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Site of struggle: the Freedom Park fracas and the divisive legacy of South Africa's Border War/Liberation Struggle

Gary Baines*

History Department, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa

Every war is fought twice: militarily and then discursively. The war of words or discursive struggle tends to be particularly acrimonious following civil wars. This is true of South Africa's Border War/Liberation Struggle, during which the white minority's 'terrorist' became the black majority's 'freedom fighter'. Notwithstanding the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the legacy of this conflict remains divisive. Contestations over the meaning and memory of the war have manifested themselves in a number of ways. These include tensions during the integration of the South African Defence Force (SADF) and the armed wings of the liberation movements. A commemorative crisis has also followed the erection of new memorials, such as Freedom Park, to honour heroes and heroines of the Liberation Struggle. A fracas followed the decision of the Park's trustees to omit the names of deceased SADF soldiers from the Wall of Names. This paper examines how Freedom Park became the site of struggle between self-styled representatives of SADF veterans and cultural elites of the post-apartheid order. It suggests that this controversy exemplifies the functioning of memory politics in transitional societies.

Keywords: Klapperkop; Freedom Park; Border War; Liberation Struggle; discursive struggles; memorialisation; reconciliation; nation building; *ubuntu*

If one person's 'terrorist' is another's 'freedom fighter', then South Africa's white minority's 'Border War' was the black majority's 'Liberation Struggle'. The term 'Border War' was usually assigned to the war waged in Angola/Namibia, which was designated as the 'operational area' by the South African Defence Force (SADF). In fact, the State Security Council declared *all* South African territory an 'operational area' in a proclamation issued in 1985 (Malan 2006, pp. 151, 338). The 1957 Defence Act empowered the SADF to counter external threats and internal unrest (Satchwell 1989, p. 40). As an arm of the apartheid security forces, the SADF fought against whoever it defined as enemies of the state, whether they were Cubans, the armies of the frontline states, guerrilla insurgents or 'terrorists' operating in the country. Unlike Steenkamp (2007, p. 4), who holds that the Liberation Struggle and the Border War were separate conflicts,¹ I believe that the one was actually an extension of the other; that the country's low-intensity civil war was very much part of southern Africa's struggle for decolonisation that occurred within the context of the late Cold War.

Between 1967 and 1992, approximately 600,000 young white males were conscripted by the SADF to defend apartheid. These national servicemen were initially deployed in Namibia and Angola, but from the mid-1980s were called up to

*Email: g.baines@ru.ac.za

police the black townships.² The militarisation of white society was reinforced by social institutions, such as the family, education system, mainstream media and the churches. By far the majority of conscripts regarded their duties as a necessary commitment to make in order to ensure the continuation of white power and privilege. Occasionally, those liable for national service (or *diensplig*) refused to be conscripted, and some national servicemen objected to patrolling the townships. Some supported the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) for alternative forms of service. In rare instances, national servicemen went into exile to join the ranks of the armed wings of the African National Congress (ANC) or Pan Africanist Congress (PAC).³ But, by and large, they believed the apartheid regime's 'total onslaught' rhetoric, which maintained that the twin threats of African nationalism and communism were intent on destroying white society in South Africa. With the end of the conflict (and the phasing out of conscription), however, former soldiers have had time to reflect upon their experiences. Some have published memoirs or posted their stories on Internet sites, while others have had their stories mediated by journalists.⁴ These soldier-authors have sought to make sense of their experiences through the changing political landscape of the country's transition.

I have argued elsewhere (Baines 2008) that certain of these former SADF national servicemen believe that they have not been acknowledged for doing their duties and making sacrifices on behalf of their country. Yet others wish to shrug off the shame of being regarded as vanquished soldiers who lost the war and so ended on the wrong side of history. Some have dismissed any suggestion that they share a measure of blame for being complicit in an oppressive system and have embraced victimhood instead, while others have disavowed victimhood in favour of reaffirming their contribution to the making of a 'new' South Africa. Still others have chosen to remember the part that they played in making the country safe for continued white rule, only to be sold out by untrustworthy politicians. Clearly, ex-conscripts are not a homogeneous group and do not speak with a single or cohesive voice. It is against this background of the changing political landscape to which veterans have had to adjust that the fracas over Freedom Park's Wall of Names must be understood.

