Africa, such a sense of the effects of past events on present lives is widely expressed and increasingly, so is the sense that something must be done to heal people in the ways they are affected by their own past or even that of their ancestors.

Many Ovaherero today describe what happened in SWA between 1904 and 1907 as “painful” and a source of social suffering. It is a past that causes suffering in the present. They have witnessed elders crying while telling stories of this time and they perceive the effects of these past injustices to significantly constitute their own lived experiences generations after the war. To some, Herero losses under German colonialism initiated what was to be almost a century of political and economic marginalization as well as great losses of land, cattle, and cultural heritage. Some even argue that their ancestors’ traumas, particularly rape, manifest in their own stigmatization among Ovaherero today.

At least since Namibian Independence in 1990, one group of Ovaherero under the leadership of Chief Kuaimo Riruako, who serves concurrently as Ovaherero and Ovambanderu Paramount Chief, Member of the Namibian Parliament, and President of the NUDO political party, has repeatedly tried to engage Germany in addressing the tragic experience of this past for Ovaherero. This group called upon Germany to recognize the

events of 1904-1907 as genocide, to admit its culpability, and to reconcile with Ovaherero and address these wrongs of the past. Such appeals included a public apology, reparations, and a lawsuit against the German government under the United States' Alien Tort Claims Act. Prior to 2004, such requests of Germany had only been vaguely acknowledged by German government officials visiting Namibia.

The remembrance of this series of events occurring during Germany's colonial possession of SWA has been made ever more public since Namibia's Independence, but particularly with the approach of the 100th anniversary of 1904. While one task of this anniversary was to remember the approximately 60,000 – 80,000 Ovaherero who perished in the context of colonial wars with Germany, this anniversary also sparked particular interest in reconciling this past within Namibia and between Namibia and Germany.

Indeed, just before 2004, public contests emerged in Namibia and particularly among Ovaherero about how best to understand and reconcile this past. Some Ovaherero, including Riruako's group, saw a "wound" that needed to be healed between Germany and Ovaherero. Other Namibians, particularly a group of more nationalist-oriented Ovaherero, understood the 1904 colonial war and its aftermath as the beginning of the liberation struggle, part of a shared national experience and history of Namibians resisting foreign rule.

It was not, of course, only with Independence or the 100th anniversary of the colonial war with Germany that Ovaherero started remembering the tragedies their ancestors experienced between 1904 and 1907. However, what is new is the means of bringing these memories to the attention of Germany, if not the world, as well as attempting in some way to come to terms with this past beyond individual coping mechanisms.

What some Ovaherero have engaged with, and what others have mobilized against, is a growing worldwide movement that aims to achieve justice through discursive means and symbolic reparations. A movement that began in 1952 with restitution offered by West Germany to Israel and Jewish victims of the Holocaust has since manifested itself in group apologies, reparations, tribunals, and truth commissions. These practices attempt to create forums for public discussion about contentious pasts, to allow victims opportunities to therapeutically talk about their experiences and help to create a public record of events and actors involved, or to improve present social relations through shared discussions.

Indeed that it is Germany to which Ovaherero have made claims about addressing past injustices is an important part of this Herero movement's context. Not only was this global movement initiated by West Germans, but the very question of the relationship between collective responsibility and identity was raised by numerous groups of Germans following the Nazi Holocaust. During the 1950s in Germany, the question of collective guilt was linked with a political and moral challenge to *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* ("manage the past"). In the 1980s, these discussions were further elaborated by German historians concerned with the moral and political implications of *Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* ("coming to terms with the past"). German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, a prominent figure in the German *Historikerstreit* (Historians' Debate), argues that German identity and individual Germans' identities are inextricably linked with history so that one cannot separate the culpability of ancestors from that of Germans today (1988). Germany has certainly figured prominently in the emergence of these conditions for apologies and reparations.

Desmond Tutu uses the term *restorative justice* refer to a range of social practices and discourse that acknowledge the varied ways in which the past may be felt to impact

people's lives and critically engage with perceived wrongs of the past in ways that aim to right such injustices. At its core, it is an approach to addressing conflicts and their repercussions. It is framed in opposition to retributive forms of justice, and may be used as an alternative or complement to other mechanisms for achieving justice, such as through legal processes.

Restorative justice has proven a particularly attractive approach to people trying to come to terms with crimes against humanity, when it seems impossible to achieve a punishment that is severe enough to address the crime. Jacques Derrida argues that it is such crimes' violation of the notion of humans as sacred that drives the "geopolitics of forgiveness," supplying discourse and legitimation (2001:30)¹⁵. In other words, restorative justice has been used when victims feel that legal recourse is insufficient.

Restorative justice has also been called upon in the context of societies emerging from civil conflict (often referred to as "societies in transition" or "divided societies") with the aim of social restoration, re-establishing the more harmonious social relationships existent prior to conflict. Indeed it is the reconciling of groups separated by conflict that Tutu argues is the primary aim of restorative justice. "While the Allies could pack up and go home after Nuremberg, we in South Africa had to live with one another" (1999:21). In other words, restorative justice emphasizes the value, indeed the necessity, of constructing a society of productive social relationships post-conflict.

However, such congenial relationships may not have existed prior to social conflict. Such a concept of conflict that informs this notion of restorative justice aims is ahistorical. Rwanda serves as a vivid example that severed social relationships are rarely, if ever, a consequence of a discrete event. In this instance, tensions between ethnic groups arose from

colonial era ideologies of race.¹⁶ What, in fact, may be required is the construction of new social relationships in ways that affirm the common humanity of all parties.¹⁷

While this term *restorative justice* is not wholly satisfactory, particularly for its misleading allusion to some previous state of social harmony, it does encapsulate the variety of practices for addressing wrongs in unique fashion—group apologies, truth commissions, reparations—that are most productively considered together. I also find Tutu’s emphasis on the primacy of restoring social relationships when addressing past wrongs to be particularly critical aspect of any such practices.¹⁸ Tutu implies that this sort of conflict resolution is particularly meaningful to Africans because it responds to an African concept of the individual’s inextricable relationship to others, known in several Bantu languages as “ubuntu” (1999:31). As Tutu explains, ubuntu refers to the essence of being human:

...my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in [others]. We belong in a bundle of life. We say, ‘a person is a person through other people’ (in Xhosa *Ubuntu ungamntu ngabanye abantu* and in Zulu *Umntu ngumuntu ngabanye*). I am human because I belong, I participate, and I share (1999:34-35).

An individual who is said to have ubuntu is open to and affirming of others because of the understanding that one “belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are” (Tutu 1999:35). Tutu and others argue that restorative justice is, in fact, characteristic of African jurisprudence, where the central concern is with healing relationships and communities in the spirit of ubuntu, rather than with punishment (1999:54, Wilson 2001:9, Forsberg 2003:78). For these reasons, I will continue to use the term *restorative justice* throughout this dissertation as short-hand for a globally emerging approach to addressing wrongs (by which groups intend to engage with others involved to

bring about a sense of having contended with variously felt impacts of gross injustices) and its associated discourse, practices, and networks.

Restorative justice as social practice

Many clichés circulate within the broader discourse of restorative justice that attempt to encapsulate the particular intentions of practitioners, such as “righting past wrongs,” “coming to terms with the past,” and “restoring relationships and imbalances.” The implied notion is that if this past could somehow be undone or changed, the present would be significantly altered, indeed bettered. In the absence of time machines or non-linear conceptions of time, groups conceptually seek to do something to the past to change its effect on the present. A large part of what this means in practice, I suggest, is reconceptualizing the meanings of the past in question. Restorative justice practice then intersects with the ways in which the past is communicated by groups seeking to address the past. In what follows, I aim to trace how the pursuit of restorative justice affects how this past is understood, how narratives and meanings of this past are changed. What are the effects for histories, oral and written, of a group practicing restorative justice? If restorative justice effectively becomes a new site of history-making, how are other sites impacted and the histories they produce and reproduce?

Restorative justice assumes two understandings of what happened in a given past, that of perpetrators and that of victims. One implicit aim of such an approach must be to devise an interpretation with which both parties agree so that responsibility can be claimed and the injustice can be dealt with in some manner. Some aims of restorative justice, such as voicing silenced histories or forming a complete account of an event, are explicitly included in

discussions about how to come to terms with the past. What if common history among either group doesn't exist precisely as such before restorative justice practice commences? How might some accounts be highlighted and others side-lined in the interest of asserting a group understanding of the past from which to proceed with restorative justice?

As I discuss in the following chapter, human rights is a very significant facilitator of restorative justice. How do human rights and other such supporting discourses intersect with the practice of restorative justice? How do the ideas of restorative justice, as a global discourse, articulate with situations in which they're mobilized? How do notions of victims and perpetrators or truth and justice develop through such practices?

Over the course of these chapters I aim to explore how the practice of restorative justice acts to produce new understandings of the past and its relationship to present subjects. Even as Ovaherero have attempted to come to terms with the events of 1904-1907, they have (*re-*)produced the critical importance of the German-Herero past for their communities and families. I argue that restorative justice's achievements are realizable in the practice of restorative justice, in all of the seemingly insignificant ways that a common painful past and its relief have to be negotiated by stakeholders. At the same time that the process of pursuing restorative justice offers opportunities (for what appears to many as morally good) to bring pasts that have been silenced into the open and to construct more engaged relationships between groups, it also stands to shape the presence of the past in unanticipated ways. I argue that it is particularly via the practices of pursuing restorative justice that "wounds" of the past might be healed, rather than in the intended outcomes of any given restorative justice practice. More specifically I mean that it is possible new feelings about relationships between victims and perpetrators as well as new frameworks for interpreting the past may emerge

largely outside of any particular act of restorative justice. Simply, a truth commission, an apology, or reparations are not enough. Their possible significance emerges out of complex social practices.

Research Contexts

Namibia

“Namibia: Land of Contrasts” is a slogan that has been used to promote tourism in Namibia.¹⁹ The slogan intends to evoke images like that of towering dunes of red sand and lush Makalani palm trees, quaint German architecture and large African mammals, the world’s largest open pit uranium mining operation and the practice of semi-nomadic pastoralism. However, it unintentionally alludes to innumerable social “contrasts” shaped in part by variations in environment, but especially by history.



Figure 1: Map of Namibia²⁰

Namibia's population, totaling 1.8 million at the last national census in 2001, is sparsely and unevenly distributed over the country, with an average population density of 2.1 persons per square kilometer, a consequence of the arid climate such that water is scarce overall and large areas of the country are inhabitable by humans.²¹ While about two-thirds of Namibians resided in rural areas at the time of census, most in the north and northeast, overall rates of urban growth have been increasing over the last several decades (Mendelsohn et al. 2002:163).

To an extent, these residence patterns reflect migration and settlement patterns of different ethnic groups as well as strategies for negotiating low average and highly variable rainfall. However, they also result of more recent contests over land and resources, including land acquisition and allocations during the German colonial period, as well as government policies (particularly those of the South African administration) in the last 100 years regarding population management or social control. Consequently, the population is highly segregated along linguistic or ethnic boundaries. In particular, rural populations tend to be more segregated than people living in urban areas (Mendelsohn et al. 2002:165).

There are twenty-five languages or major dialects spoken in Namibia, most of which are identified with language communities in northern Namibia (Mendelsohn et al. 2002:164). These belong to three language families: Bantu (languages spoken by Owambo, Herero, Kavango, Caprivian, and Tswana peoples), Indo-Germanic (languages spoken by Afrikaner, German, and British peoples), and Khoesan (languages spoken by the San/Bushman, Nama, and Damara peoples). As of the last census in 2001, the group of languages/dialects spoken in most Namibians' homes is Oshiwambo (48 percent), followed by Nama/Damara Khoekhoe (11 percent), Afrikaans (11 percent), Kavango (10 percent), and Otjiherero (8 percent). Of particular relevance to this dissertation are the Otjiherero- and German-speaking populations which were recently estimated at 130,000 and 25,000 respectively.²²

Although the Namibian government has elected to refer to different cultural groups according to home languages, as reflected in the census categories, "tribal" and "racial" identities remain very salient to Namibians although their origins can be traced historically. Namibians readily identify one another in the following broad categories that are understood to represent racial groups: *Blacks*, *Whites*, and *Coloureds*.²³ Although I find their use a very

imperfect solution to ethical questions about discussing groups of people, these are identifiers I have elected to use in this dissertation because of their socio-historical relevance. To be clear, I take these as labels of sociocultural categories and not of race.

Namibia suffers greater income inequality than any other country in the world, a consequence of historic disparities in land allocations and other apartheid era policies. Indeed, shortly after Independence, the richest one percent of Namibians consumed more in value than the poorest 50 percent combined and this gap has hardly narrowed in the following two decades (Sherbourne 2009:6). Thus, while Namibia is externally ranked as a lower middle income country, international measures of development (human development index), poverty (human poverty index), and equity (Gini coefficient) vary significantly across Namibia's regions as well as across and within rural and urban communities (Mendelsohn et al. 2002:188-189).

Land Reform

Land ownership, or more specifically commercial land reform, has been a contentious issue in Namibia since Independence as it clearly embodies different meanings for different groups.²⁴ For example, for many Black Namibians today, it reflects historical patterns of oppression and the basis of much suffering from poverty today. For many White Namibians, land reform represents their increasing exclusion from Namibian society and a threat to families' livelihoods. As of 1991, when the Namibian government first took up the question of land reform, national parks comprised about 14 percent of Namibia, 57 percent was freehold commercial land, and about 27 percent communal land (Sherbourne 2009:321). Most of this commercial land was owned by individuals, of which Black owners constituted only about three percent (Sherbourne 2009:321-322). Since this time, approximately 11

percent of available commercial farmland was redistributed via the Namibian government's programs (Sherbourne 2009: 328-330).

National discussions about land dispossession typically passes over land occupations prior to the late 19th-century and begins with the period of German colonialism, during which land was privatized by Germans and areas occupied by indigenous groups began to be formally defined. By 1902, six percent of Namibia was freehold commercial farmland, 30 percent was recognized communal land, and the rest was either government land or unallocated (Mendelsohn et al. 2002:134). With the end of wars between Germany and Ovaherero and Namas, the land of these groups was confiscated by Germany and reallocated such that by 1911, about 21 percent was freehold farmland and only nine percent was communal land (Mendelsohn et al. 2002:135). Figure 2 depicts this dramatic shift in land allocations, a loss of land which many Ovaherero today cite as one of the greatest consequences of the events of 1904-1907.

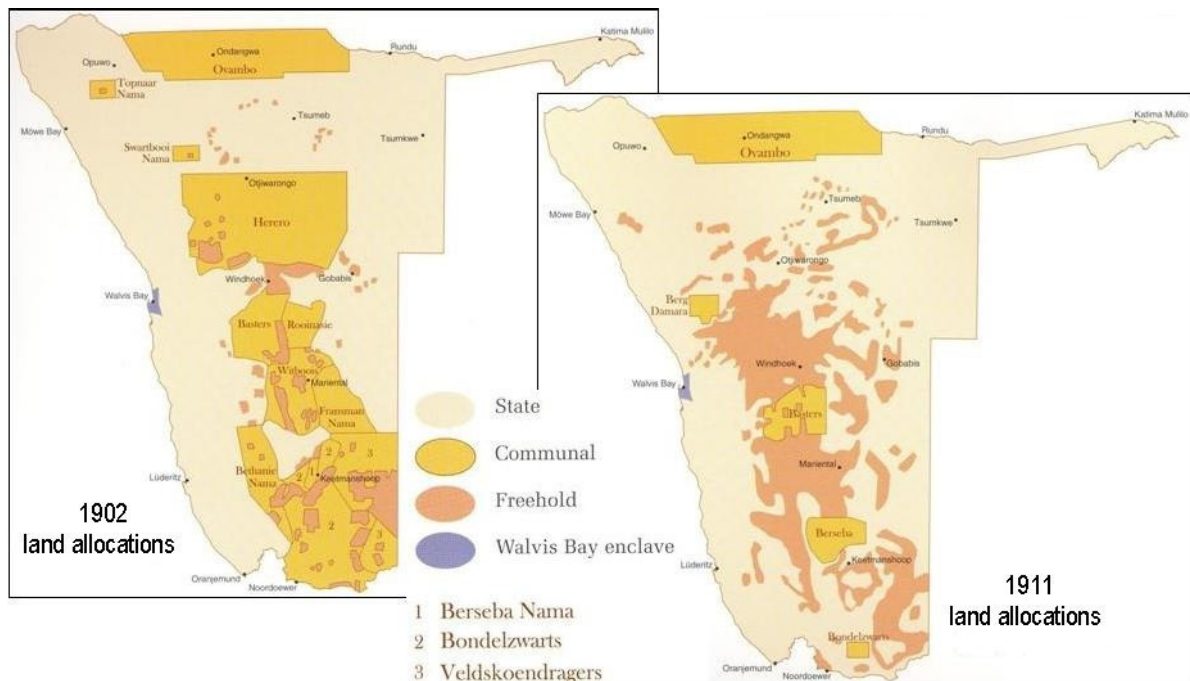


Figure 2: Land allocations relative to German wars with Ovaherero and Nama²⁵

After SWA became a mandate of South Africa, new laws encouraged people of European descent to buy farms such that relative allocations of freehold farmland continued to increase. Land allocations shifted substantially again with the establishment of native reserves following the Odendaal Commission's 1964 proposals. As the population of each major ethnic group was consolidated, as much as possible, into separate areas, some unsuitable commercial farmland was reallocated for this purpose such that freehold land was diminished to about 44 percent (Mendelsohn et al. 2002:137).

Fieldwork Sites

This dissertation is the result of 26 months of ethnographic research in Namibia between 2002 and 2005, most of which was at three cities/towns. I first made contacts in Windhoek, Namibia's capital, between June and August 2002 and again between February and April 2003. I then moved to Otjiwarongo (Otjozondjupa Region) from May to December 2003. Most of my interviews were conducted between August 2004 and September 2005 while I lived in Okakarara (Otjozondjupa Region) and made short trips to Windhoek (Khomas Region). To access people planning the commemorations in 2004 as well as those involved in promoting restorative justice, I made short visits to Windhoek almost once a month. However, it was in Okakarara that I found a research home and a family.



Figure 3: Inset of Namibian map highlighting my field sites²⁶

Okakarara is a small town located 30 kilometers south and 72 kilometers east of Otjiwarongo. Its estimated population is 5000,²⁷ most of which are Otjiherero-speaking residents, evidence of the area having been part of a designated homeland, “Hereroland,” under the 1951 South African Bantu Authorities Act. It consists of two proper residential areas – Opamue (the former enclosed area for Whites at the outskirts of the town) and Okakarara (the former Black area).

Okakarara is the closest town (approximately 30 kilometers) to the Waterberg National Park which draws many tourists, some of whom make a short stop in Okakarara.²⁸ Its marginality to both more prosperous parts of the country and Waterberg tourism became vivid as the paved road abruptly ended at the entrance to town where a gravel surface began. Although not a crowded town, as you approached and drove through you must watch for goats and cows. The government hospital occupied a large block of land near the town entrance, at the beginning of the short non-residential part of the main street. There were two gas stations, one of which served largely as a taxi stand for those wishing to go to

Otjiwarongo or Windhoek. Lining the main street during most of my residence in Okakarara was the police station, town council building, community hall, post office/telephone company building, Lutheran church, a grocery store (owned by the one White family I knew to work in town), the primary and secondary schools, and a large “bottle store” (for alcohol) and adjacent “casino.” There were countless, less formal businesses that people ran out of their homes or in other small, simple or even makeshift structures (e.g., hair salons, political party headquarters, mechanics, food & alcohol shops, ‘restaurants’/bars). There were always lots of people walking up and down the main street during the day and others sitting in groups at the roadside or chatting with others along the route. It gave the impression of being quite busy in the middle of the day.

Families lived in brick houses on sandy plots that lined the streets extending one to three blocks, perpendicular to the main street. Although all houses in town may be connected to utilities, the municipality frequently turned off the electricity or water at the behest of the utility companies due to debts owed. While commercial farms bordered the western edge, villages of various sizes and small settlements were widely spaced along the main gravel roads to the south and east. For example, my family’s village (or rather the village of my friend’s mothers), Okarokape, was 15 kilometers east of Okakarara and approximately 10 kilometers west of a larger village, Otumborombonga, where one could buy petrol, diesel, and basic food.

Ovaherero

At the start of every interview with someone I perceived to be Omuhherero I asked: “do you consider yourself Omuhherero?” Every individual quickly affirmed her or his Herero identity except one journalist who challenged my question and asserted that there is no

singular group of Ovaherero. He went on to explain his identity by way of his parents' origins in eastern Namibia and alluded to their affiliation with Ovambanderu. While it's not remarkable that he would refuse to self-identify as Omuhherero given his parents' affiliation with Ovambanderu, his challenge to the notion of a Herero community was unique and revealing of some of what was at play in Herero identity politics. Despite numerous types of divisions and even historical evidence to the contrary, a common Herero identity continues to be imagined by many Ovaherero. Several Otjiherero-speaking groups are broadly recognized and included or excluded, as they also affiliate or disassociate themselves, from "the Herero" in particular contexts. A recent population estimate suggests that Otjiherero-speakers in Namibia number 130,000. Many Ovaherero implicitly accept that there is some Herero ethnic group or tribe.

Ovaherero generally think that "Herero" refers to an enduring, interlinked community living a particular culture that is only more recently facing encroachment from outside influences. Herero oral history understands Herero ancestors to be a singular group which then divided as they migrated south and east in Namibia. Historians, however, argue that a unified Herero society only emerged through explicit efforts in the wake of Herero chief Samuel Maharero's death in 1923 (Gewald 1999, Kruger 1999).

Early in the first millennium AD, the first nomadic pastoralists arrived in southwestern Africa. These pastoralists are thought to be ancestors of present-day Nama. Around 1400, it is thought that the first Owambo groups entered southwestern Africa, as the earliest wave of the Bantu migration to enter the area. The Ovaherero, who are also believed to have moved across the continent from the Great Lakes in the Bantu migration, are thought to have arrived around either 1100 (Gewald 1999:12) or 1500 (Dierks 2002:6).²⁹ These pastoralist

ancestors of Ovaherero were very socially and politically decentralized.³⁰ Indeed, prior to the second half of the 19th-century, no centralized leadership was recognized except for patri-clan heads.³¹ However, with the expansion of the Cape colonial frontier into the area during the 19th-century, Herero society began to adapt by becoming increasingly more centralized (Gewald 1999:12).

Ovaherero developed separate groups and identities based on early migrations and environmental determinants such that three broad divisions exist historically: the Ovaherero, the Ovambanderu, and Ovahimba.³² All three, as well as further sub-identities (i.e., Ovatjimba, Ovazemba, and Ovakwandu), speak dialects of the same Bantu language, Otjiherero, and they share a number of cultural practices related to social organization, preferred economy, cosmology, epistemology and spatio-political organization” (Gewald 1999:12). By the 19th century, Ovaherero were residing in the central Namibian Highveld, Ovambanderu³³ were at the western edge of the Kalahari (central-eastern Namibia), and Ovahimba were in the Kaokoveld (northwestern Namibia). The Ovahimba in particular stand apart visually in their practice of wearing handmade leather clothing, while Ovaherero and Ovambanderu wear Euro-American clothing or “traditional” attire influenced by German colonial clothing styles.³⁴

I use the term *Otjiherero-speaking people* to refer to all of these groups and each particular group term when appropriate. Because Otjiherero grammar does not easily meld with English grammar, I use the Otjiherero term *Ovaherero* (or *Ovahimba* or *Ovambanderu*) to connote many Herero individuals and *Omuherero* to connote one Herero individual, but I use *Herero* as the adjectival form.³⁵

Today, these various identities of Otjiherero-speaking people are sometimes contentious and have come to be segmented and configured in particular contexts via other differences. First, according to some Ovaherero, there are different levels of cultural and linguistic practice that vary by region. My Otjiherero professor at the University of Namibia explained pronunciation differences between Otjiherero-speakers in Kaokoland (a pre-Independence political area, approximately the Kunene Region of today) and those in central Namibia and described the former as purer. Similarly, I heard Ovaherero in central Namibia refer to some words or phrasing as “deep Herero” which was associated with the Otjiherero spoken in Kaokoland. In a one-on-one conversation, my instructor’s daughter (whose family was from the Opuwo area of the Kunene) also explained to me that the difference in cultural practices between central Namibian Ovaherero and those in Kaokoland is hierarchical, with the more northern Ovaherero being more fully Ovaherero. However, central Namibian Ovaherero regard Ovaherero in the Kaokoland area as more civilized than the Ovahimba of the area.³⁶ Spurred by a joke exchanged between Herero teachers in central Namibia, one teacher explained the humor to me by describing Himba sexual practices as animalistic, “like a bull mounting a cow.” Embedded in this joke was a perceived hierarchy of civility with Ovaherero on top, further from their origins.

Second, affiliation with a number of Namibian political parties overlays these differences of identity, even further distinguishing different sub-groups of each primary grouping.³⁷ Several Okakarara residents sketched the geographical distribution of Herero party identification at the time of my research as follows: Okakarara is affiliated with the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) and the National Unity Democratic Organisation (NUDO), Omaruru with the South West African Peoples Organization (Swapo), Omatjete

with DTA and NUDO, Otjinene with DTA, Opuwo with Swapo, and Okahandja with DTA. These affiliations are related to the party affiliations of local chiefs and, of course, emerge out of particular historical contexts.

My goal here is not to quantify party affiliations by area, but rather to make clear a few points about Herero party affiliation. First, Ovaherero widely understood party politics to divide an imagined, normative Herero community. Second, party affiliations in a given area reportedly coincided with those of area leaders. Political affiliation may then have subsumed affiliation with a national party as well as with traditional leaders. In a context in which the recognition of “traditional authorities” is regulated by the state (interpreted through the Traditional Authorities Act of 2000³⁸) and has been contested by some Ovaherero, the political affiliation of a traditional leader may matter.

Last, Herero men and women affiliate with both matrilineal (singl. *eanda*; pl. *omaanda*) and patrilineal (singl. *oruzo*; pl. *otuzo*) groups, the practice of double descent reckoning.³⁹ Herero society emerges out of clans: between 20 and 36 *Otuzo* and between six and nine *Omaanda* (Gewald 1999:41). Each is represented by a particular animal and associated with taboos regarding livestock ownership and consumption, especially in terms of the horn and color variation of cows.⁴⁰ This descent system proves crucial for sorting out succession and inheritance claims.⁴¹ However, at other times, one’s *Oruzo* and *Eanda* can serve as a means of creating connections. These clans are largely shared by all Otjiherero-speaking groups, helping to support ties between various communities.

All these differences among Otjiherero-speakers and even within the so-called “Herero” community now and in the past make it difficult to refer to discrete groups. It becomes similarly challenging to compose a group history that encompasses this flexibility

while still constituting a common historical experience. What remains important, however, is that these groups are construed as such in contrast to other groups by most Otjiherero-speakers.

The Emergence of a German Population in SWA

Prior to Germany claiming SWA as a colony at the Berlin conference of 1884-1885, where European colonial powers met to divide the African continent amongst themselves, German (Rhenish) missionaries and traders had been active in the area. Rhenish missionaries commenced projects in central SWA in the early 1840s but were not granted protection by the Prussian government.⁴² It wasn't until early 1884 that the (newly formed) German government granted protectorate status to lands in southern SWA that a Bremen merchant had acquired.⁴³ Later that year, Germany annexed the SWA coast, between the Orange River and the Kunene River excluding Walvis Bay, and these claims were formalized at the Berlin Conference. However, before Theodor Leutwein (territorial captain 1894-98, governor 1898-1905) was dispatched to SWA in 1893 with the mission of transforming SWA into an economically viable colony, various concession companies had effectively governed the region.

Due to economic and cultural pressures in Germany to establish settler colonies as well as demographic concerns in SWA territory, populating SWA swiftly became a primary focus of governmental and private colonial proponents (Walther 2002:9-27). A number of historians argue that especially in the wake of recent German political unification in 1870 and industrialization, SWA became a site for the "preservation" of *Deutschtum*, or a laboratory for the realization of particular *Deutschtum* ideals: "a hard-working, parsimonious, Protestant agrarian class filled with staunch nationalist values and devotion to

the emperor, with the 'traditional' German family at the core of society" (Walther 2002:2, Zantop 1997, Wildenthal 2001).⁴⁴

Government-organized and -funded initiatives to promote German emigration warranted even more investment as analyses about making the colony profitable highlighted the promise of livestock breeding for external markets, an economic activity that required a large settler population. Although originally intended as an interim measure until emigration initiatives were successful, former colonial soldiers comprised the majority of settlers from the beginning of Leutwein's administration as they were offered special privileges and financial incentives to accelerate colonization.

As the promotion of settlement increased, so too did concerns about defining the new German population in reaction to the increasing immigration of Afrikaans settlers, the threat of miscegenation to contemporary racial categories deemed necessary to the maintenance of Germany rule, and individuals not serving as good examples of *Deutschtum*. In response, "undesirable" individuals were deported back to Germany, social and legal measures were introduced to against those who lived with or married African women, German women were programmatically sent to SWA, children born of German-African parents were denied German citizenship, and an educational system was established to preserve *Deutschtum* in SWA youth (Walther 2002:9-85). By the beginning of the First World War, many immigrants had come to see SWA as their new homeland and began claiming a form of *Südwester* (Southwesterner) identity. Historian Daniel Walther asserts that this new identity was constituted both by settlers' affinity with SWA and their *Deutschtum* (2002:87).

At the conclusion of the war, Germany had to relinquish control of its colonial possessions because Germany was deemed unfit to govern colonies, according to the Treaty

of Versailles. SWA Germans as well as many parties in Germany opposed the treaty on these grounds and persisted in hopes of the colony's return or, even its independence, until the Second World War. In its new role as the administrator of SWA (due the League of Nation's new mandate system), the Union of South Africa recognized the political and economic values of trying to accommodate SWA Germans. SWA Germans, however, perceived South Africa (and the Afrikaner settlers it dispatched to SWA) as a threat to *Deutschtum* and focused their efforts on political and cultural survival amidst a sense of being made second class citizens.⁴⁵ In turn, efforts to preserve *Deutschtum* served as a rallying point and means of enforcing conformities among SWA Germans.

In exchange for cultural autonomy, SWA Germans tacitly supported the South Africa National Party's apartheid program. At the same time, they distanced themselves from other populations in the region as well as the Federal Republic of Germany. By this time, a SWA version of *Deutschtum* had developed in the context of SWA such that the present and past Germany no longer measured up to SWA Germans' notions of *Deutschtum*. Thus, a *Südwester* identity existed quite independently of notions of European *German* identity.

Organization of the Dissertation

In this dissertation, I describe why the German colonial past remains so salient for many Ovaherero and what it means to them to come to terms with that past. Because a national contest emerged about whether and how to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 1904-1907 Herero genocide or war in Namibia, I take the commemorations and their planning as an entry into understanding competing meanings of and processes for producing this past. I found that while many Ovaherero supported very public efforts to engage

Germany in restorative justice due to the present significance of 1904-1907, many of the same people said they attended the 2004 commemorations to learn about this past. This raised questions about how social memory and oral history were produced and transmitted as well as what sorts of understandings of the past developed greater status than others and the processes by which this happened. I understood the 2004 commemorations to be sites for learning about the past, spaces to create a sense of Herero unity, and part of the larger project by some Ovaherero to re-shape relationships to this past in the interest of “healing wounds.” Last, I focused on the intersection of human rights, restorative justice, and memory/history where I argue particular understandings of the past and subjectivity have been produced in contrast to those circulating in Herero families, which are the same painful memories that motivated those seeking restorative justice.

In the first chapter, I describe the planning of the 2004 commemorations of 1904 and as well as the commemorations and other events honoring the anniversary. I introduce this commemorative year to illustrate some of the social and political context in which restorative justice has proceeded, for to think of restorative justice as facing towards the past is a vastly oversimplified impression. Fissures among Herero and Namibian communities emerge in the commemorations as well as contests over the production of accounts of the past within Namibia. Chapter two sketches competing histories of the violence of the German-Herero past. These divergent histories all have to be reconciled, even if temporarily, for the purposes of bringing multiple parties together to address an agreed upon past through restorative justice. The third chapter describes how Ovaherero today learn about the past, their ancestors’ experiences with German colonial rule in particular. Because remembering for Ovaherero makes such use of contemporary contexts of suffering as prompts to talk about the

past, remembering the past has much to do with how the past is felt in the present. The fourth chapter outlines the restorative justice process and explores the meanings of specific restorative justice practices for Ovaherero. Finally, the fifth chapter argues that restorative justice as cultural practice produces new social forms—understandings of the past, relationships, and subjectivities. I discuss how ideas about human rights shape restorative justice processes and understandings of the past as well as relationships to the past for those involved

Notes

¹ This Schwarzkommando was first created to support a scheme for a Nazi empire in Africa and then to act as rocket technicians for the German military preparing rockets for a final stand. The fictional Herero speaker in this passage, Oberst Enzian, is the leader of the Schwarzkommando and a “half-breed” child of a European father and a Herero mother. A US Army lieutenant named Tyrone Slothrop asks Enzian about the Schwarzkommando and their rocket-building.

² In Otjiherero, the Bantu language spoken by Ovaherero, the prefix *Ova-* refers to people in the plural form and *Omu-* refers to individuals. Pool (1991) argues that the most probable meaning of the term is “the determined ones.” It recalls lore missionary Reverend Vedder recorded about a group who separated from the larger group, settled in the Kaokoveld (now northwestern Namibia) and were determined to stay there (1991:4).

³ Pynchon has referred to the Herero genocide in two fictional works-- *V.* (1963) and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973)-- as part of a larger indictment of Western colonialism and racism, extending into present life (Harris 2003).³ Pynchon describes the Herero genocide not only as a precursor to the Nazi Holocaust, but as part of a more extensive pattern of human history, what Pynchon identifies as “the imposition of a culture valuing analysis and differentiation on a culture that valued unity and integration (Seed 1988:243).

⁴ A radio broadcast by the fictitious British psychological warfare agency read: “Germany once treated its Africans like a stern but loving stepfather, chastising them when necessary, often with death. Remember? But that was far away in Südwest, and since then a generation has gone by. Now the Herero lives in his stepfather’s house. Perhaps you, listening have seen him. Now he stays up past the curfews, and watches his stepfather while he sleeps, invisible, protected by the night which is his own colour. What are they all thinking? Where are the Hereros tonight? What are they *doing*, this instant, your dark, secret children?” (Pynchon 1973:75). The clear warning to the imagined German listener to be cautious of the seemingly pacified and now impotent former colonial subject, suggesting even that colonial subjects are potentially more dangerous once “domesticated” and thereby intimately knowledgeable of the colonizer. This commentary dovetails with critical colonial scholarship examining the dangers of domestic colonial spaces.

⁵ For example, Pynchon has the Schwarzkommando, or “Zone-Hereros,” living in abandoned mine shafts which Ovaherero nick-named “Erdschweinhöhle” (Erdschwein, or aardvark, is an animal associated with the historically poorest Otjiherero-speaking group in Namibia, the Ovatjimba) as a bitter joke to comment on being made abject by surviving the genocide and living as exiles in Germany (1973:315). The particular group of Zone-Hereros attempting racial suicide refer to themselves as “Otukungurua” (Otu- designates the inanimate and the rising) rather than “Omakungurua” (Pynchon explains that Oma- refers to the living and human, but grammatically only Ovakungurua would refer to a human group) (1973:316-7). This particular group carry a knotless strip of leather to represent their disconnection from their cultural identity, being “dead to the tribe” (a critical practice that Pynchon says refers to Herero chiefs’ former practice of untying the preserved umbilical cord of each Herero who converted to Christianity via the Rhenish Missionary Society) (1973:316).

⁶ In this detail about Ovaherero committing racial suicide, Pynchon implicitly raises a question of the relationship of colonial subjects to the colonizer. Ovaherero’s program of “finishing the extermination” ironically challenges coloniality, illuminating the necessity of subject populations for colonizers.

⁷ While military operations against the Ovaherero officially ceased in 1906 (although the tracking and capturing or killing of Ovaherero in hiding during the wartime continued longer) and were ended by “imperial decree” in 1907, the incarceration of Ovaherero in concentration camps ended officially in early 1908 (Gewald 1999:141 n. 1). However, it is known as “1904-1907” to most people in Namibia and so I use this periodization of the war between Ovaherero and Germany for its social meaning.

⁸ Von Trotha had previous experience in colonial wars in German-East Africa (1894-1897) and in “the Boxer Rebellion” in China (1900).

⁹ The concept for concentration camps was borrowed from South Africa, where the British had used these to intern Afrikaners in what is known as the second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902).

¹⁰ Some large civilian companies, such as the Woermann shipping company (which was notably one of the early defendants of the lawsuit filed under the Alien Tort Claims Act) maintained their own camps.

¹¹ The following is an account from 1905 missionary chronicles about a concentration camp at Swakopmund:

[Herero prisoners of war] were placed behind double rows of barbed wire fencing...and housed in pathetic [jammerlichen] structures constructed out of simple sacking and planks, in such a manner that in one structure 30-50 people were forced to stay without distinction as to age and sex. From early morning until late at night, on weekdays as well as on Sundays and holidays, they had to work under the clubs of raw overseers [Knütteln roher Aufseher], until they broke down [zusammenbrachen]. Added to this the food was extremely scarce. Like cattle hundreds were driven to death and like cattle they were buried. (Gewald 1999:188)

See Erichsen (2003) for a description of conditions in one camp, Shark Island at Luderitz, where Herero and Nama prisoners of war were interned.

¹² There are connections between eugenics research conducted on Ovaherero and Nama who died in concentration camps and that of the Holocaust. Historian Frank Chalk describes the study of Herero children for German eugenics research just after the Herero genocide. Eugene Fischer, a prominent German eugenicist at the time, studied the children of German men and African women. He concluded that African blood made these children mentally and physically inferior to German children (Tucker 1998). Adolf Hitler read Fischer's book, *The Principles of Human Heredity and Race Hygiene*, and included Fischer's findings about Hereros in the chapter on "Nation and Race" in *Mein Kampf* (Chalk 2000). Also, Josef Mengele, Fischer's student, went on to become an infamous doctor at Auschwitz. See also Benjamin Madley (2005) "From Africa to Auschwitz: How German South West Africa Incubated Ideas and Methods Adopted and Developed by the Nazis in Eastern Europe." *European History Quarterly* 35(3):429-464.

¹³ Such organizations include Prevent Genocide International, the Society for Threatened Peoples, and the Namibian Society for Human Rights.

¹⁴ See the BBC World Service's "I have a right to: Article 2"
http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/features/ihavearightto/four_b/casestudy_art02.shtml, accessed March 15, 2010.

Inspired by Herero successes, a movement reportedly began recently in Tanzania to seek reparations from Germany for atrocities committed during the Maji Maji rebellion and is being coordinated by Dr. Bertram Mapunda, head of the History Department at the University of Dar es Salaam (http://www.itsabouttimebpb.com/Announcements/Justice_for_Maji_Maji.html, accessed March 15, 2010).

¹⁵ Derrida pins its import on the sacredness of the human and connection to Abrahamic (and particularly Christian) traditions. He further asserts a connection with Christianity to argue that "the 'globalization' of forgiveness resembles an immense scene of confession in progress...a process of Christianization which has no more need for the Christian church" (2001:31).

¹⁶ Historians trace the roots of the 1994 Rwandan genocide to ethnic identities created by early coloniality and complicated amidst the transition to independence.

¹⁷ In her reflections on her interviews with Eugene De Kock and experiences serving on the South African TRC, Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela (2003) describes how processes of "humanizing" perpetrators and victims work through dialogue about large scale violence. She argues that for perpetrators this process serves to both create accountability and to therapeutically heal:

It humanizes the dehumanized and confronts perpetrators with their inhumanity. Through dialogue, victims as well as the greater society come to recognize perpetrators as human beings who failed morally, whether through coercion, the perverted convictions of a warped mind, or fear.

Far from relieving the pressure on them, recognizing the most serious criminals as human intensifies it, because society is thereby able to hold them to greater moral accountability...[dialogue] also thereby invites him, if he can, if he dare, to negotiate the chasm between the monstrousness and the world of the forgiven. It thus encourages him to stop denying the suspected truth: that all along, he knew that he was human and knew right from wrong. The act of humanizing is therefore at once both punishment and rehabilitation (119-120).

¹⁸ This focus on using restorative justice to work towards the formation of social relationships that affirm everyone's humanity emerges from a number of different philosophies pertaining to a person's inherent responsibilities to another. From a Rights perspective, such as what Asad describes, "responsibility" means to be accountable to an authority for one's actions, to know that one deserves punishment for the failure to do one's duty – a duty that one could and should have done, and therefore another's right that the duty be performed (2003). For Tutu, it is South Africans' understanding of ubuntu through which restorative justice is articulated. He suggests that this foundational tenet of being human should be taken up by other societies or groups engaged in addressing injustices.

¹⁹ Until recently, the Namibian Tourism Board, a joint government-public company (parastatal) created with the passage of the Namibia Tourism Board Act of 2000, used this slogan to promote tourism abroad.

²⁰ Namibia Library of Dr. Klaus Dierks.

http://www.klausdierks.com/Namibian_Roads/Namibia.Road_Map.htm, accessed March 15, 2010.

²¹ The UN Population Division estimated the Namibian population at 2.07 million in 2007.

<http://www.unaidsrsta.org/countries/namibia>, accessed March 14, 2010). Rural areas in which Ovaherero reside in central Namibia have an even lower population density.

²² That I have found it very difficult to locate a population estimate for Ovaherero or German-Namibians is, by my interpretation, a reflection of the Namibian government's commitment to "anti-tribalism." In an attempt to further this end, the government categorizes people by language group rather than ethnic group.

²³ Even more derogatory versions of these terms may be used in personal conversations among individuals of the same category or in heated disputes between individuals of different categories.

²⁴ The Namibian government has attempted to change commercial land ownership in two ways: (1) the Affirmative Action Loan Scheme, which offered subsidized loans to previously disadvantaged Namibians who want to own commercial farm land and who meet particular criteria and (2) the National Resettlement Policy that resettles poor, landless, previously disadvantaged Namibians on Government-purchased commercial farms. Because of dissatisfaction with the progress of this policy reliant on a willing buyer-willing seller principle, the Namibian government has pursued expropriation of selected commercial farms. For an overview of the history and status of commercial land reform in Namibia, see Sherbourne (2009: 319-331).

²⁵ I created this figure from maps published in Mendelsohn et al. (2002:134-135).

²⁶ I made this map from Figure 1. Namibia Library of Dr. Klaus Dierks.

http://www.klausdierks.com/Namibian_Roads/Namibia.Road_Map.htm, accessed March 15, 2010.

²⁷ In 2001, the population was 3296 according to the 2001 census (Kuteue 2004b) and the Namibia Ministry of Agriculture, Water, and Forestry (<http://www.citypopulation.de/Namibia.html>; accessed December 15, 2009)

²⁸ Tourists seemed to stop in Okakarara as a cultural tourism experience. As one website advertises about Okakarara: "Today one can still observe the traditional way of life for the Herero." <http://www.namibia-travel.net/centralnamibia/okakarara.htm>, accessed March 15, 2010.

²⁹ German Rhenish missionary Heinrich Vedder described Herero origins in SWA as follows: “The Hereros with their coffee-coloured complexion, their tall, stately physique, their distinguished demeanour, their fine features, differ too much from the Negro-type to warrant our including them in the negro race without further investigation. The supposition has often been expressed that they might belong to the Hamite tribes of North Africa. If this be the case, this tribe must have emigrated thence in pre-historic times and have intermingled with Negro tribes in Central Africa and have come to the south of Africa after long nomadic migrations” (Hahn 1966:153). He describes a hierarchy of races common to 19th century colonial ideology. It is the same sort of typology used by the British in Rwanda that created divisions between Hutu and Tutsis and ultimately bred a context in which genocide was an outcome. I heard a similar characterization of Herero physique while I lived in Namibia. For example, an older German-Namibian farmer linked physical features with personality traits: “Kapuuo. That was a Herero, a Herero as I know them – tall, thin. Not like Riruako with big lips. He’s already cross-bred with Damara. All Herero I knew [growing up] were tall and not fat. Those Herero you could talk and walk and work with.” Combining this assessment with characterizations I heard Ovaherero make about Damara as lacking culture, a sense of family responsibility, and ethics I might infer from this man considered “full blood” Ovaherero to be “better” (i.e., less resistant, more compliant, or somehow more similar to German-Namibians) in particular ways than those who are perceived to have intermingled with the Damara communities (with which historians suggest Ovaherero have long resided). It could prove worthwhile to trace the possible implications of this hierarchy in Namibia, particularly in the context of the German-Herero war when Damara were living together with Ovaherero and were often not differentiated.

³⁰ Henrichsen argues that in the pre-colonial 19th-century Otjiherero-speaking people went through a process of re-pastoralisation, meaning that they consolidated Herero society based on livestock ownership and spatial mobility out of a situation in which they had lived as impoverished pastoralists and/or hunter-gatherers as, a strategic economic choice that integrated Herero society with the mercantile capitalist system expanding from the Cape Colony (Bollig & Gewald 2000:152).

³¹ Europeans who interacted with Ovaherero at this time remarked on the independence of the multitude of sub-groups of Ovaherero (Gewald 1999:13).

³² For possible meanings of these group names, see Rhenish Missionary Heinrich Vedder ‘s description of “the Herero” (Hahn *et al* 1966:155-6)

³³ For a description of Mbanderu history and culture, see for example Theo Sundermeier’s (1977) *Die Mbanderu: Studien zu Ihrer Geschichte und Kultur*.

³⁴ Women wear long dresses with petticoats while men wear uniforms resembling those of the German Schutztruppe. For a detailed discussion of Herero dress, see Hildi Hendrickson’s (1996) “Bodies and Flags: The Representation of Herero Identity in Colonial Namibia.”

³⁵ *Ova-* and *Omu-* are respectively the plural and singular prefixes for most Otjiherero nouns signifying people. Also, regarding my incorporation of Otjiherero spellings, I have indicated tonal sounds in some words/names by italicizing that letter as I do not have a font available that would better mark these letters.

³⁶ While visiting a Himba tourist village near Purros in Kunene Region (northwestern Namibia), my guide explained that Himba women just had to put on western clothing to become Herero. While I don’t consider this sort of cultural flexibility very accurate, I found his comment provoking for its illustration of each group’s orientation in regard to notions of “modern” and “western” as well as how each is negotiating changing socio-economic contexts.

³⁷ I discuss these different political parties in more detail in the second chapter.

³⁸ The act is to “provide for the establishment of traditional authorities and the designation, election, appointment and recognition of traditional leaders; to define the powers, duties and functions of traditional authorities and traditional leaders; and to provide for matters incidental thereto” (Government Gazette of the Republic of Namibia No. 2456, 22 December 2000, pp. 1-16)

³⁹ Married women affiliate with their husband's *oruzo*. For further discussion about the rules of double-descent for Ovaherero, see Vedder 1966, Gibson 1956, and Malan 1995.

⁴⁰ For instance, my friend Magord once explained a series of unfortunate events that affected her as a result of a kudu (*Ohorongo*) crossing the road in front of us while we were driving the previous week. At that moment she told me that the kudu is the animal of her *Oruzo* and that it was supposed to be bad luck that one crossed her path.

⁴¹ For example, although differences of opinion had divided the Mbanderu community for a decade previously, a public dispute erupted over who should succeed Mbanderu Chief Munjuku II Nguvauva after he passed away in early 2008 that had not yet reached full resolution by the end of 2009. See also Gewalt's description of the succession dispute that resulted in Samuel Maharero's chieftaincy at Okahandja (1999:29-60).

⁴² The Prussian government was otherwise occupied with moving towards German unification (1871) and an impending Franco-Prussian war.

⁴³ Smith identifies an 1883 treaty with a "Hottentot" chief in South West Africa as Bismarck's first act of colonial expansion (1978).

⁴⁴ Walther translates *Deutschtum* loosely as Germanness, including German culture, customs, and traditions that may also refer to German populations living outside of Germany (2002:196).

⁴⁵ See Walther for a discussion about the production of Südwestler identity (2002: 86-108).

chapter one

STRUGGLING TO REMEMBER 1904: THE 2004 COMMEMORATIONS

The year 2004 stood as one of public remembrance of the 1904 German-Herero war or Herero Genocide to varying degrees for the Ovaherero, Namibian, and German-Namibians communities. To see the 2004 commemorations simply as public recognition of historical events, as a logical occasion given that 2004 was a centenary year, is not only misleading, but also misses the meanings of the year and its commemoration in Namibia and abroad. One might instead ask why 1904 should be remembered and by whom, why this year was chosen to be commemorated on its centenary, amidst what contexts these commemorations may have been planned and carried out, and what meanings these commemorations may have produced or reproduced by and for various communities. Indeed, in their planning and execution these 2004 commemorations, imbued with multiple objectives, illuminate on-going struggles over histories and History-making amidst several communities in addition to fissures in the Namibian Herero community. In what follows, I intend to briefly describe these commemorations and the context in which they were planned and carried out to provide a concrete entry into later looking at how and why Namibian Ovaherero remember the German colonial past today.

Broadly, commemorations of any form are occasions to more or less publicly recognize a particular past event, to assert its importance. They are also rituals that may

recognize ancestors, consist of rule-governed symbolic behavior, and shape group identities in their practice. However, such understandings only partially explain the behavior of those who participated, in some form, in these 2004 commemorations and the meanings of these commemorations for the various parties involved. Commemorations are a form of public remembering, or social memory, programs which are both moral and political, as I will discuss further in the third chapter (Halbwachs 1992). These 2004 commemorations brought to light the trauma experienced by Ovaherero following the events of 1904 and recognized the sacrifices of those who participated in fighting with Germans, but the commemorations also contributed to larger contests over the contextualization and use of this past.

Further, these commemorations may be situated within broader struggles over history and memory, particularly in postcolonial Africa where memory has been used extensively to critique power and influence political subjectivity but where memory is also increasingly contested (Werbner 1998:1). In the years following Independence, Africanist historians aimed to restore political agency and autonomy to Africans by effectively nationalizing the past, creating a long national meta-narrative through which people could imagine a sense of a shared community. Indeed, this is a project taken up by the Namibian government and ruling party, Swapo, in pursuit of and in the wake of Namibian Independence as they at least in part aim to create an authentic past to ground nation-building (Melber 2003, Gewald 2003). Experiences with and memories of colonial resistance are not, however, singular or uniform; neither are the purported unified communities that emerge out of such political struggles, in Namibia or elsewhere. The importance of public remembering to the critique of power in Africa is not limited to colonial experiences and relationships. Postcoloniality—the socio-political contexts of a post-colonial nation-state--has brought its own disappointments,

uncertainties, or repression for many, which may feed and be fed by public memory work. The contributions to Werbner's volume, for example, evidence a postcolonial "efflorescence of state memorialism and popular counter-memory" (1998:1). As various pasts of recent or more distant times are silenced or highlighted by the state, some citizens have forwarded counter-memory efforts, seeking to publicly document memories for future accountability of the state. These sorts of concerns about the place of one's memory and history amidst new state memory and history production are very much present for Ovaherero in Namibia as well. In the discussion that follows, I thus approach the 2004 commemorations as not merely Herero recitations of a particular part of the past, but as a site of memory work in a postcolonial Namibia.

The Centenary Year

Throughout the year of 2004, a variety of public commemorative programs were carried out in Namibia. Commemorations at important battle sites of 1904 throughout central Namibia formed the basis of the commemorative events and drew varying crowds in each location. There were also television and radio discussions about the commemorations and the moments of the past they aimed to recall. In addition, at least some Namibian churches devoted some services to addressing this history.

However, 2004 was certainly not restricted to remembering in Namibia or by Namibians. A variety of interested parties in Germany held commemorative programs in 2004 as well. The various commemorative events in Germany and Namibia were planned separately from one another, but certainly were not wholly independent.¹ First, there was more visible media coverage than usual, judging from my several years in Namibia, linking

the two countries—German journalists in Namibia as well as Namibian journalists in Germany, and German reports reprinted or rewritten in Namibian newspapers. Secondly, people moved back and forth for various purposes related to the centenary. An August conference (planned to coincide with the Ohamakari commemoration) entitled “1904-2004 - Decontaminating the Namibian Past. A Commemorative Conference”² at the University of Namibia (UNAM), sponsored by its History Department, brought in scholars from Europe and North America, including myself, to join in presentations with Namibian and southern African scholars. The November “Bremen Conference”³ in Bremen, Germany brought many Herero leaders and Namibian scholars to Germany. Namibian and German government officials passed between their jurisdictions, most notably the German Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development, Heidemarie Wiczorek-Zeul, who participated in the August commemoration activities at Ohamakari. The von Trotha family in Germany publicly invited descendents of Samuel Maharero to a meeting between the two families in Germany.⁴ The Ohamakari commemoration also drew many of the scholars who attended the UNAM conference.

While at least two of the historical events commemorated in 2004 have been commemorated annually for decades (albeit in other forms) by a small group of Ovaherero, the idea of a centenary of any of these events seems designed to draw more attention than usual from both the Namibian and international communities. Aside from the fact that labeling the commemorations a “centenary” immediately distinguished them from commemorations held in other years, the notion of recognizing a centenary appears to have little or no precedence among Herero communities. While Ovaherero recognize such annual celebrations as birthdays and leaders’ deaths, I have not otherwise known people to do the

same for particular historical events (e.g., ten-year anniversaries, centenaries). Indeed, the numerical label of the year of a Herero man's birth and his age are not nearly as important as the name of his birth year, each of which is named to call to mind significant happenings of that period of time, and his stage of life, which bears on his familial and community status and responsibilities. What is also critical to note is that the few commemorations recognized prior to 2004, while still moments for recognizing a particular past, center on an individual's life or individuals' lives, rather than dates or even events. I will return to this contrast in the third chapter.

Although the genocide or war between Ovaherero and Germans is commonly said to have occurred between 1904 and 1907, 2004 was chosen as the year to recognize the centenary of that period. One commemoration organizer told me that they would have liked to have continued commemorations through 2007 but the committee was concerned that the momentum directed towards the planning for 2004 would not be sustainable over three years. Indeed that would have likely been the situation given that many members of all committees, national and local, were very active political and community leaders, and thus had limited time at their disposal. Another commemoration organizer explained that her committee felt that bringing attention to von Trotha's extermination order was critical and since that occurred in 1904, this committee's interest was in commemorating that in 2004. In short, the choice to commemorate in 2004 selectively highlighted the events of 1904 and did not arise from any particular meaning of 100 years having passed since these events. However, 1904 engendered somewhat different meanings for different commemoration committees, as I discuss further below.

The year 1904 certainly marked a turning point in relationships between Ovaherero and Germans. It was in January of this year that overt fighting between Ovaherero and Germans began, although the Germans at least had already carried out smaller, unsustained acts of violence against Ovaherero. The year went on to see numerous battles between Herero and German fighters that ultimately resulted in the ousting of Ovaherero from their areas of residence and economic activity, concluding with the battle of Waterberg in August 1904. Particularly for those arguing that the forms of violence perpetrated by Germans between 1904 and 1907 constituted genocide, 1904 was significant because it was in October of that year that General Lothar von Trotha issued his now infamous *Vernichtungsbefehl* (extermination order), announcing his intent to kill all Ovaherero remaining within German territory. Thus, the 2004 centenary represents a period during which many Ovaherero and Germans died in one way or another via Germany's colonial presence in South West Africa. It also marks a historical shift, although surely not so discrete, in relationships between Ovaherero and Germans from some sort of cooperation and co-occupation of land to overt German domination.

What might be said of using 1904 to represent this three-year period? First, it is the events of war, which occurred during 1904, that are thus emphasized, rather than the imprisonment, exile, hiding, or forced labor that Ovaherero experienced later. This appears to say something about the influence of a particular kind of historical meta-narrative (i.e., one based on "big men" and warfare, military or political history) on committee members' thinking as they selected pasts to be commemorated. Secondly, the outbreak of war in 1904 which historians have variously conceived as a Herero uprising/retaliation against colonialism or a German attack born of colonial fears is given particular significance by

choosing 1904. While this moment of Herero-German history focuses on antagonistic relationships, for some, it also marks a vivid shift from Ovaherero as active agents struggling for sovereignty, whose power compared to the Germans, had not conclusively been decided, to one of Ovaherero as victims of and refugees from German domination. Finally, as I alluded to above, the events of 1904 evidence most plainly the notion of a Herero genocide. The documented order by von Trotha to kill all Ovaherero in German territory provides persuasive evidence of a Herero genocide, which in hindsight some might speculate was the grounding for the entire year's battles. In sum, the committees' selection of 1904 to effectively represent the 1904-1907 period seems to be guided by particular understandings of History and thus what begs public remembrance on a grand scale, and most certainly brings to the fore an image of one-time heroic Herero fighters. This vision coincides with several objectives of the two committees. For those seeking to make the Herero-German past the initial phase of the liberation struggle, highlighting Ovaherero's resistance and heroism in the face of adversity, an impression which can be produced from the histories of 1904, is precisely what is required. At the same time, an argument for innumerable injustices committed by Germans culminating in an acknowledged intention to commit what we now know as genocide can also be parsed from the histories of 1904 to meet the objectives of the committee that contextualizes the commemorations within longer-term restorative justice efforts.

Given the historical significance of the events of 1904, I found it curious that many Herero friends and acquaintances mentioned their interest in learning the history from the commemorations. There are certainly a number of reasons that Herero individuals may profess they do not know the history of 1904 and I will take this up in more detail in chapter

three. Yet this expressed gap in historical knowledge does not mean that these same individuals do not know what happened during this period of their history. Indeed some of these same individuals told me that they as individuals or as Ovaherero as a group could “forgive but not forget” what happened. The explanation for this apparent inconsistency would seem to have something to do with the goals of the committees and the resulting histories they sought to produce, which stand somewhat in contrast to what Ovaherero emphasized in relaying memories or stories of German colonialism. These memories certainly focus on the shift many Ovaherero see in their ancestors’ relationships with Germans, but they primarily emphasize stories of being dehumanized, more akin to experiences after the battles of 1904. I will return to these memories in chapter three. For now, the point I want to make is that given these variegated interpretations of 1904, the commemorations of 2004 clearly did not merely retell stories that each Omuhherero (Herero individual) already knew.

Planning to Commemorate

The planning for 2004 began informally years in advance in Namibia. Indeed, I first became aware of the upcoming centenary while reading a 2001 news article that referred to conferences and commemorations being planned for 2004 in the context of an article about a recent discrediting of the idea that a genocide had occurred.⁵ Different parties had different reasons for formally or informally discussing and planning for 2004; certainly there was no singular, predictable approach for commemorating in 2004 or even to formation of the committees that planned them. Thus, not surprisingly, even after some parties agreed

together to commemorate the 100th anniversary of 1904, the framing of the commemorative year and the commemorations it would include remained to be more precisely decided.

Out of these different approaches, two different national-level committees ultimately formed to plan programs for 2004: the “National Preparatory Committee for the Commemoration of 1904” (hereafter, NPCC04) and the “Coordination Committee for the First Official Commemoration of the Ovaherero Genocide” (hereafter, the Genocide Committee). Local committees also formed to organize the commemoration events in each location. Immediately, the committee names point to their members very different approaches to remembering 1904. The name of the first alludes to the aim of including all Namibians and portraying the events of 1904 in the context of the nation-state. The second clearly identifies this committee’s interest in focusing on Ovaherero as the primary victims of the events in 1904 and in particular asserts that what happened in the fighting between Germans and Ovaherero then was a genocide.