Memorials serve as significant markers of postcolonial society's (re)construction of its past. This is evident from Werbner's (1998) critique of the memorialisation of the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe. Werbner's notion of a 'postcolonial memorial complex', developed in relation to the Heroes' Acre site in Harare, interrogates the privileged place accorded the struggle narrative in the war memorial. The narrative constructed by the leadership of the ruling party serves to define the nation and becomes part of the official history of the new nation state. It remains to be seen whether the memorialisation of past conflict in post-apartheid South Africa follows this model. My approach is informed by Coombes's (2003) study of visual and material forms of representation that examines the tensions inherent in narratives of belonging – especially to the imagined community of the nation – and whether these can (and should) be resolved.

The Freedom Park fracas suggests that the relationship between reconciliation and nation building is a fraught one. Memorialisation is often a highly charged political process that leads to contestation between competing interpretations of past events. These differences of opinion have centred on questions such as who gets to claim ownership of the Liberation Struggle/Border War, and who gets to define the nation in post-apartheid South Africa? This paper explores these and related issues.

Monuments, memorials and alternative sites of memory

The apartheid regime erected a monument to pay tribute to those who lost their lives in defence of the Republic of South Africa (*Paratus* 1978, p. v). A twice-life-sized statue of an infantryman⁵ was erected on a hill called Klapperkop, south of Pretoria (now Tshwane). It is situated at the entrance of Fort Klapperkop, a military museum that houses artefacts of the South African War (1899–1902). Unveiled on 31 May 1979 by the then Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and Security, P.W. Botha, the soldier strikes a triumphant pose that is a standard design of war monuments the world over (see Figure 1).

The site became the locus of regular Republic and Remembrance Day memorial parades. On one such occasion, Botha admonished the audience with these words:

if you become faint hearted, and if you become tired, and if you are filled with despair, go to Pretoria, to Fort Klapperkop, and look at the simple statue of a soldier in combat uniform who gazes far over the horizon of the future, and look at the symbol of that monument which looks to the future and not the past, with faith in the Lord and with the knowledge that civilization must triumph (*Paratus* 1979, p. i).

The equation of white society with civilisation was commonplace in the rhetoric of the apartheid regime, and the invocation of God's name was a feature of Calvinist-inspired Afrikaner cultural nationalism. Nonetheless, it was no guarantee of victory. Indeed, as the conflict dragged on, ceremonies staged at the site by the SADF failed



Figure 1. Fort Klapperkop statue of uniformed soldier. Photo: Dudley Baines

to reproduce the ritual of national self-sacrifice in apartheid South Africa that was necessary to legitimise the war effort. The absence of reaffirmation had a deleterious effect on public morale and memory, for, as Mayo (1988, pp. 74–75) argues:

Memorials lose the forcefulness of their meaning when past wars and events are forgotten. A nation may cherish the memory of a particular war, but when persons and places are forgotten their monuments are not preserved and honor rituals are no longer held.

The memorial site on Klapperkop also includes a series of walls with the names of deceased soldiers inscribed on slate plaques affixed thereto. Nearly 2000 names are inscribed on these plaques (see Figure 2).⁶

Tributes were paid to these soldiers, as well as those who lost their lives in the Korean and World Wars. However, the names on the walls of remembrance have not been updated since 1994. During a 2003 visit to the site, I spotted a single wreath and gained the impression that the memorial had been neglected. Unlike the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Wall in Washington DC, the site has not become a well-frequented place of remembrance or mourning for friends and families of deceased SADF soldiers. In fact, the Klapperkop memorial has been rendered relatively insignificant by the transfer of political power and the integration of the statutory and non-statutory armed forces into the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). Although the SANDF continued the reenactment of Remembrance Day parades



Figure 2. Fort Klapperkop Memorial Wall. Photo: Dudley Baines

beyond 1994, the memorial has become virtually invisible, notwithstanding its elevated position on the Tshwane landscape. It has become an overlooked memorial to an undeclared war.

Since the transition, the standing of the SADF site at Klapperkop has been eclipsed by Freedom Park, which has been described as ‘a major landmark that is reshaping and enhancing the skyline of the capital city’ (Freedom Park Trust 2004–2009). Erected upon Salvokop, south of Pretoria’s central business district (CBD), it was purposely sited in close proximity to the Voortrekker Monument, which is emblematic of sectional (read: white Afrikaner) interests. With a budget in excess of R700 million, it is one of the most ambitious Legacy Heritage projects championed by the Mbeki presidency in terms of the National Heritages Resource Act No. 25 of 1999.⁷ As a state-funded memorial site, Freedom Park is dedicated to fostering a sense of national identity. Its mission statement commits the project to:

provide a pioneering and empowering heritage destination in order to mobilise for reconciliation and nation building in our country; reflect upon our past, improving our present and building our future as a united nation; contribute continentally and internationally to the formation of better human understanding among nations and peoples (Freedom Park Trust 2004–2009).

This inclusive vision is derived from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which suggested that there should be some form of symbolic reparations for those who suffered during the apartheid years. According to the TRC Report, symbolic reparations are those that aid in ‘the communal processes of remembering and commemorating the pain and victories of the past’ (cited in Minty 2006, p. 423). To this end, it proposed a memorial site that would enable visitors to come to terms with South Africa’s divided history by providing a place where people could not only mourn the loss of loved ones who died in various conflicts, but also celebrate the victory of democracy and freedom. In short, the site would enable the public to remember the struggle for humanity and freedom.

The Freedom Park Trust not only derived its mandate from the TRC, but followed its lead in adopting the notion of *ubuntu* as the foundational formula for an integrated nationalism (Marx 2002, p. 58). *Ubuntu* is an invented tradition and type of cultural essentialism that seeks to minimise the historical fault lines in South African society. It is a synthesis of African philosophy that stresses a common humanity and Christian theology, and emphasises the need for forgiveness as a prerequisite for reconciliation. Championed by (former Archbishop) Desmond Tutu, who coined the phrase ‘rainbow nation’ to describe the nascent nation in the post-apartheid period, *ubuntu* became the cornerstone of the nation-building project.

While Freedom Park was being constructed, its trustees established a website. According to statements on the site, the project was committed to ‘foster[ing] a new national consciousness’ and ‘play[ing] a primary role in healing our nation’s wounds by uniting the diverse peoples of South Africa’ (Freedom Park Trust 2004–2009). In order to promote such goals, the Park hosted ritualistic cleansing ceremonies that symbolically served to put the nation’s divisive past behind it. A wreath-laying ceremony in 2005 was designed to ease tensions between former enemies, the SADF, on the one hand, and MK (*Umkhonto we Sizwe*)/APLA (Azanian People’s Liberation Army), the armed wings of the ANC and PAC, respectively, on the other hand. This symbolic gesture was an attempt to find common ground and ‘bury the hatchet’ (Freedom Park Trust 2005). However, the ceremony did little to heal rifts in the

ranks of the SANDF, and the choice of site for the ceremony – Freedom Park, rather than Klapperkop – suggested that the former represented the future, whereas the latter was associated with the past in the minds of the new commanders of the SANDF.