Members of, and other contributors to, the Genocide Committee told me that their group arose out of conversations within the Namibian Herero community. At the last commemoration of 2004 at Ozombu Zovindimba (near Otjinene in the Omaheke Region), an individual told me that he was part of a group that had initiated thinking about commemorating 1904. In an interview shortly thereafter, he described the basis of the eventual committee’s efforts as support for Ovaherero’s reparations claims against Germany. This group’s initial aim, which he felt was achieved via the committee’s programs, was to bring international attention to this history.

We conceived that idea around May 2003. And that coincided with the case that Chief Riruako took to court to the USA. So we came together as a group of Otjiherero-speaking intellectuals saying “what is it that we can do to assist the Chief in this attempt?” And that was in the aftermath of the World Conference on Racism

which took place in South Africa, where there was a unanimous resolution on a demand for reparations against slavery and colonialism. That is the context in which Chief Riruako took the German government to court in the USA. And we said, “what do we do to support the demand of the Chief because it’s legitimate, what he’s trying to do there, it has been vindicated by this unanimous resolution by the World Conference on Racism. We shall do this by commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the genocide as a way of trying to bring to the limelight ... in essence to be a backup to what the Chief was trying to do there. That was the idea.

He went on to explain frustration that the government of Namibia wasn’t supporting Riruako’s efforts for reparations. Judging from arguments against Riruako’s efforts that I’ve read about in newspapers or that friends and acquaintances have shared with me, the government opposed these efforts either for being tribalist or for being poor political strategy, for too aggressively confronting the government of Germany, Namibia’s biggest foreign aid donor. Clearly, some Ovaherero, including this man, had hoped that this decision at the United Nations World Conference on Racism to support Africans’ pursuit of reparations for colonialism and slavery would lend legitimacy to Riruako’s efforts such that the government of Namibia would come to officially support these efforts. That the government persisted in opposing reparations for Ovaherero even after this international Conference was perceived to support them, left some Ovaherero resentful that the government placed more importance on its relationship with the German government than on supporting its own citizens in their struggle with the effects of past injustices.

Here you have a unanimous resolution by the World Conference which is vindicating the position that Chief Riruako has taken. Why the hell is our government trying to pay a deaf ear to this? To counter that deliberate political position of our government, it converges with the German government because it came later that they had an agreement not to talk about genocide, the two governments. It came out when we were following the commemoration thing. So we thought in the face of that, that conference resolution, we organize a hundredth anniversary of that genocide. It will have the impact of highlighting that historical reality that people want to sweep under the carpet, as if it didn’t happen. So that is now the conception of the committee on the commemoration of the Herero genocide, the first official commemoration. That’s the committee; that’s how we conceived it; that was its aim. As we were proceeding

with that, we had a government which was in collaboration with the German government. It did not want the genocide issue to be discussed at all.

This anger at having their interests, and in turn the difficult past which these reparations aim to address, seemingly ignored by their own government has been ongoing, judging from what several Ovaherero told me and from articles in Namibian newspapers over the past few years. In this context, some Ovaherero perceived that the government or the churches, in collaboration with the government, intentionally tried to sideline the Genocide Committee and its aims by establishing a second committee. This man, for example, suggests that the government effectively tried to reframe the war between Germans and Ovaherero in 1904 as part of the national liberation struggle in order to appease the German government. However, this reframing also would serve to further glorify the national liberation struggle and its leaders.

Interviewee: It's how they infiltrated our committee. It's why I'm saying so I know that three or four people that were part of this core group ended up in the other committee. The other committee was set up by Cabinet. So called "national committee for the commemoration of hundred years of struggles." That is the Kameeta committee; it was set up by Cabinet... It was set up by Cabinet to counter this committee. It's a part of the position the German government to want this genocide issue not to be talked about. It's why they were deliberately saying it's "hundred years of commemoration of the struggles," not the genocide. So there is a substantive difference between the two committees.... "Struggles" is not a genuine thing; it had nothing to do with the genocide. It was a counter-measure from the side of the government to want to support the position of the German government on the genocide issue ...not to be highlighted.

Me: So it was an attempt to sort of dilute the history because they couldn't stop you from having the commemorations...they couldn't stop people from doing that so they tried to focus it more on liberation. Is that what you're saying?

Interviewee: Because it is the formal history that has been taught in this country. It is a formal history which is a ruling party history. It is projected in such a manner than the anti-colonial movement here only started in 1966. It ignores the other battles that other people fought and suffered.

Me: my observation of a 9th grade history book that fighting between Herero and Germans was part of chapter on the liberation struggle. Is that also part of this

diluting or is that the way that it should be? Is that part of trying to distract from the genocide, or is that how you think it should be?

Interviewee: That has got to do with ethnicity, tribalism. Because you have to erase the role other peoples played in history in order for you to claim it... Formal history is only done by those in power.

Me: You can see it both ways. On one hand, it's recognizing that there were these conflicts before say 1960, but on the other hand...

Interviewee: But it's only good enough to only to mention it in passing, to come to the real thing, to want to be the official picture that everybody sees.

Here, as this man elaborates on the attempt he perceives by the government to sideline the Genocide Committee's work, he brings to light a feeling which I've heard expressed by many Ovaherero: that the government, in the interests of Swapo and the Oshiwambo-speaking people which purportedly largely comprise it, has not only been ignoring, but actively silencing Herero history since Independence in order to exalt Swapo's achievements and heroes/heroines in the efforts for Namibian independence. This feeling, as well as a broader sense of disenfranchisement, certainly plays a role in how historical relations between Germans and Ovaherero are remembered by Ovaherero.

In contrast to the previous man's detailing of the Genocide Committee's origins, another member was adamant in insisting that his committee had nothing to do with reparations or with the Riruako-led efforts for restorative justice when I spoke with him for the first time in November 2003. Although his answers to my questions didn't sound scripted, he seemed very careful in how he represented the Committee, seeking to paint a picture of it as non-political, inclusive, and sensitive to the communities involved. He described the beginnings of his committee and the concerns which shaped its membership, taking it as matter of fact that of course the centenary would take place in 2004.

It started in May [2003]... It is indeed an initiative by the Herero themselves. It is a decision that was taken in January [2003] at Aminuis, where Hosea Kutako was

staying. And the reason why the decision was taken in January and the committee was started in May is because when the Hereros decided on this, that this event must be commemorated, they felt that if they start themselves it will become a tribal initiative, a tribal organized activity which will not be accepted by the other tribes. If they tried to push it, it can also be linked into their political parties so it will also be seen in that light, that is a politically motivated kind of thing. So they were looking for people who were more neutral to run this thing. And they could not get it because they could not initiate it; they could not call a meeting because if they would have done that it would have been put in that connotation.

So it went on and on and on. So round about the end of April, somebody took the initiative and started inviting others and say that “let’s come talk together. Next year it will be hundred years, let us come together, and think about this thing.” It’s where the whole initiative for people, the invitation was right because we came together as individuals of various backgrounds and the committee was elected at one of those meetings. First they set up a steering committee to draw up the terms of reference and all these things. And then the actual committee was elected. That is why the committee came about. We are living in a very, heavily politically linked community. You cannot say you are not linked to one of the political parties. But I think that we have been able to manage that pressure. We know that [refers to himself] belongs to a political party, but we are not active. Personally I am not politically active. I do vote.

The initial concerns that he describes must be understood in the context of contemporary Namibia, where public accusations of “tribalism” by and towards virtually every ethnic group (as well as the government) are common even as the government claims an anti-tribalism policy.⁶ Thus, a committee which aims to organize national programs but whose origins are not only within the Herero community, but firmly within a Herero area⁷ of Namibia, is susceptible to criticism both by the government and others. In order to lend the centenary, and, in turn, the past being remembered, the historical import and far-reaching educational purpose desired by those involved in planning events, commemorative programs needed to interest Namibians outside of the Herero community.

For a similar reason, organizers were concerned about perceived affiliations with particular political parties. Many Ovaherero are members of the current ruling party, Swapo. However, Namibian public perception associates Ovaherero with two particular opposition parties: DTA and NUDO.⁸ Indeed, Chief Hosea Kutako, whom this committee member

references, was a leader in the DTA. A connection with a particular political party is not only taken to mean one is supportive of or opposed to the ruling party, but also implies probable identification with a particular ethnic group. In addition, Chief Kuaimo Riruako is a contentious figure both within the Herero community and within the government.

Associating with his political party would likely suggest to others that the committee was working under his direction while his methods for pursuing restorative justice with Germany remain disputed among Ovaherero.⁹ If the Committee embraced either of these affiliations, the programs it planned would likely be understood by the Namibian community as biased towards Ovaherero and aimed merely at Herero audiences. The Genocide Committee was not wholly successful in removing itself from these perceived associations as some, including the other national committee, referred to it as “Riruako’s Committee.” Later in 2004, I heard speculation by some Ovaherero that this committee member was using his position to garner votes for his candidacy in the 2004 elections. However, compared to the public leadership positions that several members of NPCC04 held, the Genocide Committee’s members were not overtly politically linked at time of the committee’s inception.

This Genocide Committee member describes the formation of the NPCC04 as a response to the formation of his committee, in the interests of the German-Namibian community and in framing the events of 1904 as an early moment in a historical narrative about Namibians fending off oppressive outsiders.

And then as a result, and because of the fact that the German community was not very comfortable with us, but the majority of the people in the committees are Hereros, there was another committee [NPCC04] started by the churches, the German churches together with the Lutheran church, which the Germans were supporting. Then they were looking at the commemoration as a national issue. It is not directly connected to von Trotha’s order. And they were pushed and pulled into two committees.

Although he did not sound wholly satisfied with the eventual tentative cooperation of both committees, he noted that it mattered both pragmatically and symbolically.

[Recently] all of us have come to terms with the reality that two committees will not work. We met. I think there is an understanding that as much as we may not at this late stage form one committee, but we have agreed to coordinate our things closely so that we will not organize similar activities at the same location on the same day. So soon we are going to share our programs. If we have an event like the one that they will hold in Okahandja, then the other colleagues will not have an event there; they would rather support us. If they organize something in some other places we are not going to organize activities at the same place or the same day in another place because now we are pulling the same people. That is what we have in principle agreed, that this is the best that we can do...It will not change our approach, and it will neither change their approach.

Personally to me as [a committee member], I have faced a situation where I was very imbalanced. [He describes analogy that if you're an American citizen, doing something in the name of America, you can't look at the color of your skin] ... If we are saying that what we are doing is in the interest of the nation, for those who have died for this cause, our conviction, be it churches, etcetera should not divide us to that extent that we are now diluting this noble cause. There were certain instances where I was very much depressed, but now I am very happy that we [two committees] have reached that understanding.

Me: You have two committees planning national reconciliations and remembrances...

Exactly! You are talking about reconciliation but you're not reconciling the two, the two committees are not reconciling, how can I expect the other people to reconcile? Yeah, these are some of things that you preach what you are not going to be. You must be exemplary. You must prove that, "yes we can reconcile why not you?" Now if you are saying "you must reconcile but we are not reconciling..." It's bad, yeah, it's bad.

In sum, the Genocide Committee formed around the idea of bringing attention to what happened to the Herero community through fighting Germans in 1904 and, in particular, seeing this array of experiences as genocide. To execute this aim effectively, the committee needed to balance its emphasis on Ovaherero with an image of being apolitical and non-tribal. It seems that for committee contributors, the need for this attention arose not only from the past for various reasons, but also from the NPCC04's simultaneous attempt to quiet and

co-opt this history by framing it as an historical episode affecting all Namibians and as part of the liberation struggle. Finally, it seems that the eventual cooperation with the other committee is understood as a necessity rather than a manifestation of an actual reconciling of differing perspectives on the commemorations of 2004.

The National Preparatory Committee for Commemoration of 1904

The other committee, the National Preparatory Committee for Commemoration of 1904 (NPCC04), seemed to see the context of commemorating 1904 very differently from the Genocide Committee. At least in large part because of this difference, the aims of the two committees also developed very differently. Rather than treat the German-Herero war as a singular event in Namibian history, this group saw the opportunity to use these commemorations as a device for bringing to light commonalities in Namibia's history under various foreign administrations and thus to focus on nation-building. In addition, they wanted to avoid singling out perpetrators and victims, all in the expressed interests of bringing together the various ethnic groups in an effort towards national reconciliation in post-Independence Namibia. In brief, as the NPCC04 saw its noble goal in national reconciliation and saw the Genocide Committee's aims as narrow, politically unsavvy, and perhaps even self-serving. The Genocide Committee saw the NPCC04's focus as a continuation of a silencing of Herero history and concerns.

A German NPCC04 committee member affiliated with the German section of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Namibia (ELCIN-DELK) explained to me that his church's council started discussions early about how to approach the commemoration of 1904 without making the German community in Namibia feel attacked.

I knew two or three years before the commemoration year of 100 years started, many groups in Germany started to think about what they would do. I didn't want the German-speaking community here to be taken by surprise. ... Sometimes one side of the story...and I know the German-speaking community here is very sensitive on this issue; they would feel attacked if something of the German history is discussed and they have the feeling that they are the culprits. ... And so we started very early in the pastors' conferences and the church council... by now there will be a lot of discussions coming from Germany... TV people...and all wanted to know what is going on in 1904. And so my church council then decided that we should start an initiative to start some discussion round tables. First it was some German-speaking people who ... German-speaking groups here. We had very open talk, what they thought would be necessary, will be possible and so a lot of talk of ideas came up. The one very much in favor to do something as the German-speaking population and others we said don't touch this thing, it's too complicated and And so we had a talk of some two or three meetings of the German-speaking community. And then very soon we said 'we must try to get the Herero-speaking people on board.' Germans start to talk together. And then I contacted Bishop Kameeta, who himself is also a Herero, asked him for advice, who one could contact and then we contacted some people from the Herero community. And we started to have some discussions just to find how the people think it should be commemorated. And some opted out, some stayed. And then at a very important stage we got contact to people among the Herero groups who came to me and said 'we as Hereros are also meeting in committees' We are thinking what we want to have commemorated and whether we can't put our heads together and find ...and that was the idea I always had. That is where it comes from to start.

It is interesting that this man describes the initial momentum for planning for 2004 as coming from Germany, rather than the Church or the German-Namibian community it serves. It is then the Church, in support of the German-Namibian community, that attempted to formulate a program for 2004 to avoid merely reacting to someone else's framing of 1904. Although he describes the initial outreach to and inclusion of interested Ovaherero as fairly successful, the church quickly chose sides within Herero debates about the framing of the commemorations, leading to the formation of the two committees.

And from there on we had two or three meetings and then it was very soon apparent that the Herero people were very divided. So we had the one group who said...it should be not an exclusive Herero thing; it should be part of the discussion [about] how to deal with the past. How it's wrong, 1904, how that war [was part of the longer] liberation struggle. Ok, those people are more or less Swapo people and also Hereros. And we from the church decided we are the ones to be more inclusive and not exclusive. And then there was another group who said no, because the Hereros

were the victims, we want our own thing. And we tried for three or four months to get those things together. But we weren't successful... and then the two commemoration committees started. The one called the so-called "Bishop's Committee." I wasn't quite happy about the name. On the other hand, it might have been a good idea because people knew the churches were involved... And then we tried, we did our thing as the 'Bishop's Committee' and the other committee was "the Genocide Committee."

His remark about being known as the "Bishop's Committee" illustrates his uncertainty about how he hopes Namibians perceive the role of his church, or how he imagines such an affiliation impacts the work of the commemorations. Indeed, in my conversations with Ovaherero, the role of the Lutheran Church in this committee was widely acknowledged in addition to a less explicitly formed association with the government and Swapo. Certainly, the name "Bishop's Committee" is reminiscent of another bishop's committee focused on restorative justice: the South African Truth and Reconciliation Committee led by Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The Church did, however, attempt to minimize their association with the committee by holding initial meetings outside of church spaces.

One of the sites this NPCC04 member described at which some interested parties in Namibia discussed the upcoming centenary was open meetings at the *Namibisch-Deutschen Stiftung* (Namibian-German Foundation; hereafter, NaDS).¹⁰ With the aim of furthering national reconciliation by promoting dialogue between Ovaherero and Germans (those in Namibia as well as Germany) around the remembrance of the German colonial past and 1904 in Namibia, NaDS began hosting meetings in 2002 at their offices in Windhoek. When I spoke with a NaDS representative in 2003 he described the meetings as quite informal with little consistency in attendance. By the beginning of 2003 more and more Hereros became involved and they pushed for a national committee to plan various programs for 2004 and they wanted the Namibian government involved. He described a gradual shift in the

communities constituting attendees from the beginning towards the time of the formation of the NPCC04 in July. At the beginning, he said, attendees were almost all German-Namibian, which is not remarkable given that NaDS's membership is largely German-Namibian. He noted that the number of White people at these meetings dwindled over time and towards the end, meetings mainly involved Ovaherero with two or three Germans present. In the middle of these series of meetings, this NaDS employee had felt some hope that these meetings might result in something productive for national reconciliation because of the mix of people showing up—all sorts of people from all sorts of occupations and positions. In the end, however, the Herero attendees formed the NPCC04 by issuing a press release and getting NBC (the "Namibian Broadcasting Corporation") to cover the event.¹¹ At a meeting with about 60 people in attendance the committee was constituted via nominations from the audience.

Briefly, the NPCC04 began as some members of the German-Namibian community, or those associated with it, tried to create a space for dialogue between German-Namibians and Ovaherero. The divisiveness among Ovaherero about how to commemorate 2004 required the Lutheran Church, as a representative of the German-Namibian community, to effectively choose a side based on its own desire to see these commemorations include as many Namibian communities as possible. Overall, an explicit interest in promoting national reconciliation among all the peoples of Namibia as well as a seeming concern about protecting the German-Namibian community underlie the creation and focus of the NPCC04.

The Committees

The NPCC04: defining resistance

“The National Preparatory Committee for the Commemoration of 1904” (NPCC04), was formed at a public meeting at the Goethe Centre in Windhoek on July 14, 2003. Even before the committee was formally constituted, the participants in conversations about commemorating 1904, the group which the NPCC04 member describes above, had decided something about the future committee’s focus. According to report to this group on May 28, 2003 by a representative of the Herero Royal Houses,¹² the chiefs constituting the Royal Houses voiced their support for a national commemoration planning committee to involve all ethnic groups in Namibia. Also at that meeting, one participant (not identified in the meeting notes) announced that the government of Namibia wanted the remembrance of 1904 to be set entirely in the context of the national liberation struggle.

An advertisement to invite interested individuals to the July 14, 2003 meeting constituting the NPCC04 was placed in Namibian newspapers three days earlier. It framed the committee’s interests as follows:

The year 2004 brings back the memories of the resistance of mainly Herero/Mbanderu and Nama people against German colonialism... The initiative “commemorating 1904” aims to heal the wounds of the past and help build our nation by strengthening the process of reconciliation, unity, and transformation.

From the committee’s inception the commemoration was presented as part of a larger narrative about Namibians working towards Independence. The fighting between Germans and Ovaherero in 1904 is framed as “resistance” against “German colonialism,” suggesting that Ovaherero/Ovambanderu and Namas were actively fighting a German colonial program, although 1904 rather than the entire German colonial period remained the focus. “German colonialism” is named the object of resistance rather than German soldiers, German

colonialists, or Germans broadly. In other words, German colonialism rather than actual people is identified as the problem. This word choice meets the committee's aim to avoid judgment or accusation and also parallels language used to describe the South African administration from which Independence was negotiated. Lastly, it is clear that one is to see this remembrance as a component of national reconciliation, which is deemed to be somehow therapeutic for the Namibian population.

This framing was continued to the committee's "mission statement" and "terms of reference." By the NPCC04's second meeting, the preamble to the mission statement was changed to add the Damara as an additional group resisting German colonialism, although Namibians continued to debate publicly and privately whether and how the Damara should be included in the reconciliation efforts surrounding 1904.¹³ In addition, the following actions were added to the mission statement regarding the aims of the committee: that these commemorative efforts should begin an ongoing process and that the committee would seek to identify problems in the present resulting, at least in part, from events of the past. To facilitate these aims, the committee sought to encourage various forms of telling the "facts" of the past across Namibian communities, such that they would come to better understand one another, and, thus, work towards national reconciliation. In short, the NPCC04 forwarded the notion that by creating a dialogue about the colonial past across Namibian communities, each would come to understand each other community came to its present form via the experiences of colonial subjugation. This new understanding, according to the committee, would allow these various communities to reconcile and unite as Namibians, as members of a common national community.

The claim that sharing history would reaffirm national identity met the government's proclaimed aims for a Namibian nation-state. At its inception in 1990, the government declared a policy of national reconciliation, an intent to work to bring communities together to overcome a long history of inequities and conflicts among Namibia's historical communities as a result of colonialism (which in public discourse often refers to both the German and the South African administrations) and apartheid.

It is no coincidence that the committee attempting to further the goals of the State and had many members affiliated with the ruling political party, Swapo. Under Swapo leadership, the State has promoted a narrative of Namibia's modern history centered on "the liberation struggle." Although the scope of "the liberation struggle" was explicitly extended by some parties, including government representatives, in the context of the 2004 commemorations, the "the liberation struggle" typically refers to the period from 1966 to 1989/90, from the beginning of armed efforts to gain Namibia's independence from South Africa, to the achievement of independence and the founding of the new state. SWAPO was the official liberation party and has been the ruling party since Independence. Hence, the "liberation struggle" stands more specifically for a narrative about SWAPO members' pursuit of Independence against South Africa. Incorporating the events of 1904-1907 into the struggle for independence does not merely extend the period understood as colonial subjugation and resistance. It brings other communities into a narrative otherwise dominated by the ethnic group (various Oshiwambo-speaking people) from which Swapo originated. This group constitutes not only the majority of Swapo's membership, but also the majority of the Namibian population. At the same time, making the events of 1904-1907 part of a common narrative with the armed fighting against South Africa suggests that colonialism is a singular

project and that its subjects experienced it similarly as colonized populations. As a result, this narrative of a 95-year liberation struggle is more inclusive of various Namibian communities than any particular period of resistance, but also generalizes colonialism to such an extent in the effort to create common experience (and thus a basis for national identity) that the terms of colonialism may lose their descriptive power.

The Genocide Committee and the use of genocide

“The Coordinating Committee for the First Commemoration of the Ovaherero Genocide” (the Genocide Committee) was formed in April 2003 of Herero men and women who were interested in participating, but who were not otherwise known as political or cultural leaders. The primary objective of the committee, according to the chairperson at that time, was to organize commemorative activities that concern the 100 year anniversary of the German-Herero war of 1904. Further, the committee aimed to educate the Namibian people about the Genocide, recognizing that it was not well known; to do research on the history of the Herero people, and to network with the Ovaherero in the Diaspora who left Namibia as a result of the 1904 war. Although committee members I spoke with used both the terms *war* and *genocide* in talking about what was being commemorated, *genocide* was clearly the term most used publicly in addition to genocide being the impetus for the committee’s formation and its greatest contrast with the NPCC04’s focus.

When I asked a member of the Genocide Committee in 2003 about which term his committee had decided on to describe what was being commemorated in 2004, he explained that the committee chose *genocide* because that is how the events of 1904 are most widely known by historians and Ovaherero.

[The committee] has decided on Herero genocide because it’s recorded in the history books, those who have written books about it, they refer to it as genocide. Now we

don't want to cause confusion in the history, that at one moment people are talking about genocide and the other "we commemorate the Herero uprising." For those who are going to read books, it adds to the confusion. So that is why we say "let us now commemorate under the name that is known, that is 'the Herero genocide.'" If, for instance, you take the Blue Book, it is really referring to Herero genocide.¹⁴ There are a number of books that have been written by other writers after that. They are also referring to the Herero Genocide. So I don't think it's better for us to invent a new terminology, different from that which is known.... Even historians like Kaputu and these people are also referring to the Genocide. That is the known terminology that is being used....It should not be seen in a negative way; it should be seen in a historical background.

I found it curious that he merely cited a frequency of use of the term *genocide* and didn't attempt to argue why the *genocide* best describes what happened to Ovaherero beginning in 1904. Whether he was merely trying to maintain a non-controversial image of himself or his committee to someone he then did not know or whether he didn't yet feel comfortable in making this sort of claim publicly, this almost indifferent attitude to the use of *genocide* clearly had disappeared by the time that the committee invited a South African law professor, Jeremy Sarkin, to the Ohamakari commemoration to argue that the events of 1904 legally constitute a genocide. Also interesting is his urging that the committee's use of *genocide* should not be seen negatively, which I take to mean that it's not intended to incite anger or political action. Instead, he seems to suggest here that the use of *genocide* is only an explanatory term employed to most accurately and consistently describe an historical event.

Certainly, the use of caution when speaking of *genocide* is not unwarranted quite aside from any discomfort its use might cause Germans or German-Namibians. There are Ovaherero today who describe feeling great anger at Germans and/or German-Namibians for what happened during the colonial period. For example, during a demonstration organized by this committee in August 2005 to protest Germany's candidacy for the UN Security Council, a participant, although reportedly not a member of the committee's group, held up a hand-lettered poster reading "kill all the Whites" for a few minutes before demonstration

organizers confiscated it. This may have been something like what an older man in Okakarara had in mind when he told the chair of the Genocide Committee prior to the commemorations that his support for the commemorations came with conditions:

So long as whatever you are doing is not going to bring war to this country...I do not have so many days to live...I don't want to become a refugee somewhere because of you, if you stir the feelings and it leads to war. I want to live in peace in this country. Whatever commemoration is going to be done, it has to contribute to the reconciliation...

Genocide connotes something far graver than *war* and its use in Namibia seems to evoke particularly strong responses for Ovaherero, Namibian Germans, and Germans. I will discuss the use of this term more thoroughly in the last two chapters.

It is because this committee wanted to highlight the Genocide that they chose to focus their commemorations on 1904. They felt that von Trotha's extermination order of October 1904, viewed as the most compelling proof of genocide, was the most historically significant event of the 1904-1907 period. The committee then effectively selected events of 1904 to commemorate to further the argument that the Germans waged a genocidal war against Ovaherero. Another committee member explained how the committee selected what would be commemorated.

Interviewee: The history guided us here. Because we know that the first bullets were fired on the 12th of January 1904. That was the day that Samuel Maharero said "enough is enough" and he raised up against the Germans. So that was the first. And then from there they went to another place and so the war continues the whole year and we took all the important dates where a huge number of people were massacred and that guided us as to these are the days we'll have our commemorations on.

Me: Ok, so it was based more on when many lives were lost... you chose those days?

Interviewee: [agrees] And of course there were many places that we wanted to visit but that we could also not visit due to limited resources and so on. There were many, but we picked the main ones, like the first day that the war started. Then from there we went to Ovitoto, it's a place near at Okahandja. And from there we went to Ohamakari. Because that was a major one, it's where the Herero fled. And then

another place is in Otjinene, it's called Ozombu Zovindimba. It's where von Trotha read the extermination order and we thought that is also a very historic place to visit.

Throughout my research I have noticed that Ovaherero, although they are certainly not alone in doing so, speak of history as an objective, definite entity, as does the person above when suggesting that history does not entail interpretation; it rather speaks for itself. In light of this perceived need for education about the Genocide, I found it surprising that she described no conflict among the committee in selecting dates to commemorate or in establishing what happened on that date.

I think the society trusted the committee in whatever we planned we gave them feedback. So there was consultation between the committee and the community members. And that is if there was anything we could not agree on we could discuss that and sort it out and reach consensus.

I think that what she had in mind here is something like determining the correct history. However, to my mind, her statement actually describes something of how history-making proceeded via the commemorations, with those in positions of relevant authority determining "the History" and then effectively re-educating the Herero population, teaching them what counts as History in Namibia today in the process.

Whether realizing it or not, she contradicted this notion of objective history guiding the commemoration plans, at least in part, by revealing that the committee was interested in dates of large-scale massacres around which to plan commemorations. This clearly illustrates that this committee emphasized the loss of Herero lives in 1904. They also do not hesitate to identify "the Germans" as the instigators of the original unrest between Germans and Ovaherero as well as the perpetrators of genocide. Put another way, the committee wove an argument for and description of genocide by Germans throughout their commemorative events, the point at which they most vividly clashed with the NPCC04.

Another committee member mentioned above seemed to feel that by framing 1904 more vaguely as a national issue, the NPCC04 wasn't just trying to be more inclusive, but was intentionally continuing to silence this history under the guise of it being too sensitive for Namibians today to discuss. The consequences of this tack from this committee member's perspective are not just the distortion of history, but civic instability as negative feelings among Ovaherero and German-Namibians increase behind a veil of respectful silence.

The only bone of contention was the committee [I am a member of] felt strongly that this history must not be distorted. It must be remembered as the war of 1904, which was the war between the Germans and the Hereros. It's the history. Too, it is the first war in this country, where an official declaration was made that a specific tribe must be wiped out from the face of the earth. And had it been now, this order, this guy, von Trotha and those who were involved, would have been tried now in the courts like the guys in Rwanda and Liberia... because you are declaring that a specific tribe must be cleansed from the face of the earth. So we were saying that it must specifically be like that because we are not inventing the wheel, we are just reminding people about the history. It's a bad history. It has got very bad feelings, but personally I believe that the moment we continue hiding behind churches and saying it may raise feelings among the Hereros and the Germans... [He uses the example of illegal farm takeovers in Zimbabwe as an example of what can happen when there is no dialogue about problems that result of the colonial past.] There is a lack of communication. And as long as we continue with that, there is not going to be peace in this country. In 20 years time, in 30 years time it will come up. It has taken Zimbabwe 22 years. You cannot pretend that nothing happened. You cannot rely on courts. You cannot rely on the constitution. Not in Africa. Any guy can just take over government, throw up the constitution, declare a one party state, take over, whatever... The constitution is not guaranteed unless we, as the people, work towards that and make sure that whatever differences are coming up are sorted out in an amicable manner. Otherwise, it's not guaranteed. And this is from our side, the committee is saying its painful to sit down and talk with a German and say "you killed my father" and for the German guy to say that "it is not me; it's my father." ... If we sit down and talk around the table with a cup of tea and say that "yes, your father was killed; yes, he was staying at the farm where I am now, but I did not kill him. This farm belongs to me because this is what happened. You have a system in place to buy farms and what you need to do is that. We, as the White community, this is how we're going to help you: training people, getting the farms..." This is an example of things that need to be said. And the other committee felt it's too sensitive to say it's genocide, it's too sensitive to say that the Hereros have been killed by the Germans. We must reconcile; we must forget about these things. How could I forget if I haven't brought them up? This is a problem....It's sensitive, but it's there.

From the perspective of restorative justice, it is interesting that he makes a point of labeling courts and law as unreliable solutions to disputes in Africa. Instead, he suggests the answer is in open dialogue in which the conflicting parties arrive at an amicable relationship via understanding one another's injuries and perspectives. Although he doesn't identify it directly, it seems that an unstated goal of the Committee is to prompt dialogue about the history of 1904 among Namibians, but specifically between German-Namibians and Ovaherero.

Although not within the stated aims of the Genocide Committee, it's clear from comments mentioned above of two people associated with this committee that it does aim towards furthering some form of restorative justice between Ovaherero and Germans (identified variably as the German government and German- Namibians). However, in either case, these efforts are clearly envisioned by the Committee and others involved within a national context that silences Herero history in particular ways and alienates the Herero community from the perceived central institutions of power in Namibia.

Local organizers

In addition to the two national-level committees, local committees were required to organize the logistics of each commemorative event for the larger committees. In Okakarara, site of the August Ohamakari commemoration, the committee was affiliated with the new Okakarara Community and Cultural Centre and comprised of local leaders of various sorts as well as interested individuals. One member of the local committee planning the Ohamakari commemoration, who was also affiliated with "Redemption Gospel Church" in Okakarara, explained to me that the Kambazembi Royal House usually oversees a yearly event for remembering the battle of Ohamakari that is organized by the Red Flag commanders (an area

cultural group that will be explained further in a later chapter).¹⁵ He explained that the Genocide Committee planned to coordinate the commemoration with the Kambazembi Royal House since 2004 marked a special year, but that Kameeta's committee wanted to get involved and make the commemoration a national event.

Since the local planning committees were charged with organizing the logistics of a large scale community event, rather than the commemorative program itself, it shouldn't be surprising that many members of the local committees seem to have become involved at least in part for reasons having little to do with an interest in history. For example, the first local committee member that I met (although not in this capacity), Magord, is a very friendly and outgoing woman who seemed to be regularly involved in organizing numerous community events as well as politics. Another committee member became involved in the Okakarara committee because of his role as an advisor to Chief David Kambazembi. However, he was also interested in the new community center at which the commemoration would take place.¹⁶ Knowing that the center itself would benefit the community in the long-run, he wanted to be involved in its commemoration planning committee to better see what was going on with the center. Similarly, a third committee member became involved because as a community worker for the Ministry of Sport, Culture, and Education in Okakarara, she wanted to be a part of such a large community event. Clearly, these 2004 commemorations formed important occasions for friends, family, and even other Otjiherero-speaking groups to come together and socialize.

Despite the fact that both national committees aim to arrive at reconciliation via their commemorative programs, their approaches about how to deal with a difficult, painful history are very different. The NPCC04 tried to simultaneously acknowledge Namibians'

losses during the German colonial period and not lay blame on any particular community or their ancestors. For NPCC04 the meta-narrative of the liberation struggle served as an equalizing mechanism. The goal was to create a common history for the nation, in which all citizens could regard this history with a similar affect. Out of a feeling for a common history, in which all Namibians are free to see their communities somehow contributing to Independence, with a collective of heroes and heroines, a sense of unity is to emerge. The Genocide Committee wanted not only to acknowledge Herero losses, but also to shed light on a previously silenced history and to witness public admission by Germany of responsibility for these tragedies. Reconciliation was to come out of confessions, expressions of affect, and admissions of responsibility for the past all of which effectively requires all parties to reach a consensus about what did happen and how it is to be regarded. The local planning committees might be viewed as conduits for reconciliation in everyday practice, as these committees played a great part in reproducing Herero communities by facilitating their physical interaction at commemorations. Indeed, the symbol of coming together that most Ovaherero I spoke with remembered from the 2004 commemorative year was the intermingling of the various sub-groups of Ovaherero.

Commemorations of 2004

By the time I returned to Namibia in June 2004, committee meetings had ceased. I phoned a number of contacts to find out as much as possible about the upcoming Ohamakari commemoration around the 14th of August as I finished writing my paper for the UNAM conference that would follow. I planned to attend the first event of the so-called “month of

mourning” planned for August by the Namibian Lutheran church branches, but I couldn’t locate the venue.

This was the beginning of many months of frustrated attempts to discern what commemorative activities were planned before they actually happened. I typically only had success in attending an event in the first several months of this stage of my research if I had heard about it and then could contact an existing acquaintance involved in planning that event. I felt very frustrated and dismayed that neither friends nor acquaintances typically thought to mention commemorative activities to me unless I happened upon asking the right question to elicit such information. After attending several of the 2004 commemorations, I realized that these frustrated efforts were in part due to my not yet being a part of a Herero community, but were primarily due to other reasons more particular to the commemorations.

First, that I struggled to find information about commemorative activities illustrate existing tensions over the context and audience of these commemorations. In short, most of the commemorations were not widely advertised in Namibia outside of the Herero community (in which radio and word-of-mouth seemed the primary media of information). However, I was told that the international news media, and especially news sources in Germany, were kept abreast of these events. Thus, the goal of some Namibians, and some Ovaherero among them, to make 2004 a year of remembering events of 1904 as early segments of the nation’s liberation struggle, and thus of national interest, seems to have been only partially fulfilled.

Second, I had a very different idea about the significance of the commemorations from that of most of my Herero friends and acquaintances. While I envisioned each commemoration to be a result of careful consideration by a planning committee of the

historical significance of various events of 1904 such that together the commemorations might shed light on the historical and cultural significance of 1904, most Ovaherero I've spoken to seemingly expected all the 2004 commemorations to be fairly similar. Most people didn't see a need themselves to attend several commemorations. If they were interested, most Ovaherero I know chose one commemoration to attend, usually Ohamakari, and didn't express concern that they didn't attend more. Some of my friends and acquaintances suggested they would have attended another commemoration but for other plans that weekend or lack of transport, for instance. Indeed, the only "regulars" I could identify at the commemorations I was able to attend were those involved in planning the commemorations in some capacity. In other words, most of my Herero friends and acquaintances didn't place value on participating in the commemoration of all the committee-designated historically important dates of 2004.

I attended the last three commemorations of the year: Ohamakari (August 14), the reburial of Chief Manasse Tjiseseta (October 2), and Ozombu Zovindimba (October 30). Ohamakari was the first commemoration I could attend and from my own judgments and what I heard from Herero friends and acquaintances, this commemoration attracted the largest and most diverse audience, including the greatest diversity of Ovaherero. Below I will discuss the Ohamakari commemoration in more detail below due to its high attendance, familiarity to most of the Ovaherero I spoke with, and its significance as the occasion of German Minister Heidemarie Wiczorek-Zeul's apology.

White Flag Day reburial of Chief Tjiseseta

Chief Tjiseseta's reburial took place as part of the annual "White Flag Day" in Omaruru. Due to the conflicts with the German colonial administration, this chief and the

Ovaherero who stayed near him fled into South Africa, where he eventually died and was buried. After many months of negotiations in South Africa recently, Namibian Ovaherero were permitted to take possession of the Chief's remains so that he could be reburied in Omaruru, his original area. As is usual for a Herero cultural event, area "Otruppe" (a cultural organization whose structure was modeled on the German Schutztruppe), as well as some Otjizerandu Otruppe, entertained guests with marching and horse-riding before the reburial program began.¹⁷ A number of ministers and many people gathered in front of the old mission church to await the arrival of the pick-up truck bearing the Chief's coffin and female descendents. In comparison to the Ohamakari commemoration, I noted the far lesser presence of a diversity of Ovaherero. Judging from the colors of the Otruppe groups' uniforms and flag as well as those of the clothing of some women, it appeared that the majority of attendees were of the White Flag sub-group of Ovaherero, although there were certainly some Red Flag and a few Green Flag visible. There were also a handful of what I took to be older German couples from the area. However, the composition of the crowd was certainly far less diverse than at Ohamakari. The coffin was removed from the truck and carried by hand in a procession to the neighboring cemetery. It was at the gravesite that the day's program of prayers, speeches, and wreath-laying took place. Then German ambassador to Namibia, Wolfgang Messing, and a representative of the German war graves organization in Namibia laid a wreath at the gravesite. The speeches at the grave site recounted Chief Tjiseseta's life as well as the circumstances that led to his escape to South Africa. After several hours at the graveside, some descendents of the Chief passed by the grave to drop handfuls of soil upon the coffin. The crowd then dispersed, probably off to gatherings with friends and family as well as more performances by the Otruppe near the residential areas.

Ozombu Zovindimba

The commemoration of von Trotha's extermination order was held at an area known to Ovaherero as Ozombu Zovindimba (the place where the wells were poisoned), located just outside of Otjinene. This area is far within the former Herero Reserve East, now communal lands, and thus far from any main roads, unlike the Ohamakari and Omaruru commemorations. Thus, I wasn't surprised to find that the attendance at this event was less than the other commemorations I'd attended and that the crowd appeared to be wholly Ovaherero, aside from myself and a White tour guide with his four tourists. Again, the diversity of Ovaherero present was vastly less than at Ohamakari. When I arrived at the place late in the morning, a friend told me that I'd missed what he considered to be the most moving part of the day's program: visiting a site where Herero skeletal and material remains from 1904 had been partially unearthed. The rest of the program took place under a large rental tent and consisted of speeches similar in theme to what I'd heard at other commemorations. While this commemoration didn't include speeches by important foreign or Namibian politicians, it did include several performances that made the program feel less overtly political than the other commemorations. A poet recited a poem she'd composed for the event. A group of young girls dressed in old traditional leather clothing (about which the older girls appeared to feel self-conscious) performed a script on the theme of the day as well. Near the tent was a photographic display of photos reproduced from the National Archive, most of which I'd seen before in books but which I hadn't previously noticed at commemorations. These showed images such as Herero leaders of the German period, Ovaherero dressed in (then) traditional clothing, Herero concentration camps, and Herero prisoners of war. That this display was the first time many Ovaherero had ever seen images of this age, and particularly ones depicting Ovaherero being mistreated by Germans,

impressed upon me to what extent Ovaherero as a group have been unable to access parts of their own history publicly, whether it is because they had no access to historical books or archives, were only taught South African history in school, and were not allowed to speak openly about the German-Herero war/Genocide under South African laws. Certainly, the messages presented at this and other commemorations may have still been shaped to avoid confrontation with the German-Namibian community, for example, but the publicness of these commemorations still stands as a novelty in recent history.

Clearly the various commemorations of 2004 offered considerable information for attendees as well as new experiences with their own history. They also offered opportunities for Otruppe groups to perform, for friends and families to come together, and even for individuals involved in planning to improve their organizational or public speaking skills. The commemoration at Ohamakari was, however, a particularly unique commemoration for its large-scale, for its participation by important Namibian and German government officials (part of acknowledging this history), for its now historic apology, and quite simply for bringing an unprecedented variety of Herero individuals together in one place.

Ohamakari

The committees reportedly cooperated in some fashion to plan the August 14th commemoration of the battle at Waterberg.¹⁸ This was intended to be the grandest commemoration of the year because it is understood by many Ovaherero and non-Herero historians to be a decisive moment in the fighting between Germans and Ovaherero. Indeed, in retrospect, the Ohamakari commemoration stands out in the memories of all of us who attended or followed the commemorations in 2004.

The Ohamakari commemoration also marked the beginning of my life in Okakarara as well as my friendship with Bertha, who was my first host in Okakarara. I had been to Okakarara on a couple previous occasions so while driving into town the day before the commemoration I quickly noticed the preparations underway at the commemoration site and the unusual number of people walking or riding horses along the road toward the site seven kilometers to the west of Okakarara.

Later that afternoon, Bertha agreed to go with me to see what was going on at the commemoration site. She took great care in getting ready to go, as if she were going to a party or a bar for the evening. However, it also serves as a reminder of the social function that these 2004 commemorations, like the annual commemorations of past leaders, partly constitute for attendees. These commemoration gatherings are one of several contexts in which disparate families and friends come together and reaffirm (or create) relationships, catch up on news, fulfill obligations to support one another, or share jokes. Indeed, our time that evening, like virtually everyone else there, was spent mingling with Bertha's friends and greeting people who walked past. And it is no wonder since this event, even more so than other 2004 commemorations, brought Otjiherero-speaking people from all over Namibia as well as Botswanan Ovaherero in addition to other Namibians and various foreigners. The time outside of the ceremony really was one for spending time with family, friends, and acquaintances. Okakarara was absolutely full of visitors that weekend. Some Okakarara residents later told me that the number of people in Okakarara that weekend was more than had ever been there before. At Bertha's house, for instance, there were four of us (Bertha, her boyfriend, her boyfriend's friend, and me) sleeping in her bedroom, a number of people in the other bedroom and living room, at least three tents full of people in the backyard, as well

as a couple horses (belonging to men who perform with their horses at cultural events like this commemoration). There was lots of conversation, eating, and drinking to be enjoyed that weekend. I only saw a few people I knew, but it was a good opportunity for Bertha to introduce me to people who would later become friends and acquaintances in Okakarara.

At that moment, indeed for the whole weekend, I think I was merely one of numerous White foreign faces; my real meetings with these individuals would come later once I was starting to make Okakarara a home. In meeting or being approached by Ovaherero, I was surprised at how frequently others assumed I was German as many people of various language proficiencies initiated some exchange with me in German. I felt relieved, somehow, that I could easily evade their anger and demands for reparations by claiming my American citizenship. The individual confronting me would simply move off, perhaps in search of a real German. This experience also left me wondering about my place in this remembering as neither an Omuhherero, nor a German, nor even a Namibian. Thus, for me, this social experience was less so one for enjoying others' company, but rather as a further stimulus for on-going thinking about who I was in their company and in the context of these rememberings. At the same time, my sense of myself as a researcher working on a unique project was sorely challenged when I met several other foreign researchers and documentarians this evening. Indeed in several of my later interviews in and around Okakarara, it was obvious that for better or worse (especially as several previous researchers had reportedly not followed through on promises), I was but one of several foreign researchers some Herero individuals had worked with, albeit on many different topics. This worry about the import of my work was even more severely impacted by my participation in the UNAM history conference. It was intimidating to envision an entire building full of

people who were interested in the history of German and Ovaherero whereas in my home academic setting it seemed people were hardly aware of a country called Namibia, much less a group of people called Ovaherero. The conference and my conversations with some other foreign researchers and documentarians did illustrate the breadth of academic interest in this general topic.

In the midst of socializing, we also stopped to watch young children from Okakarara Primary School perform their marching. The crowd intensely observed every movement of these children and applauded and cheered madly when they managed to perform movements in near precise unison. The children appeared very serious, focused on correctly carrying out each move of hand, leg, arm, or foot. Each was clad in a pieced-together khaki uniform with red fabric swatches (representing the Red Flag subgroup of Ovaherero) standing in for epaulettes and other military-style decoration. Friends tell me this is a cultural group in which school children can choose to participate. This particular group of children was from Okakarara Primary School, but such groups exist in all the Herero areas of Namibia. These are the young version of the “Otruppe” which also exists in subgroups throughout Namibia and some of whom performed throughout the commemoration weekend. I was not present to see the Otruppe groups perform that evening, but I noticed many men in such uniforms amidst the crowds or on horseback. They are a common feature at the annual Herero commemorations and command even more attention and excitement than the children do.¹⁹

Another highlight of the evening was the arrival of the King of the Ondanga, Elifas Kauluma, also the chair of the Namibian Council of Traditional Leaders.²⁰ He arrived at dusk, bringing with him a gift of cattle for Riruako on behalf of the Herero community. The gift was later reciprocated by Riruako and other Ovaherero. During the following day’s

ceremony, Riruako explained the significance of Kauluma's attendance. According to oral history accounts, the Ovaherero and Owambo groups are closely related and migrated from central Africa together about 400 years ago. Indeed Otjiherero- and Oshiwambo- speakers in Namibia have told me that they can communicate with and understand one another.²¹ Further, Kauluma's presence served as a reminder that some Owambo groups provided shelter to Ovaherero who fled into their territory to escape from the Germans after the battle at Waterberg. To my knowledge, he was the only Namibian non-Otjiherero-speaking traditional leader in attendance that weekend.

The remainder of the Friday night, during which it seemed people continued to arrive in great numbers, was spent by crowds at the commemoration site mingling and watching performances or in Okakarara at bars and the homes of friends and family. Bertha and I went home early since she was feeling ill. The following day was to be the main commemorative program.

On Saturday morning, there was a heavy flow of vehicles and people riding horses or walking towards the commemoration site. I went on my own this morning since Bertha wasn't interested in spending as much time there as I was. Full daylight provided me a much better sense of the commemoration site itself. I'd heard previously from an acquaintance that the site of Saturday's commemoration had been recently donated by a commercial farm owner to the Herero community for the purposes of building the Okakarara Community Cultural and Tourism Centre (OCCTC) at which the commemoration occurred.²² The land was one hectare of a larger farm which is remembered by Ovaherero as the site of the last battle between Germans and Ovaherero in 1904. The timely donation by Mr. Snookie Diekmann, the German-Namibian who owns Farm Groß Hamakari, was thus intended in the

spirit of remembrance and reconciliation of 2004.²³ In another act of reconciliation, an organization funded by the German government called the Deutsche Entwicklung Dienst (DED), or German Development Organization, funded and saw to the management of the construction of the OCCTC. Almut Hielscher, a German journalist by trade, was the initial director of the project, followed soon thereafter by a Herero man, DaCosta Kandukira from another area who specializes in development work, including many projects for USAID. The two were to share in directing the building and running of the OCCC and helped to organize local efforts to plan for the August 14th commemoration, which was to be the first event at the OCCC. In addition to the small office building, stadium, and ablution block that were standing at the time of the commemoration, a small museum was constructed and, by the time I finished my research there, plans were underway for a few camp sites for tourists. During my time in Okakarara, the Centre hosted a new German documentary about 1904 as well as two productions by the National Theatre. The stadium also found use as an evangelical church for a period of time until disagreement about this use by the directors resulted in the termination of this use. The museum opened in 2005 with an exhibit of photographs from the August 14th commemoration, a small not yet ready for display collection of period guns, and a Herero woman from Okakarara to act as a museum guide.

The stadium at the OCCC wasn't quite finished by the time of the commemoration, but the completed stage and some seating provided a formal backdrop for the day's events. When I arrived that morning, there were already many people seated in the stadium area while others mingled just outside. A group of perhaps 30 or 40 Herero women affiliated with the Red Flag clustered beside the entry walk performing the cry for warriors, a performance I've seen in the past at Herero Day celebrations. Groups of Ovahimba men and women, stood

about, a surprise to me and likely many others since Ovahimba don't reside in the area and are not commonly so closely affiliated with Ovaherero.²⁴ I saw a number of White men in suits whom I presumed to be members of the German Parliament walking towards the stadium area, to be seated in the shaded areas of the stage. There were innumerable individuals, including myself, trying to capture the spirit of the day on film for personal use, documentaries, or various news media. A large white handwritten banner hanging from one outer wall of the stadium read: "Remembering Ohamakari Battle. 100 Years after 1904 – 2004. Okakarara 14 August 2004. Ovaherero Genocide Committee."

I found a space to the left side of the stage in which to unfold my camp chair and organize my notebooks, tape recorder, camera, and water. As we all waited for the program to commence, I scanned the crowd with an eye towards investigating the composition of the attendees at the same time that I sought out familiar faces. Most others were talking and laughing with people around them. The individuals seated around me I assumed to be all Ovaherero, dressed in traditional or everyday clothing. From my position I could also see a few of the dignitaries seated on stage in the shade of tents. I quickly made out Chief Alfons Maharero, Chief Riruako, and Chief Munjuku Nguvauva sitting on the side of the stage closest to me. Another large white handwritten banner hanging from the bottom edge of the stage read "Ohamakari, the place of brutal mayhem, the last bastion of the early colonial resistance, and the cradle of the liberation" A number of foreign tourists were scattered around the edges of the stadium, some making use of their hiking boots to climb atop the unfinished stadium walls. At the top of the center stand of stadium seats, a Herero man held a sign board highlighting his German ancestry and the fact that children/descendants Germans and Ovaherero during the colonial era were not claimed by their German fathers/families.

Who is the father of our German fathers!! The Hereros Who Took Advantage of Who! Who the German Am I!! Daddy's Dad is a German (Knicklem) Mommy's Dad is a German (Walli) I am Herero – Out of What Tree Did I Fall!! There are more 2nd Generation Germans/Hereros running around Namibia than in Germany, deserted, destitute, uitgebleek, and poor. I inherited only western diseases (skin cancer) Shame on you!!!

At some point during my perusal of my surroundings, I noticed the arrival near me of Gerhard Töttemeyer, a long serving German-Namibian Member of Parliament and Swapo member, with a woman I presumed to be his wife. Even if I hadn't recognized his face from newspaper photos, his West African style clothing distinguished him from anyone else present. Indeed there were very few White individuals in attendance, but certainly more than I saw at any other commemoration. When talking with Okakarara residents later about Ohamakari, some told me that a few area German-Namibian farmers were also present but I couldn't see them from my seat. Mr. Diekmann was more visible as he was called to the stage during the program for recognition of his land donation.

Eventually there was some movement around the podium while a swell of rhythmic Herero women's voices could be heard from the entrance and someone announced that the women were performing the customary warrior praise for German Minister Heidemarie Wiczorek-Zeul as she arrived. The arrival of a few more distinguished guests was announced including German Ambassador Wolfgang Messing and King Kauluma. Some commands were made over the loudspeaker in Otjiherero, seemingly to gather those who should be on the stage. The crowd was then prompted to sing the Namibian national anthem followed by the African Union anthem. A musical band of youth played twice briefly and a Herero commander made calls over the loudspeaker eliciting more warrior cries from the women.

Finally a man began with a prayer, first making the point that reconciliation is a teaching of Jesus. His prayer spoke of the sacrifices of individuals in working towards Namibian independence and the need to use the day towards reconciliation. In particular, he concluded by calling on the German government to recognize atrocities committed by Germany's colonial regime in Namibia. The next prayer covered similar themes, but made a particular point of praying that the remembrance of the day would bring healing to Namibians via reconciliation. After reminding speakers to keep to their allotted time, the program continued with the master of ceremonies recognizing the distinguished guests present and asking them to raise their hands when recognized so that the audience could identify each individual: Namibian Minister of Lands and Resettlement, Hifikepunye Pohamba, also representing the President of Namibia;²⁵ German Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development Heidemarie Wiecek-Zeul; Namibia's Attorney General; Chief David Tuvahi Kambazembi, the host of the commemoration; King Kauluma, Chairman of the Traditional Leaders Council of Namibia; Chief Riruako; Chief Nguvauva, deputy chair of the Traditional Leaders Council; Chief Maharero; Chief Tomo; representatives of the Mureti Royal House; Chief Christian Eerike Zeraeua; the German Ambassador to Namibia, Wolfgang Messing; the Governor of the Otjozondjupa Region, and the Mayor of Okakarara. Although it was already visible from the colors of the Otruppe and others wearing traditional long dresses that an unusually diverse crowd of Ovaherero were present, it was remarkable for any public Herero event I've attended in Namibia that every Herero Royal House as well as Chief Riruako was present.

After the youth band from a German high school in Windhoek (Deutsche Höhre Privat Schule--DHPS) played a short piece, the Governor of the Otjozondjupa Region gave

the welcoming remarks. After he also recognized the distinguished guests, as I've learned is customary for public speakers in Namibia, he went on to describe the suffering of Herero-speaking Namibians during 1904 as well as other Namibians and proposed that the period be remembered as a sacrifice for Namibian Independence. He cited the Namibian government's law promoting national reconciliation to remind the crowd that the day isn't intended for revenge, but for reconciliation, economic reintegration, and political stability. He concluded by outlining the German government's cumulative contributions to development in Namibia and stated that these efforts need to be appreciated in the spirit of reconciliation. I noted that his comments framed the commemoration and Germany's contributions to Namibia in agreement with the views of the Namibian government and, in retrospect, stand out from the rest of the day's speeches for the lack of focus on Ovaherero.

Against the calls and responses of Otruppe groups in the background, the next speaker continued with the message that the unity of Namibians of different cultures constituted by their presence at this event should be celebrated as an achievement of reconciliation. He suggested that perhaps it was the spiritual power of everyone's ancestors and forefathers that had made it possible for the descendents of those who fought one another in the past to come together for this event. His invocation of ancestors particularly struck me both because it seemingly invited Germans into a Herero worldview, in which ancestors are important in very different ways than they might be for Germans, and for the depth of reconciliation this image suggests, that generations of spirits as well as living persons were coming together.

The master of ceremonies called for a few minutes for everyone to stretch and observe a moment of silence before King Kauluma continued the program of speakers.

According to the English summary provided for his speech in Oshidanga, he narrated the close relations of OvaNdanga and Ovaherero, that both groups of people come from the same root. They were two sisters, Nangombe and Kazu, who each took a different direction when migrating into Namibia. Kazu took the left hand side and Nangombe took the right hand side, the South and the North of the river. Then they developed their different languages. Kazu became the speaker of the Otjiherero language while Nangombe's children developed languages such as Oshikwambi, Oshikwanyama, and Oshidanga (together known as Oshiwambo languages). He used this narrative to emphasize the need to Namibians to overcome the struggles of the past and unite. As with the attention directed towards his arrival the previous evening, I was again surprised at this gesture of solidarity embodied by King Kauluma's presence at a Herero commemoration and in the appearance of camaraderie between he and Chief Riruako on the stage.

The guest speaker, which followed, was Jeremy Sarkin, Professor of Law at the University of Western Cape who was to describe the definition of genocide in international law relative to the Herero genocide. He stated, in a paper he made available to the media at the commemoration, that what happened in 1904 was a genocide both in today's terms and in those of the time. He alluded to evidence that aside from von Trotha's extermination order, the government of Germany at the time condoned and accepted what happened after the fact, even rewarding generals for their actions; thus, making a case for Germany's culpability. Genocide, he argued, originated in the idea of crimes against humanity and international laws against such acts were promulgated in The Hague in the 19th-century. To illustrate (and seemingly further enliven) his argument, he noted that Hermann Göring was convicted at the Nuremberg trials of exterminating Jews (i.e., the term *genocide* wasn't used) and stated that

what happened in the Holocaust was similar to the events of 1904-1907 in South West Africa. In concluding, he argued that minimally, murder has always been a crime everywhere. Each point of his argument was met with great applause from the audience (even before his language was translated into Otjiherero). My impression was that this was intended to be a rousing speech and the audience's response was as he anticipated (and elicited). His argument was persuasive, but I was left wondering how much was overstated for the purposes of the day, such as his last comment about murder which ignores that murder is also subject to legal as well as moral definition.²⁶

Before proceeding, the master of ceremonies explained to the audience in English that when you call a chief, you must first call someone who knows him to say something about him before he talks. A friend later explained to me that the individual(s) who introduce a chief should also be family of the chief. Chief Nguvauva, often identified as the Paramount Chief of the Mbanderu, then approached the podium.²⁷ The English translator said Nguvauva spoke of the fighting between Germans and Ovaherero in 1904, that it started in Okahandja and who was involved, but he stated that the fighting even touched everyone in Namibia and should be remembered that way. He seemed to suggest that reconciliation was necessary so that what happened in the past wouldn't happen again and so that all Namibians could start anew. Perhaps as a lesson for Ovaherero to unite towards their common goal, Nguvauva instructed that "when two dogs are fighting over a bone, the third dog takes it and the other two are left with nothing." His speech seemed rather brief and straightforward, but some of the detail may have been lost in the summarized English translation.

A small group of school children from DHPS came to the stage dressed in their school uniforms to perform a collective statement of sorts. The narrative described briefly

what they'd learned about the history being commemorated and why they felt understanding this was important to contemporary problems as well as more general statements about the supportive social relations among different Namibian cultures that they want to see in the future. The children on stage looked as though they constituted several Namibian cultural groups. Each child took turns saying a part of the script, switching languages with almost every change in speaker. Although students of this premier school, reputed to be the best in Namibia, are probably accustomed to performing in various ways for German dignitaries, it struck me that these students' educational experiences, and indeed life experiences, couldn't be more divergent from that of the majority of Herero students. The choice of including or inviting this performance allowed a display of cultural and linguistic diversity that would be difficult to match by most Namibian secondary schools. It also might have been inspired by the children of some committee members, whose children attended DHPS and may actually experience such diversity among their school friends.²⁸ Although I know that even this unusual school does not achieve such ideals, I found myself wishing that the model of diversity and respect constituting their narrative and embodied in their combined languages and physical features was absorbed by each child as they spoke such that they might really carry these ideals beyond their time at DHPS.

The speaker I most anticipated, German Minister Wiczeorek-Zeul, continued the program. I was very curious to hear how she, as the representative of the German government, would respond to the previous speeches, but more importantly to the meaning of the day and the commemorative year. After recognizing the invited guests as well as expressing her feeling of honor in being invited to participate in the commemoration, she made a point of saying that she had also come to listen and, as such, had already met with

Herero and Nama representatives. She then proceeded immediately to the direct language that every German representative in the past has avoided in public speeches and conversations with Ovaherero.

Today I want to acknowledge the violence inflicted by the German colonialist powers on your ancestors, particularly the Herero and the Nama. I'm painfully aware of the atrocities committed 100 years ago and in the 19th century. The colonial powers drove the people from their land and when the Herero, when your ancestors resisted, General von Trotha's troops embarked on a war of extermination against them and the Nama. In his infamous order, General von Trotha commanded that every Herero be shot, with no mercy shown even to women and children. At the battle of Waterberg in 1904, the survivors were forced into the Omaheke Desert where they were denied any access to water sources and were there to die of thirst and starvation. And following this, the surviving Herero, Nama, and Damara were interned in camps and put to forced labor of such brutality that many of them did not survive.