Freedom Park's 52-hectare site includes *Sikhumbuto* (siSwati for 'those who have passed on'), a commemorative compound designed to showcase the spirit of the nation and ensure that the history represented is based on the principles of redress and corrective action (Freedom Park Trust 2004–2009). The precinct comprises indoor features, such as the Gallery of Leaders and a Sanctuary with an eternal flame. The outdoor features comprise an Amphitheatre and the Wall of Names. The latter is actually a series of inter-connected walls nearly 700 m in length and reaching at least 6 m in height in parts.⁸

According to the Freedom Park Trust's heritage manager, *Sikhumbuto* is not a war memorial, but is dedicated to those who fought for freedom and democracy in the country (Abrahams 2008). It pays tribute to those who died during the conflicts that shaped present-day South Africa, which are enumerated as follows:

- Pre-colonial wars
- Genocide
- Slavery
- Wars of Resistance
- South African Wars (first and second Anglo-Boer Wars)
- World War I
- World War II
- The Liberation Struggle

The walls make provision for listing the names of the fallen in each of the above conflicts. It is envisaged that some of the lists of names will only be representative of those who died in these conflicts, but that others will be as definitive as possible (Abrahams 2008). Space is provided for the inclusion of 136,000 names on the walls. At the time of my 2008 visit to the site, 75,000 names had been verified for inclusion on the walls. Space has been allocated for some 5000 names of (deceased) 'heroes and heroines of the Liberation Struggle who laid down their lives for freedom' (Freedom Park Trust 2004–2009).

The Freedom Park Trust made an appeal for the nomination of names to be included on the Wall of Names as part of a public participation process (Freedom Park Trust 2006a). Interpreting the directive to include SADF soldiers who died in combat during the apartheid era, veterans' organisations submitted the names of fallen comrades to the Trust. They sought to have these names included in the wall's roll of honour. However, the Trust summarily rejected these submissions (SAPA 2007). This perceived sleight caused a controversy that was further fuelled by the intervention of Afriforum, a lobby group that took up the issue on behalf of some of these veterans. Together with its sister organisation, the trade union Solidarity, Afriforum serves as a watchdog for the protection of minority [read: white Afrikaner] group rights (Afriforum 2007a). Afriforum has repeatedly accused the ANC government of deliberately undermining the rights of white Afrikaners. It has opposed measures such as affirmative action, which are regarded as being designed to marginalise its constituency. Yet, its assertion of an exclusive white Afrikaner identity sits uneasily with its demand for recognition of their contribution to the making

of the new ‘rainbow’ nation. These countervailing imperatives serve to reinforce the fault lines in society at large, as well as in the ranks of the SANDF. In fact, little headway was made in respect of accommodating all stakeholders and special interest groups.

In January 2007, Afriforum made further representation on the matter to the Freedom Park Trust (Afriforum 2007b). This time it requested that additional concerns be addressed. It asked for recognition of the fact that the innocent civilians and security force members who died as a result of ANC ‘terror attacks’ should be acknowledged as victims of the Liberation Struggle. This effectively sought to broaden the base of those deserving of tribute to all who could lay claim to have suffered in some way or another from the violence of the country’s past conflicts. Afriforum also objected to the proposal to include the names of Cuban soldiers who died in Angola fighting the SADF on the grounds that they were fighting for communist world domination and not freedom.⁹ The CEO of Freedom Park Trust, Mongane Wally Serote, agreed to recognition of the victims of ‘terror’ (although he did not elaborate as to how victimhood would be defined or as to how victims would be honoured). However, he reiterated the Trust’s previous stand that the names of deceased SADF personnel did not deserve inclusion on the wall, on the grounds that they had fought to preserve apartheid and defeat the struggle for liberation (*Pretoria News* 2007). This affront was regarded by former soldiers as rubbing salt into their wounds: the betrayal by apartheid politicians of what they had fought to preserve was followed by the ANC government’s refusal to acknowledge their contribution to the making of the ‘new’ South Africa.¹⁰

Certain SADF veterans responded by erecting an alternative memorial at the access road to Salvokop on 16 January 2007 (*Herald* 2007a, Afriforum 2007c). It was dedicated by the shamelessly self-promoting singer, activist and SADF veteran, Steve Hofmeyr.¹¹ The plaque mounted on the memorial bears the following inscription in Afrikaans, English and north Sotho:

For All Those Who Fell heeding the Call of Their Country including those whose names are not on the Freedom Park wall. So We May never Forget the Dearly Fought Freedom of all Ideologies, Credos, and Cultures and their Respective Contributions to our rich South African Heritage.