We pay tribute, I pay tribute in the name of the German government to those brave women and men, particularly from the Herero and the Nama and Damara who fought and suffered so that their children and their children's children could live in freedom. I honor with great respect your ancestors who died fighting against their German oppressors. Even at that time, back in 1904, there were also Germans who opposed and spoke out against this war of oppression. One of them, and I'm proud of that, was August Babel, the chairman of the same political party of which I'm a member. In the German parliament at that time, Babel condemned the oppression of the Herero in the strongest term and honored the uprising as a just struggle for liberation. I'm proud of that today. A century ago, the oppressors, blinded by colonial fervor, became agents of violence, discrimination, racism, and annihilation in Germany's name. The atrocities, the murders, the crimes committed at that time are today termed genocide. And nowadays, a General von Trotha would be prosecuted and convicted, and rightly so. We Germans accept our historical and moral responsibility and the guilt incurred by Germans at that time. And so, in the words of the Lord's Prayer that we share, I ask you to forgive us our trespasses and our guilt. Without a conscious process of remembering, without sorrow, without apology, there can be no reconciliation. Remembrance is the key to reconciliation. 2004 is a year of commemoration, but it should also be, and we have seen that with the children, a year of reconciliation. Today we honor the dead. Those who fail to remember the past, become blind to the present. By remembering the past, we should gain strength for the present and the future.

I was left feeling utterly astonished and thrilled. I would imagine many Ovaherero around me shared these feelings, but also more complex ones, having been the object of so much silencing for so long. Minister Wieczorek-Zeul seemingly revealed her own feelings

about this history when her voice sounded strained as she detailed General von Trotha's order, during which she also paused as though to recompose something of her public speaking voice. Some individuals who were sitting on the stage told me later that they could see that Minister Wiczepek-Zeul was crying. Applause followed her comments about her own political party's historical role in condemning the genocide, her statement that von Trotha would today be tried for these crimes, and after her use of a phrase from the Lord's Prayer and insistence on the prerequisites for reconciliation.²⁹

Minister Wiczepek-Zeul continued by stating that Germany shared the goals of Namibians in the past and in the present. She explained that Germany supported Namibians, both idealistically and materially, in the past as they sought Independence, and with it freedom, dignity, and a just and humane world. "Germany has learned the bitter lessons of history," she explained and is now committed to promoting peace via its participation in the EU and UN as well as to providing assistance to people in Africa and helping in Namibian development due to Germany's "special historical responsibilities towards Namibia." She particularly emphasized Germany's assistance to Namibia's "necessary" land reform process. She concluded by citing Germany's commitment to a fairer world, including better living conditions in all parts of the world, in the face of globalization.

Once she had finished and an Otjiherero summary had been delivered to the audience there seemed to be a quick shuffling of people as she reclaimed her place at the podium's microphone.

When I finished before there were some people who said "apology..." I wanted to make it quite clear that everything that I said in my speech was an apology for crimes committed under Germany's name and I wanted to make that quite clear so that no one is in a misunderstanding.

Perhaps because the word “apologize” had been so strictly avoided by German representatives in the past, who instead spoke merely of “regret” for what happened in Namibia in 1904, not all of the audience recognized her apology for what it was when it was not delivered with the particular vocabulary that had been long requested. Indeed, there was more applause and some shouts of “dankie” (“thank you” in Afrikaans) after her addendum and its translation. The question which she didn’t answer, but which I heard many Ovaherero propose later, was whether the apology was her own or whether the German government authorized her to deliver this apology on its behalf. The crowd’s initial uncertain reception of her apology as well as this later question suggest to me that the Herero community has been well educated through the years of Riruako’s restorative justice efforts about the language of such public apologies as well as perhaps the real, legal implications of such semantic choices.

My impression was that she was trying to underline a commonality among Germans and Ovaherero by citing the language of the Lord’s Prayer to issue her apology. However, one might also question the appropriateness of the reference to this particular commonality (Christianity) that was, or at least perceived to be by many Ovaherero, born of German colonial aspirations on a day meant to commemorate human tragedies driven by these aspirations. No one that I spoke to later about the apology noted this irony. To me, this illustrates that the historical link between German missionaries and the popularity of Christianity among Ovaherero today, and indeed in all of Namibia, is not immediately evident to Ovaherero.³⁰

Her speech felt like the climax of the day to me and it would have felt quite appropriate for the crowd to have dispersed from the stadium thereafter. Thus, the remainder of the speeches felt like an overly long epilogue, seemingly protracted by the uncomfortable

heat of the late winter mid-day sun. However, it was necessary to complete the day's program of speakers and allow the apology to be officially accepted by various leaders.

The first speaker to respond was then Minister of Lands and Resettlement, Hifikepunye Pohamba, speaking as the representative of the government of Namibia.³¹ Pohamba first stated that there was much of his speech that he now wanted to delete after hearing Minister Wiczorek-Zeul (although he never indicated what he felt could now be left unsaid). He began by describing in broad terms the battles fought in 1904 and the sacrifices of those who fought the German troops. However, he spoke vaguely of the "unfortunate genocide of Ohamakari" and the efforts of "our" or "Namibian" people. He didn't mention Ovaherero or any other group specifically although at the end of this brief historical review he did name individual leaders (six Herero and one Nama) of these battles against German troops. Using his reiteration of the suffering and sacrifices of Namibian people under German colonialism as a segue, he went on to discuss the land problem in Namibia and how his Ministry was proceeding with land re-appropriation. In his final words, he implored Namibians to accept the Minister's apology and then told her that on behalf of the audience he accepted her apology.

Two men, part of the Maharero family and thereby also family of Riruako, were next called to the stage to introduce Chief Riruako and Chief Maharero. A friend later summarized these speeches for me in English as the two men spoke in Otjiherero and no translation was offered to the audience. She clarified that these detailed introductions about where the person comes from, both via their ancestors and the individual's own life history, are a regular Herero practice. Ovaherero want to know lots of detail about where another Omuhherero comes from, my friend explained. Indeed, in conversations with other

acquaintances, I was told that these sorts of introductions are critical for locating a stranger amidst Herero families and clans. I found it curious that this family history about Riruako and Maharero was only made accessible to the Otjiherero-speaking attendees. I couldn't even coax a full translation from my friend seemingly because she thought the details would be irrelevant to me. Her initial summary was just that the men were talking about what Maharero and Riruako have done and who their families are. While tedious at times for non-Herero listeners, these family histories are actually crucial to understanding Herero values and worldviews as well as often revealing much about the displacement of families due to the German colonial presence in then South West Africa. As these two men described the ancestors of Maharero and Riruako, the audience cheered or applauded as these ancestors' accomplishments, such as fighting the German colonial troops, were conveyed.

Amidst frequent bouts of laughter and cheers Chief Riruako briefly explained his own authority as Paramount Chief with some reference to his matrilineal ancestors in defense of his position. "I am chief of the Hereros, not under somebody else and not on behalf of somebody else," he proclaimed. He also reminded the audience that he has long been fighting for the acknowledgement by the German government of the 1904 genocide. I'd grown accustomed to Riruako's unconventional speaking style after witnessing his speeches at previous Herero Days in Okahandja. It seems it is the audacity of his direct insistence on his right to the position of Paramount Chief that always elicits laughter and cheers, as at Ohamakari. Aside from his boldness, he often injects bits of humor into his speeches. For example, as he described the law suit against Germany and German corporations he led, he advised "I look to be simple, but I'm not that simple as you see. You can't judge a book by its cover. Open the whole book and read." This comment was followed by laughter from the

audience. While his attitude contributes much to his charisma for some, for others he appears merely arrogant.

Chief Riruako acknowledged the Minister's apology as "the truth about the government of Germany's guilt" and expressed appreciation for her attendance at Ohamakari and doing what was right in offering the apology. He was, however, clear that he conceived of the apology as a step towards restorative justice, not an end in itself: "I am here to indicate that there must be dialogue to finish the unfinished business." Given his leadership role in seeking restorative justice with Germany throughout many years, it is not surprising that he also prescribed the outcome of the apology on this day and also claimed some credit for bringing the Germans and Ovaherero together.

I am the first man to get the Hereros and the Germans at that mount Waterberg where the graves of those who fought during the war lie. And I have brought both sides together and they were weeping while I was talking to them. I said to them "you killed one another here. This is the time for you to forgive one another here and accept one another as human beings." And I told all the Namibian Germans that "I don't have anything to do with you. I have something to do with the German government who sent you here." But it was to indicate that they have to acknowledge their guilt. They have to accept what happened. They were there. And for that matter, accept their guilt. And on there they told us what they said today.

He posits that speaking a historical truth leads to forgiveness which in turn leads to re-humanizing both Germans and Ovaherero. This is a very particular way of looking at these subjects that is very much in line with the ideas of the restorative justice movement. As at other times, he is careful to assert the German government's culpability in the Herero genocide and allow German Namibians to sidestep the label of perpetrator by suggesting that they were merely carrying out government commands.³² Again, his labeling of perpetrators corresponds with the ideas of restorative justice and associated human rights legal institutions. Riruako went on to assert that everyone in German South West Africa suffered because of the war between Germans and Ovaherero. However, he emphasized the

differential effect on the Ovaherero: “but the fact is still the Herero were exterminated by the Germans. It was an order from von Trotha by the Kaiser of the Germans, Wilhelm II, who gave, beforehand, permission to von Trotha to do what’s he has done.” Riruako was clearly laying out the legal line of culpability that was also pursued in his lawsuit, by establishing the government of Germany as the responsible party. He talked about all that Ovaherero lost as a result of the genocide, and asserts that there were between 500,000 and 600,000 Ovaherero before the war with Germany.

Despite some further speeches, the day felt as though it had come to conclusion with Pohamba’s and Riruako’s responses to the apology. It was late in the afternoon when the crowd began dispersing from the stadium. Groups of people still gathered here and there on the Cultural Centre grounds to socialize or go over the day’s events. As this was Saturday night and most people didn’t need to return to their homes until the next day, the evening brought a flood of people to the eating and entertaining establishments of Okakarara as well as innumerable continued gatherings at people’s homes. I think many were hopeful that the day marked a change in the struggle for this history to be recognized and the impetus for German aid.

Conclusion

The planning for and execution of commemorations in 2004 illustrates that while these commemorations bore some resemblance to regular commemorative practices, they also brought to light conflicts over history- and memory-production among Ovaherero and within Namibia as well as some of the ways in which this past is intertwined with present concerns amidst a relatively new postcolonial nation-state.

Commemorations are complex social practices. As we have seen, they are contexts in which community struggles become visible, whether over memory, history-making, or leadership (Sider and Smith 1997, Werbner 1998). Although much of these events was devoted to public speeches, commemorations are also not merely performances of texts. They are sites of remembering and memory-making (Werbner 1998). Commemorations are also particular sorts of experiences for all involved, as any performance is not merely a recitation of memorized words and movements (Werbner 1998).

Although I will return to this matter in the last chapter, I want to introduce here the idea that these 2004 commemorations constitute part of the restorative justice process in Namibia. First, this was an occasion in which the multiple stakeholders attempted to negotiate a common conception of the German-Herero past. This negotiation was, however, certainly not complete or accepted by all to whom it pertains today. I suggest that what was negotiated was an official history, one that bases its authority on its support from government representatives and national-level Herero leadership. Acceptance of this version of the past would ideally radiate outwards, but in a diminishing fashion from these central authorities. However, there was an explicit dialogue about this past across all the stakeholder communities to a degree that it hadn't previously circulated. At the same time, the planning about how to commemorate the past provided a concrete context in which these largely disparate stakeholder groups came together with greater or lesser success to contribute to these discussions that so many cared about tremendously in different ways. While most of these conversations occurred amidst national leaders of various sorts, many others less central to the planning process or entirely uninvolved were provoked to conversations about this past as well. For example, the conferences planned in Germany and Namibia in

recognition of the commemorative occasion brought together historians, documentarians, and other scholars from many countries. German or Herero tourists reportedly engaged one another in conversation about these commemorations. Conversations may even have transpired between German-Namibian bosses and Herero employees. Simply, the recognition of one another's agency and humanity, which Tutu and others deem a necessary component of restorative justice, partially occurred simply through the conversations that emerged as parties addressed how these commemorations should or should not proceed. Third, it appears that the leaders of the restorative justice movement significantly shape the terms with which other Ovaherero understand the project. For instance, Riruako made clear at Ohamakari that the apology would not be the end of his efforts, although he left vague the precise aim of restorative justice for Ovaherero. In other words, it appears as though the relevant categories, claims, and measures for evaluating the Herero restorative justice project need to be produced via the process itself as they were not inherently obvious to the Herero communities.

Notes:

¹ Although I'd originally intended to carry out research in both Germany and Namibia, for which 2004 would have been an exceptionally fascinating year, research funding seemed to have presented itself more easily for extensive time in Namibia and I quickly came to see my funding opportunities as fortuitous because there was more than enough work for me in Namibia simply trying to figure out what was going on in Namibia in regards to memory of the German past. In a sense, not being in Germany in 2004 then highlighted for me all the more the links between the commemorative year in both places.

² Although it is termed a "commemorative conference," the choice of title seems to frame it as a facet of restorative justice. The word "decontaminating" brings to my mind a secular variant of "cleansing" or "purifying," a first step towards the process of "healing" a historic "wound."

³ The conference, termed an "international conference", was entitled "The German-Herero War – 100 Years After 1904-2004: Realities, Traumas, Perspectives" and was planned jointly by the Bremen Africa Archives in the Faculty of Law, University of Bremen, and the Faculty of Law of the University of Namibia

⁴ Throughout the media coverage of this meeting, it was consistently clarified that Lothar von Trotha had no descendents of his own and this von Trotha family are only relatives not directly related to the General of ill repute.

⁵ The article, which I will discuss in a later chapter, authored by several scholars who are quite visibly involved in public history projects in Namibia, responded to a previous article in the *Windhoek Observer* that summarized the arguments of a recent MA Thesis by Klaus Lorenz that argued that German soldiers did not intend the results for the Ovaherero which many others have interpreted as genocide (Silvester et al. 2001).

⁶ One way in which the government attempts anti-tribalism is in the labels it uses to refer to various Namibian groups. Each group is known by a language group, rather than according to any cultural identities. Thus, all cultural groups speaking any dialect of Otjiherero are officially merely "Otjiherero-speaking peoples." Similarly, all Namibians of German descent are officially "German-speaking peoples." While cultural or ethnic labeling is also wrought with problems, the Namibian government's approach seems particularly ill-suited because people in Namibia continually label themselves and others according to cultural labels, which hold far greater meaning than broad language groups.

⁷ Aminuis, like virtually every other place that would today be identified by Namibians as being a Herero area, is a former Native Reserve, one of the rural areas designated for Ovaherero by the South African administration's Bantu policies.

⁸ Broadly speaking, political parties in Namibia divide to a great extent, but certainly not wholly, along ethnic lines. However, public perceptions make these divisions much stricter. As is also the case with the other political parties, the fact that Ovaherero are associated in Namibia with the DTA and NUDO seems to have much to do with the originating members of the parties. DTA and NUDO were united under the banner of DTA until Kuaimo Riruako pulled NUDO out of DTA in 2004, just months before national elections.

⁹ Chief Riruako is a very charismatic leader and some Namibians indicated to me they are put off by his personality, which one friend described to me as a "cult of personality." However, there is also division among the Herero community about his claim to the title "Paramount Chief" as well as his dual position as a traditional and political leader since he is also currently a Member of Parliament for NUDO.

¹⁰ According to him, the *Namibisch-Deutschen Stiftung* (NaDS) was founded around the time of Namibian Independence, but it emerged from the existing *Interressee Gemeinschaft* of German-speaking Namibians (Society for the Interests of Germans). There was no common perspective in the German-Namibian community about Independence; some thought it better to stay under South African rule. The liberals in this debate formed NaDS in an effort to decolonize the minds of all Namibians, deal with the past, help create the Namibian nation, etc. He said that while NaDS only has about 160 members (2003), they could spend time trying to recruit

members but that they would then risk becoming conservative as statistics of German-Namibian population would suggest. NaDS is supposed to link Germans and Namibians as well as German-Namibians with other Namibians. While NaDS sees itself as a cultural institution, it does not does not promote or conserve German culture.

¹¹ NBC is the public radio and television station of Namibia, owned in part by the government of Namibia.

¹² The Herero/Mbanderu royal houses are constituted by inheritable chieftaincies from the six royal houses whose authenticity is considered to be historically-based--Maharero, Nguvauva, Kambazembi, Zeraeua, Vita-Thom, and Mureti. A 1992 meeting held in Okakarara and chaired by Advocate Vekuii Rukoro established the joint leadership structure of the Ovaherero and Ovambanderu for the purposes of the Council of Traditional Leaders to be formed in accordance with Article 102(5) of the Namibian constitution. Those present declared that the chief of each of the six Royal Houses plus Kuaima Riruako (who was not in attendance) as a seventh chief would constitute the Herero/Mbanderu Chiefs' Council. The latter position was to be eliminated upon Riruako's death as it was a special measure intended to resolve a dispute about the pre-Independence position of Paramount Chief. This Chiefs' Council has certain rights and responsibilities in relation to the Council of Traditional Leaders under Namibian law.

¹³ Because Damara were living with Ovaherero at the time of the wars with Germans, the Germans also killed Damaras alongside Ovaherero. However, the Germans never explicitly fought against the Damara and it was only Ovaherero who were specifically targeted in von Trotha's extermination order.

¹⁴ The "Blue Book" is a collection of accounts by officials of the British Union of South Africa about German colonial rule in SWA. I describe it in further detail in chapter three.

¹⁵ The committee formed sometime between late 2003 and early 2004 and it was in June and July that the joint committee was formed and plans began in earnest.

The Kambazembi Royal House is located in Okakarara and is one of the sub-groups of Herero traditional leadership. It is understood to be a historical institution constituted by a chief, his family, his advisors, and his followers. The chieftaincy is an inherited position.

¹⁶ This is the Okakarara Community Cultural and Tourism Centre which I discuss below.

¹⁷ For further information about the Otruppe movement, see chapter three. This group was known as "Spieltruppe" by Germans, meaning "play troops."

¹⁸ Although the actual date of the conclusion of this battle was August 11, 1904, the organizers wanted the event to be held on a Saturday for the sake of attendance so that the commemoration was held on August 14th.

¹⁹ The Otruppe, I suggest, constitute part of the remembrance of the German colonial time for Ovaherero and, thus, I will discuss the Otruppe in more detail in a following chapter.

²⁰ The Council of Traditional Leaders was established by section 2 of the Council of Traditional Leaders Act, 1997 (Act No. 13 of 1997).

²¹ Although speakers in Namibia describe a commonality in the languages and both language groups are related among the Bantu language family, historical linguistic research suggests that their historical relationship may not be as close as what oral histories suggest.

²² The Okakarara Community, Cultural and Tourism Centre (OCCTC) is the result of an initiative taken by the Okakarara Chamber of Commerce in 1999 with the original aim of using cultural performances to attract some of the many tourists who visit the Waterberg Plateau Park to travel to Okakarara. The initiative was unable to secure sufficient financial support, but was revived in 2004 with the financial support of the German Government, German Development Service (DED) and German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) (Museums

Association of Namibia “Report on the Okakarara Community, Cultural, and Tourism Centre (OCCTC) planning workshop” 27-28 July 2005).

²³ One Okakarara resident suggested to me that Mr. Diekmann had donated the land so that he wouldn't have lots of Ovaherero on his farm for the commemoration. This comment leaves open the question of how Ovaherero, especially those in the area, perceived Mr. Diekmann's donation. Was it viewed in the reconciliatory spirit publicly described or with skepticism?

²⁴ Ovahimba and Ovazemba are also Otjiherero-speakers and close relatives of Ovaherero. Oral history suggests that when Bantu groups migrated into the area of southern Angola and Namibia in the last 1700s, Ovaherero moved further south while these other groups remained in the north. These groups share many cultural practices and their most visibly obvious difference is the choice of most Ovahimba and Ovazemba, living in the north to wear clothing more similar to their ancestors than to the largely Euro-American clothing worn by Ovaherero. The different geographic locations of these groups, however, meant very different historical involvement with Germans during that colonial period since Germans for the most part did not make it as far north as the areas of the Ovahimba and Ovazemba.

²⁵ As the head of Swapo and Swapo's Presidential candidate for the 2004 elections, Pohamba effectively attended as the future President of Namibia.

²⁶ I'm particularly reminded of Talal Asad's (2003) discussions on this topic in *Formations of the Secular*.

²⁷ As I will discuss later, the Mbanderu are variously referred to as a subgroup of Ovaherero or a separate group of Otjiherero-speakers.

²⁸ I'm reminded of a conversation with one Genocide Committee member about the responsibility of parents not to communicate any negative feelings they may have about the past to their children, who may then be able to live together with children of other cultural groups. He cited the example of his daughter, then a student at DHPS, proposing that she and one of her German friends deliver a statement together at the first commemoration event of the year.

²⁹ In listening to my recording of her speech again later, I noted that the majority of the audible applause occurred during her speech in English, with relatively little following the Otjiherero summary. It led me to wonder if the majority of Herero attendees were not better educated (or younger, such that English was their medium of instruction in school) portions of the community such that they could easily understand her English verbiage.

³⁰ Today, it is estimated that 80-90 percent of the Namibian population is Christian (CIA World Fact Book <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/wa.html>, accessed March 14, 2010).

³¹ Some Ovaherero I spoke with about the Ohamakari commemoration, felt it a slight that the then President of Namibia, Sam Nujoma, was not present at the event. Ostensibly, Pohamba was seemingly selected to represent the government because his then Ministry is charged with attempting to rectify the inequalities in land ownership born of German colonialism and South African Bantu policies. I think it's at least as likely that he was chosen so as to have an occasion to present himself to a large gathering of voting Namibians (particularly Ovaherero, who are a stronghold for opposition parties) three months before the national elections in which he was the Swapo Presidential candidate. After winning the Presidential election in November 2004, he became the second President of the Republic of Namibia on March 21, 2005.

³² However, there are certainly better reasons for Riruako and others choosing to leave German Namibians aside as restorative justice is pursued with the German government. It is both less controversial in Namibian and more economically promising to leave the German government as the named perpetrator of the genocide and other atrocities of the colonial period.

chapter two

CLAIMING THE PAST

In the previous chapter, I described the conflict that developed in Namibia about how to commemorate Herero experiences during 1904 to 1907. At issue was not only the question of how to categorize the violence perpetrated by German troops during this time, but also who rightfully had a stake in claiming and mobilizing particular meanings of this past in Namibia today. These conflicts had to do not only with what happened between 1904 and 1907 in South West Africa (SWA), but also with the meanings and significance of these experiences for present day Namibians. In other words, it was both the history in the sense of what had happened and its significance that sparked controversies around the 2004 commemorations.

In this chapter I elaborate on the bases for such conflicts. Certainly, in part these depended on the simultaneous circulation among different communities of several notions of what had happened. Therefore, in this chapter I will characterize the different histories about this past that are most prominent to highlight different understandings of what happened, which informed the 2004 conflicts. I also, however, will illuminate how different meanings have been assigned to these histories by different groups. It is through such history-makers that these different meanings of particular moments of 1904 to 1907 or the period broadly came to hold their present importance (or have become irrelevant to present actors).

Another component to the conflict around the 2004 commemorations, however, requires examining what was at stake, what provided the fuel for contestation. As I suggested in the last chapter, the 2004 commemorations themselves formed a way to produce an account of the past. Thus, conflict about these commemorations was a contest over control of (memory- and) history-making, for the creation of this past's significance to the present. In other words, the 2004 commemorations served to create certain understandings in Namibia and elsewhere about how this past should be understood to impact the present.

Further, while the 2004 commemoration preparations brought some visibility to the competing knowledges about and meanings of this past in Namibia, I suggest that it was the question of restorative justice (and perhaps reparations, in particular) more broadly that prompted the intersection of different communities of history- and memory-production in new and complicated ways. Indeed, Historian Jan-Bart Gewald traces the past use of memories of the Herero genocide in Namibia to suggest that these memories have been mobilized in various contexts over the 20th-century by different socio-political actors with varying goals (2003). In this most recent use of memories of the Herero genocide as the foundation of the Herero restorative justice project, interested or affected groups have engaged with this past in new ways. In other words, as this particular use of the past of 1904-1907 and German colonialism broadly has become increasingly supported domestically and internationally, the question of restorative justice has become increasingly salient for interested or affected groups. In contributing to discussions about restorative justice for Ovaherero, these different groups' understandings of this past and its significance in the present have increasingly come into conversation and conflict.

In what follows, I first want to briefly explain my approach to memory and history before going on to trace the veins of this conflict among different history-making communities. It was largely because the 2004 commemorations were recognized by many interested parties as a site of history-production about the forms of interaction between Germans and Ovaherero during the 1904-1907 period (with socio-political implications beyond 2004) that groups struggled for control over the form of the commemorations. I will identify several groups engaged in talking about the past of German colonialism in Namibia and 1904 to 1907, in particular, and the historical contexts in which these groups produce knowledges about this past. I will also outline these groups' various understandings of this particular past. In doing so, I aim to illuminate the features of this conflict over the use of memory and history in Namibia today.

Ways of Knowing the Past

Before proceeding I will explain what I mean by *history* and *memory* since I suggest both varieties of historical knowledge circulate among the multiplicities of knowledges about the German-Herero past. An enormous body of literature, from a variety of disciplinary traditions in the humanities and social sciences has arisen around the vague notions of *memory* (my focus is on what is variously referred to as *collective*, *social*, *popular*, or *cultural*) and *history*. Distinctions between what I choose to term *social memory* and *history* remain somewhat jumbled within academic literature. I will distinguish between *social memory* and *history* for clarity, but most especially because these terms may hold real and distinct meanings amidst social contests over historical truth. By *social memory*, I refer to understandings of the past, both narrative and fragmented accounts, shared by members of a community by virtue of their membership in this community.¹ These memories may be

discursive, bodily, or emotional. By *history*, I mean narrative accounts of the past (written, oral, or visual) that may constitute the products of experts, such as local oral historians or academic historians (the products of whom I refer to as *History*).

Some scholars distinguish memory as the raw material of history (LeGoff 1992), while others identify memory and history as two kinds of historical consciousness that may affect one another (Olick 2003). In other words, history is not only an expert's composition of memories, and memories are not only the material of historians.

I take *history* and *memory* to be outcomes of particular processes of knowledge production. It is the process creating these different forms of knowledge about the past that particularly distinguishes them rather than something inherent about their form or truth-value.

Much recent scholarship on history and memory tends to leave these terms more vaguely defined because their distinctions are less important within broader inquiries about how people produce understandings of the past. For the purposes of this project, I also prefer to concentrate on the processes by which knowledges of the past are created rather than categorizing their end products. However, I will make a particular effort to distinguish the two terms as my informants do as well as to demarcate *History*, emerging out of Euro-American disciplinary practices.

Production of History as Knowledge

Commonly, history might be understood as the result of a professional historian sifting through information about the past to sort fact from fiction and then composing a narrative ordering of these facts. However, this positivist notion of history, as is widely critiqued by scholars of history, glances over the ambiguities of how fact is established or

distinguished as well as the subjectivity required to order information. Some critiques retort that a history is merely a narrative. However, this constructionist perspective fails to account for the acceptance of some histories over others and the variability among winner's histories, for example.

Many scholars have focused on the role of power in producing historical truths as an alternative interpretation of history as a process that creates particular types of knowledge.² Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) offers a particularly helpful investigation into the making of history as he describes the workings of power in the production of Haitian history to suggest how certain aspects of the Haitian Revolution were effectively silenced in Haiti's historiography. Trouillot outlines the process of history production with four conceptual phases, which he examines particularly for the role of each in creating silences in history: the creation of historical fact (what criteria is used to determine what counts as fact), the assembly of fact (archiving), the retrieval of facts (narrating), and the creation of significance (history) (Trouillot 1995:26). These phases illuminate something of the contours of forces producing histories generally and highlight that history is created in a historical context by people, behaving in the capacity of agents, actors, and subjects (Trouillot 1995:22-24).

Although a thorough description of the relevant processes of history-making in and about Namibia are beyond the scope of this project, I approach this contest over the history of 1904-1907 as an intersection of different processes of history-production as Trouillot and others have theorized. What are the sites of Namibian history-making and who is producing history in each context? How and why do some Ovaherero (and German-Namibians) understand themselves excluded from some particular history-making processes? Why have

the events of 1904-1907 in SWA been silenced and trumpeted at different times and in different histories? My interest is in the various contexts, people, and power of history-making about this period of German and Namibian history. I also seek to describe this contest as a part of history-making especially relevant to post-colonial contexts as well as being a feature of practicing restorative justice.

Production of memory

Analogous to history, remembering is not the simple recollection of previous experiences. Social memories are malleable and responsive to, or constituent of, the context of their telling (Olick 2003, Popular Memory Group 1982, Matsuda 1996, Bloch 1998, Halbwachs 1992, Tonkin 1992, Hodgkin and Radstone 2003, Climo and Cattell 2002, Werbner 1998).

Virtually all scholars working on problems of social memory trace this literature's origins to the work of French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs on what he termed *collective memory* (1992). Collective memory for Halbwachs is thoughts about the past that are shared within a group. It is through interactions among individuals as group members that collective memory is created and changed. Collective memory, then, is the product of individuals remembering as group members, and not of individual recollections unified in a singular group memory. When group members come together to reflect on the past, collective memories may change to fit with changes in the group's interests or thinking. Collective memories, Halbwachs argues, are socially produced at particular times, or epochs, in order to meet current social needs and are conditioned by the socio-cultural context at that moment.

Anthropologist Maurice Bloch argues that many social memories about a particular part of the past circulate simultaneously. Among multiple suitable narratives of the past,

different narratives dominate in different contexts (Bloch 1998:110). It is wrong, he elaborates, to consider multiple accounts contradictory for each is suitable to particular contexts. For example, among Zafimaniry accounts in Madagascar, he distinguishes one account that is “official” and expressed in formal, ritual contexts and another that is constituted by interwoven elements of memory that are passed down from ancestors and expressed in more everyday contexts (Bloch 1998:108-9).

The possibilities of memories are not, however, endless. Some anthropologists critique Halbwachs’ notion of memory and assert that there are limitations on what constitute plausible memories for a given group and that the form of social memory varies according to the context of its telling. In their studies of conflicts over memory, anthropologists Mary Steedly (1993) and Jennifer Cole (1998; 2001) argue that cultural meanings, narrative traditions, and social context condition which memories are plausible formations. Cole furthers this consideration of the context of memory telling and suggests that particular constructions of the past are, in fact, used selectively in different contexts as discursive resources (1998:112). Similarly, Anthropologist Elizabeth Tonkin (1992) argues that a particular account of the past is not separable from the teller or audience in which it was relayed, that subjectivity has much to do with telling memories.

Histories and history

While some memories or histories produced may enjoy “official” recognition as singular, hegemonic understandings within a community, multiple competing histories and memories are always crosscutting these (Popular Memory Group 1982, Olick 2003, Werbner 1998). Thus, struggles over history and memory also include the negotiation of hegemonic versions of the past from multiple versions, as was a subject of dispute in Namibia in the

context of planning to commemorate in 2004, both amidst smaller communities and within the Namibian nation-state. However, as with any hegemonic knowledge, this status comes of particular workings of power at a given moment. In short, even more hegemonic memories or histories emerge out of particular contexts and are not in any way permanently so or without association to their context.

Thus, different groups may aim to try to control memory- and history- making because to do so lends some control over interpretations of the past (Climo and Cattell 2002:30, LeGoff 1992:xi). Indeed some scholars particularly attend to the politics of memory production, and trace the political effects of memory production and reproduction -- “politicized memory” (Werbner 1998). In other words, memory embodies political power (i.e., to build nations or challenge a regime’s legitimacy), making the stakes great regarding the telling and reproduction of social memories (Werbner 1998, Hodgkin and Radstone 2003, LeGoff 1992).

In particular, some argue that memory challenges power and it is for this reason that African states in the recent past have often contested the moral right of citizens to public remembering, or the public recognition of memory (Werbner 1998:1). Public remembering, they suggest, has been utilized by some Africans to contest power in postcolonial transformations, challenge a regime’s legitimacy, build nations, and create documented records of accountability (Werbner 1998).

This is how I see memories and histories of the German-Herero war being mobilized today in Namibia. Public tellings of the past have clearly been used to document claims about accountability for this past by both the German state and some Ovaherero. However, various groups have used politicized memory to make broader critiques. For example, some

Ovaherero have also utilized memories and histories of this past politically to challenge the Namibian state's role in controlling citizens' relationships with Germany, to critique the state's silencing of particular notions of this past, or to allege the Namibian state's marginalization of some citizen populations, particularly Ovaherero. The Namibian state has also used politicized remembering to forward the claims that it is the appropriate representative of any of its citizens' concerns to other nation-states as well as to promote nation-building in particular ways.

In Namibia, one of the most vocal differences in understandings about the history of 1904-1907 pertains to the nature of the fighting between German troops and Ovaherero. Such interpretations are interested in both the extent of the violence and the culpability of the parties involved. Especially within much of the German-speaking community of Namibia, the notion of a Herero "uprising" still finds supporters, although the less specific depiction of this history as a war is the most predominately used. At the present, public tellings of the war in Namibia forward a version of the history that both refers predominately to a massacre or genocide and at the same time to Herero resistance efforts against the Germans. Even amidst speeches at Herero Day during the past two years that commemorate heroes of this war, various Herero participants described the war as *genocide*, an *uprising*, and a *massacre*. However, many also assert that within Herero communities, this war is known as *Otjindjandja*, which I have been told means "many people died together."

A second highly contentious difference in understanding this past has to do with the nature of this violence in a different way. As I particularly highlighted in the previous chapter's review of disputes about how to commemorate in 2004, some interpret 1904-1907 as primarily a period of (failed) anti-colonial resistance which continued for almost 90 years

while others, particularly some Ovaherero, see Herero experiences at this time as singular in Namibian history, not to be trivialized by association with (less violent or dehumanizing) experiences of the liberation struggle.

Both of these examples of contestation over the history of 1904-1907 in Namibia came to the fore in the context of negotiating an official history of sorts to be used in restorative justice or commemorative efforts. However, similar negotiations of multiple histories into single versions have been ongoing in communities who have a stake in these histories. In other words, German-Namibians and Ovaherero communities have also had to settle on particular versions of this past for various purposes over time. For example, within Herero communities a “Herero perspective” had to be sorted out in order to forward Herero claims against Germany.

A Version of Herero Histories

Expectations and Oral History

In the following chapter I describe in more detail the ways in which Ovaherero learn about what happened to their ancestors between 1904 and 1907, and in particular the contexts in which this past was discussed. Ovaherero’s understandings derive largely from social and personal memories as well as oral histories, but some published accounts by non-Ovaherero historians have also come to be sources of knowledge about this past. Herero elders and known historians are the primary producers of history. The context in which this past is discussed, however, greatly influences the knowledges (and their meanings) that circulate within families and communities.

In approaching the question of how Ovaherero remember the German colonial past and, in particular, the violence at the turn of the century between German troops and Ovaherero, I was attentive to the idea that I didn't want to impose particular ideas or labels, infused with value judgments, on the types of historical knowledge (e.g., history, stories, memories) or the actual content of this knowledge (e.g., war, genocide, fighting).³ As my interview opportunities increased and I realized that many people were either reluctant or felt unable to talk with me about "history," as I discuss in the previous chapter, I became even more careful with my use of terms pertaining to knowledges of the past. I didn't want to exclude those potential informants from my research who claimed to know nothing about the history since it seemed to do so would be to speak only with historical experts. As a form of empowerment of sorts, I also wanted those in my community to feel as though they maintained valuable information and, thus, I tried to avoid words that might lead some people to feel excluded from my research on the grounds of their own perceived knowledge gaps or inadequacies.

Also, what I heard may be a reflection of the limited contexts in which I heard about the past. Because different ways of talking about the past are likely practiced in different contexts, I may not have heard about the past in a setting for which it would be appropriate for Ovaherero to use lengthy, narrative practices. In particular, I never heard discussions about the past at the fireside and wonder about the significance of this gap on my overall sense of how 1904-1907 is now talked about. Since so many individuals told me that they learned about their family's history around the fireside and I never witnessed such tellings, I may have entirely missed this important context for talking about the past that may include narrative histories.

It is also possible that it was simply my status as an outsider that prevented me from hearing particular kinds of history. Some versions of the past may not have been relayed to me by a particular individual either out of privacy concerns or worries about telling incomplete or uncertain information to a (perceived) professional.

Whatever the reasons, I learned several types of historical knowledge about this past primarily in the contexts of interviews and commemorations. I did hear a chronology of fighting between Germans and Ovaherero that focused on places where fighting occurred. Secondly, I heard short narratives about particular events amidst the broader violence of the time; events which it felt to me were told or remembered because they vividly describe a sense of inhumane acts by Germans. Thirdly, as I described in the previous chapter, many people were able or willing to tell me about how their own family was affected by or participated in the fighting between Germans and Ovaherero. Lastly, I have both heard and read a number of summaries of the fighting that highlight the consequences of fighting for Ovaherero or the Herero community generally.

Narratives of Battle, Betrayal, and Survival

For those individuals who were willing to talk about Herero history more broadly, I heard about escalating tension between Ovaherero and Germans, the progression of the war in terms of place or farm names, Ovaherero's flight through the Omaheke desert to safety, as well as capture and hiding following the war.

If individuals didn't narrate an originary moment of the war between Ovaherero and German soldiers, I asked who started the war. Almost everyone I spoke with explained that Germans started the war by provoking Ovaherero or that Ovaherero rose up against Germans in protest of unfair treatment.

One older Herero man answered my question by explaining that Ovaherero started the war as a defensive measure: “Ovaherero. The first person to shoot was an Ovaherero, but it wasn’t because it just started, they were provoked. Germans killed Herero cattle.” A friend, active in local organizing for the Ohamakari commemoration, also present for this conversation interjected, as though clarifying for me what the previous man had just begun explaining: “Germans started it. Hereros defended themselves. Germans started shooting cattle, Herero defended their cattle.” Their somewhat divergent conceptualizations of how the war began well illustrates a tension I noticed as culpability has been more formally assigned to the events of 1904-1907 in recent years, namely that many understand that their ancestors with other Ovaherero were both brave warriors who confronted unjust treatment by Germans as well as innocent victims of German colonial oppression. I will return to this observation in the last chapter.

In addition to what is understood by Ovaherero to be intentional acts of provocation, some Ovaherero cited evidence that Germans were preparing to fight Ovaherero before the war actually began. One man explained why only some Ovaherero had guns to use against German soldiers in the war:⁴

Germans come to Herero before to gather their guns, said must take the guns for injections, and then they started the war. Some Herero were clever and questioned or didn’t give their guns. They knew Hereros didn’t know about [disease]...Germans organized, like preparation for war.

A story that came up several times if I asked individuals about how the war began was that of Germans shooting Ovaherero from a distance in the bush and explaining that they thought the body was that of an animal rather than a human.

At the beginning, Germans started as friends, they arrived at every village just to get information from Herero about where power was. This was before the war. Later, when they realized they would take over power from Hereros, they started shooting person-by-person in the bush or field, one-by-one. They looked through their

binoculars, saw a Herero two kilometers away, and shot. If they were asked at the time why they shot a Herero they would explain “oh, I thought that maybe I shot an ostrich.” Herero used to carry wood on top of their head or back that the Germans could say made a Herero resemble an ostrich. This was a lie. It started with that. They shoot someone and say they’re testing whether it’s a person or an animal. Because you are Black, they compare you to maybe a monkey. So if you’re sitting they think “oh, it’s a monkey.” If you’re standing: “oh, it’s an ostrich.” So later, Hereros realized that Germans came not to be friends, but only to kill Hereros.

This story also illustrates what many Ovaherero described as a shift in the relationship between Ovaherero and Germans from one of presumed friendship to that of enemies. With hindsight, many Ovaherero described their ancestors’ experiences with Germany colonialism as a time of lost trust, insincere friendships, and even a “betrayal of friendship.” As with other narratives I heard, this elderly Herero man describes a change in the way that Germans treated Ovaherero, a change that suggested deception in Germans’ initial relationships with Ovaherero.

Another elderly Herero man similarly described this very different relationship with Germans before the war: “[we were] told about friendship and missionary when Germans first came, didn’t come to fight – brought food, clothes, etcetera to sell – that was before the war started. “

At the Ozombu Zovindimba commemoration in late 2004, former Namibian Attorney General Advocate Vekuii Rukoro, a self-identifying Omuhherero, echoed this common perception as he warned Ovaherero to be wary of strategies Germany might employ to divide Ovaherero over the issue of reparations. He reminded those present that when Germans first came to Namibia they “pretended to be the saviors but ended up being the killers” (Kuteue 2004c).

Yet another man termed this shift amidst his own ancestors’ relationships with Germans from friends to enemies as Germans’ “hidden agenda: “At first, Germans and

Kambazembi were friends, but Germans had deceptive intentions.” He went on to explain that even the introduction of churches was a calculated project by Germans to slowly destroy Ovaherero. Germans justified churches as a context for educating Ovaherero, he explained, “so Germans and Hereros could understand each other.”

Herero people believed in the holy fire so older people didn't go [to church], just sent their children. Germans knew Herero believed in Holy Fire but Germans wanted to take it away so Hereros could become Christians. Those children who went didn't want to go to holy fire. Not all people were in education so those who didn't kept the holy fire. This Christianity led to some men and children who didn't believe in the holy fire and now Herero culture is dying [as a result].

While also arguing that Germans initially seemed to want to befriend Ovaherero, another chief suggested that Herero chiefs allowed some of their children to attend mission schools not out of ignorance or naiveté, but rather it constituted a strategic decision.

“Ovaherero are very clever,” he explained, “they can see the kids also benefit” from the mission schools.

Another story I heard several times that suggests a past remembered with subtle acts of resistance depicts Samuel Maharero offering a jar of soil to Germans who asked to buy land, as a defiant, uncooperative response.

Some of [the Germans] went to Kambazembi, Maharero, Zeraeua and others to request land, to be resident there and the chiefs then said “our land is too small for our people and we will never allow you to reside here so your land is enough. Germans were trying to give reasons to chiefs, trying to convince them that the land is big enough. Kambazembi and Zeraeua said “we're not responsible, go to Maharero in Okahandja.” But at that time, German requests were not only directed to Kambazembi and Zeraeua, they were requesting land from local communities also. So they sent a message to Maharero that Germans want land but don't give it to them. They made a song so that Germans couldn't realize what they talking about... Maharero was sitting with German people and some Ovaherero were standing a little bit far and started singing. Then Maharero realized that maybe this was a shout from the districts. Then Maharero got ground in a box and gave it to the German people and said “you need to create land from this sand.” Later when they realized that Maharero didn't want to give land to Germans, they informed the Kaiser who sent von Trotha to kill all Herero.

This story describes Ovaherero using secretive means of communication to organize their position on land and Maharero delivering the opinion of other Ovaherero in the form of a witty retort, sarcastically suggesting to Germans that they grow their own land from a jar of soil. This story also crosscuts a larger narrative of Ovaherero losing land as a result of pressure from Germans and the war, while celebrating a moment of Herero pride and resistance to Germans' desires for land.

Past relationships between Germans and Hereros are understood as betrayed relationships while still leaving space for some Herero skepticism about Germans' intentions. This concern with Germans behaving deceptively helps to reveal something of the injury to their sense of humanity that Ovaherero describe today. The situation sounds familiar to that expressed by Rwandan genocide survivors in the sense that the violence of the genocide was furthered by the alterity of friends and neighbors suddenly becoming perpetrators of genocide. It's not merely enemies whom one fights or is murdered by, but former friends. Small memories of Herero ancestors, particularly leaders perhaps, acting on skepticism about Herero relationships with Germans fueled some sense of pride for Ovaherero about how their ancestors attempted to negotiate German colonialism.

Movement of Battles

The war was described as a series of battles in different places, emphasizing the flow of the war across Herero land. However, individuals didn't offer enough detail to understand precisely why the points of conflict moved from place to place or even why any individual site developed into a battle site. Narratives about the battles always ended with Ovaherero hiding or fleeing. It is clear that at some point during the series of battles Ovaherero were no

longer fighting and were instead simply looking for means of survival and relative safety. For many, this turning point was remembered as the battle at Ohamakari.

One man described the progression of the war in 1904 following provocation by Germans:

Herero just see people start fighting them and they fought back. When started fighting at Okahandja then war broke out. My grandfather started at Okahandja then to Okondjira then to Oviombo (Ovitoto) then to Ohamakari (split from there) then to Ozonguti then to Ozombu Zovindimba (Otjinene). After Ohamakari, they were fleeing; they knew they were defeated. Some hid in the mountains, some fled out of the country, some went to Ovamboland.

Another man told a very similar story of the war from his grandfather's perspective:

My Grandfather was a fighter...He went from Okahandja to Okondjira to Otjozondjupa. Samuel [Maharero] was among them. When in this area [Okakarara], they started separating. He was hiding for a long time. Then Germans stopped killing. Germans hung people from trees. He just stayed in the veld (fields). He ate fruits from the veld and drank water there. He was hiding in mountains.

I heard a number of similar narratives. Notably, the location of battles always featured centrally in narratives, perhaps suggesting something of the continued meaning for Ovaherero of these sites today. Also, such narratives outlined the experiences of a particular ancestor, rather than Ovaherero or even Herero warriors generally. Often, if the ancestor referred to fought with a famous chief, this was also highlighted. Female ancestors were also included in these war narratives, but it was men who were labeled as fighters.

Amidst battle, Ovaherero usually couldn't be properly buried. Many highlighted this problem to evidence the Germans' inhumane approach to war, as though Ovaherero expected a ceasefire period to follow each battle in which each side could retrieve and bury their dead. One man lamented: "Hereros didn't have time to bury dead while running; they just left the dead for the animals." Sometimes, another man explained, "some people managed to come back to bury those who had died and run away again." At other times, such as where drinking

places were poisoned by Germans, so many Ovaherero died that there were too many to bury. At other places, burial holes could not be made large enough so animals also ate those who died. “When I was growing up,” he described, “I sometimes also found belongings when out in veld. So some know where Hereros died.” Indeed, the absence of ancestors’ graves stood as a particularly tragic effect of the war for some.

.A number of people described particular events or moments of this wartime outside of a chorological context. These were usually not offered as illustrations of a broader narrative, but rather as isolated stories. While these narratives were certainly relevant to discussions about Herero experiences in the past, it seemed that individuals intentionally chose to repeat poignant images of Herero victimization, to make the case that Germans at the least did not follow norms of battle, if not also acting immorally or inhumanely.⁵

The following shows one man’s transition from talking about where his family moved during the war to something more like snippets of longer, brutal stories which aren’t even clearly about his family anymore:

Came at Ohamakari, where [my ancestors] left some of their parents. When they came, Germans took their property and asked them to make a kraal. Herero women and children were put inside and the kraal was put on fire. Hereros thought they were making a kraal for cattle. So everyone died in that kraal. Sometimes they were at a place where Germans stand in a circle with knives, throwing children around. They even tore a fetus from a pregnant woman.

I read this as an attempt to evidence a pattern of the inhumane practices of German soldiers at this time. There is no indication in such discussions about how widespread such German practices were, but it is clear that they have lingering meaning for many Ovaherero whether in remembering this time within the contexts of their own families or specifically in speaking with foreigners.

The particular story of German soldiers standing in a circle and tossing a baby or child between them using knives or bayonets is one I heard many times and which also appears in the *Blue Book*, a 1918 report produced by the British government containing natives' reports of their experiences under German colonial administration, as well as other published histories (Cocker 2001:331).⁶ It's an example of ways in which particular books have been used in connection with personal memories or histories. This practice may explain something of the blurriness between family and group-level histories that I often heard as well as the use of decontextualized stories, particularly as some of these narratives have been retold at public commemorative events. Given that several published histories have seemingly earned particular value as true accounts more recently, arguably a result of increasing literacy rates and access to locally published volumes, some Ovaherero may regard these as at least as equally accurate as their own family histories and thus incorporate them into their own tellings about the past.

In Pursuit of Survival

Ovaherero describe fighting with German soldiers until Ovaherero had been pushed into the Omaheke in late 1904, from which point they describe their ancestors fleeing somewhere in pursuit of safety. In talking about Herero experiences in the years after the 1904 battles with Germans, Ovaherero primarily talk of their ancestors making whatever choices were available to ensure their own survival. Ovaherero described families fleeing, individuals or groups focused on physical survival, and "bad treatment" by Germans.

One man explained that many Ovaherero tried to escape and hide from Germans, but many did not succeed. "Even people were tied together in chains. They were taken by Germans to be put in camps so they wouldn't escape. They were badly treated." He

understood these camps to be something like holding areas for prisoners of war. Aside from an overall assessment that captured Ovaherero were treated harshly by Germans, that Germans restrained Ovaherero with chains was particularly abhorrent to this man.⁷

A small group of older men, who serve as councilors to the Kambazembi Royal House, agreed upon the following account of what happened after the war itself concluded:

After the war, Germans won so they started collecting people in the bush in one place so they would know who should be hanged and who should work. They got information from people about who was in charge of killing Germans. So when someone seen as leader of certain group who killed Germans, then that person was killed [by the Germans]. Others were not seen as having anything to do with the fight and were left to go work for Germans.

If Germans were looking for particular people, they heard of certain people with certain surname who was a leader and would take to camp and sort of court...

They described that chiefs and chiefs' councilors, "those people who give power to" chiefs, were particularly sought out by Germans after the fighting ceased.⁸ Germans used some captured Ovaherero to help in finding traditional leaders who hadn't yet been captured or killed.

Another elderly man similarly described the rounding up of Ovaherero after the war:

People were taken to camps in chains, with a pass. If they were found with old clothes, they were shot. After the war, most people were taken to camps. Police came to collect people. Some Herero people were together with German people, working to help report others. Those Herero with Germans explained who came from where.

Like the previous narrative, this man also highlighted that some Ovaherero colluded with Germans to capture Ovaherero. Although no one elaborated on the context in which some Ovaherero worked with Germans in this way, it is clear that this fact was significant to many in the larger context of gathering Herero prisoners after the war.

One of these men, with a copy of Maharero's biography in hand for reference, narrated the killing of several traditional leaders:⁹

For example, Kameitwara, head of Ombandi clan...He was taken and hanged after he went to court...hanged on a tree and shot and died.

Kasisi (leader of Ouzemba), Kamupupo. These two were strongest tribes so those two leaders taken and Kasisi hanged. He was taken to Luderitz, the headquarters. In Luderitz was a big prison where Kasisi was taken before he was to be killed the next day. So Kasisi had a friend, a German. Before the war, the German sold things. Herero knew Germans were killing them so they took the German friend of Kasisi. Then Kasisi went to friend of his, don't step around here, my people are planning to kill you. So when Kasisi was taken to Luderitz, his friend was also there and told him "you saved me, I save you. Don't tell anyone or we'll both be killed." Kasisi escaped.

One man from Okahandja describes what he knows of his family's experiences after the fighting ended:

Germans killed my grandmother. My mother was in a camp with another daughter. Took men of other women, supposed to be killed, mother of him followed her daughter, tried to escape, killed daughter anyway. [My mother] worked for Germans [in their homes] and died after Independence.

On my father's side...My father was in the mountains. Germans took his cattle etcetera near Ovitoto. They gave themselves up in the mountains. He became a slave. He was forced to make camps where Germans could keep stolen cattle.

While recounting his family's experiences he elaborates on experiences that seem to evidence things Germans did that seem inappropriate, perhaps excessive, to him. He notes that Germans "killed her daughter anyway," for instance, suggesting that this action was in some way beyond what Ovaherero think or thought was normal. Similarly, he describes not only that his father was made to do forced labor, but that he had to effectively help Germans secure property that they stole from Ovaherero.

The aunt of one woman, Johanna, told her stories about experiences in a concentration camp as she was growing up with this aunt.¹⁰ Johanna's aunt witnessed another woman being raped by a German soldier and as her aunt tried to protect this woman, her aunt

was stabbed in the hand with a bayonet, resulting in permanent disfigurement to her hand. Johanna explained that her aunt seemingly earned greater respect from the Schutztruppe at the camp after this heroic gesture and was thus given better work to do, such as doing sewing for the soldiers and taking care of their horses. After the concentration camp, Johanna's aunt was also forced to participate in the German administration's labor organization project as well after the camps were closed. Johanna explained that her aunt was "made to wear a Karibib Pass around her neck like a dog at a very tender age of between eight and nine years." This pass refers to a numbered metal disc that the German administration first assigned to each prisoner of war and then used for every "native" from 1906 to track the movement of laborers.¹¹

It's not always clear from individuals' accounts of the past which particular time is being discussed relative to historians' accounts of "the events" or "genocide" of 1904-1907. The period of controlled labor in SWA is not distinguishable in many accounts from the years following that when many worked for Germans (and other Whites) out of economic necessity rather than legal requirement. In other words, Ovaherero often don't differentiate between their ancestors' experiences during German colonialism and that of the South African administration. One man described hearing about how his ancestors lived during the colonial time: "told that my parents worked for German people and were raped so that Whites are in Herero people. Cattle and land were also taken from them." This example, like many others, suggests that some Ovaherero were most interested in outlining what their ancestors suffered over the German colonial period rather than distinguishing different phases of this time or the following years, at least in the context of discussing this past with a foreign researcher.

Conclusions about Herero Memories

In contrast to the narrative promoted by those forwarding Herero claims for restorative justice based on genocide, Ovaherero I talked with commonly elaborated on the difficulties faced by their ancestors throughout the 1904-1907 period. These memories and histories focused largely on how poorly Germans regarded Ovaherero, intimating but not directly accusing Germans of treating Ovaherero inhumanely. Such poor treatment encompassed insincere relationships, unethical war strategies, physical abuse, material losses, and even the effective erosion of cultural practices. Little distinction was made between Germans occupying different roles in SWA as most Ovaherero simply referred to “Germans” when talking about this past, rather than soldiers, traders, or missionaries. Also, there was no particular end described by Ovaherero other than the end of fighting with German soldiers. Instead, most described an indefinite period of survival, from hiding after the war to working as laborers in German homes.

Many Ovaherero understand that Germans provoked the war as they betrayed friendships with Ovaherero. As Germans effectively revealed their deceitful intentions in regards to Ovaherero and their land, Ovaherero were compelled to defend their community members and possessions. Significantly, Germans justified their possible murder of individual Ovaherero as literally mistaking humans for animals. This metaphor of Ovaherero being compared to animals featured in several contexts in the war history and served to emphasize that Ovaherero’s humanity was effectively challenged via their experiences between 1904 and 1907.

Acts or experiences perceived as particularly brutal were also highlighted. Herero memories of abnormal or even excessive violence by German troops were understood in contrast to what is remembered of Herero troops’ conduct.¹² Some Ovaherero point out that

Samuel Maharero issued an order that German women, children, and missionaries were not to be shot, for example. In other words, part of what Ovaherero commonly understand about this past is that Ovaherero fought fairly, whereas German troops utilized unfair and excessive measures from the time of provoking a war through experiences in camps or even labor relationships. Interestingly, von Trotha's extermination order itself was rarely identified in Ovaherero's histories and memories, and no one mentioned how many Ovaherero died during these years.

In addition, many accounts of the fighting between Germans and Ovaherero evaluated the effects of what happened during this period, usually focused on what Ovaherero collectively "lost" amidst these circumstances. "As you can see," explained one man, 'cows all over Namibia are from Hereros. Only bulls were brought from Germany to reproduce with cows in Namibia. All cattle, sheep, goats in Namibia are from Herero people.'

Perceived losses of this time, however, go beyond the material. As I mentioned above, many suggest that the Herero Holy Fire was lost to many families during this time both as a consequence of Christianization and the loss of the physical requirements for the Holy Fire as families fled. Further, the loss of "Herero culture" more broadly is sometimes asserted as a consequence of the war, particularly in connection with the loss of land and cattle as well as the dispersal of families. These concerns with losses of the 1904-1907 period demonstrate that this past is often understood by Ovaherero in the lingering residues of those losses in everyday life today.

A Nation-building History

On March 21, 1990 Namibia finally held its own national elections and gained independence from the Republic of South Africa, ending what many Namibians understood as 106 years of colonial or foreign control of this area. A late-comer to Independence, Namibia's decolonization process was not typical of African nation-states in that it sought independence from South Africa via the United Nations, not from a European colonizer as was the case for most colonized African countries. Namibia's independence movement negotiated Cold War politics and was also tied up with a wider regional struggle against White minority rule during this same period. In part as a result of this wider political context, the liberation movement involved a long period of attempted diplomatic negotiations by several political groups that one group, SWAPO, later combined with an armed liberation war.¹³ SWAPO, which was internationally recognized as the sole representative of the Namibian people in independence negotiations, became the ruling political party in independent Namibia. The boundaries between political party, government, and state are significantly blurred in post-Independence Namibia and opposition parties often overlap with other political groups that worked towards Namibian independence in other ways.¹⁴ In brief, liberation struggle politics continue to play out in complicated ways in post-Independence Namibia, what Henning Melber describes as the "militaristic orientation" of Namibia's political culture (2003).

Indeed, I found the history of Namibian liberation, referring to a period from the 1960s to 1990, very visible in Namibia, and certainly more than any other period of the area's past. In one sense, it may appear logical that a time period of the relatively recent past is so visible. However, that this period is regarded by those with the readiest access to media

and other places for publicly talking about history in Namibia as formative of their lives and that of the country is at least as relevant in explaining its visibility. As with history generally, a notion of the significance of this past has to be created out of multiple personal and group memories and then reproduced to the point of being hegemonic and visible. Indeed, a particular history of the “struggle years” has also been explicitly mobilized by public leaders in Namibia to create a common Namibian past from which to build a sense of nationhood and a Namibian identity. Namibians’ divergent experiences with the liberation struggle, whether as supposed bystanders, domestic youth activists, or exiled struggle leaders certainly inform their understandings of Namibian politics today, but the overlapping of Swapo’s leadership with Namibian government leadership today helps to lend public credence to a particular interpretation of the liberation struggle and its role in contemporary Namibia.

Constituting “the Struggle”

As I described in the chapter about the 2004 commemorations, much public debate and tension about the commemorations had to do with the relationship between the events of 1904-1907 in SWA and Namibian independence. Nationalist-oriented Ovaherero and the Swapo-led government understood the German-Herero war as part of a long anti-colonial struggle, the beginnings of the national liberation struggle while other Ovaherero see the events of 1904-1907 as a brutal moment particular to Herero communities (and perhaps some other minority communities). Part of this debate, however, arises out of the particular ways in which *colonial* has been mobilized in Namibia today. Further, for some, this is a contest over the use of the Herero past and, thus, many see the incorporation of 1904-1907 into the liberation struggle as an attempt by government (and Swapo) to control Herero history.

While the domestic and international efforts leading up to Namibia's formal recognition as an independent nation-state are commonly billed as an anti-colonial struggle, the meanings of *colonial* for Namibians (and others) remain somewhat vague. The term is widely used in a variety of contexts in Namibia. For example, recently, *colonial* has been used by some political leaders, notably former President Nujoma, to describe the immoral or unloyal collusion of Namibians with foreign interests, what Nujoma refers to as *neo-colonialism*.¹⁵ The term has also been employed by some Namibians who have countered Ovaherero's claims to lost land by recalling the population history of the area prior to Germans' arrival. From archaeological data, it has been inferred that the San are the community with the longest continual residence in the area that is now Namibia and, thus, some argue that Ovaherero acted as colonists themselves in pushing San communities to more marginal lands to make space for new Herero communities and grazing for their livestock.