Obviously not all ideologies are committed to the cause of freedom – and white supremacy in the guise of apartheid was most certainly not – yet Hofmeyr suggests that all contributed equally to the making of the ‘new’ South Africa. He also invokes the trope of historical impartiality to validate his view that public memorials should represent all sides where there is contestation over the meaning of past events. This much is evident from the plaque’s poorly worded (or translated) explanation of the memorial’s symbolism:

This triangular monument’s various sides symbolise the fact that history is not one-sided. It is erected to ensure that those who will, as a result of Freedom Park’s one sided usage of history are not being honoured, will get the recognition they deserve. Even though this monument does not cost the R716 million that Freedom Park cost, it is a sincere effort to pay homage to those who died in conflicts.

The unnamed conflicts presumably refer to those within living memory: to the ‘Border War’. The plaque also, rather pointedly, quotes a statement attributed to Serote:

'Because at the depth of the heart of every man beats the love for freedom'. The citation of Freedom Park's CEO suggests Serote's insincerity and even hypocrisy in not including SADF members on the Wall of Names. The erection of this cheap counter-memorial was a token but symbolic act by a group of disgruntled former SADF national servicemen protesting the perceived exclusiveness of Freedom Park's remembrance of conflicts in the country's recent past.

A meeting involving Afriforum executive member, Kallie Kriel, Hofmeyr and the trustees of Freedom Park was subsequently held on 30 January 2007. Serote proclaimed this an opportunity to promote dialogue and further debate on the SADF issue. While he spoke of the need for inclusivity, Serote is also quoted as saying that 'the issue of reconciliation and the past can be pitted against the history of the SADF' (*Herald* 2007b). His mention of the fact that the names of SADF combatants had been recorded elsewhere was presumably a reference to the Klapperkop memorial. However, there was no discernible attempt by Serote to appreciate why Hofmeyr, Kriel and company felt compelled to erect their own alternative monument, rather than gather at the SADF site. For his part, Kriel reckoned that '[t]o sing the praises of participants in the struggle while the rest are vilified will be a recipe for undesirable polarisation' (*Mail and Guardian* 2007). A subsequent workshop, which included representatives from the South African Veterans Association, the Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuur Vereniging, SA Heritage and the departments of defence and justice, was held on 8 February 2007 (*Herald* 2007c). The workshop apparently did little to resolve the differences of opinion and the issue became polarised and racialised. According to one report (*Herald* 2007d), it 'was split between those intent on reconciliation and others dead against displaying oppressors' names in the same place as those of freedom fighters'.

It is noteworthy that the Freedom Park trustees regard the *Sikhumbuto* memorial as a work in progress; as a 'living monument'. According to Freedom Park's website, '[t]he wall is not conceptualised and designed as a fait accompli and the design allows future generations to add their heroes and heroines' (Freedom Park Trust 2004–2009). However, it should be pointed out that a process of validation has to be followed before names are accepted for inclusion on the wall and it is not exactly clear what criteria have to be met by nominees to qualify. For instance, the names of those killed in the 1960 Sharpeville massacre and during the 1976 Soweto uprising were added to the wall (Freedom Park Trust 2006a). Certain of the deceased were not necessarily political activists, but innocent bystanders. Thus, there has been slippage between the categories of 'hero/heroine' of the Liberation Struggle and 'victims' of apartheid, as well as a blurring of the distinction between combatants and civilians. It seems that suffering or victimisation, rather than furthering the aims of the Liberation Struggle, has effectively become the qualification for inclusion of names on the walls, and, for now, trustees are neither ready nor willing to entertain the idea that SADF soldiers' names should be included. However, they have been prepared to compile a register of SADF personnel who died in the execution of their duties and to add these names to Freedom Park's database.