Many Namibians conceive of both Germans and South Africans as colonizers such that they describe a period of colonialism lasting over 100 years. Certainly, for people who were living in central and southern Namibia during the time of German colonization, there may have been very little difference in principle between German rule and early South African rule. However, for individuals in the far North, largely comprised of the ethnic group that formed the basis of SWAPO, colonialism was mainly experienced via emerging capitalist relations at the edges of more formal colonial relations (Hartmann et al. 1998:3-4). Gradually, the colonial state began to consolidate under South African administration. It became increasingly more involved in socio-cultural matters by the mid-1930's and intensified upon the commencement of formal apartheid policies a decade later.

While the German colonial past has been included in recent discussions about Namibia freeing itself from colonial oppression, it is not always included in narratives about the liberation struggle. During 2004 commemorations, many sought to incorporate the German past into a narrative of a 100-year liberation struggle. It has also been incorporated, or some might say *subsumed*, under the banner of the liberation struggle in the national history curriculum and to some extent in the Heroes Acre monument in Windhoek. However, the German colonial past has been absented from other spheres for talking about Namibian independence, such as street naming and public holidays. Thus, it would seem that the German colonial past has been selectively incorporated into the liberation struggle narrative, or at least only selectively highlighted as an important moment of the liberation struggle.

Some Ovaherero then perceive this selective employment of the events of 1904-1907, what they see as Herero history, as the government's attempted use of Herero history for government's or Swapo's own purposes (given the blurred lines between state and party). Nationalist-oriented Ovaherero and the Namibian government imply that making the events of 1904-1907 part of the liberation struggle effectively creates a more inclusive, shared national history, of various groups pursuing liberation. This history then serves as a foundation of nation-building. On the other hand, some Ovaherero see the government's use of the German-Herero war as a means of taking over Herero history for their own purposes, making it a national issue such that it is the Namibian state rather than Ovaherero as a group that is the rightful recipient of any reparations from Germany.

Since Independence, the government of Namibia, or what some Namibians read as the Swapo government, has explicitly promoted a policy of non-tribalism. With questionable success, the government has aimed to create a sense of Namibianness, a new national identity

that claims, although not exclusively, to include all residents of Namibia.¹⁶ This narrative aims to counter the previous national history from which the majority of Namibians were excluded. The government intends for its citizens to recognize their belonging to the state and similarity to one another by establishing a common history in the sense that Benedict Anderson argues that a shared history is a critical component in constructing an “imagined community,” a sense of belonging to a nation. To create a common history and thus an “imagined community” of Namibians, the government forwards “the liberation struggle” as the meta-narrative of Namibian history. An association is thus implied between a group’s location (or not) in the history of the liberation struggle and their Namibianness, their belonging to the nation-state. In other words, using this meta-narrative to found a Namibian nation both includes and excludes different groups of citizens in particular ways.

However, the state’s narrative of Namibian Independence has yet to be produced in a way that truly incorporates all Namibian communities or even the variegated experiences with Namibian Independence. The history publicly circulating is very much a teleological narrative about *liberation* and *struggle*, and not merely a sketch of the history of the Namibian nation-state.

For example, White Namibian communities, which often further segregate into German- and Afrikaans- speaking communities, maintain a version of Namibian Independence that is very different from the government-sanctioned version. Memories of Namibian Independence that I heard from members of these White communities typically have to do with frightening and violent experiences in the “bush war,” farming families being killed in their farm houses by terrorists, or Whites fleeing Namibia for other southern African or European countries in fear of escalating racial violence in the lead-up to Independence.¹⁷

Somewhat similarly, the grand narrative of the “Independence Struggle” makes selective use of the experiences of Black Namibians outside of the armed struggle and even of some SWAPO members. The narrative currently focuses largely on violence in the context of war, the development of apartheid policies, and the biographies and diplomatic efforts of exiles. There is little space to talk about experiences like those of my friend, Job, in the North who at around 9 years of age was handed an automatic rifle by the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) and instructed to protect the village from South African Defense Force (SADF) troops if they arrived. It also says nothing of the daily threat of violence experienced by those whose school teachers were armed SADF soldiers or even those in school who were to recite daily “Afrikaans is my mother tongue.” There is not even any visibility of the more and less subversive tactics, or *weapons of the weak*, used by those who remained in Namibia to protest South African oppression, such as the group of students who burned the newly constructed Okakarara Secondary School Hall built by the South Africa administration.¹⁸ Another area of the Liberation Struggle that has remained hidden, many claim intentionally, is that of SWAPO ex-detainees, around which a group has emerged, “Breaking the Wall of Silence,” to make known the (ignored) suffering of SWAPO ex-detainees, usually younger members accused of spying for South Africa, who were imprisoned at SWAPO training camps.¹⁹

Herero Experiences under South African Rule

On behalf of Great Britain, South Africa assumed administrative control of SWA in 1920 by a League of Nations mandate after South African troops fighting for the British defeated German troops in German SWA in 1915.²⁰ In 1946, all mandatory powers were invited to transfer their mandates to trusteeship under the newly formed United Nations, but

South Africa refused to do so, arguing that the people of SWA wished to maintain their relationship with South Africa under the mandate. SWA was, thus, effectively annexed.

The shift from German to South African administration at least initially offered some new opportunities to Ovaherero in SWA. Herero and Nama leaders who had been targeted by the German state were free to return to SWA from their places of exile. Ovaherero were also (briefly) permitted to return to their former lands. After South Africa assumed governance of South West Africa and the administration briefly allowed Ovaherero to return to their former land, the native reserve policy came into effect. The administration ordered the relocation of all “natives” to areas of land designated for each “tribe.” Ovaherero efforts at resistance were not successful. Within the reserves, the government maintained tight controls over the production and sales of dairy products to enforce the payment of grazing fees. Further, life in the reserves facilitated a process of differential impoverishment and accumulation, such that very few livestock owners could exist without a supplemental income from wage labor (Werner 1998:220).

Political Parties and the Liberation Struggle

After World War II, South West Africans rekindled earlier resistance movements. By the late 1950s, there were three primary resistance movements in South West Africa: the Ovamboland People’s Organization (OPO),²¹ the South West Africa National Union (SWANU), and the Herero Council.

The Herero Council was an ethnically-based organization, composed of Herero traditional leaders who sought to preserve pre-colonial systems and hierarchies. Regardless of their politics, this group was highly regarded by other resistance groups for the Herero Council’s many years of protest against the colonial administration. Further, other groups

recognized that the participation of the Herero Council was necessary to secure the cooperation of Ovaherero in resistance struggles. However, Ovaherero were (and are today) members of all the primary political parties.

From 1964, apartheid policies led to political tensions based on racial and ethnic identities. Because South Africa was unwilling to direct Namibia towards independence, independence struggles ensued. Military disputes since 1966 led to a guerilla war and the military occupation of northern Namibia by South Africa. Many Namibians opposed the nationalist liberation movement, SWAPO with their armed wing PLAN, and joined opposing forces.

One such opposing group, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), led interim governments during the 1970s and 1980s. However, these never gained internal or international legitimacy. The DTA at this time represented a coalition of ethnically based political parties that wanted to reform apartheid and work with South Africa to create terms of independence acceptable to the South African government.

Free elections, under international supervision, resulted from the 1989 United Nations Security Council Resolution 435. Swapo won these elections, which some Namibians attribute to its ethnically-based support from the Owambo populations and ties to the churches, trade unions, and student organizations.²² These votes for Swapo were concentrated largely in the densely populated northern area of Namibia (the region of origin for Oshiwambo-speaking peoples). The DTA, which campaigned on more ethnically oriented issues, garnered more votes from nearly all other areas of the country and was particularly supported by Hereros, Whites (English, Germans, and Afrikaners), and Caprivians (Fosse 1992:17). Based on voting statistics, some researchers conclude that Namibians voted along

ethnic lines or against Swapo. However, the Owambo were actually underrepresented among Swapo's parliament members and government officials while Whites, Hereros, and Damaras were actually over-represented.

In campaign literature for the first elections, Swapo promoted a policy of national reconciliation. A July 2, 1989 Swapo pamphlet reads, "national reconciliation and unity are necessary pre-conditions for peace, stability, economic reconstruction, and the development of our country" (Harris 1999:82). The new constitution adopted by all parties represented in the Constituent Assembly includes a state policy of reconciliation and reconstruction and a guarantee for a non-tribal, non-ethnic society. Certainly, if the spirit of the constitution as it relates to national unity is supported by the Namibia government more broadly, it is understandable that Herero attempts to seek reconciliation with Germany might be met with discouragement from the national government. Such reconciliation between Germany and Ovaherero might appear to proponents of national reconciliation as a step that would, at best, not aid Namibia's internal reconciliation efforts or, worse, would further reify ethnic differences.

The national reconciliation within Namibia was directed more towards the forging of ties across previous social divides than towards reconciling understandings of divided pasts, as the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) attempted. For example, the government refused to conduct war trials or prosecutions for human rights violations committed prior to independence and later refused to allow the TRC to conduct hearings in Namibia (Sarkin 2009:4). Instead, "a general pardon" and a "hand of reconciliation" were offered to "all those Namibians who were misled and misused by the colonial [South African] powers to prevent the achievement of independence" (Nathan 1992:137-138).

Public Presence of Liberation History

Memories and histories of the liberation struggle, particularly from the start of armed resistance in 1966, are very visible in Namibia today. There is a breadth of literature available in Namibia that discusses the liberation struggle, although the majority authored by Namibians seems to be in form of memoirs and biographies. As Werbner also describes as the form of state remembrance in post-colonial Zimbabwe, state memorialism in Namibia has also focused on the glorifying of individual heroes and heroines (1998).²³ In short, this recent history is primarily told through individuals' experiences, much like it is among Herero communities (discussed in the following chapter) except that heroes and heroines are seemingly traced through party lineage rather than family.²⁴

Aside from written sources, this history is seemingly embodied in and spoken about by heroic icons, most prominently liberation struggle heroes and heroines. Commemorating such historical figures "whose blood waters our freedom," according to the Namibian national anthem, is a common means of talking about this history. These figures have been brought into public discussion in a variety of ways, such as by depicting them on Namibian paper currency, recognizing heroes and heroines generally on public holidays, and with the construction of a national monument.

Heroes' Acre, located on the outskirts of Windhoek and inaugurated on Heroes' Day in 2002, currently houses 174 graves of deceased heroes and heroines as well as a large statue representing an unknown soldier.²⁵ Much debate has emerged since its design over who should be honored at this site intended to foster patriotism and nationalism.²⁶ Indeed, in recent years, public debate about the state's criteria for conferring hero status on citizens, such as whether only heroes of the liberation struggle could be recognized, led to the negotiation of formal guidelines to aid in defining heroes and heroines.

However, there are also numerous heroes and heroines of the liberation struggle alive today, some of whom have achieved something like iconic status. The first president of Namibia, Sam Nujoma, in particular has been afforded such status by the state and the Swapo party. Recently, for example, Nujoma's 2001 autobiography, *Where Others Wavered*, focused on his role in the liberation struggle and was made into a Hollywood film in 2007, *Namibia: the Struggle for Liberation*, with significant financial backing from the Namibian government.²⁷

Most living heroes and heroines hold government posts and many are or were Swapo party members. Occasionally, such individuals may speak at public events (particularly political party rallies), but more often it seems their involvement in the liberation struggle is taken to be public knowledge and not necessarily recited publicly. However, there are occasions such as public holidays, events, or political rallies at which they or others may discuss their involvement in the liberation struggle. For example, I have often learned about these individuals on their birthdays, when Namibian companies may place "happy birthday" advertisements in Namibian newspapers. Occasionally the Namibian and the New Era (government parastatal) newspapers or a Namibian magazine may publish an interview with one of these individuals. Those heroes and heroines not affiliated with SWAPO may still be recognized by the government, but more commonly on occasion of their death.

The symbolic status assigned to or claimed by such icons coincides with what some have termed "the politics of exile." The meta-narrative of the liberation struggle seems to reproduce a dichotomy of those who chose exile in pursuit of Namibian independence and those who remained behind and either "colluded with South Africa" or passively benefited from the Independence won by those in exile. One man who was a student in Okakarara

during the struggle challenged this implied hierarchy by questioning whether those who were planning in Lusaka were really suffered more than those who stayed in the country and had to see soldiers every day in their classrooms and protested South African rule in seemingly smaller ways in the country.

The exiles have by and large become the political (and often financial) elite of the new Namibia. The privilege of these former exiles is certainly not only a matter of status, of being associated with the network of individuals who some perceived sacrificed more and worked harder towards Namibian Independence than those who remained behind in Namibia. Exiles had greater access to a variety of resources that those who remained in Namibia did not, such as higher education²⁸ as well as leaders of civil society movements in other parts of the world.²⁹ These sorts of real and social capital proved useful to these former exiles in gaining senior civil service positions, earning greater salaries, and allowing access to the more expensive, formerly White neighborhoods and schools, reproducing the higher social status of former exiles.

Chief Riruako, in particular, has born criticism by some Swapo members in particular for purportedly colluding with and benefiting financially from the South African administration. Although he went into exile in 1963, he returned to SWA in 1978 to become the Herero Paramount Chief upon the death of the former Paramount Chief, Clemens Kapuuo (Kuaima Riruako—Herero Leader 1979:157). He reportedly attempted to work with the South African administration and received a salary from the administration for his position as a chief.

To some, it appears as though the promotion of liberation history by the government is biased. First, some feel that the government promotes this history at the expense of

recognizing other significant parts of Namibian history, or even by occluding other histories. Second, some Namibians feel that the liberation struggle is so closely affiliated with the Swapo party and/or the Owambo populations that largely constitute its membership, according to the perception of many, that some communities and political parties feel marginalized via the government's promotion of this history. Such sentiments were certainly at play with conflicts between different commemoration committees in preparing for 2004. However, it's also evident in other forms of public history making forwarded by the government.

Many streets in Namibia that were named for prominent Germans of the German colonial period have been renamed to honor heroes/heroines of the liberation struggle in Namibia, particularly President Sam Nujoma, as well as some SWAPO comrades from other countries' liberation struggles (e.g., Laurent Kabila and Robert Mugabe). While German-Namibians have criticized the effective silencing of their ancestors' roles in Namibian history, such efforts also remove some public traces of the German colonial past, which is particularly meaningful to Ovaherero and Nama.³⁰

Also, public holidays have been established and celebrated by the government to selectively highlight events of Namibian history. Apart from international holidays, those recognized in Namibia draw attention to dates of significance to the "liberation struggle."³¹ Of particular note is "Heroes' Day," intended to remember heroes and heroines of Namibia's Independence struggle and timed to commemorate the beginning of the armed struggle. However, it also coincides with Ovaherero's Red Flag Day, effectively dividing public attention and attendance between two different commemorative events.

Conclusions about a Liberation Struggle History

What I've aimed to illustrate above is how closely the liberation struggle history is actively associated with members of the Namibian government today. This relationship arises from the extensive overlapping of boundaries among political party (Swapo), government, state. Liberation history has remained an important formative narrative for the Namibian government because the official movement for Namibia's independence morphed into a political party which has held the Presidency and maintained the majority in the Namibian Parliament and National Assembly since Independence.³² It should then not be surprising that the state has mobilized this history to serve as a founding history for the nation-state.

At the same time, this founding history has been used by some to organize political and social relationships in Namibia today. Melber argues further that it serves to glorify some citizens while marginalizing others (2003). Indeed, for those who did not participate in the SWAPO-led liberation struggle, the government promotion of this history may feel alienating and challenge their sense of belonging to the Namibian nation, contrary to the government's explicit intent. At the same time, the government's claim to the liberation struggle narrative via SWAPO's role in this history helps to legitimize the current (Swapo-led) government as the proper leader or representative of Namibians.

The liberation struggle history conflicts with a history of Herero genocide then in several ways. First, the government has claimed on several occasions that merely commemorating the German-Herero war would heighten or create tensions between Namibian Ovaherero and Namibian Germans by recalling a past adversarial relationship, working against the government's stated policy of national reconciliation.³³

Second, heightening the visibility of the Herero genocide threatens to displace the liberation struggle history as a founding narrative, at least for the Herero portion of the

Namibian population, if not also other groups like the Nama and Damara who were also involved in fighting German soldiers during the colonial era. Thus, the foundation of Namibian nationhood forwarded by the government stands to be somewhat jarred as the public meaning of the liberation struggle history is challenged by Ovaherero arguing the singular significance of the Herero genocide. Again, because the Namibian government, the state, and Swapo are not wholly discrete entities at present, each of these also stands to be somewhat de-centered by a narrative that some parts of the Namibian population consider an important basis for present experience.³⁴

The Namibian government and nationalist-oriented Ovaherero first effectively attempted to silence the Herero genocide narrative with the aim of promoting national reconciliation and preserving Namibia's congenial relationship with Germany. As the genocide garnered more attention among Ovaherero and interested parties internationally, incorporating the genocide as an early part of the liberation struggle seemingly intended to be a compromise. It attempted to reframe this matter as part of a common national interest in Independence, rather than as a singularly brutal set of experiences for subsections of the Namibian population. In short, incorporating the genocide in the longer history of the Namibian nation-state can be understood as an attempt to frame the Herero genocide as a Namibian concern rather than a Herero (or Damara and Nama) concern. However, less obviously, incorporating the Herero genocide narrative into the liberation narrative to enhance its purpose as a founding narrative rather than challenge it.

German Accounts of an Uprising

For Germans living in SWA at the beginning of the 20th-century as settlers, missionaries, or traders, contemporary reports suggest that the fighting between Germans and Ovaherero was an uprising planned by the Ovaherero that took the German population by surprise. Germans' accounts of this time describe bands of Hereros coming and going from German farms and settlements to kill and loot Germans of any age or gender.

At Otjikango, a mission station in central SWA about 30 kilometers southwest of Okahandja, German residents described the outbreak of the war with surprise at Herero attacks. One missionary describes approaching a resident Herero acquaintance on January 11 to enquire about the recent arrival of hundreds of armed Herero men from other locations. The Herero man explained that Ovaherero were gathering to decide about who would fill positions of chiefs who had recently died. The missionary goes on to explain that the first shots were fired from the Herero side on January 12, when first a young trader's wife was shot in the back and then the trader himself as they left their house to return to the mission (Moritz 1996:8). Similarly, one resident (a widow of a missionary) described the surprise outbreak of violence as "murder" by "the Herero."³⁵

Germans in Germany who heard of the war as it happened knew it as the *Herero Aufstand* (the Herero Uprising). Because so many lives were being lost in this war, it was extensively discussed among the German public and within the Reichstag. Indeed, contemporaries did consider this war to be a large-scale massacre (Smith 1998:110 n. 6). However, most German political parties viewed this fighting as an illegitimate uprising and, thus, defended the right of the German *Schutztruppe* (the German colonial soldiers) to continue attempts at quelling it. The Social Democrats, however, perceived the uprisings as

an effort towards freedom and criticized the brutality of the German troops (Smith 1998:110).

Government officials, National Liberal politicians, and conservative politicians identified “the inbred ‘dissoluteness’” of the Herero as the catalyst of the war and, as such, they viewed Herero fighting not merely as an uprising, but as “a revolt against civilization” (Smith 1998:112). Virtually all politicians shared a conception of Hereros as especially barbarous people, compared to other Africans (Smith 1998:113). Consequently, it was understood that the acts of German troops against the Herero were not stimulated by any inhumanity on the part of German troops, but rather by the barbarous nature of their opponents.

Colonial violence was further defended by contemporary ideology of the political right which posited that visible supremacy was necessary for the work of “cultural raising”: “The native who is supposed to learn from the White must see him as a being who stands far and powerfully above him” (Smith 1998:116). Thus, although the degree of force, relative to that of the Ovaherero, that German troops should exercise was debated, all German politicians relied on a shared understanding of the moral good of colonial rule to justify force. This contemporary political context that largely understood colonialism to be a progressive project grossly explains why fighting between Germans and Hereros was recorded in official histories as an “uprising.”

Other early publications similarly avoided judgment about the war as it was instead framed as a necessary part of the colonial civilizing mission. Published first-hand accounts, novels, children’s books, and other popular history books were very popular in Germany in the years following the German-Herero war (Brehl 2008:101).³⁶ These discuss the events of

1904-1907, but without mention of von Trotha's extermination order. Although colonial literature in Germany increased following the First World War, marking Germany's loss of its colonies, those concerned specifically with the events of 1904-1907 diminished. One of the most popular and extensively published books prior to the Second World War was Gustav Frenssen's 1906 *Peter Moors Fahrt nach Südwest. Ein Feldzugsbericht* (Peter Moor's Journey to the South-West. A Campaign Report).³⁷ The novel focuses on the personal development of a German soldier in SWA set against a background of a personally trying but righteous civilizing mission.³⁸ Literary texts only began to adopt a critical view of colonialism and the tactics employed by German soldiers in the German-Herero war in the 1960s, first in the GDR, in parallel with increasing historical research on this war.³⁹

In sum, historical accounts circulating among Germans in SWA and in Germany until approximately World War II framed the fighting in 1904 as a "native uprising." The way in which German soldiers responded to the uprising as well as the strategies the German colonial administration adopted thereafter to manage Herero populations (and others) were understood by Germans to be founded in racial disparities and contributing to a civilizing project. However, much that was written about the events of 1904-1907 used these as a backdrop to narratives about hardships endured and adventures lived by Germans in the colonies.

German histories: from Witnesses to Historians and Südwesters

The events of 1904-1907 in German South West Africa remained largely outside of the concern of university-trained historians until anti-colonial struggles were becoming common worldwide. However, even prior to this time, histories of this period were known via less formal histories in Germany and by Germans in SWA.

Narratives about the fighting with Ovaherero from the perspective of various Germans have taken a number of directions over time and in relation to the teller's views of colonialism in Namibia. A variety of Germans living in South West Africa at the time of fighting between Germans and Ovaherero made written accounts of the fighting in letters, diaries, and reports. Later, historians wrote a number of accounts about the war in the context of larger questions about German history. However, understandings of this time by German-Namibians have differentiated from those of Germans in Germany at the same time that the German community in SWA became increasingly invested in their own autonomous communities rather than as German settler communities. German historians have more recently acted in concert with other university-trained historians working in and about Namibia, particularly on projects recognizable as pursuing "public history" agendas.

In one regard, there is a trend in the accounts of Germans regarding how the fighting is conceptualized: although the fighting was initially perceived as an uprising in written accounts it becomes known as a massacre or even a genocide in later historical accounts. Thus, there is no simple means of tracing German histories over time of the 1904-1907 period.

Academic Histories

Historian Hörst Drechsler argues that colonial policies were not critiqued during either the Weimar Republic or the Third Reich because the German state feared that knowledge of colonial brutality would threaten its claims for the reestablishment of the German colonies (1980:11).⁴⁰ After World War II, colonialism was seemingly eclipsed by the more recent and urgent events of the Holocaust events that demanded historians'

attention. Colonialism may have appeared too similar to the recently experienced Nazi expansionist politics to persist as a notion for nostalgia. Also, the appropriate historical resources were not available to German historians immediately after the war. All official records in Germany were confiscated by the Allies after World War II and most were not returned until 1955, including the files of the Imperial Colonial office.

Due to this series of events, German studies of German colonialism did not commence until nearly 1960. The research group of Walter Markov in Leipzig (GDR) initiated the first such studies; they began publishing books on this topic in 1959 (Bley 1979:149). The primary impetus for investigating German colonialism within East and West Germany emerged from reinterpretations of the *Kaiserreich* and interrogations of the reasons for past German expansionism as well as of the causes of World War I.

Drechsler's 1966 work brought to light the atrocities suffered by Herero during the Herero war, which he refers to as "genocide." Drechsler characterizes von Trotha's strategy for attacking Ovaherero at Waterberg as genocidal in intent:

Von Trotha had but one aim: to destroy the Herero nation. He believed that the easiest way of achieving it was to drive the Herero into the Omaheke Desert. But such a crime can only be describes as genocide (Drechsler 1966:155).

Drechsler goes on to extensively condemn von Trotha's conduct of war, including the "Extermination Order," but also argues that Germany supported von Trotha's approach such that Drechsler asserts that German imperialism committed genocide against Ovaherero. In part, it is the appropriation of *genocide* that makes Drechsler's work path-breaking among studies on the war. The events constituting the war could then be understood as criminal acts, rather than as normal events of war or colonial administration.

Drechsler, an East German journalist, situates his work amidst a trend of East German Marxist historians in the 1960s that produced studies that analyzed German colonial policies,

work which he describes as an obligation to expose the horrific policies of colonialism (1966:2). These historians intended to help Africans in the project of creating national histories of former colonies and, thereby, to dispel the imperial myth in Europe that Africans have no history prior to Europe's involvement there. Drechsler writes that such efforts contrast with contemporary practices of the West German state that resorted to "neo-colonialist methods" in its involvement in Africa while "affecting relief at shedding the burden of its colonial legacy" (1966:2). Here Drechsler refers to West Germany's post-war "westernizing" efforts, which included its participation in the United Nations and its provision of development aid to Third World nations. The English translation of Drechsler's book, *Let Us Die Fighting* (1980), seems to have been directed, at least in part, towards Namibians. In the introduction, Drechsler suggests that remembering the Herero and Nama struggle against the German colonizers is useful for Namibians as they fight for independence from South Africa, which they finally attained ten years later (1980:1).⁴¹

Shortly after these East German efforts, West German historians began the project of producing histories of colonialism. Historian Helmut Bley situates himself in this originary moment, a time when he attempted to combine social and intellectual history of the *Kaiserreich* with new understandings of African history in his 1968 *Kolonialherrschaft und Sozialstruktur in Deutsch-Südwestafrika 1894-1919* (Colonial Power and Social Structure in German South West Africa) (1979:151).

Most monographs of the 1904-1907 war in SWA produced since the war argue that the Herero planned and initiated a revolt against Germans out of anger about the loss of their lands. Helmut Bley reworks this thesis somewhat to suggest that the loss of land was not as important as a cause of war as was a general fear among the Hereros that the German

Colonial government was not trustworthy and that the future of their society was threatened by it (1996).⁴²

More recently, historians Jan-Bart Gewald (1999, 2000) and Gesine Krüger (1999), in particular, have been concerned with the ways in which Herero society changed with the war and with colonialism (both German and South African).⁴³ Even since German historical monographs of the war began to employ the terms *Massaker* or *Völkermord*, rather than *Aufstand*, historians vary in the ways they characterize Hereros' victimhood and German culpability.

Colonists' Fears to Genocide

Historian Jan-Bart Gewald, who has been affiliated with public history projects in Namibia as well as Namibian history production in Europe, published *Herero Heroes*, an account of the war that broadly paints Germans as the instigators of the war (1999). He purports that the war resulted from the actions of a panicked German officer in the context of German fears of Herero insurrection. Gewald's narrative of the Herero genocide takes into account early 20th century Germans' fears about their colonies and includes a convincing argument that contemporary German racial ideology sanctioned these fears.

Because he makes such a strong argument for genocide and Herero victimization at the hands of Germans as well as because it was referenced extensively in the law suit, I was surprised not to find it popular in Namibia, especially among Ovaherero forwarding the idea of a Herero genocide. I can imagine at least two plausible explanations for its relative absence from public history making in Namibia. First, unlike other publications that I have seen or heard Ovaherero reference, I did not purchase Gewald's book in Namibia. Given the limited availability of and access to books for most people in Namibia, that this book not

widely available in Namibian bookstores surely bears some relevance for its physical absence from history-production in Namibia. A second explanation is that this narrative doesn't fit as well with the stories that Ovaherero in Namibia told me, about Ovaherero as active agents in the war and lingering pride over their ancestors' resistance. Does this disjuncture suggest that Gewalt's version is not "correct" from the perspective of some Ovaherero (or other Namibians) or simply not as meaningful to many Ovaherero because it doesn't fit their conception of their role in the war? Or, is this book simply unknown to most Ovaherero? I unfortunately cannot answer this now.

However, I highlight Gewalt's published account here because it is a frequently-cited source in the lawsuit that Riruako and the Herero People's Reparations Association filed against Germany and German companies in the U.S and because it is one of the most recent historical investigations into the events of 1904-1907. Also, although it does not seem to currently play a direct role in how Ovaherero in Namibia understand the war, it is important, at least, to the production of Herero-German history outside of Namibia and interesting for considering the roles of different sites and types of history production in Ovaherero's pursuit of restorative justice.

Gewald asserts that the Herero lost their independence before the revolts that catalyzed the Herero genocide ever began. Herero viewed a rinderpest epidemic (a cattle disease) that began in late 1896 as a consequence of a curse by an executed Ovambanderu chief before his death (Gewald 1999:110). This curse dovetailed with other circumstances to destroy cattle herds, cause the reorganization of Herero society, and facilitate German colonization of their territory. Because of decisions made by German South West Africa Governor Theodor Leutwein and Herero Chieftain Samuel Maharero, Herero and cattle

became consolidated onto ever smaller areas of land. This consolidation further burdened scarce resources and increased the ease of transmission of rinderpest. The power of chiefs other than Maharero, who was able to manipulate German support, was rapidly waning and made worse by the epidemic at the same time that Herero were being economically devastated by it. This combination of factors, in turn, forced Herero to find new forms of subsistence, such as participating in wage labor or indentureship as well as selling land, and it allowed for further dispossession (Gewald 1999:123). Socially, rinderpest prompted changes in cattle ownership practices and new forms of patronage that led to further dependence on traders. Many Hereros turned to the Rhenish missionaries at this time, reportedly for religious assistance, contributing to the disintegration of Herero society.

Gewald writes that rumors of an impending Herero uprising were widespread among settlers by late 1903 and that the Herero war began in the midst of German suspicion and fear (Gewald 1999:142). On January 10, 1904, a delegation of Herero arrived in the capital of Hereroland, Okahandja, to speak with the Herero Councilors and the paramount chief Samuel Maharero about the inheritance of a late chief. Because of the atmosphere among settlers, this very commonplace event was perceived as a threat and all settlers were, therefore, ordered to come inside the German fort (Gewald 1999:149). Rumors and anxieties fed into one another and created a panic among Germans such that early on January 11th Lieutenant Zürn contacted Windhoek to relay that a revolt was imminent. The provisional governor Richter in turn told the mayor, Duft, “the Hereros had gathered in suspiciously large numbers and were probably planning a revolt against the Germans” (Gewald 1999:150). Duft arrived in Okahandja with extra reinforcements that afternoon. Although in a meeting that evening between Germans and Hereros the latter insisted that the Germans had nothing to fear, the

Germans were too suspicious to believe the Hereros and requested further reinforcements from a German naval cruiser.

At the same time, the Hereros could see that the Germans were preparing for war, but didn't understand why and were distressed by the number of German patrols (Gewald 1999:152). The next morning, January 12, as Duft and Zürn walked towards their prearranged meeting with a Herero delegation, they surmised by the facial expression of a Herero church elder that the war had started.⁴⁴ Their fears were further substantiated when they saw two large groups of armed Herero in the Herero section of Okahandja. The two returned to the fort, ordered remaining Germans into the fort, and German troops opened fire on Herero near the fort. Zürn and Duft then sent a telegram to Berlin reporting that the anticipated uprising had begun (Gewald 1999:153). The Herero were able to retaliate somewhat on this first day of fighting and prepared themselves by the next day.

Once fighting had begun, all the Herero chieftaincies were drawn into the war, even those who insisted on their peaceful intentions. Emphasizing the Hereros' lack of desire to fight, Gewald notes that they sought to withdraw and regroup to evaluate the situation. Yet German troops cleared Herero from their own settlements. About a month after the war commenced, Leutwein sent a letter to Maharero asking for his interpretation of the causes of the war. In his response, Maharero insisted that the Whites had initiated this war, specifically blaming German traders and Zürn (Gewald 1999:167). This exchange was leaked to the press and the Kaiser forbade Leutwein to enter into any kind of negotiation and ordered him to immediately organize an attack against the Herero (Gewald 1999:168).⁴⁵

During the next several months the Germans and Hereros engaged in battles at Ongandjira and Oviumbo before the Herero were pushed to the Waterberg near the end of

July. By this time Lieutenant-General Lothar von Trotha had taken over command of the German troops from Leutwein, who was removed for failing to defeat the Herero. Leutwein persisted in his attempts to negotiate a peaceful end because he believed that an annihilation of the Herero would be a horrible economic mistake.⁴⁶ Leutwein made a final attempt to negotiate peace on May 30, 1904 (Gewald 1999:169). The German government responded to Leutwein's attempts with resounding disapproval, and ordered him not to interfere in German military policy (Gewald 1999:170). After Leutwein's removal, negotiated peace was no longer possible. During the months of relative peace between the battles of Ongandjira and Oviumbo in April and what would be the battle of Waterberg in August, the Herero expected that the negotiations Leutwein started, and followed up on with his May 30 proclamation, would continue, an expectation that past precedent supported. However, once von Trotha determined that he had enough reinforcements he encircled the Herero at the Waterberg on August 11 (Gewald 1999:171).

The defeated Herero fled in the direction of a desert area known to the Herero as the *Omaheke*, while pursued by German troops. Von Trotha issued orders to cut off escape routes, which effectively forced the Herero further into the *Omaheke* (Gewald 1999:171). After a number of battles, von Trotha delivered his infamous proclamation, the "*Vernichtungsbefehl*" (extermination order), to his troops on October 2, 1904, which was read again to prisoners the following morning while copies were distributed among them.

Inside German territory every Herero tribesman, armed or unarmed, with or without cattle, will be shot. No women and children will be allowed in the territory: they will be driven back to their people or fired on. These are the last words to the Herero nation from me, the great General of the mighty German Kaiser. (Gewald 1999:172-173)

This particular selection from von Trotha's extermination order is frequently included in German newspaper articles (on most topics concerned with Namibia or Ovaherero)

arguing that these Herero deaths constituted a genocide. According to Gewalt, evidence suggests that von Trotha did fully understand the implications of his proclamation; but other scholars disagree and contend that he didn't intend his words to be followed to such an extent. Indeed, Gewalt remarks that the many diaries of the German colonial troops illustrate the consistency of this proclamation with earlier orders, thus suggesting that von Trotha did have genocidal intent when he composed the order excerpted above (Gewald 1999:173-174). As the Herero were forced across the Omaheke they attempted to seek respite at waterholes but were forced to attempt to cross to the Bechuanaland Protectorate (under British control) as German troops pursued them from one waterhole to the next.

Although most Herero survived the battle at the Waterberg, the majority died in the *Omaheke* where they had few cows and little access to water (Gewald 1999:175). Some did escape to Bechuanaland and others found refuge in Ovamboland (territory of another ethnic group) through trading contacts. In addition, some Hereros managed to escape back into central Namibia; a few had even remained in central Namibia undetected throughout the fighting (Gewald 1999:180).

As Leutwein anticipated, the war resulted in a shortage of labor for German commercial and colonial projects, an economic loss that was remedied through the establishment of forced labor in *Konzentrationslagern* (concentration camps). Herero captured between 1904 and 1908 were sent to forced labor camps to work on military and civilian projects (Gewald 1999:185). Even after these camps were closed in 1908 Germans continued to control the movement and supply of Herero labor.

Eventually, pressure from within Germany concluded the war. The Rhenish Missionary Society and the German social democratic party, among other groups, urged the

German government to allow the Herero to surrender. Surrenders were negotiated with contingencies, such as forbidding Herero to own firearms and requiring them to transfer all cattle ownership rights to German farmers (Gewald 1999:184).⁴⁷ The Herero were left without cattle, without land, without leaders, and with a drastically diminished population.

Trends in Academic Histories

On the whole, academic histories have come to recognize genocide of Ovaherero as the gross outcome of the events of 1904-1907 in SWA. The precise spark to the war in January 1904 is not fully agreed upon and neither is the ultimate Herero population loss. However, the overall perception of German culpability for criminal forms of violence against Ovaherero during the war and the following few years contributes significantly to the way in which interested people outside of Namibia today conceive of the German-Herero war. Further academic work considering historical genocides or German colonialism, for example, make use of this historical work in making other arguments, such that the notion of Herero genocide continues to be reproduced.

Present Sites of History-making in and about Namibia

European Institutions

Although talking about the presence of Namibian history, especially regarding the German colonial past and the liberation struggle, outside of Namibia is beyond the scope of this chapter, it's worth mentioning that there are several European institutions that do have a clear influence on the histories circulating in Namibia as well as academic histories. Scholars of these institutions have been engaged in discussions within Namibia about contemporary Namibia and Namibian history. These institutions also serve as important sites for

scholarship on Namibia in Europe in that they serve as gathering points for resources and interested scholars.

The first is the Nordiska Afrikainstitute (Nordic Africa Institute) in Sweden. It is a research, documentation, and information center on modern Africa for the Nordic countries. There are a number of scholars of Namibia associated with this institute, who actively contribute to discussions about contemporary Namibia and Namibian history in Namibian media and conferences.⁴⁸ Another is The Basler Afrika Bibliographien (BAB) in Switzerland.⁴⁹ The BAB is recognized as the largest collection of documents related to Namibia outside of Namibia, but has also funded projects and publications related to Namibian history production.⁵⁰ Lastly, the University of Leiden (the African Studies Centre, in particular) in the Netherlands and the University of Cologne in Germany have also served as particularly important sites for gathering scholars with interests in Namibian history.⁵¹

Public History in Namibia

Particularly since Namibian Independence, a number of scholars of Namibia (some of them Namibian) have worked on various projects to make Namibian history more accessible to the public. This unofficial network of scholars includes individuals working in Namibia, Europe, South Africa, and, to a lesser extent, the U.S. While such scholars build from previous German work, the sites for producing Namibian academic history have proliferated and include places where public history is of particularly relevance.

The aim of public history, to make Namibian groups aware of each other's pasts in ways that many people can hear about and understand, serves both as an anti-colonial effort and a nation-building initiative. Until recently, many archival materials (e.g., missionary's reports, German administration documents) were held outside of Namibia, with the official

records of Germany and South Africa. This meant that materials useful as evidence for some histories was not easily available. In addition, under South African administration, school students learned the history of South Africa but little about the land and people of SWA/Namibia. Some public history projects thus serve the purpose of creating a common historical for Namibians that supports the Namibian government's interests in nation-building. At other times, such projects, however, aim more towards talking about pasts that were not previously known across the population than creating a history with which everyone may see their ancestor's experiences.

University of Namibia History Department

The University of Namibia (UNAM) in Windhoek and, especially, the Department of History have served as a gathering place for many scholars and events that have promoted public history-making in Namibia, including conferences and course offerings.⁵² For example, the "Trees Never Meet" project began as discussions in 1992 to create a space to facilitate the meeting of disparate (both globally and among Namibian institutions/organizations) researchers and the exchange of ideas (Hartmann et al. 1998:viii).

The Project along with the History Department hosted a conference in Windhoek in August 1994 to gather scholars working on research related to the events of 1904-1907 and German colonialism. Like other conferences the Department has hosted, this one aimed to make academic discussions about Namibian history accessible to UNAM students and other members of the public. The conference included contributions by academics associated with various universities, non-governmental organizations, and the Namibian government. UNAM Art students presented an exhibition related to the conference topic as well. Participants

included UNAM students, civil servants, interested members of the Namibian public, NGO workers, and the media.

National Archives

The National Archives of Namibia actively pursues the acquisition of documents and materials that contribute to tellings of the Namibian past. Although I have not noticed much on-site usage of the archives by members of the public, some archived photos, in particular, have been made available to the public via various publications and photo displays at the 2004 commemorations. As a commemorative act in 2004, the Archives negotiated with German archives to acquire materials from the colonial administration that were sent back to Germany during its administration of SWA. Also, the Archives is engaged in an on-going public request for materials relating to anti-colonial resistance and the liberation struggle that contributes to a special collection “The Archives of Anti-Colonial Resistance and the Liberation Struggle” which is funded jointly by the German and Namibian governments.

Publications

Namibian historian Gerhard Pool’s biography of Samuel Maharero (1991) is one of the most common books I noticed in Namibia.⁵³ Aside from being commonly available in bookstores, I found both Ovaherero and others with an interest in Namibian history often in possession of this book. As I note in the section about Herero histories in this chapter, one Herero man I interviewed in Okakarara brought this book with him to our interview.

Pool specializes in the German colonial period of Namibian history and wrote this after having published a history in Afrikaans of the Herero Uprising, *Die Herero-opstand 1904-1907* (1979). In his forward to the Maharero biography, he states that has written a

scientific work and he does reference a variety of source materials, but it also appears that he approaches the matter of German colonialism from an anti-colonial political perspective.

Pool frames Maharero's life as "the story of the struggle of a nation against colonialism" (1991:xi). Notably, Pool argues that Maharero made the decision to take up arms against the Germans out of pressure from his followers, in what Pool describes as a revolt. He paints von Trotha as a professional soldier rather than an abnormally brutal oppressor acting on his own behalf, but also clearly links Maharero's fight against German colonialism with eventual Namibian liberation.

The recently reprinted "Blue Book"⁵⁴ has become an important source for many Ovaherero, both for those relative few who have access to the book (by purchasing or borrowing it) as well as the English language knowledge necessary to read it) or those who hear selections from those who have read it, of narratives of the violence suffered by Ovaherero at the hands of Germans. In telling me about what happened in the past between Germans and Ovaherero, several individuals re-told stories that appear in the Blue Book.

It is not that some Ovaherero were not familiar with the particular stories within the Blue Book or similar incidents, but rather that the appearance of these stories within the Blue Book lends them greater import with a wider audience, if not for Ovaherero as well. The fact that the Blue Book has been republished as a book lends it and its stories a sort of legitimacy that some feel oral histories lack. Also, that these stories were collected by Europeans seems to be used as evidence of the fact that they're not biased towards Herero perspectives.

The material of the original Blue Book, the 1918 "Report on the Natives of South-West Africa and Their Treatment by Germany," was gathered by British colonial officials to bolster British claims to Germany's colonies in the aftermath of the First World War by

criticizing German methods of colonial rule. The particularities of German colonialism were not the interest of the British Empire, but rather the elimination of German influence on the edges of the British Union of South Africa. The last Prime Minister of the Cape Colony prior to the Union in 1910 particularly sought accurate, written evidence of the treatment of the Natives under German colonial rule (Silvester and Gewald 2003:xv). It is based on the voluntary statements of at least 50 African witnesses as well as documents of the German colonial administration. Within ten years later all copies in SWA and South Africa were ordered destroyed by a vote of the SWA Legislative Assembly (and all copies in the British Empire were to be consolidated in the Foreign Office) in an effort to ease tensions between German residents of SWA and new White immigrants from the Union of South Africa.

Two prominent historians of Namibia, Jeremy Silvester and Jan-Bert Gewald, carried out this project to reprint the 1918 Blue Book in 2003 and provided context for its original publication. “The aim of this publication is to make the 1918 Blue Book available to a wider public, explain Silvester and Gewald. They further intended the republication to provoke academic and public debate about “genocide, comparative colonialism, and the relationship between violence and memory” (Silvester and Gewald 2003:xxxii). To extend the circulation of this effort, the African Studies Centre in Leiden, The Netherlands (with which Gewald has been affiliated) subsidized the publication of the book in Namibia at a reasonable price. So this re-publication was directed foremost as an attempt to make written accounts of the events of 1904-1907 available to the Namibian public in hopes of sparking discussion.

Another publication that aimed to contribute to public access to and discussions about the Namibian past is *The Colonising Camera* (Hartmann et al. 1998). Although originally conceived as a contribution to a 1994 history conference about South African colonization of

Namibia, the photographic collection first became an internationally traveling exhibition and a source of individual newspaper features before being converted into book form. The aim of the collection was to increase access to colonial photographs in the archive. In fact, this was a two-fold project to make these photographs public. Within the National Archives, there are two archives. One is accessible and cataloged. The other is a repository from which the public collection photographs have been selected (Hartmann et al. 1998:6). The editors envisioned the project as one of reinvigorating the archives with memory and fueling memory with archival materials:

The archives is often associated with the closure of meaning, with disconnection, with forgetting... The desire was to bring colonial photographs out of the archive and reconnect them with contemporary historical discourses in Namibia and elsewhere (Hartmann et al. 1998:2).

This introductory statement stands nicely as one describing the variety of loose projects happening in and around Namibia to reconnect histories and memories, materials and meanings.

Public media

The *Namibian*, a widely read daily English-language newspaper, published a fortnightly column entitled “Picturing the Past” from 1997 to 1998 that featured photographs from the National Archives in an effort to bring the archive into a more public space.⁵⁵ The circulation of photographs in this manner led to Black families, in particular, communicating information regarding their own private photograph collections (Hartmann et al. 1998:8-9).

Members of the German-speaking community in Namibia have also worked towards making Namibian history more visible at least among the portion of the population who reads German.⁵⁶ The German-language daily newspaper, the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, takes an explicit interest in regularly reporting on matters of historical interest and includes frequent historical

articles. It also collected photos from its readership and published a photo CD in 2005 to celebrate the *Allgemeine's* 100th anniversary. The *Allgemeine* seems particularly concerned with giving voice to histories of German-speaking Namibians and therewith creating a sense of community and continuity.

Ovaherero learn about their own history via the Herero-language service of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) radio station. In particular, NBC's Alexander Jarimbovandu Kaputu presents a number of radio programs concerned with Otjiherero orature: "Ovirumatwa vyetu" (Our Heritages), "Omakuruhungi maye zemburukwa" (History is being recalled), "Ngatu zemburuke ozombangane zetu" (Let us Remember our Heroes), and "Ongaro nOvitjitwa vyOmuhoko" (Tradition and Culture of our ethnic group) (Miescher et al. 2000:112).⁵⁷ Kaputu has also gained recognition as a prominent local historian and thus has been consulted by numerous foreign researchers. Also, as with Herero family discussions about the past, many on-air discussions about the past may emerge in announcements about the deaths of prominent Herero-speakers, for example.

Although not an exhaustive inventory, these sites or forms of history-making in and about Namibia today are not particular to knowledges about the German-Herero war or even the German colonial past. However, they significantly contribute to public and academic discussions in Namibia about Namibian histories.

I also intend this discussion of contexts in which Namibian history broadly is discussed to show that there is a spatiality to formal history-making work in Namibia. First, there is considerable work done outside of the continent, but which often connects with Namibian history-making via academic networks and the rise of public history projects in Namibia. Second, sites that are formally creating history in Namibia--publishing and printing

companies, NBC radio, major bookstores, archives, and the university--are almost exclusively located in the capital, Windhoek. Put another way, although much of the historical knowledge used in producing formal histories of Namibia is effectively located outside of the political and economic center of the country, these knowledges are effectively decontextualized, processed, and deposited in Windhoek as well as academic sites in other countries.

Genocide

The notion of history promoted by those claiming Germans committed genocide against Ovaherero between 1904 and 1907 is formed from the effective reframing of other histories. This history is made and re-told largely in public contexts and, arguably, cannot be separated from the restorative justice ends that are made possible via successful genocide claims. In particular, this history has been told in the context of the lawsuit, in public statements regarding requests of visiting German officials, and in the preparations and programs of the 2004 commemorations by the Genocide Committee. To be clear, I am not suggesting that this history is in any way less authentic or true than any of the other conceptions of what happened between Ovaherero and agents of German colonialism during the 1904-1907 period. It is only that the validity of this history has been recently questioned publicly in Namibia, but for reasons which I suggest have more to do with political and social relationships than with the quality of this history. Because I discuss the history upon which claims about genocide are made in several chapters of this dissertation, I will only give a brief outline here and base it largely on the history included in the lawsuit, as a primary site

at which this history was been made publicly. Additionally, the lawsuit cites abundantly from Gewalt's 1999 *Herero Heroes*, which I have described extensively above.

In brief, this history might begin with the migration of Herero-speaking peoples into Namibia at least two hundred years prior to German colonialism such that by the time of the arrival of Germans, Ovaherero had well established cattle herds and grazing territories. As the number of Germans in the territory increased, so did their desires for land and cattle to maintain settler populations. Given that Ovaherero had large livestock herds and occupied the central part of the country where Germans wished to establish settlements, Germans attempted to negotiate with Ovaherero to secure land and cattle. However, Ovaherero soon recognized that they were being cheated by Germans even as they were pushed to be more concessionary than their needs could afford. Germans were unwilling to cooperate with indigenous populations and instead commenced efforts to eventually enslave and exterminate Ovaherero. It was then during the battles of 1904 that Germany deliberately set out to provoke a "phoney war" to exterminate and enslave the Herero population at the time (Gewald 1999:178). The Germans used exceedingly brutal tactics to fight against Ovaherero, garishly illustrated by General von Trotha's extermination order.⁵⁸ Out of a Herero population of approximately 80,000, only about 15,000 survived into 1905. These few Ovaherero who had survived the battles and being fugitives in the desert thereafter were subjected to slavery, forced labor, abuse of women, and medical experimentation. Nearly half of the Ovaherero condemned to concentration camps died from brutal treatment.

This history about the Herero genocide focuses largely on describing Germany's intentions towards Ovaherero and the number of Ovaherero who suffered or died in various ways as a result. First, this history clearly argues German culpability for the fighting that

constituted the programmatic extermination of Herero. Central to this argument is that the subject of German brutality was not individuals, but rather Ovaherero as an ethnic group. The entirety of this past is understood through the actions of and to Ovaherero as a group. Thus, there is little attention to the experiences of families throughout this period of the past. Additionally, this genocide history categories Herero experiences with abuse by Germans in terms that are widely meaningful today. Indeed, the fighting of 1904 is understood as an extermination campaign rather than battles or a war, while the entirety of Herero experiences between 1904 and 1907 are constituted as genocide.

Last, it's notable that this history is significantly constructed from the archival research of academic historians. These sources offer a group-level lens on this history of the sort that is not common to Herero oral histories and memories, but such a formulation of this history is necessary to communicating claims of genocide to other audiences. For example, academic histories offer population statistics (or estimates thereof) which was not the sort of information that was compiled by Ovaherero survivors of the events of 1904-1907, but which proves powerful in making particular arguments about the past today. Further, academic histories carry a sense of legitimacy that arises from their meaning to a wider audience in Europe and North America. They represent historical "truth," determined through academic peer-review processes and other processes of authorizing academic knowledge. And, simply, their written form may better meet others' expectations of legitimate history. In other words, the sources that constitute the history of Herero genocide are particularly relevant to the intended audiences.

Conclusions

Overall, I argued that accounts of 1904-1907 respond to different contexts. The co-existence of multiple understandings of this past suggests that each is meaningful to different communities or in different ways.

In the increasingly visible project to pursue restorative justice with Germany, some Ovaherero publicly forwarded a particular history of this time that was arguably formed in this context. It is one that understands German culpability for an intentional scheme to commit genocide against Ovaherero. This narrative necessarily uses categories of people and violence to make the content and meanings of 1904-1907 understandable and even familiar to audiences and discourses outside of a particular Herero family's homestead or even the Namibian nation-state.

That the loose collection of Herero histories I discussed above have likely emerged in the context of elders teaching younger family members about their own family history as well as the places where and ways in which their ancestors lived, as I illustrate further in the next chapter, is evident in the types of memories and histories passed along and, at least partially, repeated to me. This past is meaningful, and thus remembered and re-told, in the ways in which Herero ancestors negotiated agents of German colonialism or in the life lessons that might be inferred. This history, largely moral and pragmatic, has to do with relationships with non-Ovaherero, the ethics of fighting, struggles for survival, and losses that continue to impinge on life today.

Ovaherero who align more, for various reasons, with a nationalist perspective of the events of 1904-1907, do not aim to discount the reality of Herero experiences at that time, but rather they interpret these experiences somewhat differently. From this perspective, that

the German-Herero war or genocide is an early moment in colonial resistance efforts leading up to Namibian independence, Ovaherero are not alone in the brutality they experienced at this time. Not only did other groups also experience negative and violent effects of German colonialism, but such experiences continued to be a part of life for Namibians over the next 90 years. Further, because of the ways in which the liberation struggle narrative forms or authorizes particular relationships today, most vividly that of citizens to one another and the state, in its work as a founding narrative of the state (with the government and Swapo) there is much at stake if it is somewhat sidelined by an equally meaningful history.

The historical perspective of German-Namibians has been largely absent from the contests over history that have emerged around the issue of restorative justice for Ovaherero. While at the time of the German-Herero war the written accounts of Germans in SWA formed the basis for how this history was understood in Germany for some time, German-Namibians' understandings are now largely restricted to circulation within this community. Indeed, even Herero-led restorative justice practices have effectively left this community and their understandings to the side as Germany has been named the culpable historical party. Thus, any conflicts between German-Namibians' history of 1904-1907 and other narratives circulating publicly in Namibia at this time have been largely left to history tellings and discussions in private spaces.

However, the formal academic histories of Germans and others outside of Namibia initially emerged in response to such earlier accounts by German traders, soldiers, missionaries, and settlers. Such histories have been responsive to political factors and on the whole have moved from an anti-colonial approach to that of a post-colonial effort to make a nation's history accessible to it, in part via public history projects.

While I suggested above that more formal history-making in Namibia generally has roughly proceeded out of a flow of knowledge from “peripheral” areas to Windhoek (and other countries), where particular sorts of more “official” history are produced, a similar spatiality applies to this contest over how to understand the history of 1904-1907. It is out of Windhoek that efforts for restorative justice have been made, where the visible conflict proceeded about how to commemorate 1904. In more rural areas, and even where the media reports on both. Certainly, each of these history-making communities values the histories re-told by elders in villages or on farms as well as historical meanings embedded in the landscapes of rural areas.⁵⁹ Yet these histories seem largely regarded as a different sort that better serves as authentic raw material or anecdotes for the sorts of histories produced in the capital, histories which are intended to translate across social and political boundaries, but which may not resonate well for all Namibians.⁶⁰

As the question of restorative justice emerged and gained visibility internationally and nationally, different interested histories emerging from different contexts converged, or more often intersected or abutted others, around this matter. These various histories came to embody new meanings as they have been slightly reconfigured in this new context. Within this new context, histories (or at least their form) may effectively be in processes of standardization, if only temporarily, in particular ways so that interested parties can better compare and contrast understandings of the past to then weigh in on the question of restorative justice. For example, I observed that the more nationalist-oriented history gradually shifted over the time of my fieldwork from dismissing the idea of a Herero genocide to instead incorporating it within the liberation struggle history. Also, the narrative describing the Herero genocide has borrowed extensively from non-Namibian academic

historians in communicating this understanding of the past both to international audiences and to Herero communities. Indeed, family or village Herero historians may reference available academic histories to supplement or guide their own tellings while also meticulously writing their personal memories or family histories to contribute to their family's or outsiders' historical knowledge.

In conclusion, different accounts of experiences during the 1904-1907 period constitute knowledges produced for different purposes, which make the past meaningful in different ways. Multiple histories of the "same" events or experiences circulate simultaneously, although, they may change with each re-telling. In a new context, related accounts may be forced to confront one another. In the process, new histories emerge, even if temporarily.

Notes:

¹ Virtually all scholars working on problems of social memory trace this literature's origins to the work of French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs on what he termed *collective memory* (1992). Building upon Emile Durkheim's ideas regarding collective consciousness, Halbwachs approaches collective memory as a phenomenon that creates social unity. Halbwachs explains that it is through interactions among individuals as group members that collective memory is created and changed. Current work on memory is founded in his argument that collective memories are socially produced at particular times in order to meet current social needs and are thus conditioned by the socio-cultural context at that moment.

² See, for example, Gerald Sider and Gavin Smith's edited volume *Between History and Histories* (1997).

³ Despite my conscious attempts to avoid as much as possible directing the forms of historical knowledge that community members shared with me, I recognized later that I had still expected to hear narratives alongside non-narrative memory forms. Indeed, I had somehow hoped to hear extensive narratives that might counter or at least be comparable to official or published accounts of this historical period.

⁴ Smuggling largely accounted for the flow of weapons in SWA since the German government had controlled all arms sales there since 1897. Ovaherero hadn't participated in any large-scale war since 1892 and thus were able to accumulate a large supply, reportedly more (4000) than those held by the Schutztruppe (Pool 1991:196-197).

⁵ In other words, I had the sense that several individuals I spoke with were trying to appeal to what they assumed to be a shared sense of ideas about appropriate and moral behavior. However, they are not unusual in doing so. Many of these incidents appear in published accounts of the war and one historian used many such anecdotes to argue that German colonial practices were particularly cruel and brutal (Cocker 2001:314-342).

⁶ See chapter three for a description of the "Blue Book."

⁷ Indeed a photo from the Namibian archives of Herero prisoners of war is familiar to many as it has been often used in published histories of the 1904-1907 period. This particular concern about the use of chains was highlighted again at the Ohamakari commemoration when a group of Herero men effectively recreated this image as a form of performance art.

⁸ One of these men who was born in Botswana explained that many other leaders were sought out and killed but that he didn't know about them because he is from Botswana. In other words, he suggested that his knowledge of this past is limited by growing up in a Herero community in Botswana. It's not clear whether he felt limited because he was not in his ancestral places or because the community was small and thus knew only what that small population knew who had fled with Maharero.

⁹ This book is Pool's 1991 biography of Samuel Maharero which I describe further in chapter three.

¹⁰ Although on the whole I didn't hear a lot about Herero experiences in concentration camps after the battles; however, there are multiple explanations for this and I suspect it is a result of the scope of my research rather than that experiences in concentration camps constitute little meaning to Ovaherero.

¹¹ See McGregor 2003 for more about this pass system.

¹² This interpretation of war strategies is also argued by Drechsler, who describes the Herero approach to the conduct of war as "very humane" (1980:150).

¹³ It was only the military offshoot of SWAPO, PLAN (People's Liberation Army of Namibia), that carried out armed activities in pursuit of Namibian independence.

¹⁴ Indeed, Melber argues that increasingly in Namibia, Swapo is becoming the government and the government is becoming the State (2003:323).

¹⁵ For example, according to an article in *the Namibian* newspaper, at a Swapo rally in March 2007, Nujoma argued that “imperialists” were attempting to mobilize “opportunists and political renegades” in Namibia and elsewhere in Africa to perpetuate the economic marginalization and under-development of the continent, a process Nujoma labeled “neo-colonialism” (“Nujoma blames imperialists”).

¹⁶ I find this attempt at anti-tribalism is sometimes taken to an unhelpful extreme. While seeking opportunities to financially support myself while writing my dissertation, I approached the then Director of Cultural Affairs within the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport, and Culture to enquire about projects with which I might assist. He asked about my dissertation work. After hearing that I was working with Ovaherero, he responded that the Ministry doesn’t promote any particular tribe and thus, it might be more likely for me to find work with them if I were a specialist in all cultures of Namibia.

¹⁷ The “bush war” describes the long conflict between the South African Defense Force (SADF) and the armed wing of SWAPO, the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN).

¹⁸ Coincidentally, my friend’s father was involved in overseeing the construction of this hall and when he learned of my move to Okakarara he had cited the burning of the Hall as an example of Blacks “ruining whatever they’re given.” Almost a year later, I met an individual who participated in the Hall burning and he described it as an act of resistance. He expressed some regret that the Hall had been destroyed since it would otherwise be so useful to the community now. The Hall, which is used regularly by the Secondary School, was still in a state of partial destruction when I lived in Okakarara.

¹⁹ For further discussion of the “ex-detainee issue” see, for example, Leys and Saul (1995:4) or Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Namibia: An organization called “Breaking the Wall of Silence;” its mandate, membership and activities (1990-September 2002) , 17 September 2002, NAM39956.E, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3f7d4dd923.html>, accessed October 6, 2009.

²⁰ In Article 119 of the Treaty of Peace with Germany signed at Versailles in 1919, Germany relinquished its overseas possessions to the Principal Allied and Associated Powers, including German South West Africa. Under Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations and a class “C” mandate, guardianship of South West Africa was given to Great Britain, but South Africa administered South West Africa as part of the former on behalf of Great Britain.