Discursive struggles and the politics of memory

Discursive struggles over the legacies of past wars continue in the guise of memory politics (Olick 2007, p. 139). This is exemplified by the Freedom Park fracas that has

been characterised by an ideological contest over the meaning of the Border War/Liberation Struggle. There has been a degree of rancour between those who advocate the inclusion of SADF personnel on the Wall of Names and those who are dead set against it. Those who fall into the first category contend that the Trust has not been consistent in upholding the principle of inclusivity when remembering those who lost their lives in South Africa's conflicts. Their case rests on the argument that combatants on both sides of the South African (or Anglo-Boer) Wars are inscribed on the Wall of Names, whereas the names of those who lost their lives in the Liberation Struggle are not balanced by those killed in the Border War. Both conflicts were arguably civil wars and, rather than treat one side as victims and the other as perpetrators, it would be more even-handed to regard these conflicts as a shared tragedy. The premise of this viewpoint is that there is a moral equivalence between being prepared to sacrifice one's life for the armed struggle and defending white supremacy. However, those who advocate the recognition of SADF personnel do not seem to realise that their position effectively undermines the ANC's claims to have fought a 'just war' against the illegitimate apartheid regime and, hence, to the moral high ground.

The Afrikaner historian Hermann Giliomee has branded Freedom Park an 'ANC monument' (*Beeld* 2007). Similarly, language-rights activist Jaap Steyn reckons that it is an exclusive monument that reinforces divisions, rather than promotes reconciliation (*Beeld* 2007). For their part, Freedom Park spokespersons have refuted charges that they define freedom (narrowly) as that won as a result of the Liberation Struggle led by the ANC or that the site articulates the ANC's version of history. Instead, they have insisted that they have embraced the principle of inclusivity. So, it is not surprising that when the Freedom Park trustees promoted those with struggle credentials while disregarding the claims of SADF soldiers for recognition that they should have been accused of bias, nor is it surprising that this would have rekindled the tendency of some white Afrikaners to see themselves as being victimised for who they are, rather than for what they did in the past. Indeed, they have come to see themselves as being excluded from the foundational narrative and key memorial of the 'new' South Africa.

Prolific military historian and publisher, Peter Stiff (in Webb 2008, p. 246) holds that the omission of the names of SADF personnel who died on 'the border' would be understandable if Freedom Park's Wall of Names was dedicated only to heroes and heroines of the freedom struggle. But the inclusion of the names of those who died in other southern African conflicts renders this omission inconsistent. He believes that in terms of the TRC's mandate to promote reconciliation, the Park should have been established to honour both sides of the freedom struggle. He also believes that conscripts and citizen force soldiers were not necessarily supporters of apartheid. This may have been so in certain instances, but this does not gainsay the fact that a majority of white South Africans were complicit in upholding the system of minority rule.

While retired military correspondent Willem Steenkamp does not believe that SADF members should be included on the Wall of Names, he dismisses the idea that they were upholders of apartheid. He says that many believed that they were 'combating Soviet imperialism and authoritarianism' (Steenkamp 2007, p. 13). He also introduces the spurious argument that these soldiers 'would not have fought as hard as they did if they had no motivation except a fear of going to jail' (Steenkamp 2007, p. 13). Steenkamp quite correctly insists that not all conscripts and volunteers were white, but

he overlooks the fact that most of those who joined the South West African Territory Force (SWATF) or paramilitary police units, such as Koevoet, did so for a mixture of motives that included coercion and material inducements, rather than fighting to preserve apartheid. He concludes that to insist on the inclusion of SADF names on *Sikhumbuto* will only serve to force the ANC to dig in its heels and that this would polarise race relations further.

There are good reasons why SADF soldiers' names should not be added to the wall. Young white males who were conscripted might have been discriminated against in this one regard, but they certainly benefited from the apartheid system. Yet they have not been forthcoming in admitting their complicity in defending apartheid. Unlike the US veterans, who acknowledged being witnesses or party to atrocities in Vietnam during the so-called Winter Soldier hearings in 1971 (Fitzgerald 2007), white conscripts showed little willingness to testify before the TRC and acknowledge their culpability for war crimes and other abuses.

Of the 256 members of the apartheid era security forces that applied for amnesty... only 31 had served in the SADF. In contrast, there were close to 1,000 applications for amnesty from members of the various armed structures aligned to the ANC (Foster *et al.*, 2005, pp. 15–16).

MK (and APLA) combatants were prepared to make more extensive disclosure than their SADF counterparts. The latter remained largely silent, either out of a (misplaced?) sense of loyalty to the old regime and fellow soldiers, or for fear of being held accountable by the ANC government for human rights violations. With the benefit of hindsight and following the revelations made before the TRC, ignorance and naivety constitute a limited defence against the view that veterans should accept their fair share of responsibility for what was done in their name by the SADF. While I am sympathetic towards the argument that conscripts had to make difficult choices, and would regard them as both 'victims' and 'perpetrators' of apartheid, I believe that there is a need for SADF veterans to admit at least a degree of agency and to own up to their culpability.

There are equally good reasons why the names of SADF soldiers should be included on the Wall of Names. If the Freedom Park project is committed to reconciliation, it could be argued that historical consensus is a prerequisite for achieving this goal. Accordingly, such an imperative might seem to point towards the desirability of the Freedom Park trustees going out of their way to accommodate those disavowing a memorial dedicated to remembering those who sacrificed their lives for an exclusive nationalist project (Klapperkop) in favour of a more inclusive nation-building project (Freedom Park). According to this line of argument, all sectors of the public must feel comfortable in the knowledge they can relate to names of the deceased on both sides of the Liberation Struggle/Border War. Indeed, including the names of SADF soldiers alongside those of 'freedom fighters' would be a fitting way to commemorate the end of apartheid, because such a gesture rejects the process of 'othering' upon which white majority rule was founded. Moreover, Freedom Park must move beyond paying lip service to nation building and dialogue, and make a concerted effort to remember the sacrifices of all who suffered and died for the freedom of their country. Given this mutual experience of suffering, it is only right that the names of the dead of both sides should be inscribed on the Wall of Names as a token of reconciliation.

In a 2007 Day of Reconciliation speech, the Freedom Park Trust's CEO, Serote, stated that:

Reconciliation can only truly take place when people lay down their arms, join hands and work towards a brighter future as one. ... both black and white have been hurt beyond repair. It is a sad truth that no amount of words can heal those atrocities; but we can alleviate the impact on future generations. ... If the past isn't recognised no reconciliation will happen and our children will live the same fate of their forefathers. It will be a case of history repeating itself (Freedom Park Trust 2007).

For Serote, the key question, then, is whether this conflict can be resolved amicably or whether it is likely to generate new cycles of mutual recrimination. There is undoubtedly a need for public engagement with respect to:

- Consultation about forms of memorialisation and about their purpose.
- Conversation about the commemoration of a divisive past and its contested meanings.

According to Carrier (2005, p. 214), disputed sites of memory offer a basis for public negotiation of historical memories and their political functions. Therefore, the argument goes that a compromise could and should be found between creating an inclusive (national) and exclusive (sectional) memorial at Freedom Park and thereby promoting both reconciliation and nation building.

Conclusion

Is it at all possible (or even desirable) to create a truly all-encompassing national memorial in a society that has experienced civil strife? Perhaps this is difficult when the memories of our recent conflict – as opposed to long forgotten ones – are still raw and we have not reached a stage where both sides can be honoured alongside one another. There are precedents for honouring the dead on opposing sides of a civil conflict. For instance, in Italy there are monuments that include the names of Mussolini's Fascists and the partisans killed during the latter stages of the Second World War.¹² But such examples are the exception rather than the rule. Most war memorials represent sectional interests, and memory cultures are seldom national in scope and appeal. Indeed, if their conceptualisation and design is hotly contested, they can actually undermine political consensus (Edkins 2003, p. 17). Is this a bad thing? Are differences of opinion necessarily inimical to the nation-building project? I am not convinced that we should be prepared to sacrifice a robust democratic culture where differences of opinion are tolerated—even cherished—for the sake of achieving consensus.