²¹ OPO was the predecessor to SWAPO.

²² SWAPO won 41 of 72 assembly seats, the most awarded to any particular party. The DTA gained the second largest number of seats (21 seats).

²³ Werber offers an insightful discussion of the politics of postcolonial memory in the Zimbabwean memorial complex (1998).

²⁴ Although my knowledge of Oshiwambo-speaking peoples is too limited to suggest this relationship as anything more than curiosity, it could prove insightful to map kin relationships onto party membership.

²⁵ The monument was designed and constructed by a North Koreans firm that also created the Zimbabwean “Heroes Acre” outside Harare just after Zimbabwean independence.

²⁶ At the inauguration event, the link between this site of memory and the ruling Swapo party was vividly evident in the wearing of Swapo colors by many attendees.

²⁷ At the time of filming, there was a lot of discussion in the press about the use of government funds to subsidize a film, especially as there was concern that the film would only interest a narrow audience. The Namibian Film Commission and the Pan-African Centre of Namibia also contributed funds to the project.

²⁸ For example, among former female exiles, more than 60 percent had academic qualifications above a Matric and 30 percent had vocational training (Tamas & Gleichmann 1993:11, 26-29; cited in Diener and Graefe 2001).

²⁹ Chris Tapscott argues that access to training was a key determinant in the social differentiation of exiles, not only in terms of employment opportunities in post-Independence Namibia, but also in terms of the types of lifestyles to which exiles became accustomed (Diener and Graefe 2001: 315).

³⁰ Similarly, while inventorying Namibia's national monuments, Vogt raises concern about the need for German colonial architecture to be preserved in the spirit of the Namibian policy of national reconciliation (2004:xix)

³¹ Melber chronicles the public holidays in Namibia that memorialize dates of violence significant to the liberation struggle: Independence Day (March 21) was selected to honor the memory of the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa, a significant moment in South Africa's struggle for majority rule; Kassinga Day (May 4) marks the largest massacre of refugees in exile; and Human Rights Day (December 10) focuses on the 1959 police shootings of people demonstrating against their forced removal from the "old location" (2003:318).

³² Melber (2003), however, argues that this legacy plays out more extensively in Namibia today than what I imply. He argues that because most high ranking government officials share a long history as comrades in the liberation struggle, they employ a militant rhetoric for marking inclusion and exclusion in postcolonial Namibia. He suggests that the "violent heritage" of colonial rule shaped the practices of the colonized in particular ways. Participants in the liberation struggle learned hierarchical and authoritarian practices from the repressive regimes they resisted and brought these practices with them into the democratic systems of government that emerged from the struggle.

³³ One might, however, make a similar critique of the government's use of the liberation struggle history, that it recalls adversarial relationships between Namibians and the Afrikaner-led South African government, or for some simply adversarial relationships between Blacks and Whites.

³⁴ Although it hasn't emerged in public discourse regarding Herero claims to restorative justice for genocide, part of the underlying fuel for conflicts between two factions of Ovaherero in preparing to commemorate in 2004 may arise from the "politics of exile," as the more nationalist-oriented Ovaherero experienced the liberation struggle and negotiated relationships with the South African administration differently.

³⁵ "The murdering also began at Otjikongo on 12 January, when my neighbor, the gardener Kirstein, was attacked by the Herero and killed" (Mossolow 1993:72).

³⁶ Many of the authors of such publications had some affiliation with colonial projects – former officers/members of colonial forces, farmers, settlers, or colonial administrators – and were published by colonial or military publishers – German Colonial Press, the Reimer Press, Süsserrot, or Mittler and Son (Brehl 2008:101). However, Brehl argues that these texts were popularly read by the Wilhemian bourgeoisie and not merely by individuals particularly interested in colonial matters.

³⁷ By 1945, 500,000 copies had been printed in German, English, Danish, Dutch, Afrikaans, and Swedish (Brehl 2008:104).

³⁸ Brehl cites a particularly powerful passage of Frenssen's novel to demonstrate the underlying cultural and racial hierarchy motivating Germans' civilizing mission: "these Blacks deserved to die, before God and mankind, not because they murdered the two hundred farmers and rose against us, but because they built no houses and dug no springs...God allowed us to triumph here because we are more noble and more progressive...the world belongs to the most vigorous, the most alive. That is the justice of the Lord" (Brehl 2008:106).

³⁹ See, for example, Ferdinand May's 1962 novel for young people entitled *Sturm über Südwest-Africa: Eine Erzählung aus den Tagen des Hereroaufstandes* (Storm Over South-West Africa: A Tale from the days of the Herero uprising) or Uwe Timm's 1985 novel *Morenga*.

⁴⁰ The *Weimar Republic* refers to the German republic that existed from 1919 until 1933, when Adolf Hitler assumed power. Hitler's rise to power marks the beginning of the *Third Reich*, the end of which is marked by Germany's surrender to Allied forces in 1945.

⁴¹ It is seemingly to direct this book as he sees necessary that Drechsler chose then SWAPO (South West African People's Organization) President Sam Nujoma, current President of Namibia, to write the preface for this English version. As the official organization working towards Namibia's independence, SWAPO may have been interested in the production and accessibility of histories like these to motivate Namibians in the contemporary independence struggle.

⁴² Bley never visited Namibia to write this book; he worked in the Overseas Section of Zechlin, in the History Department at Hamburg. According to Bley himself, in this book he was attempting to combine social and intellectual history of the *Kaiserreich* (to examine the rise of totalitarian politics in German) with recently formed understandings of African history.

⁴³ Gewalt's work is described later in this paper. Gesine Krüger's 1999 *Kriegsbewältigung und Geschichtsbewußtsein* considers how Hereros understood the war at the time and the form these understandings have taken since.

⁴⁴ Duft's *Tagesbericht* explains that he didn't understand what the Herero church elder had said and that he and Zürn's decision to return to the fort was based on the elder's facial expression.

⁴⁵ Leutwein responded: "In colonial issues there must always be a diplomatic standing next to a leader. The rebels must know that their route back is still open, one that does not always lead to death" (Gewald 1999: 168).

⁴⁶ Earlier Leutwein wrote: "I do not concur with those fanatics who want to see the Herero destroyed altogether. Apart from the fact that a people of 60,000 or 70,000 is not so easy to annihilate, I would consider such a move a grave mistake from an economic point of view. We need the Herero as cattle breeders, though on a small scale, and especially as labourers. It will be quite sufficient if they are politically dead" (Gewald 1999: 169; Drechsler 1980:148).

⁴⁷ These were the terms of the settlement agreement with Herero chief Zacharias Zeraeua of Otjimbingwe.

⁴⁸ E. Katjivena and Henning Melber are two such scholars.

⁴⁹ A German who lived in then SWA for nine years, Carl Schlettwein, founded the Basler Afrika Bibliographien (BAB) in Switzerland in 1971. The BAB is a private specialist library and archive on southern Africa, with a particular focus on Namibia. Schlettwein reportedly wanted to counter what he saw as the one-sided reporting about SWA by making public his own collection of books begun during his stay in SWA. The collections grew to include a variety of collections pertaining particularly to the 20th-century such as press and documentation collections, archives of various organizations, various manuscript archives comprising written and photographic materials, a poster collection, and a collection related to the liberation movement SWAPO of Namibia. The BAB supports and promotes the documentation and accessibility of library and archive holdings, engages in research on Namibia and southern Africa, funds two southern African positions at the University of Basel, has its own publishing house, and runs an African antiquarian bookshop.

⁵⁰ Dag Henrichsen (born in Namibia) and (before his death) Carl Schlettwein have been particularly active in Namibia.

⁵¹ Jan-Bart Gewalt is one prominent historian who has been affiliated with Leiden.

⁵² The Department has taken an explicit interest in promoting discussion around public history via its curriculum. Over the past several years, Professor Goodman Gwasira has taught a course on Public History for undergraduate students. A number of other historians, such as Wolfram Hartmann, in the department have helped to further the Namibian public's knowledge of and involvement in Namibian history-production. Several

visiting lecturers/scholars who have been affiliated with the Department more and less formally have also promoted public history in Namibia, including Jeremy Silvester, Jan-Bart Gewald, and Casper Ericksen.

⁵³ Pool was born in SWA and has lived most of his life in Namibia, but earned university degrees in South Africa.

⁵⁴ The report was republished in 2003 as *Words Cannot Be Found: German Colonial Rule in Namibia. An Annotated Reprint of the 1918 Blue Book* (Silvester and Gewald).

⁵⁵ This newspaper began publication during the liberation struggle, priding itself on honest reporting, and has since earned a reputation of being “political.” Indeed, to date, the government has a policy not to publish tender advertisements in this newspaper because it has accused the newspaper of being anti-government or anti-Swapo.

⁵⁶ Because it is a German-language publication and because populations of German-speakers do not reside in all parts of Namibia, the *Allgemeine* is only available in particular cities and towns.

⁵⁷ Gewald states that prior to Independence, when the NBC was sponsored by South Africa, Kaputu “steered clear of the subject” of the Herero genocide (2003:297).

⁵⁸ In the lawsuit some Ovaherero filed against Germany and German corporations under the U.S. Alien Tort Claims Act, excerpts from the Blue Book were cited as evidence of brutal German acts during the war.

⁵⁹ Rural areas—farms and villages, in particular—seem to be associated with elders for many Namibians, including German-Namibians and Ovaherero.

⁶⁰ I have in mind the intention of the genocide committee as of 2005 to publish a historical book about 1904-1907 that included oral histories from elders. I’m also thinking of the few audio recordings, letters, and diaries that have become part of archives in Windhoek as well as the various history books published in or out of Windhoek.

chapter three

HISTORY THROUGH FAMILY

Recently, there has been a tremendous amount of contention in Namibia and elsewhere over the interpretation of the 1904-1907 fighting between Ovaherero and Germans in then South West Africa. The first chapter illustrated the widespread publicity in 2004 around the German-Herero past and its national and international commemoration. These commemorations are one way in which Ovaherero talk about this past. However, these discussions result from other contexts in which the past is regularly discussed and demonstrate its importance to various parties. The second chapter described the diverse approaches to this history that resulted in conflicts about commemorating in 2004. The question raised is how this past is contested while still allowing those involved to posit a singular Ovaherero experience of violence and trauma.

This past has fueled so much debate and conflict because there are different things at stake for different parties. My aim below is to describe the current meanings this past has for Namibian Ovaherero. Specifically, how does this past affect present lived experience and how is meaning attached to this past?

*Temporality: The Past in the Present or the Present in the Past*¹

In Andre Brink's *An Act of Terror*, the protagonist thinks about a swift, violent act that occurred in an airport as it is mundanely measured by an overhead clock:

Strange, it struck him, how this clock, at first sight so accurate – the infallibility of electronics – ignored the seconds. Each time, in the precise moment when it flipped over, it was absolutely correct. But from there, while time moved on, for a full minute, it stood motionless on a figure no longer relevant. Quantum leaps. But everything in between was suppressed, all the gathering tension and energy, all the forces that made the next jump possible. 'Official time.' For but a single second out of every sixty the clock was on time: for the following fifty-nine, roughly ninety-eight per cent of the time, it was slow. And yet everything was running smoothly, as if it made no difference; planes arrived and took off, millions of people came and went, firmly believing that they knew where they were, in what time-frame they existed: but it was all false, a mere illusion of reliability. (Brink 1991:93-94)

His point is that inaccuracies in the way people mark and measure time allows them to live without chaos, secure in the idea that they know exactly where they are in time. Similar imprecision exists in how people recognize their sense of being in relation to past, present, and future.²

Simply put, time is relative. It is not organically composed of discrete points and linearity. Michel-Rolph Trouillot captures the essence of the past as a state of being rather than a bounded entity in suggesting that "pastness" is a more precise term than "the past." He explains:

The past is only past because there is a present... The past has no content. The past—or more accurately, pastness—is a position. Thus, in no way can we identify the past as past. (1995:15)

In other words, the past is not separable from the present. Rather it exists in its relationship to the present as understood by people. Pastness then is created in social practice and the content of the past is formed via present meanings, in relation to understandings of what constitutes "the present." People must recognize "things" as being of the past (Ricoeur

2004:24-26).³ From this perspective, I want to move beyond seemingly simple criticisms of present uses and meanings of the past as conjuring something which is “in the past” and thus closed and inaccessible.⁴

In the case of Ovaherero, the past of 1904-1907 is socially produced as something which affects present lived experience. People recognize the past when it is relevant to present life, or when it is meaningful to present lived experience.⁵ This does not, however, imply that accounts of the past are mere fictions or inventions, in the sense that there is nothing substantive or real about them. Indeed, the past can manifest in an almost material quality.⁶

However, not all pasts affect the present equally for any group. For Ovaherero, not all ways in which the German-Herero past might be relevant to the present are recognized as such. For example, while Herero men’s “traditional” uniforms are modeled on German Schutztruppe uniforms, they are most prominently recognized as an important marker of being Herero and are worn proudly by Otruppe members at cultural events. Similarly, the marching of children and adults at cultural events is understood as a Herero tradition although some explain that this practice is modeled on Schutztruppe marching demonstrations. For Ovaherero, a group’s marching skills are a matter of pride. Herero women greet approaching men’s marching or riding groups with the Herero “warrior cry.” Such possible residues of the German colonial past are not imbued with the sort of pain that other practices and reminders evoke. Ovaherero attribute some aspects of contemporary life to the German-Herero past that might instead (or in addition) be attributed to other pasts. For example, Ovaherero commonly claim that the fact that they occupy land of marginal quality is because the Germans pushed them from their “traditional” lands. However, their present

location and the inequitable distribution of people across better quality land today might be a result of the Bantu laws promulgated by the former South African state. Because different meanings are attributed to different pasts, some pasts appear significant.

Social Memory Production

Remembering does not simply require recollection of previous experiences. Nor is memory preserved until an occasion of recall.⁷ Psychologists understand remembering to consist of two levels that differ in malleability: one is more immediate and static (the original phenomenal experience) while the other builds upon this and is more easily accessible (Kraft 2004:352-353). Psychologists question why some memories endure more than others.⁸ While they seek to discover how experiences are coded neurologically, social psychologists commonly transpose a process described as relevant to the individual to collectives or social groups to consider how collective memories are retained (Pennebaker et al. 1997).

Many scholars working on collective or social memory focus on questions that emerge out of French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs' notion of *collective memory* and his argument that "the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present" (1992:40). Halbwachs explains that it is through interactions among individuals as members of groups that collective memory is created and changed. More recent scholarship about social memory has argued that collective memories meet current social meanings and are shaped by the context of their production (Olick 2003, Popular Memory Group 1982, Matsuda 1996, Bloch 1998, Tonkin 1992, Irwin-Zarecka 1994, Hodgkin and Radstone 2003, Climo and Cattell 2002, Werbner 1998).

Telling tales about the past has much to do with the perspective of the narrator, although the past is not infinitely malleable. Scholars broadly agree that what can be said is

limited in particular ways. Arjun Appadurai, for instance, argues that rules in all societies regulate acceptable variation in knowledges of the past, rules which contribute to the credibility of a history or memory (1981). Irwin-Zarecka argues that normative experience orders remembrance; how people experience the world around them is largely defined by socially shared framing strategies and devices.⁹

Commonly, as many scholars have described, the past is called upon to constitute a sense of continuity for social groups (Anderson 1991, Halbwachs 1992, Irwin-Zarecka 1994). Halbwachs used Emile Durkheim's discussions of collective consciousness to argue that memory is a phenomenon that creates social unity. In a further articulation of this relationship, Trouillot argues that particularly for collective subjects who claim to remember events they did not physically experience, "their constitution as subjects goes hand in hand with the continuous creation of the past. As such, they do not succeed such a past; they are its contemporaries" (1995:16). In a different way, Irwin-Zarecka argues that "communities of memory" form through remembering extraordinary, or traumatic, experiences (1994:47-48). A shared experience may define a community, as its members contend with memories of horror and perceive that may feel untranslatable to outsiders (Irwin-Zarecka 1994:48-49).

Also, the objects and places, for example, that constitute physical reminders of a past, or mnemonic devices, are formed of memory processes; although people may imagine such things to themselves drive remembering (Irwin-Zarecka 1994:13). In what follows, I highlight the terrain in which Namibian Ovaherero attribute meaning to what they understood to be their ancestors' experiences during the German colonial period. Thus, I sought out the moments at which Ovaherero perceived the presence of the past and what forms of knowledge of the past erupt from or are extracted from each.

In addition to annual commemorations of certain events associated with the German colonial period, effects of the war with the Germans and subsequent colonial rule are extensively present in everyday life for many Namibian Ovaherero. Indeed they are so important to some Ovaherero today that they express a need to come to terms with this past, by “healing the wounds.” This past is manifest today in formal recitations of family histories, bodily markers, lived experience, and in what Ovaherero describe as Herero traditions. It is through all these modes that Ovaherero learn about their ancestors’ experiences with German colonialism. In trying to understand why these experiences are so important for Namibian Ovaherero today, I aimed to get some sense of what made the past discernible to Ovaherero. In some instances the past erupts into the present, such as the 2004 unearthing of individuals who died in 1904 at Ozombu Zovindimba through dehydration or the poisoning of well water by the Schutztruppe. At other moments, the present invades the past, as in the inaccurate use of the term “Ovaherero” to describe ancestors who may not have identified as members of such a group. My interest in the situations in which Ovaherero discuss the past is threefold: to describe their pervasiveness, to analyze how people connect this past with their lives, and to consider how the context in which the past is discussed shapes the memories and histories that are reproduced. What follows, then, explores how Ovaherero regularly produce and reproduce the past that serves as the basis for demands of Germany to participate in projects to come to terms with this past, for claims about restorative justice.

History, Memory, and Historical Authority

There are many ways in which Ovaherero learn about this past, some of them obviously recognized by Ovaherero. A variety of knowledges about the German colonial past contribute to Ovaherero’s overall picture of their ancestors’ experiences between 1904 and

1907. These understandings range significantly in form, from impressions to written histories to stories about ancestors. Categorizing forms of knowledge about the past with terms such as history or memory offers some benefits but also constrains understandings in certain ways. Such distinctions are more relevant to thinking about restorative justice than others. Thus, I begin with a broad discussion about the production of knowledge about the past.

A range of narrative genres including *history*, *story*, *legend*, *testimony*, *recollection*, and *anecdote* concerns the past, but concerns with the past are not only expressed in narrative form. *Habit*, *tradition*, and *heritage* are other common modes of evoking understandings of the past for members of groups. Each of these has different meanings for different academic disciplines. They also have differing meanings for non-academics and different meanings in different contexts. Ricoeur, for example, notes at the beginning of his work on memory, history, and forgetting: "although the three masts carry interlocking but distinct sails, they belong to the same ship setting off for a single itinerary...the problematic of the representation of the past" (2004:xvi). I approach the question of how the past is understood and produced similarly. Despite differences in what each takes as fact or raw information, who participates and how, contexts of evoking the past, and processes for creating knowledge, these forms of expressing the past are not discrete, more correct or more authentic. They merely represent differing modes of producing understandings of the past.

Of these forms of knowledge about the past, two have accumulated particularly extensive bodies of literature, from a variety of disciplinary traditions in the humanities and social sciences: *memory* and *history*. While "memory" is used both for individual and collective recollection, my interest in is in the latter, in what is variously referred to as *collective*, *social*, *popular*, or *cultural* memory. History, of course, also exists at the

individual level – the memoir, autobiography, or life history – but I am interested in histories of groups. This includes both history as produced by professional historians and history as produced by other “authorities.” Scholars do not agree on consistent distinctions between or definitions of *social memory* and *history*. Some treat memory as the raw material of history (LeGoff 1992). Others identify memory and history as two kinds of historical consciousness that may affect one another (Olick 2003). Scholars interested in the production or politics of memory and history tend to leave these terms vaguely defined because categorizing types of understandings about the past shifts focus away from the processes by which knowledge is produced and the ways in which power influences their production. Investigating the ways in which people distinguish understandings of the past is critical to describing such processes of knowledge formation. In short, such distinctions may be relevant to contests over historical truth, as is true in Namibia.

I avoided making reference to *history* or *memory* with Ovaherero to whom I spoke because I did not want their explanations to be limited by their perceptions of my categories. I hoped they would employ the terms that were meaningful to them. I settled on the term *past* to ask questions about what people know and how they learned it. I hoped this might elicit a many times of understandings, including *social memories* and *histories*, as well as the terms for talking about the past that Ovaherero find meaningful. In what follows, I will describe contexts for learning about the past that did not come up in interviews, but which I recognized as less official sources of knowledge.

In interviews I also carefully considered my use of labels to refer to the past that interested me. I did not want to predispose people to talk about the German colonial era in terms of only warfare and violence (as do public narratives about restorative justice do) by

asking about memories of “the genocide” or even the “German-Herero war.” A wider range of relationships and experiences between Ovaherero and Germans might have been relevant to Ovaherero today. I also did not wish to suggest that certain moments could be separated from processes that produce experience, memory, or knowledge. In order to ask questions, I had to find effective means of communicating the part of the past that interested me. Thus, I asked Ovaherero to talk about “the German colonial period” and “the events of 1904-1907.” My use of the term “colonial” immediately connected the period of German occupation and governance with that of South Africa and could connote particular sorts of relationships common to both. However, recognition of two colonial periods is widely recognized in Namibia; thus “colonial” was a logical (even if non-neutral) term to Ovaherero. Using the term “the events of 1904-1907” certainly alludes to the genocide or war, but I hoped avoidance of such terms might allow me to hear other words and meanings.

As I sought Ovaherero willing to be interviewed, I noticed that people referred me to perceived experts and excused themselves by saying that they “don’t know those things.” Do so many people really not know about this part of the past which is regularly evoked in Herero communities? What is it that people do not think they know enough about to discuss? I recalled a conversation with an anthropologist working with Ovaherero in Botswana who relayed her frustrations concerning her own research about German-Herero history. She had found that Ovaherero on the whole didn’t know about this history. Perhaps this past is perceived to be too contentious or too difficult to speak about, or at least to speak about with me. I was skeptical that so many people would know nothing about the German-Herero past, since for so many years Riruako had tried to publicly force Germany to take responsibility for genocide. And, nothing in my interactions with Ovaherero suggested that I was broaching

a taboo subject. That most people referred me to experts, suggested that they honestly felt they could not contribute to whatever they imagined I might be studying or that they lacked the authority to share accurate information to a foreign researcher.

Although my status as a Ph.D. student seemed to hold little, if any, meaning for Namibians, many Ovaherero clearly had preconceived expectations about what kinds of information a (foreign) researcher might find useful, namely “truth” known by experts. I later found that many researchers had passed through my primary fieldwork area during the lifetimes of those with whom I spoke. Likely they had established the notion that foreigners needed to speak to experts. While I was referred to people who “know these things,” very few such experts bore a title formalizing their authority although many referenced their experiences with previous researchers anecdotally. This knowledgeable person’s name would be offered, as well as his relationship to people my friend or translator knew and his homestead. The ones who “knew” were typically leaders of some sort and were more comfortable entertaining foreigners than others. While Ovaherero point researchers towards such experts, they are at best indirect sources of knowledge about the past for other Ovaherero.

I sought another tack for recruiting Ovaherero for interviews. By this time I was halfway through my research, had just moved to a new home in Okakarara, and was desperate to interview community members. To those aware of my goals who had voiced interest in helping me, I now tried explaining that I was just looking for people in the community who might agree to talk with me about Herero culture, traditions, and politics, as well as hear people’s opinions about the 2004 commemorations. I tried to learn whatever I could from each individual I interviewed, trying to take advantage of each person’s

experiences and expertise, regardless of whether he or she spoke directly to my research interests. My earlier interviews were almost wholly with people involved in planning the commemorations. I wanted to hear from individuals who were not so obviously interested in the public discussions about the German colonial period. By widening my pool of interviewees and asking for help from those to whom I was closest, I finally began to meet more people and make out some part of why so many had claimed not to know about the history of Herero experiences with German colonialism.

One goal was to see if I could connect what people know about the past with family experiences so I asked if my interviewees' ancestors had been affected by German colonialism and the war of 1904, in particular. It didn't take many interviews with people who otherwise claimed not to know about the German-Herero past for me to realize that this question elicited the stories I sought. People spoke of their ancestors' involvement with the Germans or in the war or its aftermath and often connected their ancestors' lives to those of contemporary Herero leaders or particular historical events. I will talk more about this in the next chapter. What I want to emphasize now is that family is a crucial conduit to the past. As I began to recognize this, I also began to realize that stories about the past are told in family-related contexts, especially "at the fire."

At the fire

Most Ovaherero identified the fire, a setting considered unique to life in "villages" or "farms," as the key site for learning about the past and about Herero culture. Although the fire is also a mundane space for cooking, it stood out most prominently in people's minds as

a profoundly meaningful place for experiencing family relationships and memories, as well as for elders to communicate cultural knowledge.

Before continuing, I want to distinguish the two sorts of fires common to village life: “the fire” is where many Ovaherero learn about their family and the past, while the “Holy Fire,” or *Okuruo*, is a spiritual site and cultural symbol. The *Okuruo* is the context in which Herero men can communicate with their ancestors to maintain ties with male patrilineal ancestors as well as to ask advice and to garner their blessings for decisions or material possessions.¹⁰ It is passed through generations via the male family head, who is responsible for its daily maintenance (although it is usually his wife who tends the fire). Especially during the German period, missionaries and Ovaherero made *Okuruo* a counter-symbol to Christianity.¹¹ As I discuss further below, because of both Christianization and physical displacement between 1904 and 1907, many Ovaherero no longer maintain their family’s Holy Fire. Thus, while it remains an important symbol of Herero culture to many, experiences at the Holy Fire are wholly different than those of the homestead hearth which many people describe as a central space of cultural, village and family life.

As one acquaintance told me, the communal lands, where villages are located is “where you live the cultural life.” When Ovaherero speak of “the village,” they mean a collection of homesteads (within short walking distance of one another) known by a particular name. Some villages bear the name of a family with a long association with that area. Virtually any Ovaherero¹² I spoke with identified a particular village as the place that she or he “comes from,” no matter how far away an individual currently resided or how long she or he resided at the village.¹³

Today, “the village” (or in exceptional circumstances a purchased farm) is the place to which most pensioners return.¹⁴ It is also the place many children spend their first few years before they attend school and the place to where they usually return for school holidays.¹⁵ During the December holidays when many Namibians have a month off from their jobs, adults residing elsewhere will also return to their villages.

Even if one can afford to send cattle to better grazing areas, some cattle and goats will be cared for at the village for the dairy needs of those residing there, to supply milk for family members living away from the village, and to provide a meat supply for the family’s special occasions. Families who keep holy cows also maintain these particular cows at the village.

“The village” then is not only a place to which one belongs but is also imbued with nostalgia and sentiments associated with *family* and *culture*. Many adults who talked about what they had learned at the fire voiced concern that young Ovaherero were not learning Herero culture and history because they are spending little, if any, time at the village. The younger generations were more interested in modern, urban life which involved television watching, sometimes emigration to other countries, and above all, a perceived lack of time.

For Herero adults, the idea of the village as the place from which one comes has different valences for men and women. A married woman feels affinity towards two different villages. Once a woman marries she is not supposed to return to her village of birth unless someone is sick or when there is a funeral or wedding there. How strictly a woman adheres to this rule has much to do with her husband.¹⁶ The husband of one of my friends, for example, doesn’t mind if she goes to her village to visit her mothers as long as she doesn’t stay the night and doesn’t visit too often.¹⁷ The village a woman usually frequents after her marriage

is that of her husband's family.¹⁸ Although a woman may have visited this village before her marriage, she is supposed to spend the first week after her wedding (which occurs at her village) with her husband at his village.¹⁹ So that she doesn't need to ask her husband's family for much, gifts she receives for her wedding include a mattress, a bucket for milking cows and goats, a pail with a lid for carrying water, and a basin for washing herself. A married woman hopes that her husband's family will be nice to her (and to her children, should she have any prior to the marriage) and offer her sufficient food (meat, in particular). As soon as it can be constructed after the wedding, a woman and her husband maintain their own house in his village. Over time, a woman may feel nearly as comfortable at and fond of her new homestead and village as she did her village of birth. A man, however, maintains some form of residence in the same village for his lifetime, although he may choose to maintain his livestock at a different location. For a man, having his own place in his village illustrates his improved status as a married man with a wife and children. Bringing his children to stay in the village before they begin school or during school holidays is important to integrating his children within the family as well as to teaching them family and cultural traditions.

For my Herero family, the main hearth was located in the yard of their homestead at Okarokape village. It was located a few meters in front of the house of the one of the mothers²⁰ and the building used as a kitchen in the winter. The hearth consisted of a raised cement slab, close to an acacia tree that held a small radio on its branching trunk. At any time, a fire burned here or embers from the last mealtime smoldered. Two cast iron, three-legged cooking pots were always nearby, one pot for boiling water and another for cooking. A few chairs (or things functioning as such) were usually situated nearby. The fire's embers

were stoked several times a day to heat water for tea, cooking, bathing, and dish washing.²¹ Family members who were not busy with the cattle, goats or other work gathered and sat near the fire at tea and meal times. Adults also gathered there throughout the day to talk and listen to the radio, taking advantage of the shade of the acacia. The fire place of my Herero family's home came alive in the evenings. The fire was lit before sundown. The worker or children who had spent the day out with the livestock returned home by sunset. Any other work to be done in a day was also finished by this time.²²

Conversation around the fire in the evenings was very informal. Typically, a few adults convened while some of the grandchildren shared quieter conversations among themselves. Later in the evening, someone would occasionally suggest singing. A song would begin and everyone would quickly join in. My family usually selected Christian songs in Otjiherero. I had heard some of the same songs at a church and at a memorial service. Evenings at the fire were also when adults tell children the tales which are not only entertaining, but which also communicate life lessons.²³

One evening early in my experiences at my family's village, Otja, a daughter in my family, asked me to tell them a story. I have never been a gifted story-teller so after much consideration, I finally settled on the story of "The Three Little Pigs" simply because I remembered it best. The children offered great encouragement and accolades, but I felt entirely inept. It felt like such a lost opportunity to participate in my Herero family. I felt I should have conveyed some life wisdom as Herero adults seemed to do easily. Although there may be some Protestant lesson to be learned from this story about the pay off of hard-work, a story at the fire seemed to demand something more meaningful.

Although the fireside conversations felt fairly informal, there are rules that structure the conversations or story-tellings performed there. Apparently, such rules also apply to other conversations or speech events. For example, after an interview with Chief Mureti at his place, Okamapingo, both his daughter, Elsie, who did most of the translating, and my friend, Magord,²⁴ who had arranged the interview commented that they had learned a lot from what he said. I was surprised since they are both middle-aged women and I would have thought they would have had many opportunities to hear about the German colonial era. When Magord remarked to me again later that day when we were alone that she'd learned a lot about history I asked her why she thought she hadn't learned these things previously. She explained that it's difficult to "get the history" because one is not supposed to ask questions of elders. From speaking with other friends and acquaintances thereafter, I learned that this rule is common for more traditional families, which some people suggested had something to do with where a family was from. For example, some friends in Okakarara suggested that families from the Omaruru area are not as "traditional" as those in the Okakarara area.

One friend described her family as fairly open to talking about different topics. She did, however, explain that any questions posed of family elders needed to be based on whatever was currently being discussed. Then one must ask questions politely. When I asked her how one asks questions politely, she referred to broader cultural understandings about showing respect for elders. She explained that you "put in your mind that you're talking to an elder; you don't talk to them like you would a friend." One also should use the elder's title in speaking to him or her, rather than using names or the pronoun "you." Even when asked politely, she explained, an elder may not answer your question. One could have touched on a topic not suitable for discussion with young people, for instance. An elder, therefore, selects

stories based on his/her audience. If the asker is older than others, the elder may wait until these others are gone before answering questions or telling a particular story.

In addition to rules guiding conversation between elders and young people, there are also rules about one's right to speak that correlate with birth order and one's relationship to the place where the conversation occurs. Earlier in this same interview, I heard something about this from Magord. As we prepared for the interview with Chief Mureti, Magord commented that the Chief's daughter, Elsie, would do the interpreting and Magord would help out as needed. The following day, Magord told me that that was due to rules of respect about who can speak in a given context. Because Elsie was from that place, Magord said she had the right to speak, but since they are family (Magord's husband's elder brother married Elsie's younger sister) and Magord's mother is senior, Magord also had a right to speak. Such rules were also alluded to at the Ohamakari commemoration: the individual leading the program noted that she really shouldn't be speaking before her older brother.

However, some people explained that rules about speaking rights vary by family and how strictly they adhere to "traditional life" overall. For example, several Okakarara-area residents suggested that families from the Omaruru area were less "traditional" and thus the young might speak more freely with elders. It was not clear whether these rules have become less rigidly applied over time, whether these rules are historically linked with particular places or families, or how these rules emerged and came to be known as "traditional."

Given the importance of oral communication in learning about the past, such rules strongly influence the transmission of stories about the past within Herero families and, in turn, the production of Herero social memory and history.²⁵ Not only do elders shape their stories according to audience, but some stories are only told on certain occasions. Indeed,

Magord often told me that it is difficult to “get the history.” The choices elders make about what to say and to whom are not always clear. For example, do they make choices to shield youth from traumatic memories altogether or do they situate such memories within selected conversations? Are some topics not appropriate or relevant to teach one’s family? The most basic lessons of these considerations about the rules guiding conversations is that elders are considered more knowledgeable about the past and that not all stories about the past may be told at the fireside, despite its status as the key site for communicating cultural and family memory.

Memory in the Body

One conversation which might take place at the fire involves explaining to children physical, bodily markers of an elder’s or ancestor’s intimate involvement with Germans in the past. Several individuals told me they had learned about their ancestors’ experiences in such ways. Certainly, physical features speak to an individual’s past and life experiences. They reflect parentage, any past injury, nutrition, and daily habits. Bodies may symbolically or physically capture some aspect of past trauma when memories are inscribed on bodies as physical traits or wounds.²⁶ Such physical markers transmit and reproduce memory of physical and psychological traumas. In a number of different modes, bodies then constitute sites of memory much like those proposed by Pierre Nora (1989).

Physical traits contribute to various socio-cultural identities (race, class, caste, ethnicity), both those that individuals claim and those that are applied by others. For many Namibians, skin tone is one physical feature widely understood to signify cultural affiliation. For example, one acquaintance explained that due to his lighter skin color he doesn’t fit in

with either the German or Herero community although he lives with Ovaherero. Individually, one's physical traits may visibly link one to ancestors and siblings, but they may also highlight difference from rather than connection to one's affinal relatives or ethnic community. Adopted children, for example, may feel they do not belong when they or others point out physical traits dissimilar to parents or siblings. Similarly, some Ovaherero recognize traits in themselves or others that are understood to be abnormal, markers of their ancestors' unusual experiences or even results of physical traumas. In themselves, these markers constitute a sort of physical memory of injury and social suffering quite apart from any explanatory narratives.

In addition to problems of identity and belonging, some Herero children born of sexual relations between Herero women and German men during the colonial period were effectively fatherless. One man explained that his Herero mother loved his German father, but that because his father's death effectively dissociated him from ties with his German family, he has no paternal kin to rely on for help. His experience with a German father was different from most whose biological fathers did not serve the social role of a father. Indeed because of marriage laws in the colonies based on concerns for the purity of German blood, nearly all children born of Herero-German relationships grew up with their mothers as Ovaherero (Wildenthal 1997). Particularly for people who practice double descent, the absence of a paternal lineage has significant cultural and economic consequences. Indeed, one argument that Riruako's group employed to justify reparations from Germany is that the Herero community has had to bear the financial burden of children born of such sexual relations.

“Blood,” for Ovaherero, is another trope of memory situated in bodies. Ovaherero estimated, for example, the percentage of the Namibian Herero population believed to have “German blood” or made such claims about themselves or their children. People do not connect blood with phenotypic traits; however, blood and cultural identity are typically understood to be overlapping traits.²⁷ For example, a mother reported of conversations with her children: “They will ask, ‘why do we have German blood when we’re Herero?’” She explained that the status of her children’s blood means that it’s particularly important for them to know the past, the context in which they came to have German blood (traced through their father’s family). While having German blood does not preclude one from being Herero, it may have social implications.

One man whose mother was Herero and father German described being treated differently by others because of his mixed blood.

Most Hereros know about it, know we’re just thrown away. Those “two bloods.” People know that. Others would call, ‘hey, German kid!’ I was treated well, but they joked about *omutwa* – not real Herero – jokes. It’s the truth and I don’t feel anything. All my descendents are *omutwa*.

He described feeling that other Ovaherero did not accept him as being Herero, especially when he was young. The label “Omutwa” was not merely something that described him as someone other than Herero, but it also shaped the cultural practices in which he, and others like him, was allowed to participate. Rules about keeping and going to the Holy Fire were changed²⁸ to accommodate children of German-Herero parentage because otherwise Omutwa were not permitted access to this important spiritual and cultural practice.²⁹ I will return to the subject of rules about the Holy Fire below. Here, what is important is that German parentage, even if a result of a loving relationship, affects a person’s possibility of participating fully in Herero society.

Blood not only symbolizes a form of embodied memory, it also represents a body's genetic history beyond phenotypic traits. Some argue that German blood manifests in "White diseases" among the Herero population. Several Ovaherero held large placards at the Ohamakari commemoration announcing their inheritance of diseases from German ancestors. They suggest that they face an abnormal burden by suffering from such diseases which are thought to be alien to Ovaherero.

The contexts in which some Ovaherero came to have lighter skin tone, German blood, "White diseases," or even the very sexual relationships from which these marked traits developed were not recalled so vociferously, however. Judging from standards and laws at the time regarding racial mixing, most such sexual encounters were likely what would now be understood as rape. Indeed, rape has frequently accompanied war and colonialism.³⁰ Individuals and families, especially women, bear very personal effects of power. For Ovaherero such relations had important implications for reckoning kinship; however, I heard little about the physical or psychological trauma of such sexual acts.³¹

Scholarship on memory of mass rape in other contexts has found that such violence is unlikely to be recalled in narrative forms. For example, Indian women find the act of remembering rape committed during Partition dangerous, comparable even to poison's effects on a body. Consequently, Veena Das explains, they avoid directly discussing such memories.

This silence [surrounding women's experiences during the Partition] was achieved either by the use of language that was general and metaphoric but that evaded specific description of any events so as to capture the particularity of their experience, or by describing the surrounding events but leaving the actual experience of abduction and rape unstated (Kleinman et al. 1997:84).

While silences or haziness in the remembering of traumatic events are common (Shaw 2002, Reisberg and Hertel 2004), rape may be additionally tabooed. Indeed, among Ovaherero, sexuality in general is not a topic openly discussed with elders.

One acquaintance, who regarded herself as a cultural historian, though she had not been educated as such, explicitly sought to create a history of Herero women. She told me about her female relatives' memories of forced sexual relations with Germans. Her aunt, who was "half White," talked about asking other women about their light complexions.

Asked, why are you light complexion? Most said it was an issue of "skirt up!" That's what our parents told us. "Rock hoch!" (Skirt up!) Whether you work for a White alone or a German with his wife. Then comes boss. After nine months you have a baby.

This account is remarkable in that from the words used to describe these experiences, one might not recognize that it is rape to which she alludes. The experience is phrased as though sex with one's boss were a regular, routine job task. Notably, these memories of rape emerged while discussing skin tone, not violence or sexuality. Even in public discussions framing the case for genocide, rape merely has been added to a list of criminal acts for which Germany is charged, but rape is not publicly discussed.

Such embodiments of past events, often prompts for narrated understandings of the past, produce their own sort of psychological trauma for Ovaherero, especially for marked individuals. In their edited volume, Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock (1997) name such phenomena *social suffering*, the pain inflicted on human experience by power. While many Herero individuals told me "we are suffering" by living on marginal land with few sources of wealth, conditions attributed to the German colonial era, the notion of social suffering also has been used to authorize requests for restorative justice.

Annual Commemorations

Annual commemorations serve as another way to learn about Herero experiences in the German colonial era. These include the commemorative events of each sub-grouping of Ovaherero: Red Flag Day at Okahandja for *Otjiserandu*, White Flag Day at Omaruru for *Otjizemba*, and Green Flag Day at Okahandja for *Otjingirini*. Speeches narrate part of the life stories of the individual leaders remembered, and contextualize them in broader historical narratives. These commemorations not only focus on a particular past – the German-Herero period—but on a particular vision of Hereriness connected to these times. Further, commemorations initiated to remember those leaders most involved in and affected by the German colonial era are the only annual commemorations among Herero communities. Thus they stand out among other festivities and events in a given year such as weddings and funerals, particularly as funeral or deaths are not otherwise commemorated so publicly.

The funeral of Samuel Maharero in late August 1923 (after his death in the Union of South Africa in March) was the model for the annual commemorations that followed. It also served as an occasion to shape a new form of a Herero community after the genocide (Hartmann 1998; Gewalt 1996, 1998; Poewe 1985, Ngavirue 1972). Gewalt argues that the funeral and related events served as a catalyst for disparate Herero communities to establish Herero unity, for the first time in history, and to draw on the pre-colonial past in creating this identity (2000:29). As the largest gathering of Ovaherero permitted since the end of the German-Herero war, it created a sense of commonality and unity in the vein of Durkeimian collective effervescence. Historian Wolfgang Hartmann argues that funeral organizers made use of a variety of symbols and traditions borrowed from both Germany and Britain to produce an event Europeans might recognize as appropriate to the death of an important

statesman, a demonstration of Herero respectability and perhaps modernity (1998:126-128). As a visual display, it spoke to the politics of the time, particularly those between Ovaherero and the administration of the Union of South Africa.

It was at this three-day funeral that the *Otjiserandu* came into being along with their tradition of wearing red scarves or arm bands, a symbol of unity and loyalty introduced by Maharero in the 1890s particularly for use in wartime (Hartmann 1998:125). The *Otjiserandu*, one section of the Herero-wide *Otruppe* movement, was affiliated with the Maharero Royal House. The *Otruppe* movement emerged as part of a larger agenda by some Ovaherero to create themselves as a unified, ethically-based pastoral community, a response to a situation of extreme population loss and geographic dispersal during the war (Werner 1990:480).³² Although drilling practices and uniforms were modeled loosely on the German *Schutztruppe*, its function was primarily a social welfare and political network (Werner 1990:483-488). It was with the emergence of the *Otjiserandu* at Maharero's funeral that earlier forms of what became the *Otruppe* movement that specifically Herero cultural symbols came to be commonly used by *Otruppe* regiments.

Three years after the funeral of Samuel Maharero, the *Otjizemba* (a regiment analogous to what *Otjiserandu* are to the Maharero Royal House) formed around the funeral of a chief's son, Parmenus Zeraeua, and annual celebrations were held thereafter to honor deceased members of the Zeraeua royal house (Gewald 1998:122). Around the same time, Ovambanderu (an Otjherero-speaking group taken to be a sub-group of Ovaherero or a group related to Ovaherero), linked with the Nguvauva royal house, sought information from Friedrich Maharero (Samuel's son) about family members who were thought to have fled into the British Bechuanaland Protectorate (the territory which became Botswana) in the

wake of the war with Germany. Maharero reported that all had perished, leaving the Ovambanderu without a legitimate leader, and thus tried to persuade them to submit to the Maharero royal house. However, Ovambanderu learned there were in fact surviving family and broke away from the Maharero community. In symbolic recognition of this divide, Ovambanderu began their own commemorations in Okahandja³³ and formed their own Otruppe group, the *Otjingirini*.

Attending annual commemorations offers an opportunity to hear narratives about the community's experiences with German colonialism, but such occasions also serve to develop feelings about Herero identity, dignity, and unity specifically in reference to past leaders who resisted German colonialism. The Otruppe groups who plan and perform at today's annual Flag Day (referring to the display of regiment colors at such occasions) commemorations are thus long associated with these commemorations. Moreover, their origins are associated with leaders specifically connected to the German colonial past, whose funerals served as important moments of community formation and identity-building after the genocide.

Red Flag Day

The commemoration recalling Samuel Maharero's funeral is known as "Red Flag Day" for its affiliation with the *Otjiserandu* (Red Flag Band) or "Herero Day," for its prominence outside of *Otjiserandu* and those affiliated with the Maharero Royal House. This commemoration and the gravesite ceremony in particular, has become a particularly public display of Herero culture, although largely limited to unique clothing, in addition to serving as a commemoration of deceased leaders and social gathering. Indeed, unlike other Herero commemorations, Red Flag Day is a site of cultural tourism, largely for foreigners.³⁴ Tourists can buy postcards of Ovaherero dressed in traditional clothing for the commemorative

weekend. It is also highlighted in guidebooks to Namibia and is a regular part of itineraries for some small tour operators. Tourists usually, however, observe only that portion of the celebration that occurs at the graveyards in the center of Okahandja.³⁵

That it is sometimes referred to simply as “Herero Day” by Namibians and some Ovaherero despite honoring the Maharero family and others affiliated with the Red Flag, reflects a slippage between a specific sub-community and a broader, national Herero ethnic identity. It is that broader identity that manifested in restorative justice efforts and public contests over Herero history as well. This slippage is the outcome of historical relationships among various sub-groups of Ovaherero. In particular, while Paramount Chief Riruako has framed this commemoration as an occasion for unifying Ovaherero as a singular group who suffered under German colonialism, exemplified on this occasion in Samuel Maharero’s life history (with which Riruako’s family is affiliated), both the “Paramount Chief” position and his claim to it are contested among Ovaherero and challenged by the State.³⁶ On the other hand, he represents “the Herero” in the minds of many Namibians and thus his affiliation with the Maharero family and annual participation in the commemoration reconfigure the occasion into a “Herero” occasion. Also, Samuel Maharero is a well recognized historical figure outside of Otjiherero-speaking communities. His life story was intertwined with German colonialism, including his position as the first recorded Paramount Chief. Maharero also commonly represented the interests of Ovaherero to German traders, missionaries, and authorities due at least in part to his residential location relative to German settlements. Thus, to some he stands as perhaps the most well known Herero historical figure and he represents an early leader of colonial resistance, a national hero to some.

During the third weekend of August, many Red Flag Otruppe members and some Ovaherero from other areas (primarily from central Namibia) gather in Okahandja to participate in the commemorative occasion of gravesite ceremonies and speeches describing the pertinent historical figures and events as well as discussions about current matters of potential concern to Ovaherero.³⁷ However, the weekend is also a much anticipated opportunity to socialize and to rehearse marching and horse riding skills. Early on Sunday morning, Otruppe members gather down the road from the main cemeteries to be visited. Each Otruppe unit parades on foot in a stream of gray, red, and black fabrics down the street, interspersed with horse riders.

Another part of the commemoration is focused on remembering deceased leaders through ritual. In 2003, at the second Red Flag Day I attended, an older man, who appeared to be the local chief, led the group in while talking about all that Maharero and other leaders buried in Okahandja did for the Hereros.³⁸ The men were at the front, squatting low to the ground as they neared the graves. Before entering the immediate grave area, the men kneeled while the chief spoke and the women stood behind them. They all proceeded past the tall, stone grave markers, most putting a hand warmly on each as they passed and laying a small stone. After the group filed past the graves, they continued across the street to another churchyard where more leaders are buried. Things were far less formal at this cemetery. The group passed by select graves before individuals then selected other graves to visit or joined friends in conversation or left the churchyard altogether.

The latter part of the day consists of cultural events: performances by Otruppe groups and speeches by local and national Herero leaders about the people and history being commemorated. Upon arrival at the Commando, the office of the *Otjiserandu* where the

afternoon speeches occur, some Herero men and woman first kneeled at the fireside where Chief Maharero spit water on them in a blessing ritual. Otruppe members on horses arrived first in the contingent of Ovaherero who march from the cemetery to the Commando. People cheered and shouted in response to the horsemen as they showcased their equestrian skills in swift laps around the Commando grounds. As Ovaherero continued to arrive at the Commando, some individuals, who appeared to hold leadership positions, sat on the rough benches under the roof in front of the Commando building. Others brought chairs or sat on the ground (especially women and children) in whatever shade they could find – under trees, beside vehicles, or beneath umbrellas.³⁹

During the opening prayer by a prominent reverend of the Oruuano Church⁴⁰ at the Commando in 2002, some of the events of 1904 were described as follows:

We today, the generations of those who went through the Massacre against the resistance war of the German troops, we should not remember that everything can be done through the hands of God, but we the generation must keep the word of God and also our fulfillment, our aspirations, this must be left in the hands of God...

It might sound sensitive to the others, but that is the reality. It is a well known fact that the Herero nation has been exterminated by the German Schutztruppe. That is historical facts. We cannot deny that. But I am still staying that was done during the will of God. I can also recall the history back, that most of these Herero during that were fled to Botswana. They find themselves in a foreign country. Today we are hailed by a very distinguished visitor among ourself, his Excellency, the High Commissioner of Botswana. He is also here in order to pay homage and remembrance of this day. And also to recapture the histories that we're also finding, one of the sons of those generations that fled this country into Botswana, is back again, called Chief Musupi from Asa Block. He's from the Asa traditional authority. He's back again in his fatherland, sitting next to his Excellency from the same area where they fled. That is the blessing of God. Let us lift everything into the hands of God and forget the past.⁴¹

As with the rest of this prayer, the historical information the reverend provides is little more than an outline of a larger narrative. As I found throughout my research, the terminology used to describe the events of 1904 usually varies considerably across speech events or even

within a particular narrative. In the above prayer, for example, the reverend describes the events of 1904 as “the Massacre” in the context of “the resistance war,” which had the result that “the Herero nation” was “exterminated.” The subjects of his narrative are broadly defined as “the Herero nation” or just “Herero.” He thus portrays Ovaherero as a singular, homogenous group who resisted German colonialism, the consequence of which was the total destruction of the group.⁴² The latter he asserts with the authority of “fact.” Also, he suggests strong relationships between Ovaherero and places. With these lasting connections, even those who resided in Botswana for 100 years have the possibility of returning to their “fatherland” in central Namibia.

On this same day, the welcoming remarks of chief Maharero, head of the Maharero Royal House that is based in Okahandja, were similar in content to that of many speeches I heard at annual commemorations.

The chief... would like to send his thankfulness to the entire Herero-Mbanderu community and also to the ladies present. He introduced himself [as being] from the Maharero clan and he is also the brother to the Kanguimine clan, which [also encompasses] the whole traditional authority of Maharero. He also [declares] to the people that he took the trouble to come and stay uncomfortably at this place where we are paying our homage to our forefathers, who [encountered] cold, hunger, and... inhumane treatment within this area but at least who sacrificed for the cause, because we know we should be here in order to pay our respect to our forefathers. He... emphasized three times about unity. He says that unity is the only thing that can make it possible for us to make socio-economic upliftment among the entire Namibian people. He also emphasized that politics is dividing us, but it is sometimes necessary for we, the traditional communities, to come together in order to pay for our own future. He also emphasized [that] disunity is not appropriate. Sometimes it is not necessary to send someone in order to reconcile different traditional communities. But on the other side, he is doing evil things ... to the people, which I really don't want to see happening within this entire community. Therefore, I think it is high time for us traditional communities to come together and to discuss our differences so that we can make it possible to harmonize and to have an amicable solution [to] this disunity throughout the traditional authorities. He said, thanks [to] you who took the trouble to come and attend this ceremony and he [wishes] you all the best and safe journey home. That is the message from Chief Kaihepozandu in his welcoming remark.

First, Chief Maharero asserted his authority by citing his kin relations to the forefathers being commemorated, a common feature of chiefs' public speeches. The sacrifice of forefathers is emphasized as well as the conditions they had to endure. This is significant because it is not the physical or political battles fought by these forefathers that are the focus of their commemoration, but rather their success in contending with difficult experiences that is heralded here. The latter half of the chief's remarks focused on a particularly common topic of commemoration speeches and casual conversation between Ovaherero in other contexts: that disunity in a Herero community is a consequence of intra-community politics (which are also translated into political party politics) and is harmful to a normative community. There is a sense that such disunity is part of a broader trend towards cultural "loss" since German colonialism, although professional historians' accounts challenge this nostalgic view of the Herero pre-colonial past (Ngavirue 1972, Gewald 1999). These accounts argue that there was not a unified Herero tribe with strong cultural practices even prior to the events of 1904. Yet this contrast reveals that Ovaherero think about the German colonial era as a moment of formative change in their cultural practices and identity.

Praise Songs

Praise songs or poems, as they are variously referred to by scholars, are another form in which aspects of the past are rehearsed and passed along among Ovaherero.⁴³ Indeed, Anette Hoffmann argues that praise songs have served as a forum for articulating understandings of the past that are not widely afforded much significance outside of Herero communities (2007:43). She analyzes a praise poem honoring those who died during a forced removal (authorized by the South African "Group Areas Act") in Windhoek, Namibia in

1959. While the ruling party constrains the ways in which this event is officially remembered to meet its interests, the circulation of this poem “became a form of discursive resistance, the re-articulation of collective identities and the production of a forum for oppositional versions of public historiology” (Hoffmann 2007:44).⁴⁴ She points out that while praise songs may be memorized and performed by innumerable people in different contexts over time, they also contribute to, and are affected by, contemporary narrative practices.

Their inherent feature of polyvocality makes it difficult to define a voice; we must therefore understand their performance as an invitation for a dialogue that allows theorizing the social environment and history of that time. *Omitandu* do not tell history. Rather they provide “established structures of creativity” that are used to contain history and have the capacity to open up a space for critical engagement (Hoffmann 2007:45).

She further argues that as a result of poems’ capacity to evoke historical events and to engender space with meanings, praise songs connected Ovaherero with places in central Namibia in the latter half of the 19th-century. Thus, she suggests that “poems created and appropriated a landscape of belonging” (Hoffmann 2007:45). According to Hoffmann, then, praise songs do not simply recite historical events or recall people. They also serve to foster relationships among those who identify with Herero cultural practices as well as strengthening relationships with places and, arguably, with the past itself.

The subjects of praise songs may be persons, locations, events, or animals, and are sung or spoken in a range of contexts, from funerals to weddings to casual gatherings (Hoffmann 2007:55).⁴⁵ Hoffmann focuses specifically on one variety of Herero orature, *omitandu* (praise poems)⁴⁶. She explains that *omitandu* (sing. *omutandu*)

are sung at festivities, but lines of them may be also recited in conversations, as part of stories, and in political speeches. Oscillating between more or less formalized contexts, shifting between different signifying systems ... (Hoffmann 2007:44).

Herero praise songs use sophisticated structures and rely on a tremendous amount of common background knowledge. Hoffmann explains:

They never tell all, leaving many questions unanswered. Thus *omitandu* keep challenging the imagination of their listeners (and performers), while teasing out cultural knowledge and collective memories. Opacity is one of the crucial factors in this respect: it simultaneously enables and complicates reception. (2007:42).⁴⁷

Thus, *omitandu* appear to be quite effective at relaying stories that are relevant to individuals who identify as Omuhherero.

Hoffmann, however, clarifies that *omitandu* do not tell history. Their inherent polyvocality obscures the poem's voice, and their performance instead is an invitation to dialogue, to critical engagement with the poem's subject (Hoffmann 2007:45).

One occasion on which I heard praise songs was during the *outjina* (women's dance) portion of a (double) wedding I attended outside of Okakarara. A friend told me that expert dancers are usually hired (for approximately US\$130 per weekend in 2005) to lead traditional dancing during a wedding, but she suspected that this family didn't have enough money for this. Instead, the dancing and singing was led by the brides' mother and at least one of the grooms' mothers and an additional jovial (and intoxicated) elderly woman.⁴⁸ The brides' mother produced a rhythm with a wooden board strapped on one foot. The songs performed were specific to a wedding and many praised the positive attributes of the cows, such as their beauty, given to the bride's family by the groom's.⁴⁹

Some praise songs refer to the colonial war against Germans. The following *outjina*, analyzed by Rajmond Ohly, describes an event of 1904 during the fighting between Germans and Ovaherero (1990: 12-13).

Katando's father and Nangombe's father
It is (the village) of Nangombe's father
Speak (sing) about Nangombe's father
Speak about Mbunga's homestead

Our community
Our community
Our community
Our community

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Speak about (how) the homestead has been chased away | Our community |
| Siyee siyee siyee siyee ⁵⁰ | Our community |
| The homestead has been chased away | Our community |
| Our community hiyee hiyee | Our community |
| Our community went away | Our community |
| That of Nangombe's father ohiye ohiye | Our community |
| Siyee siyee siyee siyee siyee! | Our community |
| The homestead has been chased away hiyee | Our community |
| It has been dispersed hiyee | Our community |
| Drive on! | Our community |
| The homestead has been chased away | Our community |
| Let us run away, let us run away! | Our community |

Ohly notes that the "community" above, a particular Herero community, functions as

the protagonist while it is assumed that the German troops are the antagonists. He further explains that the repetition underlines important, emotional features (Ohly 1990:15). Thus, it appears that "Nangombe's father," "the homestead has been chased away," and the herdsman's call, are particularly important features of this performance. Further, it is significant that this outjina thus focuses on a family's experience--of effectively being removed from their home by others who assert authority --of being treated in a way not appropriate for humans and more similar to the way a herdsman directs the movements of his livestock.

A praise song about a deceased chief, Maharero, who was the father of Samuel Maharero, illustrates the significance of tracing kinship in remembering individuals. While the listener is presumed to have knowledge of both places and of Maharero's kin, identifying prominent family members by name and commonly known attributes (e.g., someone who makes particularly fine baskets) may also help ignorant listeners place Maharero within wider kin groups or clans. As is typical of praise poems, some relevant physical characteristics are noted and, if achievements are praised, they are implied by representative image (i.e., rather than being described in detail) (Ohly 1990:28-29).

Praise songs are also sung at funerals. A friend who had invited me to the funeral of her brother, a shop owner in the community in which I resided, informed me these are important to learning about Herero traditions. She told me that she would be in a group of women sitting inside the house (a practice she identified as a Herero tradition). I heard the vocalizations of these women as I arrived though I couldn't make out what they were saying. Another friend explained that a group of women sit inside with the female mourners and that their songs, which she described as "making those strange noises" to comfort the mourners and ease their crying.

More than one person identified *omitandu* as a way of speaking about the past. One man even told me that "most historians were women, from crying at funerals." While women still perform this role at weddings and funerals, in the past they were even more involved as oral historians in this way as they also praised men who returned from or died in battles.⁵¹ Several people highlighted how important they found hearing praise songs at funerals for learning about kin relations, both those of the past and present.⁵²

It is easy to accept praise songs about people as ways Ovaherero talk about the past. However, even praise less overtly about people or events may perform this role. One praise song of the *omuimbo* genre, for example, describes the journey of a particularly outstanding bull forced to cross the Omaheke desert after German troops defeated Herero warriors at the 1904 battle at Waterberg (Ohly 1990:30-33). Although common to the genre, in this *omuimbo*, the owners of specific places are identified not only by name, but by characteristics of both the places and the owners, features with which they are commonly associated by Ovaherero. Places are always associated with the people who resided there (Ohly 1990:34). This praise song not only recalls the forced journey of animals

(accompanying Ovaherero) across the Omaheke after the battle of Waterberg, but also connects people with places while reinforcing the cultural value of cattle.

Praise songs then serve as significant genres for circulating particular information about the past for Ovaherero. Clearly, the pasts to which praise songs allude are relevant to the interests of Ovaherero since their interpretation requires significant cultural and even familial knowledge, in addition to Otjiherero-language fluency (Hoffmann 2007:57).⁵³ Since reciting kinship relations and connecting people to places are particularly common features of such songs, they may be said to strengthen kinship knowledge and to foster a sense of long-time belonging between particular kin groups and particular places.

Books

A few Ovaherero spoke to me of learning “the history” from books. They most often referred to Gerhard Pool’s 1991 biography, *Samuel Maharero*, and *Words Cannot Be Found: German Colonial Rule in Namibia*, known colloquially as “The Blue Book,” (Silvester and Gewald 2003). Pool’s book seemed to be the most commonly available book concerned with Herero history circulating among Ovaherero. Its popularity no doubt was due to the fact that it was published in Namibia in both Afrikaans and English. In addition it has been available for some time. However, people also were familiar with “the Blue Book,” even if that hadn’t personally read it. This was hardly surprising given that it had been republished in honor of the 100th anniversary of the genocide.

Saying that this biography is most available doesn’t say much as books on the whole in Namibia are not very accessible to most people. Aside from small libraries at elementary and secondary schools for enrolled students, public lending libraries do not exist and even

non-lending libraries are only located in Windhoek and Swakopmund. Books shops are also located primarily in Windhoek and Swakopmund. However, books are so expensive relative to Namibians' incomes that only a relatively small percentage of the population can afford to purchase books. Reading books was not a part of daily life for most Ovaherero. Newspapers were more widely available, although not in my research home, Okakarara.⁵⁴

While most Namibians are literate according to national statistics, this varies by age and region.⁵⁵ Older people are less likely to be literate than younger people and just over half of the adults in some areas of the far north and east are literate (Mendelsohn et al. 2002:178-9).⁵⁶ Literacy patterns appear to reflect public concerns about inequalities in the education available at schools in urban versus rural areas.

A few national commemoration committee members mentioned that they had learned something about Ovaherero's experiences under German rule by reading "The Blue Book." The Riruako-led lawsuit against Germany under the U.S. Alien Tort Claims Act also quoted heavily from the book. As already mentioned, the editors of the most recent edition of "The Blue Book" sought to make Namibian history more accessible to Namibians. Originally published in London in 1918 as the *Report on the Natives of South-West Africa and their Treatment by Germany*, "the Blue Book," it is a collection of accounts by officials of the British Union of South Africa about German colonial rule in then German South West Africa.⁵⁷ Jan-Bart Gewald and Jeremy Silvester, two prominent foreign historians of Namibia, republished "The Blue Book" in 2003 to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the Herero genocide. Ovaherero I spoke with knew little about the editors or about a larger Namibian public history agenda to which this book belongs, but they cited it as a source of true stories about the terrible things that Germans did to their ancestors. One story mentioned

a number of times in my fieldwork - about a baby tossed around a circle of German soldiers via their rifles' bayonets – probably (re-)entered circulation in Herero narratives from the Blue Book.

Another potential source of historical knowledge is school books. As of 2005, students are taught about the German colonial period several times during their education. In grade 5 social studies, students learn that during the “*war of resistance, 1904-1907*,” Ovaherero and Namas fought against German expansion as Germans sought better farm land.⁵⁸ In grade 10, students learn more about this period, such as that following the battles with Germans, the labor of Ovaherero and other “natives” was tightly controlled such they were forced to wear brass sheet metal tags at their necks.⁵⁹ The grade 10 history textbook explains that people reported to a central location where they were told where to go and work, depending on their physical condition. Because most subject to this system couldn't read or write, the textbook explains that the tags ensured people would not lose their way en route to their assigned work post. The book, however, does not critique the workings of power in controlling labor in this manner. Nor does it recognize the humiliation people suffered merely from wearing such tags. The textbooks frame this discussion as part of the national liberation struggle. For example, “1904-1907” is termed a resistance war, highlighting its commonality to the later resistance war against the South African colonizer. Clearly this only permits a cursory discussion of specifically Herero experiences.

Nonetheless, this curriculum is reportedly a drastic improvement over what was available to students' parents in school, if they attended. Several Ovaherero noted that prior to Namibian Independence “history” meant South African History, nothing that students of that time identified as their own history. Herero history, whatever that might be thought to

be, was invisible in official textual forms to students prior to Independence. Several people suggested that their ignorance of past German-Herero relations derived from never having had the opportunity to formally learn about such matters in school. Some considered this part of the injustice of apartheid. But, to some, such invisibility continues in a different way today as Herero history is made to be fit within Swapo's liberation narrative.

Given Names and Surnames⁶⁰

The importance of personal names to Ovaherero, as with most cultural groups, cannot be overemphasized. Surnames and first names function very differently among Ovaherero. While surnames should clearly link Herero patrilineal kin, interference from the state often prevents what are considered traditional naming practices. A child born in Namibia to an unwed mother is by law required to assume the mother's surname. Surnames have reportedly served as a tool to reunite families that were scattered by the fighting with colonial Germany. Thus, in a sense, surnames map the dispersal of families, much of which was reportedly a consequence of the 1904-1907 period.

First names for Ovaherero, however, encapsulate something about contemporary events/concerns or family history. I was first introduced to the importance of first names when a baby boy was born to the first family I lived with, the day after I moved in. He was named Nakokure, which I was told meant "although it's very far" and was apparently selected by the father to recognize all the people who'd helped him and become like family to him in the places he'd lived since leaving his village. A friend explained that her daughter was given the name Uapiona, meaning "dry my tears" because this child was conceived the day of her first daughter's death. Herero friends and acquaintances didn't seem to hesitate to

tell me what their names or their children's names meant, or referred to, if I asked. While an Otjiherero-speaking stranger would be able to decipher the literal meaning of a given name, the full meaning is often not publicly clear and requires some knowledge of the individual or family.

I also witnessed a very heated and emotional argument at the University of Namibia's conference on remembering 1904 when one White Namibian, a historian, cited a Herero of the German colonial period as Morengo. A Herero woman in the audience, whom I later learned consults about Herero culture, critiqued the historian's misspelling of what she claimed was Morenga and accused the historian of perpetuating the silencing and distorting of Namibians' history that has effectively resulted from non-Ovaherero documenting Namibian history. Although there was likely some long running adversarial discussion or relationship between these two, and he attempted to dismiss her concern by briefly explaining his source for this spelling of the deceased man's name, this instance might be interpreted as part of a much wider pattern of distorting or confusing Herero history through inaccuracies in name usage and documentation.

Such seeming disregard for names is remembered in those who lived through part of the period prior to Namibian independence.⁶¹ Friends told me that some Ovaherero who were living in the south of Namibia during the South African period reportedly took father's first name and made it their surname "to make it easier for Whites, but they know their real surnames. This practice only happened in the South because the Namas had Christianity." I understand them to mean that Namas, the dominant ethnic group in the South, were voluntarily using "White" or "Christian" names and so White communities in the South exerted pressure on Ovaherero living in the South to do the same. Two Herero friends

described bosses in the mid-20th-century using names of their choice to refer to their domestic workers. They explained this practice of Afrikaans and German bosses: “they weren’t asked for their names; they were just called ‘Aiyah’,” which my friends said means “baboon.” “The English people,” they further explained, “made up their own names for workers, such as Maria.” Also, I was told by friends that during the South African administration of Namibia, each individual was required to have a “White” first name, which they explained was to make names easier for bosses or teachers. It might be argued that such practices veiled the full identity of an individual or separated that individual from the meanings that his/her name was intended to continually impart. Thus, some Ovaherero’s concerns about the distortions of history produced by misspellings or omitting first or last names in documentation may be heightened by recent experiences with externally imposed naming practices, similar to the sorts of renaming and consequent erasing of personal history experienced by victims of the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Benson 2006).

Not long after this event, I conducted an interview with this woman during which one of her primary foci was to emphasize the importance and meanings of Herero names. She explained that naming for Herero is not a mere practice of assigning a name to a baby, “but for documenting, event, historical, keeping morale, telling what happened.” Morenga, she explained, means “a decent person, polite, neat, talks in a decent way.” One’s name “tells one I should behave like that because the ancestors know me as” that name, that character. She also cited a name given five generations of her female ancestors and explained “if one change names, then you cut off relationships,” the lineage of these relatives would become lost in history, she seemed to imply. She explained further,

Your name keeps you in the right path. Names praise, document... Even during our [liberation] struggle, starting from 40s, names were given to people that reflected this

time. For example, many children were named some variation of “we want independence.” One’s name encourages, it motivates you. How can you be named and not fight for or not live your name?” Children will eventually ask why they are called the name that they were given. In that way, children learn about their history. History is documented in our children. The children will also read about history, but at least he would be able to make a connection.

Names then are not precisely a means of talking about the past, but they do connect individuals with something of their past. They also identify individuals with ancestors, thus locating a newborn Ovaherero among a patrilineage (Gibson 1956:121) Names document the past in particular ways by imbuing living individuals with specific memories which are to direct one’s behavior. In connecting an individual with a particular moment or ancestor, they ground individuals in particular times and relationships and impose upon them something about that past time or person. Given the concealed meanings of many names, they function to call attention to particular kin relationships or historical events that are decipherable to a limited audience, often just family members, which seems a common pattern in ways that Ovaherero perceive the past. While names everywhere are always implicated in social relations and facilitate memory, for Ovaherero, personal names locate an individual amidst a kin group or recognize significant experiences in their parents or other kin’s lives (vom Bruck and Bodenhorn 2006:25).

Reminders of the Past

Aside from these contexts for learning about the past that were identified for me by those I interviewed, I learned about further common experiences of learning about the past: non-narrative reminders of the past. These forms of memory, like the physical abnormalities I discuss above, may also serve as springboards for more narrative tellings of the past. In interviews I often asked individuals about the consequences they perceived of the German-

Herero past or the past fighting between Germans and Ovaherero. Their responses to this line of questioning largely coalesced around two broad ideas: that Ovaherero lost a lot at this time in the past and are now suffering as a result as well as that Ovaherero are widely dispersed geographically because of this past, sometimes resulting in practices to alleviate this effect.

When I asked questions in interviews about how individuals are reminded of the German colonial past today, many responded that their present dislocation and economic hardship are lived results of this past. The following is one elderly man's response to such a question:

Just from Otjondjupa to Tsumkwe was grazing area and we had lots of cattle. During the war, cattle were lost as people were fleeing and cattle were also taken [by Germans] before the war. Germans became rich because of property taken from Hereros. So request to give back what they have taken. Culture and cattle go together so maybe if Hereros have cattle and land back, maybe culture comes back too.

Traveling around here, you see no place to grow or graze. Place we have is only for a graveyard, not for people to live at. People who are buried are not moving; we're just being buried because we don't have space to move around. That's why we need cooperation, we can help each other.

People are dying from hunger in this country, maybe you've noticed. Old and young are suffering from hunger. No work, no land to grow some things – tomatoes, onions. Don't have land or money for water. Water used to be free from the government. [We] don't get enough rain [here]. Nothing is growing wild. Now we need money for everything.

This narrative well encompasses a notion of everyday suffering which I heard from many individuals. The cause is traced back to the war and to the Germans of the colonial period. However, the environment is blamed without recognition that the South African government located Native Reserves in marginal lands. Unemployment is seen to compound the greater, long-standing land problem while the present Namibian government is not addressing its citizens' needs. Thus, a long history of marginalization by several administrations is largely

occluded in social memory by what is understood to be the greater historical factor, or the initial moment of present suffering: the German colonial period and the war.

Included prominently among concerns Ovaherero expressed about cultural loss resulting from the German colonial period was the loss of the Holy Fire in families, the means for men to convene with their male ancestors. In some families the Holy Fire was effectively lost to Christianization. In others, the Holy Fire was lost when those men who kept the fire died during the war, particularly amidst the chaos of fleeing across the Omaheke in 1904. However, after the German period, rules guiding the passing of the Holy Fire through male relatives also had to be shaped differently to accommodate the consequences of the German-Herero war. First, new practices were developed within the remaining Herero community to effectively re-light Holy Fires that had been lost with their keepers in the war. Second, new rules also had to be developed to make it possible for Herero men with German fathers to keep the Holy Fire. One man whose father was German and his mother Ovaherero described how he was able to keep the Holy Fire despite not having a Herero father:

My Holy Fire is from my mother's side. My father's mother [had it because my father was German], not a real father, [so she was] allowed to take over. It's not usual to pass the fire that way, but if your father is Damara or Nama, you won't get it otherwise.

Thus, although Ovaherero did not identify the flexibility of rules regarding the passing of the Holy Fire as a memory of the German-Herero past, it serves as a reminder of this past. This flexibility is still remembered to arise from the consequences of the German-Herero war, it has been naturalized but its historical connection has not been forgotten. Additionally, despite these practices introduced to contend with the loss of the Holy Fire in families, the loss is still recognized by many Ovaherero as such despite the Holy Fire's continuance via new rules.

Additionally, many Ovaherero verbalize a direct connection between the wide geographic dispersal of Ovaherero in Namibia, Botswana, and elsewhere and the German-Herero war. In consequence, families don't always know where all of their kin reside. This matter has been somewhat relieved following Namibian independence when movements across the Namibia – Botswana border became less closely regulated and when many Ovaherero residing in Botswana for the last 100 years were repatriated to Namibia. Still, some individuals described comparing clans or surnames when visiting new places and discovering relatives in this manner. Even when the location of kin is known, Herero families are very concerned with establishing relationships among even disparate relatives. Thus, for example, children are commonly sent to live with relatives in other parts of Namibia so that they can become familiar with other parts of their family. A second related outcome of the dispersal of families in the war is that some Ovaherero came to reside in places, especially Botswana or the South of Namibia, where they largely stopped speaking Otjiherero. I've heard several Herero individuals from central Namibian lament this as a great signifier of cultural loss as a consequence of the war. At the time of the South African Group Areas Act, when households were required to move to the urban block or rural reserve appropriate for their "tribe," some Ovaherero reportedly chose to remain in the South and live as Nama in their reserves.

Conclusions

I have outlined some of the primary ways the past becomes present for Namibian Ovaherero. In concluding, I would like to draw attention to two broad themes in the contexts in which Ovaherero learn of the German-Herero past: (1) knowledge about this past is

learned by narratives as well as by memory embedded in bodies and everyday practices and (2) the family constitutes the primary locus of and lens for understanding the past.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, many Ovaherero were reluctant to participate in an interview on the grounds that they don't "know the history." I realized early on, that Ovaherero who responded in this way had in mind a "history" that depended on expert knowledge. Thus, they did not deem themselves authorized to teach foreign researchers. In other words, they judged that their knowledge of the past was not the "correct" version or the "truth." Once they agreed to speak to me, they spoke almost exclusively of narrative forms of knowledges of the past.⁶² Yet they almost always identified the contexts in which they heard stories in addition to what or from whom they had learned what they told me. As I've described, the most important contexts in which the past was learned – at the fire in the village and at commemorations - are not merely spaces for talking, they are imbued with historical and cultural meanings. Even when Ovaherero listened to narrative accounts of the German-Herero past, they likely recognized the presence of the past in the place or context as well. Thus, in addition to ways individuals explicitly indicated the past to be important to present lived experience, Ovaherero learn about this past and its importance to their lives at present in a variety of non-narrative, even non-verbal ways.

Like the "weightiness" of ancestral things for the Sakalava of Madagascar which Lambek (2002) describes, many Ovaherero felt an obligation to their ancestors to find ways of continuing responsibilities to them despite the disruption to previous veneration practices resulting from the Herero genocide. One friend explained to me a practice which honors ancestors, whose remains are in an unknown location. I read this practice as a response to a particular historical context. It is a means of fulfilling obligations to the many ancestors

whose remains are scattered across central and eastern Namibia because Ovaherero fled from German troops in 1904 or died alone in hiding and in concentration camps, situations in which no one could bury them or share their location with descendents. “Even if you don’t know – if you’re driving, for example, and don’t know whether your father died in that area. Your father can see you passed there but didn’t eat soil. That’s why you eat soil when you’re in new places.” What are the consequences of not eating soil at a place where your father’s bones may be? “Maybe if you are in a car or racing on a donkey, your car will break or if you’re walking, you go and come back to same place and then think, oh something is wrong.”⁶³ While portrayed by Ovaherero as a Herero tradition, it is also an obligation born of memory. By eating soil in this way, Ovaherero are fulfilling responsibilities to their ancestors, but it also engenders memory of displacement and suffering.

This is one of a number of other practices which are characterized as Herero tradition but which are born of or respond to changes in Herero daily practices resulting from their ancestors’ experiences with German colonialism.⁶⁴ For example, both Ovaherero and tourists hold the annual commemorations to be events where Herero traditional culture is displayed yet, according to historians, they are effects of the colonial period to which the commemorations allude. Similarly, “eating soil” is understood to be a Herero tradition yet it is also a practice which facilitates Herero men meeting obligations to their ancestors despite the disruption of the German-Herero war to burial practices. These practices might be termed “invented traditions” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992:4)⁶⁵ Leaders and ancestors who died amidst the exceptionally violent conditions of 1904-1907 are remembered in these practices. What is forgotten, however, are the contexts in which these practices originated, moments at which previous cultural practices were no longer sufficient or appropriate. Thus, each explicit

practice is itself one form of remembering while it also alludes to particular experiences in the past.

Indeed a number of scholars attend to the variety of forms memory may take, including non-discursive memory practices. Paul Connerton (1989) asserted the importance of bodies to memory--in the form of habit, or as he describes: “how memory is sedimented, or amassed, in the body” (72). He distinguishes between two types of social practice: *incorporating practice*--“messages that a sender or senders impart by means of their own current bodily activity”--and *inscribing practices*--trapping and holding information “long after the human organism has stopped informing” (Connerton 1989:72-72).

Building on Connerton’s work, Rosalind Shaw distinguishes between *practical memory* and *discursive memory*, which she urges be taken as two poles of a continuum (2002).⁶⁶ Shaw opposes “the reflexive sensibilities of discursive memory in explicit, intentional narrative accounts of the past” with “the more tacit apprehensions of practical memory, ‘forgotten as history’ precisely because they are embedded in habits, social practices, ritual processes, and embodied experiences”(2002:7).⁶⁷ I find this distinction useful in considering how Ovaherero understand the past because it seems to parallel the way Ovaherero use memory to construct histories and memories of the German colonial past within present debates about this past.

As with the privileging of narrative forms of memory that I noted in my conversations with Ovaherero, scholars of memory have noted similar trends. Connerton argues that inscribing practices are often regarded by societies as the privileged form to transmit a society’s memories, evidenced in the often extensive efforts invested in developing systems of inscription.

For it is true that whatever is written, and more generally whatever is inscribed, demonstrates, by the fact of being inscribed, a will to be remembered and reaches as it were its fulfillment in the formation of a canon. It is equally true that incorporating practices, by contrast, are largely traceless and that, as such, they are incapable of providing a means by which any evidence of a will to be remembered can be “left behind” (1989:102).

In a slightly different approach, Ricoeur argues that memory scholarship tends to assume an object-oriented character of memory, particularly privileging “events among all the ‘things’ we remember” (2004:22-23). He contrasts an “object-oriented” memory (singular things or events) with that of “states of affairs” (generalities), which might include faces of loved ones, the manner of an utterance, or memorable meetings (Ricoeur 2004:23).

What is important in these works is both the recognition that memory is not comprised only of things or events, but also of instants of partial experiences. It is inscribed memory or the memory of things that has been privileged in debates about this past in Namibia and internationally, yet this is only a small part of Herero remembering.

The other broad theme that pervades the means of recognizing the past discussed above is that Herero discussions of the past generally are embedded in family or communities. The recognized past is that of one’s family. Such understandings of the past are not only important for Ovaherero kin groups to understand their pasts but also to determine appropriate marriage partners, to acknowledge the final resting place of one’s ancestors, and to situate feelings of belonging or identity. Memory and history are created in close groups that (better) understand coded knowledges, whether narratives or tellers’ expressions, for example. Knowledge is created through intimacy according to rules of appropriateness not replicated in wider public sites of remembering or talking about history. Emotion is associated with memories, for example, as children perceived sadness in their grandparent’s telling of the past.

These observations contrast with the recent public proliferation of Herero history in Namibia and beyond that centers on the nation or ethnic group and is based in narratives. I will argue that this history silences both non-discursive knowledges of the past - incorporated practice, practical memory, or states of affairs - and the primacy of family in the various disputes about this German-Herero past that have circulated recently in Namibia and internationally.

Notes:

¹ This discussion abuts concerns about people understand or cognize time. However, this is beyond the scope of my current project. Johannes Fabian does offer an interesting general conception of time based on an idea of Hayden White: “There is no time for us except embodied time” (2007:50).

² Le Goff highlights St. Augustine’s assertion that “we live only in the present, but this present has several dimensions: ‘the present of past things, the present of present things, and the present of future things’” (1992:3).

³ Ricoeur outlines the following features: habit (action) versus memory (representation), evocation (unexpected) versus search (re-learn forgotten), and retention (primary memory) versus reproduction (secondary memory) (2004:24-26).

⁴ I describe this line of critique as “seemingly simple” because in the act of asserting that something is in the past, in that particular language choice, an individual or group is asserting something in particular about that experience, for example, classifying an experience as something irrelevant to contemporary concerns.

⁵ In following, history, he suggests, is “the subject of a structure whose site is...time filled by the presence of the now [Jetztzeit]” (Ricoeur 2004:261). He further suggests that these incidents, when the past becomes meaningful to present lives often occur at moments of “danger,” at which the received past is endangered as understandings or practices of those living in the present are, in turn, at risk (Ricoeur 2004:255).

⁶ This passage from Barbara Kingsolver’s *the Poisonwood Bible*, for example, poetically illustrates a materiality of the past:

“The sins of the father are not discussed. That’s how it is.” She returned to her business of stabling the earth.

I know she is right. Even the Congo has tried to slip out of her old flesh, to pretend it isn’t scarred. Congo was a woman in shadows, dark-hearted, moving to a drumbeat. Zaire is a tall young man tossing salt over his shoulder. All the old injuries have been renamed: Kinshasa, Kisangani. There was never a King Leopold, no brash Stanley, bury them, forget. You have nothing to lose but your chains.

But I don’t happen to agree. If chained is where you have been, your arms will always bear marks of the shackles. What you have to lose is your story, your own slant. You’ll look at the scars on your arms and see mere ugliness, or you’ll take great care to look away from them and see nothing. Either way, you have no words for the story of where you came from. (Kingsolver 1998:495)

Memories of colonial Congo are portrayed here as undeniably present, even impinging upon the flesh of the living. Despite the post-colonial state’s attempts to promote the forgetting of these memories for the sake of nation-building and modernizing, these old memories persist and their silencing creates further suffering for remembering subjects.

⁷ Trouillot discusses problems with this notion of what he terms “the storage model of memory-history” (1995:14-22).

⁸ At the individual level, some psychologists suggest that when the particularly emotional experience of events promotes memory while the concurrent experience of stress (which accompanies trauma) causes stressful emotional experiences to be recorded neurologically in a fragmented manner (Reisberg and Hertel 2004). When individuals experience intense emotions, they are likely to share this with others which in turn is argued to result in enduring collective memory (Pennebaker et al. 1997).

⁹ This argument seems to emerge from a Durkheimian perspective.

¹⁰ See Wallace (2003) for a discussion of the development of healing rituals around the Holy Fire.

¹¹ For further discussions of Okuruo as a symbol of opposition to Christianity, see Hartmann et al. (1999), p. 121 or Gewalt (2000).

¹² As I described in the introduction of this dissertation, *Omuherero* refers to a Herero individual in the Otjiherero language.

¹³ The only exceptions among those I interviewed were a couple individuals who resided in Windhoek and described themselves as coming from Windhoek.

¹⁴ Under Apartheid, Blacks were not allowed to own farm land. Indeed, since the concept of private property known to European law was introduced to the area by Germans more than a hundred years ago, until Namibian Independence, Blacks did not own land. Neither the land reform program that came with the new government in 1990 or changed legislation removing previous restrictions on land ownership has resulted in substantial demographic change in land ownership.

¹⁵ When a child is old enough to begin grade one, he or she may reside with a parent or other family member who lives near a school or may stay at a school's hostel.

¹⁶ Interestingly, my request to go to the village where her mothers live seemed to have allowed my friend a certain amount of freedom in regards to this rule in her eyes and presumably in the eyes of her husband. However, going to Okarokape under the auspices of interviewing her mothers and allowing me to see my family's elders during my short visit still did not make the rule irrelevant. I did wonder later, after I learned of this rule, whether she in fact asked me directly if I wanted to stay the night at Okarokape in hopes that I might answer affirmatively, allowing her a plausible excuse to her husband to spend more time with her mothers. Thus, we visited for a few hours, but did not stay the night as we might have in similar circumstances before my friend married.

¹⁷ This friend's biological mother never married so came to stay at the homestead with her sister and her sister's husband although she maintains her own house and yard separate from her sister.

¹⁸ This practice is a present iteration of previous patrilocal residence patterns.

¹⁹ The cape and face covering that a woman wears throughout the wedding is only removed once she has arrived at her husband's homestead, the day after the wedding. In other words, the wedding isn't complete until the woman has traveled to her husband's village.

²⁰ This woman was the wife of the man whose family belonged to this village. The other mother, the sister of this wife, was not recognized as a wife, but did bear his children.

²¹ In my family, a couple of the older female grandchildren were in charge of tending the fire as well as preparing and dishing the food.

²² I've also heard that one may not sweep dust out of a house after sunset. Thus, completing the day's chores by sunset may not be entirely determined by availability of light.

²³ Such fables, albeit in varying form, seem to be told and re-told among perhaps all Namibian cultural groups, judging from what I've casually heard from non-Herero friends or seen published as story collections.

²⁴ My friend, Magord, took it upon herself to act as a cultural interpreter of sorts. It's thus not surprising that she would have thought to explain rules to me which might have seemed merely normal or polite to someone else. She had had several experiences befriending and working with foreigners in the past and perhaps this was part of the reason that she has a unique ability to see some of her daily life experiences from an outsider's perspective.

²⁵ Clearly, my questioning knowledge about the past confronts these usual rules about asking questions. My sense was that most people I spoke with considered (foreign) researchers differently than they would their own

family or community members, for example. It seems my status as a foreigner and/or a researcher changes the normal rules about speaking and questioning. While I don't believe that anyone I spoke with felt offended or put out by my questioning. I don't imagine that what I was told is precisely what might be shared with grandchildren, for example.

²⁶ See, for example, Judith Butler (2004) for a discussion of how memories of war are inscribed as "wounds."

²⁷ There also may be some perceived difference about types of Herero blood. A friend once mentioned a conversation in which her boyfriend suggested she wasn't good enough for him since he had "royal blood." Again, one's blood seems to say something about the community to which one belongs.

²⁸ While it was not clear when exactly Holy Fire rules changed for this purpose a likely part of the context of this decision is a larger decision by Ovaherero to return to ancestral ways following the death Samuel Maharero. Ovaherero at this time reasoned that the cause of their downfall in the German colonial era came of the choices of many to turn away from the ways of their forefathers (Gewald 2000:30-33).

²⁹ He explained: "Omutwa are not allowed to go to the Holy Fire at events. But usually not like Damara and Herero or Nama and Herero. Those Owambo and Herero and German and Herero are allowed to go. Allowed to go because they know they are not going elsewhere [to the holy fire] because they have no other family. Owambos also allowed because they have thing like the Holy Fire."

³⁰ See for example, Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois, eds. (2004) *Violence in war and peace*; Alec G. Hargreaves' (2005) *Memory, Empire, and Postcolonialism: legacies of French colonialism*; Alexandra Stiglmeier, ed. (1994) *Mass rape : the war against women in Bosnia-Herzegovina*.

³¹ However, even in Namibia as a whole, rape is little discussed or recognized. As an example of the status of rape in Namibia, I recall a Namibian newspaper editorial written in response to new stock theft laws that noted that one convicted of stock theft faced a greater punishment than someone convicted of rape.

³² The Herero military-like movement was first recorded officially in 1916 (Werner 1990:482). For a thorough discussion of the Otruppe movement and the socioeconomic context in which it emerged, see Werner 1990. For further information about the Otruppe movements, see also Gewald 1998 and Gewald 2000:28.

³³ The annual commemoration recognizes their ancestral Chief Kahimemua Nguvauva, who was executed in 1896 by a firing squad of the German colonial government.

³⁴ Indeed, I first met a Herero man (who later became my friend) at the 2003 Red Flag Day where he approached me for his own research on cultural tourism.

³⁵ In my experience, the part of the commemoration consisting of speeches in the old Herero location of the town (a product of Apartheid-era laws that segregated ethnic groups and removed Black populations from city centers) was rarely visited by tourists. This raises questions about the politics of cultural tourism as well as how notions of *commemoration* and *cultural* are constructed in Namibia in contrast to the *political*.

³⁶ As I explained in the introduction, there is dispute about whether this position should exist post-Independence and according to the Namibian Traditional Authorities Act, Riruako cannot legally claim this title anyway.

³⁷ This commemoration may often fall around the same time as the national Heroes' Day of August 26th but the latter marks a particular even in the liberation war.

³⁸ He spoke in Otjiherero so my understanding was limited.

³⁹ Although I eventually learned to bring my own umbrella to such events, I generally found it to be an unnecessarily bothersome addition to the range of essential equipment I carried with me to such events – audio recording supplies, notebooks, water, camera, chair, etc. I noted a few times in the course of my research period at which Ovaherero I didn't even know were concerned enough about my lack of regard for the such that they

attempted to save me from my own ignorance. For example later in the afternoon at the 2003 Red Flag day, I found myself surrounded by several Herero women (who were dressed for the day) and I don't believe it was accidental that the large beach umbrella one had was also providing shade for me.

⁴⁰ The Protestant Unity Church (Ongereki Yevangeli Youruano), or Oruano, is an independent, traditionally Herero church established in 1955 (Malan 1995:84).

⁴¹ While the reverend spoke in Otjiherero, this English excerpt was given by a translator who delivered an English translation after each section of the reverend's speech.

⁴² Curiously, he frames these events as "willed by God."

⁴³ It was only after my research was long concluded that I recognized that some oratory practices I had witnessed or heard referenced are all categorized by scholars as "praise poems." In future research, praise songs should be more fully analyzed as a means of learning about the past. My lack of familiarity with this genre prior to or earlier in my research reflects the relatively little attention scholars have afforded the collecting or analyzing of this genre. Linguist Rajmund Ohly attributes this to early missionaries' focus on Herero grammar, as a means of furthering their missionizing goals. He suggests that this genre was undervalued because it was perceived as a competitor to Christian songs and was not easily interpreted by non-Ovaherero listeners (Ohly 1990:2).

⁴⁴ "We may understand them as part of a cultural strategy that at once conserves, but also imports and exports, and thus lives in a vivid exchange with newer registers of cultural production" (Hoffmann 2007:44).

⁴⁵ To illustrate the diversity of praise songs, E. Dammann, for example, categorized some according to the dances with which they are associated with, emphasizing the performative nature of these songs: (1) omuhiva 'men's dance'; (2) outjina 'women's dance' and (3) ombimbi 'hunting/warriors' dance' while he distinguished others as (4) omuimbo 'song'; (5) eimburiro 'improvised song'; (6) omutango 'praise song on people', especially of heroic content; (7) omutandu 'praise-song', especially on places but also on persons, for instance, at funerals; and (8) otjiyano 'praise-song' in general (Ohly 1990:4).

⁴⁶ Hoffmann makes clear that she studies praise *poems*, translated and transcribed versions of what would be performed. Although she acknowledges that this approach limits her "reading," it also, she argues, brings to light the poetic qualities of these poems, qualities which survive even their translation in a text (Hoffmann 2007:44).

⁴⁷ Hoffmann suggests that the opacity inherent in praise songs may have been encouraged by live under the South African administration when public behavior, particularly, gatherings, were carefully controlled: "The genre of the praise poem, I recall, does allow speaking about persons and incidents without mentioning them explicitly. In the light of colonial history, this opacity marks collective resistance. The experience of colonial violence, suppression and the implementation of a space that perpetuated racial segregation may have necessitated opacity" (Hoffmann 2007:56).

⁴⁸ This wedding was for two sisters marrying two different men. Because of the costs and preparation required for weddings more than one female family member was often wed at the same event.

⁴⁹ Cows given can be rejected by the bride's family. The cows, I was told, should be healthy and of medium size. Thus, I speculate that by praising the cows, other aspects of the union are also being praised, such as the appropriateness of the gift, demonstrated respect by the groom's family for the bride, etc.

⁵⁰ A herdsman's shout to drive cattle.

⁵¹ One man described the role of woman as historians as follows:

Most historians were women, from crying at funerals, those who are praising men when come from battle, ladies know who was doing what and where. Most of who know history and culture was women. Men have fear

of White people, but women bring out what was lost. Most women were talking but mostly when someone died after battles, at otjina – wedding and festivities, but used to be more occasions.

⁵² Knowing one’s kinship is also important to guiding decisions about marriages, to maintain the practice of “cousin marriage” and to prevent such relationships between relatives deemed too close, and thus tabooed. One friend explained to me her one of her motives for wanting to learn as many relatives as possible: “If don’t know, my own child might be having affair with someone like a brother.”

⁵³ At the same time, by assuming common knowledge, praise songs may also establish boundaries of identities between those who do and don’t share such knowledge.

⁵⁴ Along with a few other residents, I made an arrangement with a taxi driver, Kaivii, to buy newspapers for me in Otjiwarongo during his daily trips.

⁵⁵ According to the Namibian Central Bureau of Statistics, eight percent of the population was Otjiherero-speakers and 81 percent of the population 15+ years was literate according to the 2001 census (<http://www.npc.gov.na/census/index.htm>). The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics estimates an adult literacy rate of 88 percent for 2007, up from 75.8 percent in 1991. UNESCO defines the adult literacy rate as: “the percentage of people ages 15 and above who can, with understanding, read and write a short, simple statement on their everyday life.” (http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=143&IF_Language=eng)

⁵⁶ The 2001 Namibian census literacy rates for regions of the country where many Ovaherero reside were: Omaheke 66 (includes Otjinene and Epukiro; 39% Otjiherero speakers), Otjozondjupa 67 (includes Okakarara; 28% Otjiherero speakers), Kunene 57 (former “Kaokoland,” includes Opuwo; 42% Otjiherero speakers), Erongo 92 (includes Omaruru area; Otjiherero speakers not reported), Khomas 94 (includes Windhoek; Otjiherero speakers not reported). (<http://www.npc.gov.na/census/index.htm>)

⁵⁷ The material of the original Blue Book was gathered by British colonial officials to bolster British claims to Germany’s colonies in the aftermath of the First World War by criticizing German methods of colonial rule. It was not the particularities of German colonialism that were the interest of the British Empire, but rather the elimination of German influence on the edges of the British Union of South Africa. The last Prime Minister of the Cape Colony prior to the Union in 1910 pursued accurate, written evidence of the treatment of the Natives under German colonial rule (Silvester and Gewald 2003:xv).

⁵⁸ See the 2007 edition of *Discover Social Studies, Grade 5*. Windhoek, Namibia: Heinemann.

⁵⁹ This pass system began in 1906 as a means of identifying and controlling prisoners of war, but was extended to all natives in the Colony in 1907 (McGregor 2003).

⁶⁰ The names of Oukura, circumcision year societies to which all practicing Herero men belong, similarly connect individuals with particular features or events of their year (not necessarily a precise calendar year) of circumcision. I was told that the Kaputu family announces Oukura year names over the Otjiherero radio service, but it wasn’t clear to me the process through which the names are decided upon and by whom. For example, the name for 1959-60/61 was Otjindjombo, referring to it as a year of war in response to an important event in Namibian history, the shootings at the Old Location in Windhoek during the South African directed forced removals of Blacks in accordance with the Group Areas Act. However, the names may refer to a period of time rather than a specific event. Other examples that an acquaintance cited were: ozondandu – (2004) “year of aims” or oviungura – “actions year” because, as he explained, nothing happened that year. Oukura serve a number of social functions for the members and the colleagues of a given society are regarded as bearing special responsibilities to one another.

⁶¹ This problem is by no means restricted to Herero names or experience. For example, a Damara woman explained the problem of various Namibian authorities today misspelling Damara surnames because they did not account for male and female versions of Damara surnames and only recognized the male version.

⁶² In line with my sense that Ovaherero I interviewed privileged narrative forms of the past, I noted that several individuals, particularly older men, I interviewed told me they were recording their family histories in notebooks or even on the computer. When I asked about their motivations, all expressed a concern about this history being lost in what was perceived to be more modern times, when children were busier and didn't spend as much time at the village or hearing stories. Thus, it seems that there is a shift in progress amidst the Herero community to written historical narratives in the face of concern for history loss.

⁶³ This man described one instance of stopping to eat soil:

One day I was coming from Windhoek. At Otjombindja – I drove in a car to that place with a White man. The White man stopped there and knew I must eat soil and then go again. So that time, White men believed in that and what we believe, we get off the car and sat and he called the Herero. We told him it was Otjombindja. We realized we have to eat soil and give to the White man. Maybe if we passed, we would have had difficulty.

⁶⁴ There are other Herero traditions founded in the German colonial period that might also be conceptualized as “invented traditions” whose origins, however, are not generally recognized as such by Ovaherero. For example, Herero women's traditional long dresses are not associated with their historical origins in the styles of 19th-century German missionary wives. The symbolic meanings associated with this dress have truly made the dresses an entirely “new” clothing object. See Heidi Hendricksen (1996) and Deborah Durham (1999) for extensive discussions on the history and meanings of these long dresses.

⁶⁵ These practices match the conditions in which Hobsbawm and Ranger suggest they should most often be found: “when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which ‘old’ traditions had been designed” (1992:4).

⁶⁶ Shaw uses Bourdieu's ideas of practice in her analysis of memory.

⁶⁷ Including Shaw in his analysis, Bayo Holsey notes that ritual is the primary site of remembrance for scholars investigating collective memory of the slave trade in Africa (2008:7).

chapter four

ADDRESSING THE PAIN

In the last chapter, I discussed the various ways in which Ovaherero learn about the German colonial past and the German-Herero war of 1904-1907, emphasizing the importance of family contexts. Further, the histories of this past that have the most meaning for Ovaherero are those relating to one's own family or the community to which one's ancestors belonged. Individuals described seeing their elders cry or otherwise indicate sadness non-verbally as they narrated stories about their ancestors' losses or of violent experiences caused by Germans during and prior to 1904-1907. Because families were dispersed and rearranged as a result of the war, people continue to meet relatives which were previously unknown to them and no longer resided in the place of their ancestors. Indeed family members today often can't be buried with their ancestors if that place has since become commercial farmland, a consequence of German and South African land ownership policies. This past of 1904-1907 is surely well remembered by Ovaherero, particularly as it concerns family or immediate community.

It should then come as no surprise that Ovaherero not only found this past meaningful, but felt it should be acted upon today.¹ Ovaherero not only want this past remembered (by their communities, Namibians, and "the world"), but treat it as an entity like a wound in need of healing. This involves more than a group simply asserting the importance

of a particular past. Not only was what happened in the past traumatic to their ancestors and unpleasant to think about, but it results in pain and suffering today. In post-apartheid South Africa, Desmond Tutu noted: “the past, far from disappearing or lying down and being quiet, has an embarrassing and persistent way of returning and haunting us unless it has in fact been dealt with adequately” (1999:28). In this way, the past, for Ovaherero is not finished or closed or merely the foundation of the present. The past haunts daily life. Its pain is not only remembered but also lived.

After talking about the fighting between Germans and Ovaherero in 1904, several individuals argued “Germans must pay.” Others described a variety of conditions--Germany should recognize its responsibility, ask forgiveness, show remorse -- that should be met to enable Ovaherero to deal with memories or pain flowing from 1904-1907.² Ovaherero commonly named “reconciliation” or “forgiveness” among the anticipated results of “overcoming” this past.

The language Ovaherero frequently used to talk about overcoming the memories or legacy of 1904-1907 is consistent with relatively recent ideas about publicly recognizing injustices of the past and the pain or suffering emerging from these, what I refer to as *restorative justice*, following Archbishop Desmond Tutu. As I introduced above, I use *restorative justice* to refer to social practices that acknowledge the varied ways in which the past may be “felt” by groups of people and that critically engage with perceived wrongs in ways that aim to “repair” (or, more accurately, “construct”) respectful social relationships that affirm the humanity of all parties. Regarding an offense as “something that has happened to persons and whose consequence is the rupture of relationships,” Tutu explains that the goals of restorative justice are to heal breaches, to redress imbalances, to restore broken

relationships, to rehabilitate the victim and the perpetrator, and to reintegrate the perpetrator (1999:55).

Below, I examine meanings of these various efforts for Ovaherero, to understand how this global restorative justice discourse comes to be useful to a particular group. I first situate Herero efforts to address with Germany perceived wrongs of their ancestors' experiences with German colonialism within the development of restorative justice ideas and mechanisms for addressing the past. Then I describe the various efforts by Ovaherero to engage Germany and attempt the healing of perceived atrocities of the colonial past – how each of these attempts was carried out and connected with restorative justice as well as the meanings Ovaherero broadly attributed to each.

Development of Restorative Justice Practices

It was in the aftermath of the Second World War as the allied forces sought to find appropriate means of justice for formerly inconceivable acts, that the initial precedent for restorative justice practices emerged, although these trials focused on the punishment of individuals. At this time, the Allies established the International Military Tribunals at Nuremberg (1945-46) and Tokyo (“International Military Tribunal for the Far East,” 1946-48), which established precedents in international law and practices, specifically that of human rights, and introduced “crimes against humanity” into moral and legal vocabulary. Also significant to later restorative justice practice, these tribunals argued that crimes against humanity are universal and timeless (i.e., in the sense that they already existed in customary law) and, thus, individuals were tried for actions (or in-action) that were not yet formally criminalized at the time of their doing.

While the tribunals significantly refigured the legal terrain of individual and state rights and raised international consciousness about the necessity of dealing with past atrocities, it is particularly the extra legal developments following the Holocaust as Germans examined their responsibility for the crimes of the Nazis that founded the moral basis of restorative justice. Although separate from the trials, West Germany (claiming responsibility as the legal successor of the Third Reich) agreed to pay reparations to survivors and victims (in the form of compensation paid to Israel and other representative bodies) of the Holocaust in 1952 in efforts to regain honor among the international community. Reparations were previously a form of “victors’ justice,” a fine amongst states (Torpey 2003:4). After World War II, however, reparations came to signify an act of taking responsibility for injustices one committed, a symbolic gesture more than compensation for or restitution of material losses.³ At the same time, German historians and philosophers, like Karl Jaspers, Hannah Arendt, and Jürgen Habermas, forwarded critical approaches to the German past to aid in Germans' understanding and assumption of responsibility for Nazi atrocities. This historical moment contributed to a wider interest in critically approaching the past.

As the United Nations worked towards codifying the principles of the military tribunals, some international leaders drafted proposals for a permanent international court that were stalled by emerging Cold War politics. The UN then pushed the boundaries of its authority to respond to problems of peace and security to create the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in 1992 after the international community failed to get involved militarily in the violence in the former state. With this precedent, a second ad hoc tribunal was more easily created in 1994 to respond to the mass killings in Rwanda.

Both the Yugoslavian and Rwandan tribunals were concerned with people's memories of the very recent past. By gathering testimonies and determining their truth, the tribunals aimed to create official records of the participants in and scope of violence (Klinghoffer and Klinghoffer 2002, Minow 2001:77). Their interest is in evidencing codified crimes and, thus, any benefit to victims who participate is incidental to the process of the tribunal. It is through the process of publicly acknowledging violence—by identifying acts as morally and criminally wrong, by naming perpetrators and victims, as well as by inscribing it in official records and thereby creating its history--that the U.N. benefits the victims of violence at the same time that guilty parties may be sentenced.

A psychological notion of reconciling personal memories of past trauma grounds this way of understanding the benefits of tribunals for victims of these violences and the effects on social memory of this past. The sense is that one's psychological wounds are healed, or at least soothed, by being able to speak about a trauma openly (either within tribunal proceedings or publicly, in so far as the tribunal makes the violence a subject that can be discussed publicly) and then have it pronounced a legitimate injustice by someone of authority (e.g., the psychotherapist or, in this case, the U.N.-directed tribunal).

Around the same time, a number of nations experienced periods of political violence but lacked sufficient support domestically for the subsequent prosecution of perpetrators. The 1980s, in particular, saw a turn towards democratization with the dissolution of authoritarian regimes in Latin American countries, of Communist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and of the Apartheid regime in South Africa. Nations sought strategies for dealing with often long-term political violence and a need to establish trust in a new regime.⁴

It was in this context that truth commissions emerged as another means of addressing the raw wounds of terror and violence in the recent past. The earliest effort at documenting political violence, namely the Brazilian report—*Brasil: Nunca Mais* (Brazil: Never Again), resulted from a secret investigation by journalists and religious leaders. When it was published at the end of the Brazilian dictatorship, it proved very popular and led to a public movement for change, including Brazil becoming an early signatory to the UN Convention against Torture in 1985. The UN then followed with the creation of a truth commission for El Salvador of limited success. A number of other Latin American countries, including Chile, Guatemala, Uruguay, Argentina, and Bolivia, employed truth commissions (via the government or non-governmental organizations) in the following years with varied levels of success.⁵ In several countries, truth commission findings resulted in reparations, primarily to individual victims or survivors rather than to groups or communities.⁶ On the whole, these commissions along with those elsewhere (e.g., Sierra Leone and East Timor) firmly established the use of truth commissions as means for pursuing a moral good of publicly recording previously silenced truths regarding criminal violence committed by states or their agents against citizen groups.

Perhaps the most widely known commission is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) established by South Africa in 1995 to address the violence perpetrated by many parties under the apartheid system. The scope of violence that the TRC attended to was vast, but restricted to politically motivated violence committed by individuals.⁷ It encompassed torture, rape, murder, mutilation, and other human rights violations. Thus, the violence of apartheid elicited by the TRC was embedded in victim's bodies, in personal memories of witnessing violent acts, and in the loss of family and friends. The TRC aimed to

gather testimony to produce and record a complete picture of apartheid era violence. However, the goal was not simply one of discovering historical truths. Through the process of the TRC's work, it also aimed to rehabilitate the humanity of victims and prompt the mending of racial and political divides, both consequences of apartheid. The focus of the TRC was both the act of testifying and the testimonials offered. People were offered the chance to publicly tell their memories of experiences under apartheid. The TRC intended this to be a secondary benefit to victims in what the Commission understood to be a therapeutic process of victims confronting former aggressors and telling of the violence committed against them. At the same time, the TRC encouraged apartheid era perpetrators to fully disclose facts relating to acts they committed by offering amnesty in exchange for such testimonies. Although perpetrators were not required to apologize or even express remorse, the TRC deemed that benefit was achieved because all South Africans would finally see the full truth of apartheid and hear the still lived pain. Once the commission completed its work, the picture of apartheid violence produced aimed to challenge individuals' and communities' previously partial view of this past. Similarly, the testimony gathered also contributed to the production of new histories of apartheid.

In addition to such bodies tasked with addressing the past and doing justice, groups or states have called upon the ideas of apologies and reparations in concert with tribunals and commissions, as practices of their own, or complements to one another in producing restorative justice. Both have been used informally or as a part of institutionalized restorative justice processes and have contributed some common meanings to the broader restorative justice discourse. They often serve very different roles, however, in promoting restorative justice. Apologies between groups manifest in a gesture between a representative(s) of each

group, what I term *public apologies*, particularly aim to attend to rebuilding or creating an equal relationship between former perpetrators and victims groups via affect and recognition of shared humanity.⁸ Reparations aim to redress material imbalances born of the past, but they are also often understood by participants to confer an intention towards repairing relationships that were damaged in the past.

As I noted above, reparations came to their present range of meanings (as they have been used in the recent past in the context of restorative justice) through their use by West Germany to attempt to better Germany's relationship with Jews (posited as a nation in this context). Since that time, reparations have not been formalized or institutionalized as has been the case for some practices for truth telling for restorative justice. However, this informality is an integral part of the meanings of reparations, of their use as seemingly free expressions of guilt and remorse.

Reparations have been used in a variety of circumstances, meaning different things at different times. The term itself is used by organizations, scholars, and groups to describe many sorts of demands for past injustices. Indeed, Torpey uses it to describe a range of practices, including public apologies, that pertain to expressions of guilt and remorse expressed symbolically between groups (2003). At the same time, other terms are sometimes used with similar or close meanings to reparations. Here, I distinguish *reparations*, symbolic addressing of an injustice, from *compensation*, literally paying back losses, and *restitution*, the return of material goods that are deemed to have been acquired in unjust ways. While the particular term chosen by a group may prove significant for tracing the exchange of ideas across activist networks, for example, the larger context in which these terms are used may

better illuminate whether and how groups affiliate their claims or actions with restorative justice.

Public apologies have been used to address very different kinds of past injustices although it is most often “the victims,” like Ovaherero, that have commenced processes leading to apologies. Events apologized for extend as far back as the 13th-century (a large group of Christians apologized to groups who had been brutalized during the Crusades during the 1996 Reconciliation Walk through Europe). Yet many public apologies are concerned with events that many people can recall through direct personal memory (e.g., in 1998 Japan apologized to South Korea for the brutality of its colonial rule). Public apologies have been extended between nations (in 1995 Filipinos requested an apology from the U.S. for the Philippine-American War), between a nation and a particular group within another nation (e.g., survivors of a massacre by U.S. troops during the Korean War requested an apology from the U.S. in 2001), and between a nation’s government and a particular group of its citizens (e.g., the request by indigenous Australians for Australia to apologize for their “stolen generations”). Such apologies have certainly proliferated in last two decades and in their practice have become normalized globally as mechanisms that, at least, contribute to restorative justice projects.

Like other mechanisms of restorative justice, the publicness of such apologies is crucial to their attempted outcomes. Public apologies are necessarily delivered and received in the public domain, some scholars argue, because a public record of some sort is the only means by which the group of perpetrators or victims as a whole can access the apology through which their consent is presumed by means of representation (Tavuchis 1991). In publicly recognizing a group’s guilt in this manner, accountability and historical truth are

intended to be settled.⁹ There is often a critical intermediary role to be fulfilled by some form of an international community.

Through their extensive use by different groups in somewhat different ways for varying problems of injustice, public apologies and reparations have become normalized over the last two decades. Their mobilizations have also contributed towards creating widespread significance of particular kinds of historical truth, the incorporation of “the public” (those closer to participants as well as a global public constituted by a common set of political or moral interests) as witness and political supporter, as well as a need for some form of regret.

These varying approaches to addressing past injustices have proliferated and changed form as they have been selectively mobilized by some and debated by others. Even as their successes and failures have been critiqued, they have developed legitimacy in the process of their use. The meanings of these practices for groups utilizing them has been further articulated and stretched as groups have engaged with restorative justice discourse and practices for groups’ own purposes. On the whole, this emerging restorative justice movement has continually reasserted not only new notions of wrongdoing, accountability, truth, and justice, but also the very understanding that the past can be painful but also overcome and healed in particular ways.

Foundations of a Herero Movement to Address the Past

While Namibian and international newspapers have highlighted Herero demands for restorative justice with Germany since shortly after Namibian Independence, several Herero leaders I questioned about this directly located earlier origins. There are several different understandings among Herero leaders about the origin of employing restorative justice

discourse to Herero concerns about their ancestors' suffering amidst German colonialism. While Riruako stated in his speech at the 2003 Herero Day in Okahandja that "for 20 years we've been trying to get Germans to respond...to foster trust, and political and economic security," the other leaders I spoke to about this matter all suggested that these efforts were born, at least to an extent, out of the aftermath of the Second World War.

One cultural leader, who did not support Riruako's earlier efforts to elicit an apology or reparations from the German government, explained that the idea that Ovaherero should be compensated by Germany for Herero losses in the 1904 war originated with the former Herero Paramount Chief Kutako.

The goal goes back to late 1940s. At that time Chief Kutako was pushing that Germany should have to pay compensation. Those that follow also followed idea to heal wounds. Then ... even in late 1990s.... There was no one to listen to Kutako at international level. Now we are free people in sovereign state and can say what happened.

This individual effectively suggested that Riruako took over Kutako's idea rather than being its originator, coinciding with this man's objections to Riruako as a "personality cult." This movement to heal wounds then isn't a recent one, according to this individual, but rather one that has only found a receptive audience in recent years, once the politics of the Namibian independence efforts had been resolved.

A Herero individual who identified himself as a part of group of Herero intellectuals who have taken on a primary role in forwarding Herero claims for justice seemingly interpreted Kutako's efforts differently. This individual's interpretation comes via his father, who was conscripted into the South African army for the Second World War and who later became a Herero councilor (a position that advised the paramount chief) for Kutako. He explained that Kutako had petitioned the UN in 1946 for fulfillment of South Africa's promises to return land to Ovaherero in exchange for conceding to conscription, for fighting

Hitler's Germany. It seems that this petition for the return of ancestral land could be interpreted as the pursuit of compensation for Herero losses resulting from German colonialism.

Another Herero leader, who is affiliated with Riruako's restorative justice project, located its conceptual origin within the movement for Holocaust reparations. In other words, while various Namibians and their supporters were at the UN petitioning for Namibian Independence, others were in the same space advocating for Holocaust reparations. It was in casual discussions between individuals of these two groups that Holocaust reparations supporters reportedly suggested to a Herero petitioner that this notion of genocide would be an appropriate framework through which Herero could pursue justice for their losses resulting of German colonialism. In turn, this Herero petitioner said he worked to organize African delegates to the UN to support Holocaust reparations. This narrative clearly evidences how restorative justice may develop and find support for individual efforts via activist networks.

However, many individuals credited Riruako at attempting something that many Ovaherero thought ridiculous and at driving recent successes in addressing the past with Germany. At a public meeting in 2005 about negotiating reparations with Germany, one Omuhherero highlighted Riruako's role: "I remember when Kuaima Riruako solely started this issue. He is responsible for opening doors. We were all laughing at him when he started, but it started momentum." Whether or not Riruako innovated the idea of restorative justice with Germany, many Ovaherero recognize his role in bringing Namibian, German, and international attention to the matter, whether or not they agree with his tactics or find the attention positive.

Historian Jan-Bart Gewald traces the ways in which Ovaherero and Namibian liberation struggle activists have mobilized memories of the events of 1904-1907, including the *genocide*, to found and motivate further resistance against the colonial and post-colonial state in Namibia (2003). It is unclear in his narrative, however, as to the meaning of the events of 1904-1907 to those mobilizing this past for political purposes at different times. He refers to the mobilization of memories of “this seminal act of failed resistance, “the Herero-German War,” “the atrocities committed by German soldiers,” “the events of 1904-1907,” “wars,” as well as “the Herero genocide.” These distinctions are important to my analysis, but his tracing of the political mobilizations of Herero memories of 1904-1907 remain useful for better contextualizing the emergence of Herero restorative justice efforts.

Prior to Namibian Independence, the genocide was cited by Swapo as an example of oppression and exploitation born of a longer history of illegal colonial rule. It was very closely linked by independence activists to Namibian Independence in a narrative identifying Herero and Nama resistance against German troops as the beginning of the nationalist struggle. Gewald argues that the mobilization of the genocide was effectively the domain of SWAPO and the national Independence struggle. However, the genocide, particularly the loss of land involved, was also used as a point of mobilization for SWANU (Gewald 2003:292). Amid increasing political tension and violence in SWA,¹⁰ some Herero leaders who remained in the territory tried to divert attention away from past conflicts between Germans and Ovaherero by playing down remembrance and commemoration of 1904-1907 and instead sought cooperation with the German settler community (Gewald 2003:293). Those Ovaherero who chose to cooperate in some ways with the South African government, Gewald argues, hadn't forgotten the past, but they couldn't afford to alienate the

economically and politically powerful German-speaking community of South West Africa (Gewald 2003:296). The South African Defense Force and its local branch, the South West African Territorial Force, supported the annual Herero commemoration of Maharero and other deceased leaders in Okahandja from 1978 as a demonstration of opposition to SWAPO. German-speaking soldiers and Herero soldiers marched together on these occasions as well. In other words, in the two decades leading up to Namibian independence, the Herero genocide was subsumed within the broader politics of the Namibian independence struggle.

With Namibian Independence, Gewald argues that Herero elites opposed to the new Swapo-led government took over the subject of 1904-1907 and activists began seeking a formal apology from the German government. Gewald cites the beginning of the Herero movement for restorative justice with Germany in the late 1980s when SWANU activists living in Germany asked assistance from Dutch anti-Apartheid groups in bringing a case against the German government (2003:298). Asserting its state power to control relationships between its citizens and other nation-states, the new Namibian government tried to quiet and maintain control over Herero demands for reparations, particularly given the benefits it soon realized from economic and military cooperation with Germany (Gewald 2003:300).¹¹

Based on these different accounts of how some Ovaherero came to seek restorative justice for the events of 1904-1907, the idea that some uniquely atrocious violence was perpetrated by German soldiers against Ovaherero emerged within the aftermath of the second World War as the world grappled with how to deal with Holocaust crimes and the South African government moved towards incorporating SWA as a province of the Union of South Africa. However, Herero claims regarding the 1904-1907 past were not understood

separate from Namibian independence claims by the international community until Namibian independence was achieved.

Mobilizing for Restorative Justice

Shortly after Namibian Independence, a group of Ovaherero under the leadership of Kuaima Riruako began a number of attempts to involve Germany in restorative justice practices. They first tried to elicit an apology from Germany for this war. During German Chancellor Helmut Kohl's June 1995 State visit to Namibia, Herero demonstrators requested a meeting with Kohl to discuss the possibility of reconciliation over the Herero genocide.¹² Kohl refused to meet with Herero leaders. Further, Kohl also declined an invitation by Herero Paramount Chief Kuaima Riruako to attend a joint wreath laying ceremony. Instead, Kohl vacationed in Swakopmund, a popular vacation spot on the coast with a large German-Namibian community, like "every other German tourist" (Hereros verlangen Schadensersatz 1995). That Kohl chose a vacation spot of this significance, in addition to his decision to decline the invitation offered by Riruako, seems to have further frustrated this group affiliated with Riruako.

After no success, this group began attempts to seek reparations from Germany. Herero activists raised the matter again when German President Roman Herzog visited Namibia in March of 1998. Just prior to Herzog's visit, Riruako had produced a document on the issue of reparations that he presented to the German Embassy in Windhoek, the United Nations, the International Court of Justice at The Hague, and The Frankfurter (a German newspaper). When interviewed, Riruako protested, "the Germans killed tens of thousands of Hereros at the beginning of the century, and now they ignore us to avoid their responsibility"

(Herero-Forderungen 1998).¹³ Herzog agreed to meet with a Herero delegation to discuss the possibility of war reparations, but Riruako expressed doubt that the German government was sincerely open to discussing the matter given Riruako's past experiences with German officials on this matter.

Indeed, Herzog did not offer any concessions during this trip. The Namibian reported that even before his visit, Herzog had acknowledged the injustice of the Herero war, "we are naturally conscious that the conflict between the German colonial administration and the Hereros was not in good order" (Tkalec 1998).¹⁴ Herzog explained that the Hereros could not claim any compensation from Germany because there were no international laws at the time concerning treatment of prisoners of war or genocide. However, he emphasized that Germany was living up to its historical responsibility to Namibia via development projects conducted in cooperation with Germany. After a conversation with Herero representatives, Herzog said he made clear that he deeply laments their fate in connection with "the so-called Herero war," but that he only saw possible an informal apology (Knemeyer 1998). Herzog reportedly said that the ways in which the Herero rebellion was suppressed were unjustifiable, and that the consequent suffering by the Herero is "a burden on the conscience of every German aware of our country's history" (Nachfahren der Hereros erwarten Entschuldigung von Bonn 1998). Clearly, Herzog was unwilling, even, to conceptualize the Herero war as genocide.

International Court of Justice

With no satisfactory response from the German government, this group of Ovaherero affiliated with Riruako attempted other means of attaining justice. Speaking at Herero Day (August 23) in 1999, Riruako reportedly announced that the Ovaherero would appeal to the

International Court of Justice at The Hague (ICJ) for assistance in garnering reparations from Germany (Gewald 2003:301). This attempt only persisted for a few months, however, before the case was dismissed, according to newspaper reports. There was no legal means for Ovaherero to pursue reparations since the ICJ only presides over cases involving nation-states. Riruako told me later, in 2003, that he actually hadn't put the case before the International Court of Justice, rather, Germany had. He said he knew ahead of time that his case was not possible there because he's forwarding it as an individual and not as a nation-state.

Gewald describes a rather different version of this purported ICJ case. He explains that Riruako declared publicly at Herero Day events that the "Herero nation" had decided to approach the ICJ to lay a genocide charge against Germany and to demand reparations. This public statement, Gewald explains, prompted German diplomats in Namibia to contact their colleagues in Germany to investigate the matter. Within days, the ICJ issued a statement clarifying that only states may bring cases before the ICJ, although neither Ovaherero nor Germany had actually approached the ICJ (Gewald 2003:301).

Although my research didn't resolve this discrepancy in whether and how the ICJ was called upon, I find it significant that this Riruako-affiliated group used legal processes, even if they weren't actually initiated, to at least partially garner global media attention to Herero claims. In making the public claim at Herero Day, Riruako also effectively re-claimed authority for making such demands on behalf of "the Herero nation," which may also help realize his contested claim to the position of Paramount Chief. In the way he described this ICJ exchange to me and likely others, he also asserted his competency with international law

and institutions. Finally, this question about the ICJ suggests that the German government was quite watchful, if not worried, as to how Ovaherero articulated their claims.

Using the Aliens Tort Claims Act

In September 2001, the Herero People's Reparations Corporation, Riruako, and individual Omuhherero filed suit against the German government and two German corporations in the District Court of the United States District of Columbia under the Alien Tort Claims Act of 1789 for violations of international law, crimes against humanity, genocide, slavery, and forced labor.¹⁵ Shortly after filing, Terex Corporation was removed from the suit because the corporation claimed it was under different management at the time. The German government was included in its place.

The suit was subject to jurisdictional challenges, debates over satisfying the applicable statute of limitations, and questions about meeting the burden of proof. The claim against Woermann was originally dismissed for lack of personal jurisdiction in D.C. (and then taken to other U.S. locations) and the Deutsche Bank claim was dismissed for failure to state a claim upon which relief could be granted (Sarkin 2009:150). Sarkin also explains that in dismissing the case in 2007, the U.S. 3rd circuit did so in part based on the concern that this claim was more appropriately a political question rather than a judicial one and that taking up such a case may invite a substantial increase in the number similar claims (Sarkin 2009:154).¹⁶

The ACTA, under narrow circumstances, allows redress in an American federal court for "any civil action by an alien for a tort only, committed in violation of the law of nations or a treaty of the United States."¹⁷ Since a landmark ruling in 1980, the ACTA has been used on several occasions for remedying victims and survivors of war crimes.¹⁸ One qualifying

circumstance is the perpetration of a crime against humanity and, thus, this statute, provided the legal means to settle some Holocaust claims.¹⁹

Riruako said he intentionally chose not to have the case prosecuted in Germany, although that was one of three places where such suits can be prosecuted, because he wanted a neutral court. He feared that a court in Germany would have a biased jury and judges influenced by the government (unpublished interview, April 9, 2003).

The beginning of the brief filed in the Civil Division of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia reads as follows:

Defendants Deutsche Bank AG (“Deutsche Bank”), Terex Corporation, also known as Orenstein & Koppel (“Terex”) and Woermann Line, now known as Deutsche-Afrika-Linien (“Woermann” or “DAL”), in a brutal alliance with Imperial Germany, relentlessly pursued the enslavement and the genocidal destruction of the Herero Tribe in Southwest Africa, now Namibia. Foreshadowing with chilling precision the irredeemable horror of the European Holocaust only decades later, the defendants and Imperial Germany formed a German commercial enterprise which cold-bloodedly employed explicitly-sanctioned extermination, the destruction of tribal culture and social organization, concentration camps, forced labor, medical experimentation and the exploitation of women and children in order to advance their common financial interests.²⁰

Certainly, the rhetoric contained within this brief is carefully crafted to appeal to those who otherwise might lend the Herero request little credence. Most noticeably, the claims compare the Herero genocide to the European Holocaust, which has already proven to be constituted by crimes appropriate for redress. Also, Herero losses in the war are clearly articulated as a consequence of genocide and slavery, terms that not only suggest the actionability of Herero claims, but also stand to command significant attention from individuals and groups outside of Namibia.

Many Ovaherero, whether or not they supported Riruako or the lawsuit, perceived that Riruako’s efforts to seek restorative justice, via this suit in particular, had increased media and other international attention to their claims. Indeed, one reporter at the Scotsman

who wrote a story about the filing of the lawsuit asserted that “Outside southern Africa, the Herero genocide hardly rated mention until Chief Kuaima Riruako began his court action” (Bridgland 2001). Aside from simply standing to draw attention to the effects on Ovaherero of the events of 1904-1907 in SWA, the lawsuit simultaneously argues the criminality of the actions by German soldiers as it attempts to translate political or moral debates about wrongs committed and appropriate justice into legal ones. Whether or not this lawsuit proves to be a failed attempt to force German accountability and payment of reparations through legal procedures because Germany has not yet claimed culpability through a public apology or reparations, it has served as a powerful mobilizing tool inside and outside of Namibia. That Germany demanded Ovaherero withdraw the lawsuit in exchange for pursuing dialogue about reparations after the 2004 apology, suggests that the lawsuit may have already served as a deterrent to inaction for some in the German government.

The German Minister’s Apology

As I discussed in the chapter on the 2004 commemorations, the Ohamakari commemoration was a particular focus of attention in a year of commemorations. This was also the one commemoration held at a more formal space, a stage in a partially completed stadium. As I described in the first chapter, this commemoration occurred on land donated by a German-Namibian farmer and at a “cultural centre” funded and developed by the DED (German Development Organization). While the commemoration stadium and grounds clearly differed from the types of sites of the other commemorations, the location itself held tremendous historical meaning for Ovaherero. It’s also noteworthy that this commemoration (only) was jointly organized by the two commemoration committees. Finally, the day itself constitutes a critical moment in Herero history and, in particular, in the fighting between

German troops and Ovaherero, the day that the Germans effectively drove much of the existent Herero population into the Omaheke desert.

Although the organizing committee requested that the German Foreign Minister attend the Ohamakari commemoration, the German government sent their Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development.²¹ That Germany sent anyone was welcomed by everyone I spoke with and in no small part because in the past German leaders have refused invitations to attend commemorative occasions with Ovaherero. Indeed, one Herero man suggested that Ovaherero's "feelings [of anger] were fueled by Herzog and Kohl. They refused to meet." At the same time, it was resented by some, that then Namibian President Sam Nujoma did not attend. In his place government sent then Minister of Land and Resettlement, Hifikepunye Pohamba.²²

Those who did note the position of Germany's representative were more focused on the fact that it wasn't a higher level individual rather than the fact that it was the Minister responsible for development aid, in particular, who was present. Other representatives of the German government were also present and seated on the stage, but they played no role in the commemoration other than perhaps to be visibly present. As I will discuss later in this chapter, all the Ovaherero I spoke with in the context of discussing how to address this past with Germany identified the idea of development as beneficial and valued. That Ovaherero referred to merely as "the German Minister" suggests that the more important aspect of her position or authority had simply to do with the fact that she was a representative of the German government. That the German government had participated in the commemoration was important to many Ovaherero.

Heidemarie Wiecek-Zeul, according to her own description, spoke at the Ohamakari commemoration as both the German Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development and as a representative of the German government. She spoke from the authority of each of these positions at different times during her speech in discussing the German government's culpability as well as its interest in reparations and promoting Namibian development. She also intentionally highlighted her participation in the present generation of the political party, Social Democratic Party of Germany, to which dissenters of the 1904 Herero oppression belonged.

Sitting at the amphitheatre at the Cultural Centre, I imagined that everyone present was waiting for the German Minister's speech, many of course hoping she would announce that the German government would pay Hereros the reparations for which they'd been waiting. As I walked around the commemoration site the previous evening with my host, a number of individuals, assuming I was German, according to my host, told me that the Germans must pay the Ovaherero. Combined with my understandings of past requests of Germany for restorative justice and refusals by German leaders to even attend past commemorative occasions, my interest was heightened in what the German Minister would and would not say in her speech the following day.

Her speech was unlike any other previously delivered by a representative of the German government, both in tone and language. Amazingly, the Minister did label what happened in 1904-1907 a "genocide" (a term that the German government had until then avoided) and extended an official apology to the Hereros while asking their forgiveness.²³

I am deeply moved to be here with you today [There is a discussion at the podium over summarizing the speech afterwards instead of translating it as she speaks] and it is an honor to have been invited to take part in your commemoration here today. And I would like to thank you for giving me, as the German Minister of Economic

Cooperation and Development and as a representative of the German government, this opportunity to speak to you. I am also here to listen and since I have been here in the country I have listened. I have met yesterday the Herero representatives and the Nama representatives and I think it is good also to listen. But I'm also happy to be able to be invited to speak to you.

Today I want to acknowledge the violence inflicted by the German colonialist powers on your ancestors, particularly the Herero and the Nama. I'm painfully aware of the atrocities committed 100 years ago and in the 19th century. The colonial powers drove the people from their land and when the Herero, when your ancestors resisted, General von Trotha's troops embarked on a war of extermination against them and the Nama. In his infamous order, General von Trotha commanded that every [voice starts to sound affected] Herero be shot, [pause] with no mercy shown even to women and children. At the battle of Waterberg in 1904, the survivors were forced into the Omaheke Desert where they were denied any access to water sources and were there to die of thirst and starvation. And following this, the surviving Herero, Nama, and Damara were interned in camps and put to forced labor of such brutality that many of them did not survive.

We pay tribute, I pay tribute in the name of the German government to those brave women and men, particularly from the Herero and the Nama and Damara who fought and suffered so that their children and their children's children could live in freedom. I honor with great respect your ancestors who died fighting against their German oppressors. Even at that time, back in 1904, there were also Germans who opposed and spoke out against this war of oppression. One of them, and I'm proud of that, was August Babel, the chairman of the same political party of which I'm a member. In the German parliament at that time, Babel condemned the oppression of the Herero in the strongest term and honored the uprising as a just struggle for liberation. I'm proud of that today. [applause] A century ago, the oppressors, blinded by colonial fervor, became agents of violence, discrimination, racism, and annihilation in Germany's name. The atrocities, the murders, the crimes committed at that time are today termed genocide. And nowadays, a General von Trotha would be prosecuted and convicted, and rightly so. [applause] We Germans accept our historical and moral responsibility and the guilt incurred by Germans at that time. And so, in the words of the Lord's Prayer that we share, I ask you to forgive us our trespasses and our guilt. [applause] Without a conscious process of remembering, without sorrow, without apology, there can be no reconciliation. [applause] Remembrance is the key to reconciliation. 2004 is a year of commemoration, but it should also be, and we have seen that with the children, a year of reconciliation. Today we honor the dead. Those who fail to remember the past, become blind to the present. By remembering the past, we should gain strength for the present and the future.

In the media fervor and public discourse about this speech following this commemoration, discussion focused on the fact that the speech used the term "genocide" and included this significant apology. However, for the process of restorative justice, her speech

arguably contributed to the development of some common notion of what happened in the past and how responsibility should be assigned. First, while she identifies the guilty parties of the genocide as “German colonialist powers” and von Trotha, she does acknowledge that these atrocities were committed in “Germany’s name” and asserts that Germans today bear a “historical and moral responsibility and the guilt incurred by Germans at the time.” Thus, she suggests that Germans contemporary to the fighting effectively bear responsibility for their inaction and tolerance of von Trotha’s violent acts against Ovaherero and others. At the same time, she asserts the responsibility of Germans today for the acts and inactions of their ancestors. Whether in an attempt to frame herself more positively or to evidence that the injustices and atrocities committed against Ovaherero were not colonial norms (i.e., that no moral or legal code existed at the time to judge von Trotha’s actions), that she referenced her political party’s past dissent about the events of 1904-1907 is of interest.

Second, she also humanizes her historical narrative by connecting the audience members with their ancestors who fought and suffered at the hands of “German colonialist powers.” She does not, however, directly recognize the feeling of many Ovaherero today that they suffer now as a consequence of what happened to their ancestors. In addition, she somewhat avoids the question of whose ancestors were affected by brutal actions of German colonial powers and, thus, deserve reparations by referring vaguely to the ancestors of the audience and “particularly the Herero and the Nama.”

Third, she employs a brief historical narrative describing and contextualizing “the atrocities committed 100 years ago” rather than simply listing possible crimes committed. In this way, she contributes to the creation of a common historical narrative, a common truth of what happened in the past that is meaningful to the larger restorative justice process.

I found her apology very moving and it elicited very divergent emotions in me. I remember feeling saddened by the actual text and tone of her apology. But I also recall a feeling of disbelief and excitement that she had not only expressed remorse and pronounced Germany's guilt but that she had actually made the apology that so many people had been waiting for, possibly for generations. I clearly recall eagerly glancing around, expecting great visible displays of emotion from the Ovaherero amidst whom I sat. I saw and heard little response aside from the audible applause which met the particularly poignant parts of her speech. A summary of the speech was immediately delivered in Otjiherero and met with a bit more applause. Although I didn't hear evidence of this where I was sitting, there was reportedly some confusion from the audience about whether this really was an apology and so she interjected after the Otjiherero translation to clarify.

When I finished before there were some people who said 'apology,' or called. I wanted to make it quite clear that everything that I said in my speech was an apology for crimes committed under German name and I wanted to make that quite clear so that no one is in a misunderstanding.

Her explanation elicited more applause and its translation into Otjiherero brought a little more applause and some shouts of "dankie" ("thank you" in Afrikaans). As I will discuss below, that the audience's response did not meet the exuberance I had anticipated might be partially explained by feelings of surprise, as was my response, but also may have something to do with confusion about the apology's authority and what might follow.

Further, her particular choice of words to convey her apology may have contributed to the apparent confusion about her intent. Despite years of Riruako's group specifically asking for "an apology" she implored the audience "to forgive us our trespasses and our guilt." Judging from the phrase that preceded this entreaty, "in the words of the Lord's Prayer that we share," she tried to enhance the reconciliatory meaning of the apology by attempting

to highlight common German and Herero beliefs. No one commented to me later about this particular word choice, but these words surely didn't seem to convey the meaning she'd hoped, judging from her response to the audience's confusion about whether or not she'd even apologized.²⁴

Later, I heard varying versions of the origins of the Minister's apology at Ohamakari. Some told me that they had absolutely no idea that she would extend an apology on behalf of Germany. Others explained that the coordinating committee planning the Ohamakari commemoration had requested that the Minister use the occasion to offer an apology. Regardless of whether or how one or all of the planning committees may have suggested to the German government that they use the symbolic significance of the occasion to further restorative justice with Ovaherero, it seems that some Herero leaders and commemoration organizers wanted to see this significant action by the German government as an outcome of Ovaherero's efforts and others wanted the apology to be a spontaneous gesture emerging out of remorse.

The second part of her speech shifted focus to Germany-Namibia relations and was more pertinent to her role as a representative of German development assistance. She considered Namibia as a fellow modern nation-state, as an equal or partner of Germany rather than a recipient of charity.

Dear friends, Namibia's independence grew on the determination and courage of the people of Namibia and the vision you share with your ancestors. The people of Namibia have every reason to be proud of these 14 years of Independence. The vision that you and we share of a more just, peaceful, and a more humane world. These of rejecting and overcoming chauvinist power politics and all forms of apartheid. We share the vision of those who fought for freedom and dignity against discrimination. We share the vision of those that are working for freedom, justice, mutual respect, and human rights. By gaining Independence, the people of Namibia have won the chance to realize this vision within their own country, what their forefathers tried and did. I'm pleased and proud that a great deal of support was also forthcoming from my

own country for the struggle of Independence and beyond. Germany has learned the bitter lessons of history. We are a country that is open to the world and has in many ways become multicultural. We have achieved German reunification in a peaceful manner and enjoyed being part of the enlarged European Union. We are committed members of the United Nations, working for worldwide peace, human rights, development, and poverty reduction. We provide sustained assistance to the people in Africa ... Accepting our special historical responsibilities towards Namibia, we wish to continue our close partnership at all levels. Germany is looking to the future and wishes to support and help Namibia tackle the challenges of development. And this applies in particular also to assistance for the necessary, and I repeat necessary, process of land reform. I hope very much for all of us that this cultural center Okakarara will be a place for Germans and Namibians to talk and exchange views on our past and on our future, from the unhappy past that this place has witnessed with all its remembrances. Let us draw the strength to create a bright future in peace and friendship. Let us create [opportunities] of reconciliation for the sake of understanding between the countries. And let me say lastly, as Bishop Kameeta said in an interview which I read in our country, I quote "at a time of faceless globalization, we must tell people loud and clear that there is hope for the world and make people aware that this world and our planet cannot survive by concentrating all the wealth in a few hands and a few countries, but by sharing resources across the world and ensuring that the world population has equal access to these resources." And so, dear friends, in the spirit of hope and with all emotional feelings that you have and I have myself, we share a commitment for a fairer world to better living conditions here and in all parts of the world. And let us thank the children that we have seen; let us take it seriously. Let us jointly work for a world in which all the children in all countries but all in the world will share and have the hope for peace and better living conditions at which they will have a good future. Thank you. [applause]

This latter part of her speech drew little attention among individuals or in the media.

Arguably, she didn't say anything new in this latter section as even previous discussions amidst the German Bundestag formally recognized Germany's "special historical responsibilities" to Namibia. Indeed, she effectively reasserted the primacy of the relationship between Namibia and Germany, rather than, for example, suggesting interest in strengthening a Germany-Herero relationship via directed development aid. Chief Riruako may have interpreted this part of her speech similarly and was clearly not eased by her discussions of responsibilities or interests in land reform and development as he highlighted the need for reparations for Ovaherero in his speech. To contextualize Germany's

commitments to Namibia as a part of larger interests, she argued at length that Germany has learned from the past and is now aiming to play a significant role in global social and socioeconomic concerns. However, she also voiced support for Namibian independence and Germany's commitment to aid with Namibian development. She also surely aimed to demonstrate respect for Bishop Kameeta, as a prominent religious and political leader who is also Herero. In short, the second section of her speech seemed to aim to diplomatically balance the attention she'd given Ovaherero in the first part of the speech and return in some fashion to normalized Germany-Namibia relations. With this strategy she likely gained some favor with both the Namibian government and Ovaherero pressing for restorative justice.

Immediately following Wieczorek-Zeul's speech then Namibian Minister of Lands, Hifikepunye Pohamba, made a point of recognizing the apology. His comments were followed by that of Riruako who said he wouldn't even read his speech because he had been calmed by the apology. He said that the Hereros accepted the apology and demanded that Germany and the Hereros now "finish the unfinished business," by which I believe he's referring to the issue of reparations. Having heard Riruako speak at a number of previous public events and knowing him to be rather vociferous in such contexts, his decision not to present his speech seemed to further highlight the significance of the apology or was intended to add to the significance via Riruako's rather dramatic omission of his speech. What is also evident in these two responses to Wieczorek-Zeul's speech is a contest over a restorative justice project with Germany. Pohamba accepted the apology on behalf of the Namibian government while Riruako accepted the apology on behalf of Ovaherero. This tension later manifested in questions about representation emerging out of the attempted dialogue process to negotiate reparations with Germany.

As I talked with Ovaherero later about this apology at the Ohamakari commemoration there were various ideas about whether this apology constituted the achievement of “healing the wound” with Germany, or what the outcome of restorative justice should be. However, most portrayed this apology not as an end in itself, but rather as a step towards a final outcome, part of a larger restorative justice project, particularly focused towards reparations (at least at the time at which we spoke).²⁵ A number of individuals described the apology as a positive gesture, saying, for example, that “apology was welcomed.” Some were pleased that she acknowledged what Germany had done to Ovaherero 100 years ago. However, many also suggested that it needed to precipitate some more concrete gesture from Germany to prove its meaning. “I accepted the apology, but behind the apology must be something else,” one man explained, “[I] don’t know if it was a real apology because there was nothing behind the apology; maybe it was just words.”

Evaluations of the apology permeated conversations among Ovaherero for quite a while after it was offered. On the whole, Ovaherero judged her apology to be sincere, but questioned to what extent she officially represented the German government versus acting on her own behalf. This is certainly a likely problem for public apologies. What does an authentic or sincere public apology look or sound like? How does an apology issued (literally) by an individual come to be imbued with a sense that the individual either embodies or represents the group apologizing?

Although Wiczorek-Zeul clarified in her speech that she spoke that day as a representative of the German government, Ovaherero considered her gesture separately from that of the status of her representation of Germany. Many described having seen or later heard about the Minister crying while delivering her apology as evidence of her sincerity in

apologizing. Others described it as sincere because it was “from the heart.” Affective expression played an important role in how Ovaherero judged the apology’s sincerity. In a somewhat different observation, one Herero friend identified a particular courage in her speech: “[She showed] courage as a mother to come up with the apology. [It] opened a door to dialogue. The minister’s courage as a mother was very encouraging.” It is certainly noteworthy that this individual recognizes particular gendered behavior in the apology, behavior that adds to the apology’s perceived credibility.²⁶ That her statement was not an easy one to deliver adds value to the apology in the eyes of this Herero man.

Indeed, the demonstration of affect has emerged as an important question in restorative justice literature as scholars consider the role of witnessing and remorse in restorative justice practices. A South African TRC judge, Albie Sachs describes perpetrators’ largely factual acknowledgements of unlawful conduct “coupled with a rehearsed apology, rather than encompassing an emotional and convincing acknowledgement of wrongdoing” as a limitation of the reconciliation process. “Instead of coming forward and speaking from the heart and crying and being open, most of the perpetrators came in suits, expressing tight body language, with their lawyers next to them and read prepared statements,” he critiqued (2002:57).²⁷

Many Ovaherero referenced news reports that discussed debates among German parliamentarians and published public discussion in Germany to question whether the apology was supported by the German government.

From what I hear, the German government has given 20 million Euros but it was not accepted by Germans. That says the apology is not sincere. The German government is pushing the Namibian government to take money before the next German government. Therefore, the apology is not genuine.

This individual noted the political tensions in Germany in questioning the apology's sincerity. Reading and hearing about such tension in the German Bundestag, especially, provoked concern among many Ovaherero not only as to whether reparations would be achieved, but whether the German government had really authorized the Minister's message at all. A common message from Germany was then an important component of the restorative justice effect of the apology for Ovaherero.

Reparations

The idea that Germany should pay reparations to Ovaherero had long circulated locally and even internationally by the time of my research, but it was the Minister's speech at Ohamakari Day that prompted hope among Ovaherero and new efforts to pursue reparations. Although nothing in the Minister's speech indicated that Germany would change its previous position and consider reparations,²⁸ it was likely a combination of Riruako's declared commitment to "finish the unfinished business" and Ovaherero's cognizance that an admission of guilt such as was implied in this apology may anyway endanger Germany legally that initiated renewed efforts for reparations. It was at this time that reparations became soundly linked with an apology as evidence of the apology's intent; whereas, previously, these two demands were not necessarily coincident in public discourse among Ovaherero.

Aside from questions of whether reparations were necessary or appropriate, the possibility of reparations for Ovaherero had previously faced a number of political barriers. First, there was a legal concern of whether and to what extent the government of Germany and/or German companies could be found legally responsible to pay reparations. Second, the attitude among Whites in Namibia, including much of the German community, seemed to be

that this matter should be left in the past and Herero requests for reparations were nothing more than people wanting easy money. Third, the Namibian government reportedly didn't want German aid diverted to one sub-group of Namibians and implied that Herero requests were a form of tribalism.

Dialogue for Reparations

Following the German minister's apology, the German government proposed a dialogue process with Ovaherero to discuss the question of reparations. While the fact that Germany was expressing a formal intent to pay reparations to Ovaherero through this proposal, the ensuing attempts to foster this dialogue highlighted the on-going struggle over Herero leadership and a lack of unified resolve in Germany over restorative justice with Ovaherero. Further, it became quickly evident that the process of negotiating reparations mattered to Ovaherero at least as much as the actual material outcome of the process.

Earlier in 2004, Professor Manfred Hinz, Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Namibia, reportedly proposed the establishment of a reconciliation commission to negotiate a settlement regarding reparations. Then at a panel debate in Windhoek about the war of 1904-1907 in early August 2004, Wolfgang Messing, German Ambassador to Namibia argued against the lawsuit as a means of reparations:

What is needed is dialogue between all parties; we have to listen to each other and find a common solution. Forget about the court case, it will not help anything. There are many other possibilities to settle this matter (Kuteeue 2004a).

Riruako stated publicly that following her speech, Wiczorek-Zeul asked him to withdraw the lawsuit against Germany which he refused to do unless Germany "substantially met" Herero demands (Hintze 2004). Instead, Riruako issued a statement in which he said:

Reparation means to repair what has been broken... Now the Federal Republic of Germany's sincerity should be solidified by engaging the Herero to negotiate a settlement process (Hintze 2004).

It was with the Bremen Conference in November 2004 (discussed in the first chapter) that the possibility of dialogue to reach a reparations agreement was more formally discussed. In response to a proposal submitted by Herero and Mbanderu representatives, the conference settled on a recommendation that the Namibian and German governments initiate “a process of meaningful and structured dialogue leading to a mutually acceptable solution of the historic injustices.” Wiczorek-Zeul reportedly assigned a representative in Namibia to head the dialogue from the German side along with advisors. However, much debate ensued among Ovaherero and other Namibian communities affected by the war of 1904-1907 about the constitution of a delegation to represent the Namibian side of such dialogue, such as was evident in the meeting in Windhoek in February 2005 to discuss the proceedings and outcomes of the Bremen Conference. By the time of this meeting, there was also angered concern by some that the Bremen Conference planners were leading the dialogue organizing and thereby not allowing Ovaherero ownership of the process. One Herero audience member who was not present at the Bremen Conference argued that Germans in Namibia were acting arrogantly, what he termed “Euro centric arrogance,” in fact, but that the dialogue process should be developed by Ovaherero and other affected communities:

They cannot do it for us. There is pool of intellectuals. We set the agenda and invite them when necessary. The setting here is an agenda set by someone else that we must follow. The Black man has come of age...

This concern that Germans aimed to set an agenda for dialogue and negotiations that Ovaherero must follow, rather than allowing Ovaherero to fully participate in the whole process was one that emerged again later in the year when the German government announced funds for reconciliation.

Reportedly, some in the German government who supported such efforts were concerned that support for any form of reparations would wane after the September 2005 German elections and thus forwarded a swift solution. In May 2005, Wieczorek-Zeul announced at a meeting of the German Lutheran Church, where she and Namibian Bishop Kameeta received a special award for reconciliation, that Germany would offer Namibia 20 million Euros per year for ten years for reconciliation fund and an additional 24 million Euros in development aid (double the previous levels). The fund, administered by both governments, would have been directed towards development projects in traditional Herero, Nama, San, and Damara areas of Namibia (Sarkin 2009:139). Both the Namibian government and Herero leaders were surprised and seemingly insulted by this announcement. The government expressed disconcert that usual diplomatic channels of communication were not used, while many Ovaherero were angered that this fund had been decided upon unilaterally by Germany and not in conversation with communities affected by the war of 1904-1907. The following is an excerpt from a statement issued by the “Herero/Mbanderu Genocide Committee in the USA” in response to the proposed reconciliation fund:

No amount of money or development projects can erase the legacy of genocide. We are looking for justice. Germany alone committed the genocide against our people. However, Germany alone, cannot dictate the terms of settlement of this dispute, or define the monetary worth of our suffering. We want to engage in an open and genuine dialogue with the German government in order to reach a settlement of mutual understanding and reconciliation...The unilateral announcement of the reconciliation fund is a clear example of Germany’s patronizing attitude. Germany’s failure to have an open and transparent dialogue with representatives of the Ovaherero/Ovambanderu, Nama and Damara people shows that the German government wants to control the process by handpicking the stakeholders and deciding who the representatives of our people ought to be...The Namibian people have not forgotten that the politics of divide and conquer preceded the genocide and the plundering of property by the German Schutztruppe and we will not allow ourselves to be divided and manipulated a second time.²⁹

This statement articulates well that a critical part of the meaning of reparations for Ovaherero was the process of dialoguing with Germany to negotiate reparations. Clearly, demands for reparations were not simply an easy means of income for Ovaherero, as some critics suggest. The respect and dignity Ovaherero wanted to feel from Germany in the process of coming to terms with the atrocities of the past experiences of 1904-1907 was not only sidelined by this announcement but Ovaherero perceived an additional injury, particularly against the background of the recent apology which was perceived to foster, or at least, initiate a new relationship between Ovaherero and Germans.

Ostensibly in support of such concerns from Ovaherero and other affected groups, Namibian President Pohamba refused to sign a prepared agreement regarding the reconciliation fund during an official trip in November 2005 on the grounds that affected communities should first be consulted. The following year, Deputy Prime Minister Libertina Amathila toured the Otjozondjupa, Omaheke, Erongo, Karas, Kunene and Hardap regions to inform and consult the communities on the “Special Initiative,” as the reconciliation fund had come to be termed, and also to clarify that it did not constitute reparations from Germany. Indeed, the projects were to benefit communities with “historic ties” to the German colonial government.³⁰ Reportedly, after initial skepticism, communities in these areas eventually came to support the initiative and submitted project proposals.³¹ However, as of March 2006, Ovaherero who participated in the “All-Ovaherero Conference” at Okakarara rejected the “Special Initiative” proposal, followed by a supporting statement from the Ovaherero Genocide Committee in May.

At the same time, 2006 brought the interest of a newly elected Bundestag member, Hüseyn Aydin, who visited Namibia in August and proclaimed his support for Herero

reparations which he planned to revisit with the Bundestag. The following month, Riruako (in his role as a Member of Parliament) asked the formal support the Namibian Parliament in pursuing reparations from Germany. Although not speaking officially on behalf of the government of his party, Swapo's Secretary General and minister without portfolio Ngarikutuke Tjiriange voiced support for Riruako's motion, making him the highest ranking Swapo member to support Herero reparations. Indeed, it was the first time that the consequences of the war of 1904-1907 were ever discussed formally in Parliament. The motion was ultimately adopted unanimously by the Parliament.

In November 2007, Germany and Namibia signed a memorandum of understanding to release part of the promised 20 million Euros (through the German development bank Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau. The final agreement was signed in 2008.³² However, this agreement proceeded without the support of some parts of the Ovaherero community. In December 2007, Riruako and Nama Chief David Frederick, along with other Herero and Nama chiefs, publicly announced that Ovaherero and Nama had decided to come together and had authored a joint demand for dialogue with Germany for reparations. In the wake of the Australian government apologizing to its aboriginal population in March 2008, Ovaherero and Nama again issued a statement pressing Germany for formal reparations.³³ Even as of his speech at Herero Day in Okahandja in August 2009, Riruako again called for reparations and emphasized a need for land to resettle Ovaherero who are descendents of those who fled to Botswana and were repatriated (with Riruako's assistance) in 1990 to Gam, near the border. However, he also urged unity among traditional leaders, visible in the presence of Ovambanderu Chief Keharanjo II Nguvauva,³⁴ a representative of Ondonga King Kauluma (who was personally present at the 2004 Ohamakari commemoration), and Chief

Joel Stephanus of Vaalgras in southern Namibia (a community descending from Ovaherero who fled south to escape German troops).³⁵

While the momentum towards reparations generated out of the 2004 apology eventually yielded a result considered satisfactory to at least some Namibians and the Namibian government, it failed to provide meaningful resolution for many Ovaherero and other Namibians concerned, especially the Nama. In other words, reparations in the eyes of the German government, or what they could settle on as a form of material reconciliation in place of reparations, has not matched the meanings of restorative justice envisioned by some Ovaherero, in particular, and other communities affected by the war of 1904-1907.

Meanings of Reparations

Some individuals argued that this tremendous loss of life could never be rectified materially, as a number of scholars raise about reparations generally. “Human being can’t be compared to money,” urged one friend, “Just reconcile, work together. Now they’re trying to make business over those who died. It’s politicized.” This concern she expressed, that considering reparations for the past represented something “political” and thus something that desanctifies human loss of life, was common among those who did not agree that reparations should be pursued. Another of my friends blamed Riruako’s approach more than the idea of reparations more broadly:

Riruako made it a political issue, a charade. It’s a sensitive issue. Real lives were affected; people were displaced. As a political issue, it makes a joke of it. It must be separate from political emotions and interests.

Many Ovaherero, however, saw significant value in gaining reparations from Germany. The meanings Ovaherero attribute to the broad concept of reparations differed. First, many people argued that Germany should do something to make Ovaherero happy.

One individual described the meaning of the German minister's 2004 apology by way of an analogy about interpersonal wrongs:

If you beat or kill [someone] and the [victim] starts to cry, you have to wash his tears. It's the same way with the past. We recognize the apology, but you have to wipe those tears so have to give someone something-- if [the victim is] a child, you give [him or her] sweets--so you can start again and feel happy.

As this explanation shows, for some Ovaherero, the party who caused someone else unhappiness or pain should make that person happy again, not try to undo what has been done (in this example, probably reprimanding the child) and to suffer punishment. This anecdote well illustrates an instance of restorative justice in that the goal in this context is to heal a breach between people.

Second, a number of explanations circulated among Ovaherero about the justification or need to approach Germany for reparations for suffering born of the past. There is an idea about asking for help that I've heard mentioned in Namibia on several occasions, including at one commemoration, described as "an African saying," that a baby will starve to death on his mother's back if he doesn't cry when he's hungry. Similarly, one individual explained to me in the context of talking about reparations from Germany that "if you're poor and struggling, you should look for help." He used this phrase to praise what Riruako has been doing in approaching Germans. These examples of asking for help suggest that it's one's own responsibility to seek out help when it's needed; one should not wait for others to assume responsibility for you. In this case any resulting form of reparations from Germany is somewhat akin to seeking help among those who are able to give it. Of course, that Germany is an appropriate party to approach for help has everything to do with a perceived German culpability for historical wrongs that result in Ovaherero suffering today. This particular meaning of reparations has to do with redressing material imbalances born of past injustices.

Additionally, these justifications for reparations are intriguing vernacularizations of restorative justice discourse. However, it is not clear how this notion of there being a responsibility of a weaker party to seek help from a stronger party would support other goals of restorative justice such as witnessing an admission of wrongdoing from Germany or re/building a new relationship between equal partners.

Despite divergent meanings of reparations, Ovaherero expressed very similar ideas about what reparations look like materially.³⁶ Most Ovaherero hoped that reparations would be allocated towards development projects in Herero areas or that reparations would consist of development projects. People suggested both that this would circumvent distrust of the Namibian government and Herero leaders (for some, even a distrust of their own spending habits) and that it would ensure an end to Herero suffering by making available services, facilities, jobs, and future benefits. Indeed, this is part of what was offered via Germany's "special initiative."

An additional issue which some Ovaherero identified with an idea of successful reparations was that of land, commonly referred to as "the land question" or "resettlement" in Namibia more broadly. Ovaherero have sought the return of what they consider their ancestral land since the conclusion of the First World War. Ovaherero cited land as important for maintaining themselves via cattle and other livestock as well as important sites of family and community history. Thus, to some, reclamation of land was imagined as a particularly powerful form of reparations.³⁷

Both of these categories of reparations reflect an intersection between Herero interests in reparations and broader discussions in Namibia, more so than material interpretations of coming to terms with the past, precisely. Despite the fact that Namibia's

relatively strong economy makes it a borderline international aid recipient, development aid has clearly been a prolific discourse and sometimes reality in the recent memory of Ovaherero, at least since Namibian Independence. Ovaherero's interest in development aid demonstrates a strong belief in the transformative effects of development socio-economically. Second, that many Ovaherero connected land reform with reparations is telling of the national context in which this remains a vivid concern, but is consistent with long-term Herero interest in the restitution of land that Ovaherero perceive was stolen from them by Germans, both prior to and during the war of 1904-1907 (Werner 1998).

Conclusions

In this long process of seeking restorative justice with Germany, a number features important to this process and probably others' restorative justice attempts emerge. In short, the practice of restorative justice relies heavily on precedent, both to innovate practices and to effectively engage participants, as well as informal international networks or groups whose beliefs support restorative justice. In addition, these Herero efforts make clear that it is the process of practicing restorative justice that embodies meaning for participants and stands to transform groups' understandings of atrocities of the past.

Building from Precedent

As I described above, Ovaherero's approach to the German colonial past became a problem to be addressed with Germany once it was effectively released from Namibian liberation politics. However, this approach to the past began to be formulated by some Ovaherero as new vocabularies of violence and remedies developed internationally in the aftermath of the Holocaust. The Holocaust embodies particular meaning for Ovaherero in

addition to its standing as an ordinary context for the development of restorative justice practices.

Use of the Holocaust

Over the course of the many attempts to engage with Germany to address this past, Riruako and others have often compared themselves to Holocaust survivors to argue for reparations. First, Holocaust reparations have been cited as successful restorative justice and a model to follow towards similar success for Ovaherero. For instance, one friend cited the precedent of Holocaust reparations not only as an example of what Germany could or should do for Ovaherero, but more specifically as an example of successfully repaired relationships: “Jews don’t have hatred because they’ve been paid. Our little hatred will also go with being paid.” Second, Ovaherero cite the restitution paid to Holocaust survivors by West Germany and various corporations aiding Nazi crimes as something akin to a legal precedent for reparations for Ovaherero. In a widely cited 1999 news article published in a U.S. newspaper, for example, Riruako is quoted as urging the German government: “We're equal to the Jews who were destroyed...The Germans paid for spilled Jewish blood. We say 'Compensate us, too!' It's time to heal the wound” (Bensman 1999). This precedent was also cited in a July 17, 2000 petition for a rebuilding program to benefit Ovaherero that the Chief Hosea Kutako Foundation delivered to German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. Even a number of individuals I spoke with who are not directly involved in appealing for reparations also identified the Holocaust or “what happened to Jewish people” as a precedent for compensation or reparations for Ovaherero. Finally, the Holocaust was used by some Ovaherero earlier in their campaign for reparations to suggest that it is racism that prevented the German government from paying reparations to Ovaherero. Mburumba Kerina, a Herero leader and

one time advisor to Riruako, is cited in literature about Herero claims as arguing that the only difference between claims emerging from Holocaust experiences and those of Ovaherero is that “the Jews are White; we are Black” (Torpey 2006:137, Howard-Hassmann and Lombardo 2008:101), From this perspective, Germans have twice used ideologies of racial difference against Ovaherero: first with the genocide and now with a refusal to grant reparations.

For the purposes of understanding the conditions in which restorative justice practices are called upon, it is noteworthy that some Ovaherero effectively based claims on the precedent of Holocaust reparations, an ordinary act of restorative justice.³⁸ However, citing Holocaust reparations in making their own claims is not simply arguing that reparations have been awarded in the past and thus could be awarded again. First, it is Germany (initially via West Germany) who paid reparations for Holocaust victims and survivors and it is also Germany who is being called upon to pay reparations to Ovaherero. In other words, Ovaherero are citing not only a precedent for reparations in international practice, but specifically a precedent in the German state’s recent history. Indeed, Ovaherero reminded Germans of their experience with offering apologies and facilitating reparations, if not also calling upon German Holocaust guilt. Second, it is not incidental that Ovaherero cite what is arguably the most infamous example globally of recent crimes against humanity and calls to come to terms morally with what happened. The Holocaust has certainly come to carry tremendous value for and as it has been called upon for many purposes.³⁹ It’s surely not surprising that Ovaherero would be more aware of the Holocaust and restorative justice associated with it than other egregious mass human rights abuses because of the proliferation of Holocaust discussion globally. Also, some Germans in SWA at the time supported the

National Socialist party and Germans were interned in camps in SWA during World War II. In other words, while the Holocaust itself was far removed from SWA, those living in SWA at the time participated to some extent in the politics of this period in Germany, whether actively or unwillingly. Since Germany's participation on World War II was played out in particular ways in SWA in addition to other connections born of our Germany's colonial past in Namibia, it is likely that Ovaherero are somewhat familiar with recent German history and Holocaust reparations, particularly when compared with other instances of reparations.

However, it is surprisingly that in referencing the Holocaust Ovaherero have not highlighted the historical parallels between atrocities committed by Germans Schutztruppe against Ovaherero and Nazi crimes against Jews and other minorities.⁴⁰ Not only is Germany the culpable party of massive loss of life in both instances, but the Germans also interned Ovaherero in concentration camps and studied Herero children for German eugenics research. Indeed, the work of one prominent German eugenicist studying Ovaherero, Eugene Fischer, was incorporated in Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (Chalk 2000). One student of Fischer, Josef Mengele, went on to become an infamous doctor at Auschwitz concentration camp during the Holocaust. Thus, the parallels Riruako or others could make by using the Holocaust and restitution for its survivors are very strong ones.

New Terrain: Compensation for Colonial Injustices

At the same time that restorative justice precedent helped Ovaherero formulate practices for approaching the past with Germany and stood to motivate Germany to follow similar practices with Ovaherero, that the success of Herero claims threatened other former colonizers may have limited international support for Herero claims and illustrates the development of restorative justice precedent through practice.

That it is a colonial context that this apology addressed is historically significant. While there have been a number of national-level/group-level apologies given and received in the recent past, few have addressed colonial-era injustices.⁴¹ Indeed, historian Lora Wildenthal commented in a 1999 U.S. news article that no former European colonizer would support Ovaherero's requests for an apology or reparations out of fear that a Herero success would catalyze numerous similar claims regarding colonial injustices against other European states. However, Herero claims had inspired similar claims of other groups even before an apology or reparations were achieved. For example, in an on-line article arguing for reparations for Sudanese, a member of The Sudan Commission for Human Rights General Council highlights Herero claims against Germany as an important precedent for the Sudan Commission's decision to pursue reparations.⁴² This change in precedent is two-fold: (1) it opens the moral question of what kinds of violence are acceptable in a colonial context and prior to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and (2) in doing so, it threatens legal precedence that could ultimately expose many former colonizers to legal action.

Appeal to the International Community

Important to continuing precedent set by previous restorative justice practices and making possible expansions of practices in innovative ways are international networks or something like a world audience. It was through international networks that Ovaherero not only recognized their past experiences in the concept *genocide*, but also forwarded their claims via U.S. attorney recommended for his professional history in adjudicating similar claims, and mobilized support among the German public via local organizations.⁴³ Ovaherero leading efforts for restorative justice were particularly keen to entice the interest of international media. For example, several individuals judged the 2004 commemorations a

success simply by virtue of the media attention they garnered for the German-Herero war and Herero claims for restorative justice. In addition, Ovaherero participated in the September 2001 U.N. World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa where their ancestors' experiences were discussed by delegates as an instance of racism. Exposure at this prominent conference fostered new supporting partners for Ovaherero's efforts.

Of particular interest to this Herero attempt at restorative justice is that the development of international advocacy skills and relationships were largely formed out of Ovaherero's participation outside of Namibia in working for Namibian independence. However, this example also illustrates that groups' successes or even interest in pursuing restorative justice intersects with other political experiences.

Practicing Restorative Justice

This long process of pursuing restorative justice has yielded a number of outcomes deemed positive by many Ovaherero that overlap with but do not necessarily constitute restorative justice. First, although broader differences among Herero communities have sometimes manifested in disagreements about restorative justice practices, this process has also brought various Herero and Otjiherero-speaking communities together, if only temporarily around particular restorative justice initiatives or practices.⁴⁴ Even during the relatively short period of my research, I noted changes in individuals' opinions about how to come to terms with the past in ways that reflected a more common outlook. Similarly, new alliances with other Namibian cultural groups were similarly born of this common interest.

Second, via these many years of restorative justice efforts Ovaherero have come to new understandings about how their ancestors' experiences with Germans during the colonial

period affect Herero lives today. Controversies over whether and how to address this past required discourse among leaders and other interested Ovaherero about how their ancestors' experiences of 1904-1907 affect Herero communities today. As these various efforts were forwarded and prompted media attention or other forms of public discourse, Herero communities were continually reminded of the atrocities of 1904-1907, or at least the version of this past that supported restorative justice practices. Certainly, the notion that the German-Herero war is foundational to contemporary Herero experiences, perhaps the most formative part of the remembered Herero past, was continually re-produced in public discourse.

Third, these various attempts at justice (as well as the 2004 commemorations) have stimulated or commanded substantial media attention both within and outside of Namibia. Along with public and informal discussions in Namibia, debates, lectures, conferences, and commemorations, tremendous public attention has been brought to Ovaherero's histories and memories of German colonialism, especially Herero experiences in 1904-1907, as well as the perceived results of this past in the present. For many Ovaherero, simply making known this history of Herero suffering and German-led injustices outside of Herero communities is an achievement. However, such discourse about the past is also a crucial component of what restorative justice generally aims to do. In order to address some past injustice with another group, a common understanding of what and who constitutes that past must first be settled upon. It is in this way that on-going public discourse asserting a particular view of the 1904-1907 period may have supported the creation of a common understanding of this past from which restorative justice could continue its work.

Last, restorative justice practice clearly emerged from some articulation of broader restorative justice ideas with meanings Ovaherero were familiar with from different contexts.

There are even numerous meanings that different people associate with restorative justice practice, but it is seemingly leaders of these efforts who have the sort of international and national political knowledge and authority to constrain or even re-shape these meanings in public discourse in strategic ways for the pursuit of restorative justice. In a related fashion, it is also largely such leaders who have framed each practice or attempt publicly in ways necessary to continue the process of pursuing restorative justice and who are responsible for determining the conclusion or achievement of such efforts amid multiple notions about the aim of restorative justice. Thus, at least for this Herero context, the necessary shaping of restorative justice related meanings relies in large part upon leadership structures that are maintained outside of the realm of restorative justice at the same time that they might be reinforced or challenged via in practicing restorative justice, like other group-level social practices.

Notes:

¹ A few individuals told me that this past is in the past, that everyone should move on. These few are all originally from areas of Namibia more marginal to regular commemorative events and national-level Herero leadership, such as the South (a result of families fleeing German troops) and east (e.g., Otjinene, the Ovambanderu area). Even these might suggest that the history of what Germans did to Ovaherero should be known to the world even if they didn't support restorative justice efforts.

² I immediately followed this question with examples of possible responses: "For example, should this past be forgotten? Should more people learn about it? Reparations?"

³ This meaning is conveyed well in the German term for reparations—*Wiedergutmachung*—which literally means "making good again" (Torpey 2003:5).

⁴ An entire body of scholarship developed around problems of "transitional justice" or "transitology." See Olick and Coughlin (2003:42-45) for a review of some of the primary questions and literature of this field. A similar point about the possibility of restorative justice helping to restore citizens' faith in governments perceived to be unresponsive to their concerns is also made in the context of criminal justice (Roche 2003).

⁵ Some scholars suggest that the calls years later for new trials addressing government-sponsored violence in several countries such as Chile, Argentina, and El Salvador evidence that the truth commissions alone were unable to provide these nations with a sense of closure and that some form of reparations are also necessary (Lean 2003:169-171).

⁶ For a discussion about the reasons that Latin American countries' truth commissions tended towards individual reparations see Lean 2003, pp. 176-180.

⁷ Some people writing about the TRC process criticize it for focusing on acts of violence and ignoring the effects of the apartheid system itself.

⁸ Sociologist Nicholas Tavuchis envisions public apologies as an extrapolation of the interpersonal apology (1991). In his much cited work, *Mea Culpa*, Tavuchis describes the "sociology" of interpersonal relationships as the basis for apologies between groups (1991). To this conceptualization he adds that the apology must be recorded in a public domain, thus allowing participation, in a certain sense, by all members of both groups, and the apology need not sincerely express sorrow. Philosopher Richard Joyce also takes theories of public apologies as extensions of theories of interpersonal apologies and adds a problematic of determining which individuals represent groups in apologies and how they do so (1999). Much theorizing of apologies and reparations takes from interpersonal apologies the notion that these acts are reciprocal, between two parties. In other words, the relationship between perpetrator and victim is the horizon of transformation via apologies and reparations. This model allows Barkan, for example, to suggest that through these acts, the strength of the victim grows in relation to that of the apologizer (2000:xviii). Further, Norma Field asserts that apologies intend to make different future relationships possible between un-reconciled parties, such that the victim is assured that such an injustice will never be perpetrated against them again (1997:6).

⁹ Rajan argues that it is this initial moment when the group representing or constituting the perpetrators admits that wrong was done, what I would term *assigning* responsibility, that the victims most benefit within a process of a public apology or reparations because the injustice has been agreed upon by both groups (along with the international community), and through its public recording, becomes fact (2000:166).

¹⁰ After the December 1959 shootings by South African authorities at "the old location" in response to local protests against the Apartheid Group Areas Act political repression increased significantly within SWA and many independence leaders fled into exile.

¹¹ Gewalt states that in 2002, Germany contributed more than 46 percent of Namibia's development financing and made available German military advisors and technicians to train and advise the new Namibian Defense Force (2003:300 n. 58).

¹² Each of these state visits appears to have been made for the purposes of reviewing development projects in Namibia for which Germany provided aid.

Kohl was first elected Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1982. He went on to be elected the first Chancellor of the united Germany in 1991, and was re-elected in 1994. Gerhard Schröder was elected to this position in 1998. The Chancellor is elected from the Bundestag (Parliament).

¹³ "Die Deutschen haben Zehntausende von Hereros Angang des Jahrhunderts umgebracht, und jetzt ignorieren sie uns, um sich ihrer Verantwortung zu entziehen."

¹⁴ "Wir sind uns natürlich bewußt, daß die Auseinandersetzung zwischen der deutschen Kolonialverwaltung und den Hereros nicht in Ordnung war" (Tkalec 1998).

¹⁵ The "Herero People's Reparations Corporation," registered in Washington, D.C., appears to be a legal entity created specifically for the purposes of filing this lawsuit. I do not know of it existing in any other context. It is reportedly owned by the Chief Hosea Kutako Foundation (Cooper 2007:120).

According to one Herero man involved in forwarding the lawsuit, the legal counsel secured by Ovaherero for filing this suit, the D.C. law firm Musolino and Dessel, was referred to them by a German man who was involved in securing compensation for victims of Nazi crimes and is a friend of Musolino.

¹⁶ Sarkin (2009:155) and historian Lora Wildenthal, among others note the risk that the Herero case holds for other former colonizers.

¹⁷ The Alien Tort Claims Act (28 U.S.C. § 1350) was adopted in 1789 as part of the original Judiciary Act. In its original form, it made no assertion about legal rights; it simply stated that the district courts have original jurisdiction of any civil action by an alien for a tort committed in violation of the law of nations or a treaty of the United States." For almost two centuries, the statute was rarely used. As a result of increasing international concern with human rights issues, however, increasingly more parties have recently begun to seek redress under the act. For further discussion about the history and use of the ACTA, see Sarkin 2009, Cooper 2007, or Sebok 2001.

¹⁸"In *Filartiga v. Pena-Irala* (1980), Dolly Filartiga brought suit in federal court in New York seeking compensation and punitive damages against Americo Norberto Pena-Irala, who kidnapped and tortured her brother Joelito on behalf of the Paraguayan government. The court awarded Ms Filartiga more than \$10 million in damages" (Cooper 2007:115).

¹⁹ A. J. Sebok (2001) "The Alien Tort Claims Act: How powerful a human rights weapon is it?" <http://www.writ.news.findlaw.com>, (accessed March 14, 2010)

²⁰ The Herero People's Reparations Corporation et al. v. Deutsche Bank, A.G., Terex Corporation a.k.a. Orenstein-Koppel, and Woermann Line, D/B/A Deutsche Afrika-Linien GMBLT & Company.

²¹ I found it almost insulting that the German government would send their Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development, to me reinforcing a post-colonialist stereotype of Africa as a development recipient, rather than someone who might better symbolize the sort of equal relations that it seemed to me is what many Ovaherero aimed for to reconcile past dehumanizing experiences. However, with only a few exceptions (namely some of those involved in planning the commemoration), no one else I spoke to about the commemoration and the apology indicated any discontent at the particular position of the German government representative.

²² Whether Pohamba was sent as the probable next President of Namibia (then the Swapo Presidential candidate) or as a reminder to Germans or German-Namibians that this Herero past was tightly bound with “the land question” in Namibia which government was purportedly addressing actively.

²³ The Minister delivered her speech in English and after she concluded with the full speech, a Herero man translated a summary of the speech.

²⁴ While Namibia is purportedly 90 percent Christian, I wondered at the assumptions inherent in her use of Christian language. First, in my experience, even for those Ovaherero who do identify as Christians and/or regularly attend church, Christian beliefs and practices are often practiced in tandem with other forms of Herero spirituality. Secondly, Christianity has a rather mixed history with Ovaherero. It was in large part German missionaries who introduced Christianity before German colonialism could be said to exist. This link between Christianity and colonialism is apparent, I think, to most Ovaherero, but opinions about the introduction of Christianity are quite mixed. Some have told me that despite the violence of German colonialism, Ovaherero should be thankful for the Christianity that Germans brought with them and shared with Herero ancestors. Others, however, see a link between the introduction of Christianity and a perceived loss of Herero cultural practices such that Christianity is understood as merely a branch of German attempts at controlling and dehumanizing Ovaherero. Thus, I was surprised that Wieczorek-Zeul risked using Christian wording because its positive reception was far from guaranteed. Secondly, it struck me that it seemed doubtful that the German public, far more secular than the Namibian public, would wish an apology delivered symbolically on their behalf to be articulated in Christian language. In later contemplation, it even provoked me to question the authenticity of a supposed state-led apology that seemed so divergent from language expected of a state or even of the German public.

²⁵ It seems that either the idea of reparations is more familiar to most people as an outcome of addressing past injustices or the Herero movement for restorative justice was quite effective in linking an apology with reparations such that most expect that reparations follows an apology.

²⁶ This remark struck me because it contrasted to a great extent with my own thoughts about the significance that the German representative delivering Germany’s apology was a woman. While I remarked in my field notes at the time of the apology on the coincidence of a particularly affective sort of restorative justice being presented by the stereotypically affective gender, this friend introduced the topic of her gender into our discussion in a completely different way, reminding me of my biases about gender relations.

²⁷ Of further interest for considering affect and justice as well as relationships between truth and affect, Albie Sachs describes the very different context of the TRC hearings from a court of law: “Judges do not cry. Archbishop Tutu cried...In a court of law no one is there to help the witness, to pat the shoulder, to provide water or tissues when the person weeps: in the TRC hearings there were comforters sitting next to witnesses” (2002:49).

²⁸ As recently as January 2004, then German ambassador Wolfgang Messing had publicly stated that Germany would not offer reparations.

²⁹ According to their website, “The Association of the Ovaherero Genocide in the USA (OGA), started by the descendents of the genocide, is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to promoting awareness and affirmation of the 1904-1908 genocide, and the just resolution of the Ovaherero people's demands for restitution from the Federal Republic of Germany.” It was officially started in January 2008. <http://www.ovaherero-genocide-association-usa.org/index.html>, accessed March 15, 2010.

³⁰ According to an article in the Namibian newspaper, the advertisement requesting consultants to embark on a study for viable projects clearly states that “the special initiative is meant for development projects in areas and for communities that had 'historic ties' with the German colonial government and which the present German government considers as a special moral and political responsibility towards Namibia to aid the said communities” (Weidlich 2007).

³¹ The Namibian Cabinet approved the deputy Prime Minister’s report in May 2006.

³² “Projects will comprise small-scale social and economic infrastructure projects including equipment to benefit the poor and reduce poverty. The projects must contain a strong community component like involvement in planning, on-the-job training during implementation and contributions in kind or in cash. The projects selected must be viable, sustainable and have minimal financial implications for the Government” (Wiedlich 2008). Land acquisition, resettlement programs, and vocational training centers are excluded from funding under the initiative.

³³ In the following statement by some Ovaherero and included on the website of the Association of the Ovaherero Genocide in the USA, the matter of an official German apology and reparations was again raised publicly: "Joint Statement by the Ovaherero and Nama People to the German Authorities on the Formal Apology to the Aborigines by the Australian Government on 05 March 2008." “The meritorious apology offered by the Prime Minister of Australia to the Aborigines should encourage and or arouse the conscience of the German people and government to do the same to the Nama and Ovaherero people of our country for the crime of genocide against them and reinforce it with commensurate reparation to them as victims.” <http://www.ovaherergenocideassociationusa.org/index.html>, accessed March 15, 2010.

³⁴ Ovambanderu Chief Keharanjo II Nguvauva was inaugurated in 2008 after some contention over who would succeed his father, the late Chief Munjuku Nguvauva II, who died in January 2008. The latter was the great grandson of Mbanderu Chief Kahimemua Nguvauva, was executed in 1896 by the German colonial administration of German South-West Africa for his part in the first armed rebellion against German rule

³⁵ “Chief Joel Stephanus of Vaalgras in southern Namibia and his delegation were introduced as the ‘Hereros who lost their home language.’ They were dispersed to southern Namibia and the Northern Cape in South Africa, first during the Herero-Nama War some 140 years ago and again during Herero and Nama uprisings against German colonial rule in 1904 and 1905. They mixed with other ethnic groups and most of them do not speak Otjiherero anymore. ‘We might have lost our language, but if you go to South Africa just south of the Orange River to Pella, Upington or Steinkopf, you find Herero names there. The same goes for us in the Vaalgras area; we are evidence that the Herero people were dispersed in all directions during the war time. We (the Herero people) must come together again, because we need to know each other and where our ancestors and families come from,’ Chief Stephanus said. ‘Even if we at Vaalgras lost our mother tongue, we will die as Hereros,’ he said” (Weidlich 2009a).

³⁶ Interestingly, one of Ovaherero’s greatest concerns about reparations was who might be responsible for distributing benefits. Indeed, some individuals told me that they’d rather forgo material reparations for this reason. There was distrust about the Namibian government acting in this role, particularly that the government wouldn’t direct benefits towards Ovaherero and, further, would likely direct benefits towards the North (the perceived governing majority ethnic base). Even Herero leaders were not deemed trustworthy by most as many feared that leaders would keep benefits for themselves (a concern heightened by conflicts over Herero leadership positions and the process for filling these positions). Thus, many people I spoke with hoped some sort of outside facilitator, like an NGO, would manage any reparations received from Germany.

³⁷ Unfortunately, the scope of this project does not include an analysis about the potential meanings of land restoration or compensation as a form of restorative justice, which should also be considered in relation to perceived marginalization by or outright failures of the land reform process in Namibia.

³⁸ More recently, however, even the use of the Holocaust as a reparations precedent for Herero claims diminished without an obvious reason.

³⁹ For example, in this statement from a talk promoting reparations for descendants of Africans affected by the slave trade, the term Holocaust is seemingly used to add moral weight to the claim: “The struggle for reparations for the Holocaust of Enslavement of African people is clearly one of the most important struggles being waged in the world today” (Maulana Karenga *The Ethics of Reparations: Engaging the Holocaust of Enslavement*, at The National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N’COBRA) Convention, Baton Rouge, LA, 2001 June 22-23).

⁴⁰ Henning Melber also notes this gap in discourse connecting the Herero genocide and the Holocaust (Melber 2005).

⁴¹ In 2002, following a nearly two year investigation, Belgium issued an apology for its role in the murder of the Democratic Republic of Congo's first democratically elected prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, who was assassinated not long after the DRC's independence in 1960 (Bensman 1999).

⁴² <http://www.hollerafrica.com/showArticle.php?catId=1&artId=69>; accessed September 28, 2009

⁴³ For example, the German Society for Threatened Peoples International (GFBV) publicly advocates for Ovaherero's claims and requests.

⁴⁴ Historian Jan-Bart Gewald goes so far as to suggest that memories of the genocide have been used "to advance and substantiate further acts of resistance since 1904 (2003:303).

chapter five

THE PRODUCTIVITY OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

The previous chapter describes how Ovaherero have mobilized and attributed meaning to restorative justice practices in the last two decades. The idea of restorative justice, of addressing (in some extralegal way) a past that yields present suffering, is widely valued by many Ovaherero, although the need for such activities and their aims are articulated in different ways by different people. In particular, public discussions about these practices by movement leaders don't always align with the views of Ovaherero less directly involved, or by those contesting Riruako's efforts. Some understandings of this past necessary to addressing it were more vocally contested, such as who should be counted as victims or whether this past was a resistance struggle. Others, such as the agency of Ovaherero in the events of 1904 remained largely unquestioned. In short, while much public discussion, especially those instances in which Ovaherero communicate demands to German or other international audiences, gives the impression that the Ovaherero seek particular forms of redress from Germany as victims of a genocide, little of these claims and their bases are agreed upon across Herero communities.

Such differences might be used to argue that the leaders are motivated by politics, that they do not represent the interests of those they claim to lead. Or it might indicate that the movement is not well organized, in that not everyone invested in restorative justice

agrees on methods and goals. Another alternative might be that restorative justice practices on the whole are inadequate to changing how past events affect people. Instead, I suggest that these instances at which OvaHerero do not agree evidence the importance of the minutiae of practicing restorative justice that frequently escapes from view in evaluations of restorative justice.

Clear claims are not necessarily available for mobilization prior to the practice of restorative justice. Rather the necessary knowledges or meanings have to be created, decided upon, smoothed into seemingly clear-cut injustices and traumas, involving distinct victims and perpetrators. In other words, the notion taken for granted for groups pursuing restorative justice -- such as that a particular and universally acknowledged wrong was committed against a discrete group of victims by particular perpetrators—is never already there but must be produced through the pursuit of restorative justice.

My argument builds on the work of a number of anthropologists, who suggest that restorative justice, as a social practice, is best evaluated in practice. In doing so, the productive capacity of practice is visible. Approaching restorative justice practices as practices addresses not only how groups make restorative justice meaningful to themselves and contribute to it, but also how restorative justice practice produces new subjects and knowledges.

To address these issues I look at some of the moments of disagreement or ambiguity of restorative justice for OvaHerero. If restorative justice reformulates way groups understand their (or their ancestors') past experiences, enabling new relationships in the present, points of uncertainty about histories and subjectivities, for example, are significant sites of social production. While these points of uncertainty and their negotiation exist “outside” the

temporal and political boundaries of restorative justice practices proper, they are critical to them.

While the meanings of restorative justice are created as it intersects or dovetails with a group's concerns, and such meanings are also produced in the intersection of restorative justice with other discourses. The discourse of rights, especially Human Rights, not only has much to do with creating opportunities to pursue restorative justice, but also has important implications for the new social forms produced.

Thus, the idea of rights, of human rights in particular, plays a significant role in guiding Ovaherero in the resolution of uncertainties about the components of the claim to injustice laid against Germany. For example, two of the broad conclusions from my analysis about the meanings of restorative justice for Ovaherero highlight the influence of human rights on the practice for restorative justice. In the previous chapter, it is clear that Ovaherero not only want to act as agents in negotiations with Germany over restorative justice (reparations in particular) but also assert a right to do so. There is something more at stake for Ovaherero than simply receiving money to compensate for human and material losses 100 year ago. They want their agency as a cultural group recognized by Germany. They seem to expect that Germany will see this as appropriate demand such that asserting agency is not deemed to upset the negotiations process for Ovaherero. In addition, the opinions of Ovaherero I spoke with about Riruako's efforts, especially, express the importance of making this history known to the rest of the world. Indeed, both the lawsuit and the commemorations were, in part, deemed successful by many Ovaherero because they brought this history of a Herero genocide to the attention of "the world." Ovaherero's assertion of their agency as a cultural group is, in fact, a right supported by international human rights law. This world

audience that is seemingly assumed by Ovaherero might be said to be one particularly interested in promoting human rights across the globe.

As I discuss below, there are many more instances at which Ovaherero take up the discourse of human rights in combination with that of restorative justice towards particular aims, but the adoption of which also creates new social forms, even unplanned consequences. It is the commonly held understanding of human rights as *universal* that seemingly allows such influence to be adopted with little contention. Ovaherero take up the discourse of Human Rights for a variety of ends, such as to interpret their understanding of past violence and to articulate their experience across linguistic and cultural boundaries. While restorative justice practices have developed relatively recently, similar socio-historical concerns based the coincident elaboration of legal rights and, specifically, the development of Human Rights (Daly and Sarkin 2007:9-12). Indeed, as I discuss below, the human rights movement, broadly, enables and shapes restorative justice practices in particular ways.

In this chapter, I turn to an analysis of the role played by Human Rights – in all its valences as law, discourse, institutions, and networks – in the practicing of restorative justice to more fully describe how Herero understandings of this past and its importance intersect with restorative justice. In this, I aim to explore something of its component parts, illuminating its constructedness and productive nature of its practice as well as the contradictions and ambiguities emerging in practice. From this approach, I aim to highlight that restorative justice practices buttressed by Human Rights offer both particular opportunities and particular constraints to practitioners. Tensions between the pursuit of these opportunities and the negotiation of constraints are visible in these points of disagreement among the practice of restorative justice for Ovaherero. Resolution of these disagreements in

the context of pursuing restorative justice has produced knowledges, subjectivities, and meanings that fit within the particular frameworks of human rights and restorative justice, but which reshape the ways in which many Ovaherero understand their experience of the historical injustice upon which claims for justice have been made.

Foundations: the Role of Human Rights

Human rights are not in any way natural or inherent to all humans at all times as the term at first suggests. They must be asserted as inherent rights; hence their codification in law. They exist and have meaning only insofar as they are put into practice and mutually reinforced through other modern projects, especially liberalism.¹

Human Rights emerged in response to the aftermath of Holocaust crimes.² The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights is regarded by scholars as the originary moment of the set of ideas, laws, institutions, practices, or discourses that constitute what individuals around the world now understand as human rights. The Declaration, grounded in liberal thinking and modern characterizations of humanity, recognized the agency of all humans and defined a universal, rights-bearing subjectivity for individuals (Asad 2003, Wright 2001). The Declaration was followed by a number of further codifications of human rights that broadened its scope to include the assignment of rights to groups.³ Human rights now incorporate political and civil rights, socioeconomic and cultural rights, solidarity or development rights, and indigenous rights (Messer 1993:22). The creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2002 out of the Rome Statute marked another significant articulation of human rights as the ICC now claims jurisdiction over residents of all signatory states in particular ways, thus further formalizing the ways in which states are

held responsible to “humanity” and violence is increasingly managed by international institutions (Clarke 2007:134-136).

The use of human rights extends beyond any codified or institutionalized boundaries, however, and is proliferated by innumerable social networks, especially networks of non-governmental organizations and activists. Since codification, innumerable non-governmental organizations formed around concerns of human rights. It is these organizations, and the global network they form, that have accomplished much of the recent work of human rights (Ignatieff 2001, Over 1999, Dembour and Kelly 2007). They might, for example, forward larger initiatives which local groups may use to bolster their initiatives, they may make available information and other resources that groups may find useful in organizing their initiatives, or they may help to circulate information about particular projects that seek public awareness. For Ovaherero’s efforts, such networks in Germany, especially, have helped to raise attention about this past and Herero claims within Germany.

It is in its extra legal practice that human rights is important to restorative justice. Such networks largely constitute the interested world audience that may serve to exert moral pressure on perpetrators to join restorative justice practices and to witness the public recording of injustices crucial to restorative justice. Human rights also offers a body of rights that are mobilized by individuals and groups globally in pursuit of non-legal aims. Further, these rights organize lived experience via particular categories about types of injustices or relationships of individuals to social groupings as well as authorizing particular forms of knowledge. Human rights defines the boundaries and content of rights and claims of their violation (Cowan et al. 2001:11). The pursuit of human rights then can be understood as “a

cultural process which impinges on human subjects and subjectivities in multiple and contradictory ways” (Cowan et al. 2001:3; emphasis theirs).

The Truth about the Past

Identifying the injustice in need of resolution would seem straightforward, indeed a given, when a group attempts to contend with pain of past wrongs through restorative justice practices. However, part of the long process for Germany to recognize their responsibility for what happened to Ovaherero between 1904 and 1907, was precisely a disagreement over the injustice. Some would argue that it wasn't that Germany didn't understand what happened, but rather that they tried desperately to avoid legal prosecution by avoiding legally defined labels for what occurred. As I discussed in chapter three, German historiography shifted the framing of this past from an uprising to a massacre to a genocide over the last century. However, this change of terms is not simply an observation about labeling, but one of Germans' relationships with this past and this history. Thus, it is actually a question of changing understandings of what happened.

Ovaherero I spoke with described a history of educating projects aimed explicitly at informing Germans about “the truth” of what happened. Some described the lawsuit and the commemorations as such projects. The aim was to make “the truth” of what happened known to Germans as well as to “the world.” Thus, part of what has effectively been negotiated to this point, marked by the German Minister's apology, was a common notion of what happened.

However, as I discussed in chapter three, Ovaherero did not necessarily share a common notion of what happened. The form of past injustice and resulting trauma also had

to effectively be produced, or at least settled on at particular moments, in particular spaces for the purposes of restorative justice.

As some scholars have argued in other contexts, part of what is produced via restorative justice practices is particular knowledges about the past, hegemonic histories – “the truth” (Rajan 2000, Wilson 2001, Buur 2001). They suggest it is the public telling, critical debating, or public recording of injustices that legitimizes these tellings and authorizes the memories and histories told as historical truths (Rajan 2000, Tavuchis 1991, Humphrey 2003). It is especially this importance of practices occurring in public spaces with the presence of a witnessing public that creates a significant role for the global human rights community in the practice of restorative justice. I don’t disagree with these arguments, but attempt to explain below that the production of truth via restorative justice is far more complex and multi-sited than what is suggested in this notion of truth produced on a global stage before a liberal audience of world citizens.

Truth commissions clearly illustrate one of the other ways in which restorative justice practices more broadly serve to make space for tellings of the past that might even be aggregated and be fashioned into new knowledges about the past. Producing a full truth of what happened amidst apartheid South Africa was one of the primary goals of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The TRC was constituted by three committees: the Committee on Amnesty, the Committee on Human Rights Violations, and the Committee on Reparations and Rehabilitation. It was the first that was responsible for granting amnesty to those who committed human rights violations. For the South African TRC, Albie Sachs, explains the creation of what he designates as specifically dialogical truth:

An increasingly rich and true story emerged from a multiplicity of voices and perspectives. Then the TRC, itself a variegated body, had the function of trying to

find the language, mode of presentation, and way of telling the story that would be as meaningful and convincing as possible (2002:54).⁴

While flushing out a more thorough history of a violent or unjust episode can itself constitute a variety of justice, the actual practice of telling, towards the end of documenting or making visible the truth, may additionally impact participants. First, the potential therapeutic effects of telling, or witnessing, has been advocated by many scholars working in Holocaust studies and restorative justice as particular realms of application of longstanding work in psychological trauma theory on the benefits to individuals of psychotherapy (Leys 1996; Phelps 2004:62-4; Waterson and Rylko-Bauer 2006).⁵ The TRC offered victims the opportunity to publicly narrate their traumatic memories and, thus, aimed to help individuals unburden themselves from this past. However, some victims charge that telling traumatic memories does not have a therapeutic effect, particularly for those to whom the idea of telling strangers about one's trauma as therapy is an alien practice (Colvin 2003:164; Wilson 2001:229; Scheper-Hughes 2002).⁶ Second, because telling the past in the context of restorative justice authorizes histories differently than in other spaces of remembering, history produced out of restorative justice practices may appear "truer" to some audiences which in turn may affect participants understandings of the past.

Although in different contexts than what is discussed as therapeutic in truth commission proceedings, Ovaherero have also made or taken advantage of opportunities for truth telling amidst and around the restorative justice practices in addition to pre-existing spaces like the fire and annual commemorations. Because this past and restorative justice have been discussed extensively within the Herero community in the process of pursuing restorative justice, a number of newer opportunities for telling have developed. In other words, the more important and meaningful these concerns became, the more they were talked

about, contributing further to their import and meaning. The 2004 commemorations in particular created new spaces and urgencies for public telling or remembering both at the commemorative events and in the public discussion spurred by these. Individuals relayed to me that the commemorative year prompted discussions on the Herero radio station call-in programs as well as with friends and family. Documentarians and researchers, like me, flocked to Herero communities to investigate various social and historical questions amidst the very public remembering of 2004 and tried to create spaces for tellings of the past via interviews. While individual-level therapeutic effects of telling were probably not achieved in and around the public spaces opened by process of restorative justice, many Ovaherero suggested there was an analogous effect for the Herero community. They imagined the global community was now learning about the truth of what happened in the past and, perhaps more importantly, recognizing it as historical truth.

However, what has not been considered is the possibility that these produced truths, or new hegemonic histories, are still partial truths. Restorative justice itself produces the idea that knowledges that emerge via restorative justice practices are somehow “more true” (or perhaps more sacred) than previously circulating knowledges of the past because they are told by witnesses (or descendants of witnesses to injustices in the case of my research). In this context, the particular ways that most individuals I spoke with understood what happened between Germans and Ovaherero is occluded is the process of seeing the past as Genocide. Put another way, the variegated ways in which Ovaherero understand the past do not all have space within the limitations of human rights thinking about rights violations such as crimes against humanity and genocide.

Framing Rights Violations

Practicing restorative justice is but one means of remembering and addressing trauma of the past. For its use of Human Rights, not all past trauma fits within the scope of restorative justice practice. As such, part of a process of pursuing restorative justice is defining a trauma in such a way that it is actionable via restorative justice practices. In addition to arguing that a past trauma continues to affect lived experience in the present, which I will discuss later, participants in restorative justice need to define past trauma as a type of violence that is understood (by direct participants and the global human rights community that supports restorative justice) to be a violation of human rights.

In different ways in legal and extra legal contexts, human rights exist in their practice (Goodale and Engle Merry 2007). With each use of human rights concepts, laws, treaties, institutions, or networks, the meanings of human rights is reproduced. Such malleability in legal contexts proceeds largely in case law (e.g., Ovaherero referenced previous cases adjudicated under the U.S. Alien Tort Claims Act to argue its jurisdiction in regards to the Herero genocide). Outside of legal systems, human rights ideas can be constructed and mobilized with even more flexibility, a process that Engle Merry conceptualizes as *legal vernacularization* (1997). This term refers to the production of different valences of human rights in practice, in particular socio-cultural contexts.

Although similar, I suggest that using Human Rights' concepts and vocabularies offers a means of communicating violence across various social borders that might otherwise be indescribable. Like any terminology, a given human rights violation, for instance, captures a specific type of violence, intentionality, and moral meaning. Human rights concepts function as a type of shorthand, but one which may serve to better communicate injustices or

violations that is incomprehensible to people who have not experienced such. Human rights offers a purportedly common global language into which or from which groups can translate their own experiences. Such translations might be specific and momentary or they may persist as something like the vernacularization that Engle Merry describes. The analogous notion of translating thoughts between languages highlights the incongruities that likely emerge between human rights in practice and human rights as legal code. Thus, I am concerned below with highlighting the ways in which Ovaherero translate human rights and the tensions that result in Herero knowledges of the past

While the notion of human rights treats every person as the bearer of inherent rights simply by virtue of being human, human rights and affiliated infrastructure are nonetheless historically produced. These must be defined and asserted. For example, boundaries must be drawn between “acceptable” violence and violence that is “excessive” or “unjustifiable.” Asad notes that certain kinds of pain and suffering are acceptable to modern Euro-American societies and excluded from being considered as violations of human rights: those produced through warfare, sports, scientific experimentation, the death penalty, and sexual pleasure (2003:113). Explicitly, legal processes define the boundaries of acceptable pain, trauma, loss, injustice, and other such categories for human rights. Violence also has different meanings and borders in addition to those emerging out of the particular history of human rights. Indeed, anthropologists emphasize that violence is a cultural construct and shouldn’t be restricted to physical injury (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). Such disjuncture between different notions of violence contributes to the different ways that the German-Herero past is understood differently by various parties. Because restorative justice makes use of ideas of

violence constituted via human rights, it is these that shape the way in which Ovaherero talk about past violence in the context of pursuing restorative justice.

Translating Genocide

As I discussed in chapter four, Ovaherero I spoke with did not apply the same term to reference the fighting between Germans and Ovaherero amidst the colonial past. While some Ovaherero suggested that the fighting between Germans and Ovaherero had always been known as *genocide*, and asserted that the Otjiherero term used to describe the fighting was translatable as *genocide*, others either didn't use the term *genocide* at all or suggested it was an additional, but not identical, term for *Otjiṭiro otjindjandja*, which many people translated as “many people died in one place.”

One Herero man who was involved in the group that organized the lawsuit against Germany explained to me that the idea of understanding the German-Herero fighting in the colonial era as genocide emerged amidst discussions at the U.N. about Holocaust reparations.⁷ Indeed, this man suggested it was Raphael Lemkin, a scholar credited with creating the term *genocide*, and Rev. Michael Scott, a Namibian Independence activist.⁸

I used to petition with the late Rev. Michael Scott at the UN and one day Professor Lemkin was introduced to me by Rev Michael Scott who said to me this gentleman wants to talk to you because he has a small pamphlet that has something to do also with the Herero people. He can probably tell you about it. We continued these discussions and I think it was another gentleman who was also hanging around that time...a very few people, a small group of people, I think his last name was ...he got the Nobel Peace Prize...Weil or something, ...So we discussed about it and he said you know you have to raise this question on the basis of this genocide and I didn't know what genocide was all about. I kept on asking him every time we'd meet during the general assembly sessions from September to December until one day the Rev Michael Scott said to me, 'this refers to how the Herero people were decimated by the Germans with the order that was issued by General Leutwein and General von Trotha.' I said 'oh' and then I started being interested in that case to help also to help Professor Lemkin to work and to prepare his delegates from Africa to support his efforts at the United Nations.

In other words, according to this man, conceptualizing what happened to Ovaherero as *genocide* literally developed in discussion with those pursuing reparations for Holocaust survivors.

In addition to disagreement among Ovaherero I spoke with about the precise terminology for talking about this past, the narrative I refer to above that describes a fairly recent origin, the eager reception of Sarkin's speech at the Ohamakari commemoration arguing that genocide occurred, and the way Ovaherero described the fighting and violence of the German colonial era Ovaherero's use of *genocide* to talk about the past in question is clearly a recent practice. Further, *genocide* exists today as a legal term; and as genocides are talked about today they are inseparable from this fact. It is then interesting that a number of individuals were so adamant in talking with me that *Otjijiro otjindjandja* translated to genocide. Perhaps such individuals were familiar with the term because of its circulation among Herero communities but were not aware of the rather precise legal meanings embedded in the use of *genocide* for those of us familiar with human rights and, thus, didn't recognize any difference between violence in which "many people died in one place" from violence that is genocide. Alternatively it may have been critically important to such individuals that I perceive the past as genocide, particularly if they perceived my authority as a foreign researcher (or simply my status as a sympathetic foreigner) as an opportunity to educate other foreigners through me.

One Herero woman whom I asked about the Otjijerero word for what happened between German and Ovaherero in 1904 suggested that her ancestor probably couldn't have known anything more about what happened at the time other than that she saw many dead Ovaherero. There was no way for one to know until long afterwards, as disparate individuals

discussed with one another their experiences amidst the battles with Germans, the context or extent of the fighting and death. I find this conversation well highlights some of the defining features of genocide. Victims of genocide do not necessarily experience a particular variety of genocidal violence. More likely, people amidst such violence may witness individual people being maimed or killed while feeling confusion and fear. Genocide must be imagined as those involved hear reports of the scale or directedness of violence. Genocide is not as much a variety of violence experienced discretely by individuals, but rather violence that is defined via accumulated experiences and conceived historically. This process is rather similar to that described by members of TRC in that after hearing all the testimonies, the committee had to narratively describe apartheid, define these experiences collectively as gross violations of human rights. Thus, that Ovaherero have potentially only understood the fighting with Germans as genocide long after the violence occurred does not make their claim less valid or authentic.

It is because of the potential legal status of claims of genocide that a central question in Ovaherero's pursuit of restorative justice has become whether or not genocide occurred. For Ovaherero, framing the violence of the German-Herero past as genocide, as a human rights violation, offered access to the various tools of human rights, including possible legal remedy. For Germany, acknowledging this past as genocide made the state vulnerable to public and legal pressure to offer compensation to Ovaherero as they had done for victims of the Holocaust. Because this question has been so prevalent in so many spaces in which this past has been discussed that I am particularly interested in how it has consequently influenced these discussions. By examining the boundaries of the concept of genocide, I aim

to discern how they intersect with or proliferate alongside other Herero understandings of what happened to Ovaherero amidst the German colonial era.

First, there is the question of whether or not what happened was acceptable violence or suffering according to human rights. German reports at the time and historiography for several decades perceived the fighting with Ovaherero as an “uprising” or “colonial war,” and, thus, the fighting was categorically not genocidal.⁹ German officials prior to the apology were also very careful to publicly refer to the context of the violence as war and to argue that no laws existed regarding genocide or treatment of prisoners of war at that time. Thus, Germany effectively forwarded a two-part defense: (1) what happened was war and violence is to be an expected part of war and (2) it couldn’t have been genocide because the concept didn’t exist legally.

For Ovaherero, I suggest, the trauma of the violence and resultant suffering extended beyond an intentional attempt at killing most or all Ovaherero, genocide. Indeed, at public events, I believe I’ve only heard Riruako discussing population estimates before and after the genocide.¹⁰ Indeed, quantifying the loss of Herero lives was not common practice among the Ovaherero I knew. Constructing a history of genocide requires limiting social memory at least in the moments of restorative justice practice to the killing of Ovaherero as a group. This focus marginalizes many of Ovaherero’s other memories and emotions about the past. For example, many of the rememberings I heard in conversations and interviews suggested to me an overall sense of dehumanizing experiences, as I discussed in the forth chapter. The complex cultural meanings of losing cattle and land are largely left to the sidelines of discussions. The scattering of families and its implications for later generations is de-centered. Indeed, family histories and the culturally meaningful contexts in which they are

transmitted today are trumped in the production of a group history inherent to claiming genocide.

Because of its emphasis on telling and text, incorporating suffering that has been embodied into restorative justice practices is difficult. However, in my research the 2004 commemorations intersected with the restorative justice project to create a different sort of memory space that doesn't always appear present in other contexts of restorative justice. Although largely constituted by speeches (perhaps also intended as easily quotable texts from approved sources for foreign journalists), the 2004 commemorations created space for non-textual memories both within and at the margins of commemorations. At the Ohamakari commemoration, several performances presented the past in ways not necessarily included in the text of the day's speeches.¹¹ There were a group of Herero individuals at the top of the stadium who held up hand-made signs that subtly recalled sexual violence in the colonial past (i.e., not within the confines of fighting or concentration camps) by highlighting individuals' German ancestors or inheritance of disease more commonly associated with people of lesser skin pigmentation. Another group of Herero men dressed as Herero prisoners of war (imitating an archival photo), effectively portraying the feeling of their ancestors being dehumanized by Germans. At the beginning of the Ozombu Zovindimba commemoration, people were taken to see bones of Ovaherero who died at this place during the war where the wells were poisoned by Germans and then used by Ovaherero as they fled across the Omaheke. This unearthing also served as a reminder of the degrading experience for Ovaherero during the battles of not being having time to stop and bury their dead. As a result, many Ovaherero don't know where their ancestors' bones lie. Herero cultural practices surrounding death and burial seemingly morphed to accommodate this problem of burial, but

it is the feeling of being forced to such inhumane treatment of their dead that Ovaherero today emphasized when talking with me. With these examples in mind, I suggest that the 2004 commemorations served to significantly expand the forms of remembering that proceeded amidst the restorative justice project. However, it is not clear to me whether or not those with only a public and or textual basis for understanding the past, and German audiences in particular, would have recognized these as other forms of remembering.

Social suffering became a part of public conversations not so much as a form of violence in itself committed by Germany in the colonial era, but rather as a residue of violence, as consequent social and economic imbalances. Restorative justice is called upon not to address violence precisely, which is the task of human rights, but rather to address how past violence is felt. It is the practice of restorative justice that requires evidence of how the past is felt for victims or their descendents. Practicing restorative justice has thus opened up spaces for Ovaherero to talk about suffering in the present that can be traced back to the German-Herero past. This has the effect of privileging social suffering that is related to this particular past and, in turn, privileging the importance of this past for present suffering. For example, possible influences of the previous South African administration and apartheid policies on contemporary Herero suffering or even the effective silencing of Ovaherero's fighting with Germans lacks space in be incorporated into the present restorative justice project.

It is social suffering that many Ovaherero refer to, to justify a need to address the past. However, genocide as conceptualized by human rights is disinterested in such residue of genocide. Suffering as a result of an injustice is secondary to the injustice itself. Because present suffering of this sort does not itself constitute a human rights violation, another

question that has arisen amidst public discussions about defining this past as genocide, is whether the concept of genocide now is applicable in the past. Human rights are conceptualized as “universal,” and thus, it should seemingly follow, be without spatial or temporal boundaries. Spatial jurisdiction (sovereignty) is, however, circumscribed in practice, in large part because human rights remain tied to national judicial institutions for meaningful application, enforcement, and denial (Asad 2003:129). Human rights confronts a similar paradox with temporal boundaries in that as much as human rights are created as universal rights, questions arise about how violations can be claimed before human rights were codified. In one particularly cogent response amidst the Ohamakari commemoration, Professor Jeremy Sarkin cited 19th-century treaties about laws of war to which Germany would have been party to argue that (1) civilians should have been protected and (2) the concept of crimes against humanity (out of which genocide emerged as its own crime) was recognized. Further, he highlighted the fact that prior to the codification of genocide, Gering was convicted of the extermination of the Jewish population, which Sarkin asserted was similar to what happened in SWA in 1904. A number of individuals I spoke with about what happened in 1904 emphasized what they perceived as inhumane war practices on the part of Germans while they were fighting Ovaherero. For example, individuals noted with disdain that Germans killed women, children, and elderly as well. One can imagine the fear, disbelief, or anger with which contemporary Ovaherero may have witnessed or directly experienced such an unfair waging of war. Indeed, the general narrative of Ovaherero fleeing through the desert enters the conversation about genocide only as evidence of Germans carrying out a plan to exterminate all Ovaherero and not as a traumatically violent experience of its own. Herero memories of an unruly or cruel war are marginalized in its framing as

genocide, in which case German genocidal intent like von Trotha's extermination order as well as total Herero deaths are privileged. I certainly do not aim to suggest that it's more important for Ovaherero to remember an uncivilized war rather than a genocide, but rather I attempted to illuminate some examples of ways in which applying a lens of genocide to 1904 leaves out some experiences with violence that constitute part of the pain of this past for Ovaherero today.

Constituting and Problematizing Victims and Perpetrators

Curiously, amidst restorative justice practices, 2004 commemorations, and my conversations with Ovaherero, the label *Germans* was used quite vaguely. At different moments, *Germans* could be citizens of Germany, citizens of Namibia, living people, early German missionaries, Schutztruppe, traders, or colonial settlers. In the spaces of restorative justice, this labeled was applied to bureaucrats and Schutztruppe in the past and to the German government today. When Ovaherero talked to me about this past, *Germans* might stand for any of the range of individuals I mention above. This slippage about who constituted the historical agents and who appropriately constitutes these agents today is a consequence of the categories of restorative justice and human rights. In other words, through the practice of restorative justice, agents of violence are not only named and asked to assume responsibility, but they are constituted in the process. Categories of human rights thought significantly shape the possibilities of who these agents can be.

Indeed, human rights practices define agents of injustices along a binary: victims versus perpetrators. As I've discussed above, violence amidst the defined injustice is interpreted according to the overall plot of the claimed human rights violation such that, for

example, an individual murder in Rwanda in April 1994 is not meaningful in itself but rather as part of a larger story of genocide. Similarly, various parties involved in a claimed human rights violation are interpreted as either victims or perpetrators regardless of individual acts which might complicate this binary. In this section, I aim to trace some of the influences of human rights practice on the constitution of Ovaherero as victims and Germans as perpetrators and illuminate resulting tensions that then affect restorative justice practice.

First, while Ovaherero talking about the past included both civil and military groups and individuals when speaking of Germans, these distinctions are significant for defining violence in human rights thought. As I discussed above, in human rights practice, one frequent qualification of morally and legally allowable pain and suffering is that it occurs in the context of warfare or among combatants. To a great extent, the type of agent defines the type of violence understood in human rights practice. Thus, violence inflicted by a member of the Schutztruppe is immediately understood differently than violence inflicted by a German trader, for instance. However, this distinction holds little value for Ovaherero who remember the violence of German colonialism as something like a broad project of betrayal and dehumanization as opposed to primarily warfare. That the status of some Ovaherero as warriors (and thus potentially classifiable as combatants, as comparable with Schutztruppe) is left out of the version of the past injustice proliferated by restorative justice practices also requires explanation. I would also suggest that it is because (1) “Herero warriors” don’t fit well within modern definitions of warfare (i.e., civilians versus military; combatants versus non-combatants) as employed by human rights, (2) the violence Ovaherero experienced over the 1904-1907 period extended far beyond battlefields, and (3) that the use of *genocide* immediately focuses attention on violence committed by *perpetrators of genocide* (perhaps

categorizing other violence as self-defense) that the civil or military status of violence perpetrated by Ovaherero is obscured. Thus, the status of violence for human rights practice has much to do with the status of participants (Asad 2003:113-118). Further, the past that emerges from restorative justice practices for Ovaherero then does not fully describe the extent of violence remembered and, as I will expand on below, limits the agency of Ovaherero in this history differently than how most Ovaherero remember their ancestors' participation.

A second tension in determining the agents of violence and responsibility has to do with the question of who represents agents of the past today. While this is a more obvious problem for restorative justice that addresses long past injustices, defining representatives of those involved in injustices is a necessary component of any variety of restorative justice practice. Agents of the past must somehow be traced to living groups. Such acknowledgement, or imagining, of a group's continuity over time is what anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot terms *double recognition of numerical identity across time* in the context of group apologies (2000:175). This is the dual process of the apologizer in the present identifying themselves with the perpetrator in the past as well as of the addressee of the apology in the present identifying themselves with the victim in the past. He argues that such an establishment of relationships between living people and past agents distinguishes apologies (and I would extend this to other forms of restorative justice) from other speech acts "that express commiseration without implicating the speaker in the first temporal plane" (Trouillot 2000:175).

In the process of determining perpetrators, I imagine four possible present-day representatives that have all entered into the restorative justice process with Ovaherero to

some extent: German citizens - real and symbolic descendents of colonial Germans, German-Namibians – largely descendents of colonial Germans who were German citizens even if their descendants are not, the von Trotha family – descendants of the individual who directed the most brutal violence against Ovaherero, and the German government – the imagined state-level descendent of imperial Germany. The liberal notions of agency underlying human rights don't allow for descendents of an individual perpetrator to be held responsible.¹² At the same time, as Asad explains, “the actions of an agent are taken to be the actions of the principal whom the agent represents” such that the actions of the German Schutztruppe, as representatives of the German state, are actions of the state (2003:75). Of course, modern notions of citizenship mean that states are understood to represent their citizens. Via the understandings of agency informing human rights, the German state becomes the final responsible party for colonial injustices.

That German-Namibians have been so readily put aside or bracketed in restorative justice practices is, to my analysis, a potential obstacle for Ovaherero someday realizing restorative justice. It is the Germans whose ancestors settled in German South West Africa who now own much of the land that Ovaherero described to me as lost family land. It is primarily these Germans with which Ovaherero live everyday life. Thus, I made a point to question some individuals about why Ovaherero engaged Germany in restorative justice rather than German-speaking Namibians. It was explained to me that no one alive today actually did these things in the past and that it was anyway the German government, represented in its General, Lothar von Trotha, which committed genocide.¹³

It would seem a foregone conclusion that Ovaherero constitute a singular group of victims, pre-existing the categories of restorative justice. After all, it is Ovaherero who have

actively pursued restorative justice and are even named as plaintiffs in the lawsuit as “The Hereros, a Tribe and Ethnic and Racial Group, by and through its Paramount Chief, by Paramount Chief Riruako.” Further, as I described in the introduction, every Herero individual I interviewed with one exception, self-identified as Omuherero.¹⁴ However, as is evident in some of tensions of the 2004 commemorations and, especially, in the various discussions among OvaHerero in Namibia about participating in a dialogue with Germany to settle the question of reparations, OvaHerero did not agree on who precisely counted as victims or on who could represent OvaHerero in spaces created by restorative justice. It was clear to me and some OvaHerero I spoke with that there were a number of communities that participated in the 2004 commemorations and discussions about restorative justice with Germany that might not normally first identify as OvaHerero. Yet Riruako seems to include all these within his jurisdiction and all are encompassed by the Namibian government’s term “Otjiherero-speaking people,” part of a rubric of group labels employed to discourage “tribalism.” Prior to Namibian Independence, all of these groups would have been categorized as *Herero* according to South African laws.

While, the constitution of the German government as the perpetrator of genocide has much to do with how human rights views the continuity of the state over time and the status of representatives of the state, it is the status of *culture* for human rights that figures significantly in shaping the constitution of OvaHerero as victims. By outlawing the destruction of national, racial, ethnic, or religious groups, The Convention on Genocide, effectively recognizes the right for such groups to exist. A number of other international agreements secure an individual’s right to “belong to” and “enjoy” a culture.¹⁵ Culture in human rights refers to groups that are discrete, bounded, and comprised of people who are basically homogenous.¹⁶ Anthropologists, however, have long abandoned this understanding of culture in favor of notions of culture as practice, incorporating dynamism, heterogeneity,

agency, and historicity. Human rights and legal systems more broadly demand clear, stable categories with which to address rights claims. These categories, in turn, prompt those making claims to essentialize culturally defined groups, even if only momentarily and strategically, in order to fit their claims within the boundaries of human rights. This compulsion to essentialize culture in order to make claims for rights is one manifestation of what Cowan et al refer to as “the essentializing proclivities of law.”

Because Ovaherero must constitute this particular type of group to forward their claims of human rights violations via restorative justice practices, this process of pursuing restorative justice has with varying results forced a common identity on what might be better understood as networked communities: those who readily claim Herero identity, those who claim their Herero identity historically despite having “lost” some or all aspects of “Herero culture,” as well as the variety of Otjiherero-speaking peoples in Namibia. The tentativeness of this grouping was further emphasized in disagreements that precipitated from decisions about representation required to dialogue with German representatives in various spaces of the restorative justice process. Interestingly, what might be a merely strategic alliance coincided at some moments with the actual gathering of these varied communities for particular purposes relating to remembering 1904 and dialoguing with Germany’s representatives about reparations.¹⁷ That others remarked to me about Ovaherero coming together for the 2004 commemorations, especially the Ohamakari commemoration, suggests that remembering in the context of restorative justice did create a temporary Herero community of sorts at some moments.¹⁸

Another way in which this sense of a singular Herero group has been produced is amidst arguments about the inclusion of others in reparations from Germany. While many

argued about whether Damara, in particular, should be included in the process to negotiate reparations, I did not hear any discussion about Ovaherero being differently affected because of the proximity of their communities to the areas of German interest. Many Damara were probably also victims of violence in the 1904-1907 period because they were living among Herero communities at the time. At the same time, some Ovaherero at that time lived further north in areas that weren't directly impacted by fighting with Germans. Thus, in these discussions, some notion of a unified Herero group was mobilized or produced to contrast with other communities also affected by violence but, actively excluded from this group on the grounds that von Trotha's extermination order was directed against Ovaherero specifically. In other words, "the Hereros" is a group produced in this context as a foil to those who were not victims of genocide. Defining the violence as genocide shapes the way in which participants in the past of 1904-1907 are interpreted and in turn helps define who Ovaherero can be today.

A third, and rather different way, in which human rights has shaped Ovaherero and Germans results of the essentializing of the nature of human rights violations such that participants become either victims or perpetrators. The restrictiveness of this binary is meaningful in its capacity to shape the way participants in restorative justice understand the past and their participation in it. Scholars investigating the effects of these categories suggest that human rights discourse used in restorative justice practices create whole groups of people as (undifferentiated) victims and argue that the formation of victims only serves to displace the agency of these groups in the historical record created by the practice (Humphrey 2003, Ross 2003:178-9, Smyth 2003). In my research I noted a potential tension between Ovaherero being produced as victims via their participation in the pursuit of

restorative justice and yet at the same time most Ovaherero I spoke with remember a much more active role for their Herero ancestors in this past. As I discussed in the fourth chapter, those more nationalist oriented versions of the past understand Ovaherero as early resisters of colonialism and active participants in the struggle for Namibian impence. Other Herero understandings of the German-Herero past described Ovaherero of that time as proud, clever warriors defeated only by the inhumanity of Germans' war tactics.¹⁹ In both of these broadly sketched ways of seeing the past, Ovaherero fought bravely against German invaders; they were hardly just victims. However, understanding the past through the lens of genocide means seeing Herero ancestors foremost as victims.

Perpetrators can also be said to be created via human rights discourse. In the context on which I've focused, the boundaries of this category were drawn in a somewhat artificial way in that by naming the German government as the official perpetrator, it left the culpability of German-Namibians largely aside. However, as I've described above, the culpability of this community is included by Ovaherero amidst some remembering and excluded amidst the remembering in spaces more explicitly belonging to the process of restorative justice. German-Namibians are surely cognizant that they are implicated as guilty parties in some Herero remembering. One member of the NPCC04 described concern among German-Namibians that the 2004 commemorations would be "one-sided." "The German community here is very sensitive," he explained in regards to this concern about the commemorations. "They have feeling they are culprits." It is curious that at least some members of the German-Namibian community recognize that they are involved in the German-Herero past in question, but do not understand their ancestors' participation to have been that of perpetrators. At the same time, some Germans in Germany, namely some NGOs

and most recently the German government recognize agents such as “German colonialist powers” or “German oppressors” as perpetrators of genocide and other human rights violations against Ovaherero.

These different relationships to culpability between these two different German communities likely emerge out of these communities different relationships to the Holocaust and the German state as well as different social memory practices.²⁰ First, some scholars argue that the atrocities of World War II enabled Germans to erase or marginalize memories of German colonialism, including of course this past violence against Ovaherero in Namibia (Friedrichsmeyer et al. 1998). However, Germans who settled in SWA during the German colonial period not only didn’t experience the Third Reich or its aftermath similarly to those residing in Germany, but by this time settlers had developed their own German identity separate from Germany and the South African state (Walther 2002, Junge et al. 1993). Germans in SWA and later Namibia continued to remember the colonial past, including the battles with Ovaherero, as I discussed in the fourth chapter. Second, out of these differing relationships with the Holocaust and the historical, moral, and legal debates that followed, it might be argued that Germans in Germany, and the German state in particular, were more familiar with restorative justice and sensitive to German culpability for past atrocities. In other words, there existed a precedent for the German state accepting responsibility for past violence, and genocide in particular, and negotiating reparations to victim communities. There is nothing about the restorative justice discourse or practices that necessitates the production of guilty, remorseful subjects which some argue are necessary for the achievement of restorative justice (Trouillot 2000, Tutu 1999, Tavuchis 1991, Barkan 2000:343-4). However, the differing notions of culpability between these two German

communities may suggest that as precedent emerges for restorative justice practice, it may influence the production of such subjectivity in new ways.²¹

Restorative Justice in Practice

Clearly Ovaherero constructed the very requisites for practicing restorative justice amidst its practice. I have argued that this is not a unique problem for Ovaherero, but is rather a necessary component of vernacularizing globally circulating discourses, like restorative justice. This is a two-way social process in which both groups using broader discourses refashion them to be meaningful and useful to their particular context and, in taking advantage of such discourses, groups may effectively reshape particular knowledges. In this instance of Herero efforts at restorative justice, this German-Herero past has not only become the most important, most formative past, of contemporary Herero experience but these practices are producing new, hegemonic understandings of the past at the same time.

The moral or therapeutic good of such reformulations remains a separate question that is not within the scope of this project, but I will highlight a few potential points of further consideration. Is the production of victimhood through restorative justice yet another potential trauma for Ovaherero that is born out of the German-Herero war 100 years ago? Do these varied understandings of the past and its participants coexist in tension, being selectively deployed in different contexts? Or are these tensions a sign of changing understandings about the past? Although my research doesn't directly explore this question, I found that these different subjectivities for Ovaherero--brave, resistance fighters and victims of genocide--currently exist in tension, with different subjectivities deployed in different contexts. I didn't note any Ovaherero expressing concern about effectively being made into

something more like passive participants in the history of genocide emerging out of the restorative justice process. However, that I found many individuals who argued that they didn't know "the history," despite knowledge of family histories, and instead ceded authority to Herero historians, cultural-political leaders, and history books. This suggests the potential for a developing Herero history that sidelines family histories. Is there a possibility of occluding the sorts of family-based memories and remembering I discussed in the third chapter as Ovaherero are effectively producing a group-identity with a common group history in the practice of restorative justice? In other words, is the seemingly increasing value of a common group history concurrently devaluing the meanings attributed to family history and memory practices within the family?

Similarly, in her chapter in Goodale and Engle Merry's edited volume, Lauren Leve describes a double-bind of violence for Nepali Buddhists who are "compelled to represent themselves [via human rights discourse] in ways that directly contradict the values and truths they say they are fighting to protect in order to defend themselves against another form of representational violence, perpetrated by the state" (2007:105-106). Leve found that Buddhists themselves didn't articulate this double-bind situation as a problem, but that a split resulted within the community (2007:106-108).²² Once the potential contradictions and the varied possible social products of restorative justice practice is recognized, there is surely much room for further investigation about how such new forms intersect with the meanings of practicing restorative justice for groups like Ovaherero.

Notes:

¹ For a discussion of the historical links between liberalism and human rights see Asad (2003:56-62).

² Quoting Hannah Arendt's (1973) *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Ignatieff highlights the paradox that human rights emerged at the moment when rights had been shown to have no foundation, when even the naked humanity of Holocaust victims failed to arouse compassion in their Nazi violators (2001:79).

³ Asad offers an interesting critique of the universality of human rights by highlighting a particular paradox of how human rights assigns responsibility for cruelty. He explains that human rights law differentiates between suffering that an individual sustains as a citizen from that she/he experiences as a human being (e.g., calculated collateral damage in military operations does not count as violations of human rights). Thus, while the inalienable rights that define humans depend only on one's status as humans, human rights violations are determined in international law according to an individual's civil status (2003:127-9).

⁴ Sachs has written extensively on human rights in South Africa as a Justice of the South African Constitutional Court and victim of violence and injustice by the apartheid regime for his participation in the African National Congress.

⁵ See also Posel (2008) for an analysis of the politics of confession in the case of the South African TRC.

⁶ Kidron (2009) critiques the common conception that "survivor silence" signifies only psychological or political repression or results of pasts that cannot be articulated as she analyzes "lived memory" among the descendants of Holocaust survivors.

⁷ This individual was located at the U.N. headquarters for several years as a petitioner for Namibian independence from South Africa.

⁸ An adviser to the United States War Ministry, Raphael Lemkin, first coined the term "genocide" to articulate Nazi crimes. His was the basis for the definition of "genocide" adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948 that made genocide a crime under international law (Chalk and Jonassohn 1990:8-10).

⁹ Asad proposes that colonizers also perceived as acceptable, violence that was suffered as part of a civilizing project, a program to create new human subjects (2003:110).

¹⁰ At the Ohamakari commemoration, Riruako asserted that there were approximately 500,000 – 600,000 Ovaherero before the fighting with Germans began and only 80,000 Ovaherero in 2004, whereas he estimates the current population would have been 1.8 million in the absence of genocide.

¹¹ I also find it noteworthy that one of the performances constituting the official commemoration was a spoken word performance by students at the German high school in Windhoek (DHPS) that was introduced by the master of ceremonies as "unity in the flesh" because the group consisted of children from several different Namibian ethnic groups. What is striking is what this "unity in the flesh" actually says about the variance in educational opportunities in Independent Namibia. These children were chosen to perform while local students (e.g., students at Okakarara or Waterberg schools) played no official part in the commemoration. Had they, the tremendous economic and educational disparities of rural and urban education in Namibia today would have likely been made visible. While it certainly may be argued that these disparities have their roots in previous administrations, it is curious that this form of inequality is one that commemoration organizers were seemingly willing to leave unspoken.

¹² See Asad for one useful discussion of agency in human rights (2003:67-79). He describes modern secular human agency as a "conscious agent-subject having both the capacity and the desire to move in a singular historical direction: that of increasing self-empowerment and decreasing pain" (2003:79).

¹³ I imagine at least two possible factors that work towards explaining why Ovaherero chose Germany as the appropriate present-day representative of the past *Germans*. First, the notion of German-speaking Namibians as the present embodiment of the past agents of genocide may not easily reconcile with many adults' experiences with Germans in their lifetimes, particularly in the context of apartheid. Relative to the other major White ethnic group in Namibia, Afrikaners, Germans were (and continue to be) known as "good bosses," which translates into being perceived as more just and charitable in employer-employee relationships. I can imagine that especially for those now elderly individuals whose working lives were fully constituted by the apartheid period, denigrating these same Germans constitutes somewhat of a moral dilemma. Second, because of the Namibian government's approach to national reconciliation, it would be politically difficult if not politically and legally impossible for one section of the Namibian population to confront another section of the population. Third, restorative justice can only name groups which can be readily conceived as a group with a representative, which is not the case for the German-Namibians, most of whom are Namibian citizens and thus could only be legally represented by the Namibian state.

¹⁴ At the beginning of each interview I asked "do you consider yourself Ovaherero?"

¹⁵ These agreements include: Article 2.1 of the United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Ethnic or National, Linguistic and Religious Minorities; Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Cowan et al. 2001:8).

¹⁶ Cowan et al argue that essentializing social categories and identities is a basic feature of legal discourse generally because law is usually grounded in a positivist view of truth. They explain further that it is out of resulting tensions between legal discourse and the complexities of social facts that law and the legal system are forced to constantly change (2001:6).

¹⁷ I'm thinking in particular of the varied attendance at the Ohamakari commemoration and the May 2005 meeting in Opuwo to discuss the procedure for dialogue with Germany.

¹⁸ It would be useful to investigate whether these creations of a group in name and in practice at some moments in and following 2004 in any way influenced the way these participants conceived of a Herero or identity community (i.e., an imagined cultural community).

¹⁹ One vivid public example of this attitude toward the past I recall is t-shirts produced by and circulating among some Ovaherero that read "100 years later... still walking tall and proud."

²⁰ Although it's not within the scope of this project to examine these different perceptions of culpability in great detail, a number of scholars have written on the notion of German collective guilt.

²¹ However, it is arguably only in so far as restorative justice practices remain separated from legal systems of punishment that precedent could work towards creating remorseful subjects. In the face of legal responsibility, alleged perpetrators are more likely to argue against precedent that would require their payment of compensation.

²² Leve references Fortun's analysis of the socio-historical circumstances that produce double-binds, from whom Leve borrowed the term, to suggest that double-binds may produce change even if a community doesn't recognize it as a problem. Double-binds, Fortun explains, emerge as "entrenched signifying systems are being challenged and displaced [and] subjects are drawn into new realities and fields of reference," and they act "as a social register of profound change" (2001:13).

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has described the emergence of the experiences of Ovaherero between 1904 and 1907 in German South West Africa not only as the past that forms everyday life for Namibian Ovaherero today, but also as a social “wound” in need of repair. In the pursuit of means to engage with Germany about this past in the form of restorative justice practices, Ovaherero had to negotiate shared accounts of this past and its meanings for the present within Herero communities, across select Namibian social groups, and between German and Herero representatives, even if temporarily for this purpose. While engaged in pursuing restorative justice, this past has taken on new meanings. It became clear that for Ovaherero the possibilities for “healing the past” can only emerge out of engaged dialogue and the changing relationships between stakeholders that found the process of practicing restorative justice.

While the significance of this period was commonly asserted by Ovaherero, the happenings of this time were not remembered identically across Herero families and communities, much less across other Namibian communities. In preparing for the 2004 commemorations, various groups with a stake in the form of these commemorations and the past they aimed to highlight attempted to come together to negotiate a common account of 1904. Contests quickly surfaced among various Herero communities and other interested Namibian communities about the interpretation and use of this past. The formation of

competing commemoration committees evidences a large difference in interpretation among Ovaherero between those who understand the events of 1904-1907 as part of Namibians' long history of fighting oppression from foreign governing powers and those who see this period as a tragic moment in Herero history that continues to constitute a source of social suffering for Ovaherero today. "The National Preparatory Committee for the Commemoration of 1904" interpreted the events of 1904-1907 as "resistance" efforts akin to those of the Namibian "Independence Struggle" and, thus, useful for imagining a common history for (most, but not all, citizens of) the new Namibian nation. At the same time, "the Coordinating Committee for the First Official Commemoration of the Ovaherero Genocide" emphasized the singularity of these events in Namibian history and the disproportionate impact on Ovaherero (along with some other groups) and their descendents. These competing framings of 1904-1907 evidence both fissures among the "Herero community" (although often assumed to be a unified group) and the multiplicity of understandings and meanings of this past despite public assertions to the contrary. In other words, while many Ovaherero asserted that 1904-1907 was formative of their lived experience today, one role of the commemorations was to help to constitute a shared version of this history for Ovaherero themselves.

By examining and tracing the different histories and social memories about 1904-1907 that circulate nationally and internationally, it is clear both that such accounts have changed over time within particular contexts and that they embody different meanings for different communities that have produced accounts. By describing the events of 1904-1907 as *genocide*, Ovaherero can effectively translate their understandings of their ancestors' experiences into terms both understood globally and actionable via legal and extralegal

processes. This interpretation also evidences particular understandings of Herero culpability in the wars of this time as well as particular explanations for the causes of social suffering today. Those framing this past as an instance of a broader Namibian experience of colonial brutality see it as a path for creating understanding across colonized Namibian communities and, thereby, for forming a shared national historical narrative and identity. At the same time, accounts of German-Namibians have shifted from being the primary official version of the events of 1904-1907 to being sidelined from national narratives as well as those of restorative justice attempts. Academic histories have developed largely in the context of political concerns (especially cold-war politics and anti-colonialism) in the academy and more recently respond to post-colonial concerns about the accessibility of history to the formerly colonized. Because the authority of these academic histories (more than Herero oral history and social memory) is recognized by the international community that supports restorative justice, these have been used extensively by those Ovaherero framing 1904-1907 as a genocide (in part) for this audience. It is noteworthy, however, that accounts widely accepted as official histories have been largely produced outside of Herero places and, in many instances, outside of Namibia.

These various histories previously circulated simultaneously and primarily among different communities. Differences were less important as each community had its own processes for producing and authorizing knowledge about the past. However, both the pursuit of restorative justice and the 2004 commemorations constituted new spaces for talking about the past and these contexts that required a more or less singular account of the past which needed to be negotiated among different communities' approaches to this past. In the context of restorative justice, the history of 1904-1907 was in the process of being standardized, even

if temporarily for this purpose, as stakeholders engaged the various histories to weigh in on this controversial matter.

I described the ways in which Ovaherero learn about the past, both generally and the understandings of the German colonial period in particular, to explore the ways in which the past of 1904-1907 continues to be inscribed with particular meanings among many Ovaherero. Knowledge about past times has been told as narratives, encoded in songs and names, and in some instances learned from published books. Yet it is also embedded in bodies and everyday practices. At the same time, it is the family that constitutes the primary locus of and lens for understanding the past. In contrast, the recent public proliferation of Herero history in Namibia and beyond is formed around narratives belonging to a shared “Herero” history. In other words, in the context of pursuing restorative justice and even the 2004 commemorations, non-discursive knowledges of the past have been sidelined and the primacy of “the family” has been displaced by “the ethnic group.”

For many Ovaherero it has not been enough to merely remember the German-Herero past, it also demanded engagement in some manner, the sorts of social practices that I have collectively termed *restorative justice*. For this reason, some have supported the pursuit of restorative justice with Germany for almost twenty years. While the events of 1904-1907 in SWA have been described and mobilized by various Namibians for other purposes in the past, it is particularly in the last decade that some Ovaherero have sought justice with Germany for these events as *genocide*. Indeed, attempts to seek justice via processes used internationally to address human rights violations stimulated increasing international attention about the events of 1904-1907 as *genocide* such that by 2004 the German government recognized it in these terms.

In tracing the history of the pursuit of restorative justice by some Ovaherero, it is evident that the meanings of such practices must be constructed as restorative justice is sought. Even beyond this particular case, the practice of restorative justice has relied heavily on precedent. This reflects the fact that restorative justice is an emerging body of ideas, practices, and networks. However, its ad hoc nature also constitutes part of its effectiveness as practices evolve to suit the changing needs of those involved. Ovaherero leading demands for Germany to engage in restorative justice practices have perpetually changed tacks over time to meet a changing political landscape both domestically and internationally. At the same time, these leaders attempted to guide Herero supporters as to how they should understand each attempted practice in the context of addressing a perceived “wound” of the past.

For example, immediately following the German Minister’s 2004 apology, some Herero leaders immediately framed the apology as a positive step and asserted that reparations would constitute the necessary materialization of social reconciliation. However, tension mounted in Namibia about the negotiation of such reparations. These conflicts, particularly those among Ovaherero, suggest that participation in the process of negotiating with the German government held at least as much meaning for the perception of achieving restorative justice as did any reparations themselves. Any meanings that these practices embodied for Ovaherero had to be framed (and reframed) in the process, negotiating vernacularized ideas of restorative justice with social meanings extrapolated from other more familiar contexts. On the other hand, Germans and the German government approached this situation with a clear memory of having engaged in a similar process regarding Holocaust

victims. The problem was with seeing Herero claims as comparable to those of Holocaust survivors.

Although Ovaherero attempted several different means of engaging Germany in dialogue about the effects of the colonial project on Herero ancestors, as though seeking out the most appropriate form of restorative justice by trial and error, a multitude of changes in the ways people understood 1904-1907 proceeded outside the bounds of any particular restorative justice approach. Clearly, restorative justice practices are not discrete instruments, with which claims of injustice are miraculously transformed into reconciliation once the correct version is applied. Rather, pursuing restorative justice is a dynamic, cultural process that emerges through practice and through which new social forms may emerge. Indeed, clear claims of injustice are not necessarily already defined and available for mobilization prior to a group's practice of restorative justice. Buttressed by human rights, restorative justice—as discourse, practices, and networks—offers certain opportunities and constraints in re-envisioning the past, social relationships to the past, and subjectivities. Negotiation of these reformulations produces knowledges and subjectivities that align well with human rights and restorative justice, but may differ significantly from the very understandings that founded a group's feelings of being burdened by the past.

In other words, new understandings about the 1904-1907 events have emerged through the mobilization of the logic of restorative justice, and of human rights more broadly. New historical “truths” were produced within German and Herero communities and ultimately across these communities, as claims and counterpoints were formulated and effectively negotiated. For Ovaherero, memories of their ancestors' experiences with Germans during the colonial period were filtered and translated into the framework of

genocide. From more complicated memories of violence, relationships, and agency, Ovaherero became defined as *victims* and Germans as *perpetrators* in the process of practicing restorative justice.

In sum, even as some Ovaherero broadcast the importance of this historical period for national and international audiences, the meanings of this past were simultaneously forming and changing in Namibia and even among Herero communities themselves through the commemorations and the longer process of pursuing restorative justice. Thus, a significant outcome of trying to “heal the wounds” of the past with Germany has been the production of new understandings of the past of 1904-1907 for Ovaherero today. I argue that it is such various social forms that are produced in the practice of restorative justice that, when framed as such, constitute the outcomes that participating groups may perceive as achievements of justice or healing. Meanings associated with restorative justice are produced in its practice.

Is “Healing” Yet to Come for Ovaherero?

By late 2009 the German government had begun contributing financially to projects identified as beneficiaries of the Namibian – German “Special Initiative” that it negotiated two years before with the Namibian government. The Initiative is a 20 million Euro program for development projects in areas and for communities that were deemed to have “historic ties” with the German colonial government and to which the present German government considers itself to bear a special moral and political responsibility. Although the basis of this initiative was first announced in 2005 by the same government official who had delivered the apology less than a year earlier, Minister Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, and it was intended to benefit communities most impacted by German colonialism, the German government made

clear that the Initiative does not constitute reparations. Instead, the German government touted the Initiative as a program to support Namibia's future development.

To some Ovaherero, the Initiative evidences Germany's unwillingness to work in partnership with Ovaherero in addressing the colonial past and calls into question the sincerity of the 2004 apology.¹ Indeed, one Otjiherero-speaking journalist suggested in a Namibian newspaper article that the German government intended this Initiative to appease its citizenry's and the international community's possible future calls for restorative justice in place of engaging the affected communities in Namibia on their terms. In other words, for some, the Initiative permitted Germany to regain control over the process and framing of efforts to address past injustices. Many Ovaherero, however, continue to deem dialogue and engagement with Germany as equal partners to be a critical component of successful restorative justice about this past.

At the same time, the 2004 commemorative year and political maneuverings related to the Herero restorative justice process have failed to resolve the place of the Herero genocide in Namibian history. In the context of considering the destination of Herero and Nama prisoner of war skulls to be repatriated from Germany Chief Riruako challenged the Namibian government to locate these skulls in a genocide section of the planned Independence Museum.²

We cannot separate history and the different phases of resistance to colonial rule. We have to combine them in such a museum...The area where the new museum is being built by North Korean builders is the very soil where hundreds of Herero and Nama prisoners had to live in flimsy huts from 1904 to 1908 (Weidlich 2009b).³

Riruako alludes to a prisoner of war camp Germany maintained in this area during the war, emphasizing the lack of memorialization of this part of Namibian history in contrast to the new museum highlighting the Independence Struggle.

For at least some Ovaherero, feelings of resolution and reconciliation have apparently not yet been achieved. As efforts for justice have shifted from a Herero-led (albeit from select communities) movement to a bilateral project between Germany and Namibia, these Ovaherero have lost the possibility of shaping the meanings of “healing” or attaining justice, which as I argued above is the means by which groups may realize restorative justice. At the same time, other Ovaherero who have long aligned with a nationalist approach to engaging with Germany may imagine significant progress towards or even the accomplishment of restorative justice.

This situation then raises questions about how restorative justice might be practiced in such a way that all stakeholders, or particularly the victims that these practices prioritize, may adequately participate in the formulation of meanings critical to groups’ assessments of success. This dissertation demonstrates the importance of describing restorative justice as practice rather than measuring and evaluating such approaches to the past as programs. It is only in exploring the complex social processes that constitute these practices that one can begin to address questions of whether or how wounds of the past might be socially constructed and meaningfully “healed” for groups like Ovaherero.

Notes

¹ See, for example, Kae Matundu-Tjiparuro's New Era column "Are special initiative projects development or appeasement?" January 22, 2010. He also expresses concerns about the sustainability and impact of the projects supported by this Special Initiative, suggesting that the projects were planned quickly as appeasement rather than as part of long-term development initiatives linked to Namibian government plans.

² The Ethnology Museum in Berlin, Germany received all ethnographic "materials" collected in German colonies during Germany's colonial period. In particular, after the wars between Germany and Ovaherero and Nama in SWA, German scientists demanded the skulls of dead prisoners be sent to Berlin for "scientific research." These are the skulls for which Herero and Nama chiefs sought repatriation beginning in 2009.

³ North Korean builders were also used to build the Hereros' Acre monument and the new Presidential Residence. Government's use of non-Namibians stimulated much public criticism.

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