In the final analysis, what is at stake is whose version of history becomes institutionalised (Glassberg 1996, p. 11). The conventional wisdom is that winners get to write the history, while losers are likely to be relegated to the margins of society, with the official histories disseminated by the new political elites and cultural brokers becoming hegemonic. However, hegemonic historical narratives are always contested, and there is nothing sacrosanct about the Liberation Struggle, especially if its custodians betray its principles and thereby cede the moral high ground. Indeed, it is not inevitable that the victors – or liberators – will have the last word on how South Africa's divisive past is remembered. Nor should we seek an end to such contestation, for it is a normal –

even necessary – occurrence in the practice of democracy. Instead, we should develop the institutions and structures to manage conflict.

Notes

1. Steenkamp (2007, p. 4) makes the point that ‘the SADF and MK [*Umkhonto we Sizwe*] / APLA [Azanian People’s Liberation Army] never clashed operationally in any significant way’. This may be so, as the liberation armies never developed the capacity to wage anything but a war of insurgency and chose their battles accordingly, while Namibia and the frontline states served to buffer the white minority regime from direct attacks. But the War of Liberation was not confined to ‘operational areas’; it was waged throughout the entire country.
2. Universal conscription of all able-bodied white males replaced the lottery system that had existed since 1952. The call-up was extended to ‘coloureds’ and Indians after the creation of the Tricameral Parliament that accorded these groups token rights and added responsibilities of citizenship. White males in South West Africa were also conscripted by the SADF and from 1980 national service was extended to all Namibians – excluding Owambos, because they were deemed to be supporters of South West Africa Peoples’ Organization (SWAPO) – who were assigned to the SWATF and the South West African Police (SWAPOL).
3. See, for instance, Jürgens’ (2000) partly fictionalised autobiography, *Many Houses of Exile*.
4. For discussions of this literature, see Baines (2003, 2008) and Roos (2008).
5. A miniature replica of the statue was presented posthumously to the next of kin of those who died in action during the aborted Angolan invasion of 1975 (known by the codename ‘Operation Savannah’).
6. The toll of those killed while on active duty remains unclear. In a statement to Parliament in 1982, the then Minister of Defence, Magnus Malan, said that the SADF had a casualty rate of 0.012% (or 12 in every 100,000) of the average daily strength of its armed forces in South West Africa. It is not clear whether this figure includes casualties from accidents and suicides, but this figure is a gross underestimation of the actual situation. According to Professor R. Green, the official death rate of white troops killed on the border, expressed as a proportion of all white South Africans, was three times that of the US forces in Vietnam (Catholic Institute of International Relations 1989, p. 31, citing *The Cape Times*, 4 January 1985). My research suggests that the number of national servicemen who died in accidents or by their own hand while in uniform outnumbered those killed in action by about 3:1 and that the total number of troops killed during the 1970s and 1980s numbered about 5000. This figure does not include black members of the SADF or its surrogate forces. Steenkamp’s (2006, p. 20) estimate of 715 SADF personnel killed in action between 1974 and 1988 is clearly too low. John Dovey’s roll of honour lists 1986 SADF members killed on active duty over the period 1964–1994 (but has no data for 1980 and 1981) (see Dovey 2009). Stiff’s roll of honour of those killed in active service numbers 2095 and is based on the tally of names listed at the Klapperkop site, supplemented by his own research (Appendix in Webb 2008).
7. Freedom Park is to be completed in 2009 at an estimated cost of R719 million, according to *The Daily Dispatch* (*Daily Dispatch* 2007).
8. For a set of images of the Wall of Names, see: http://www.freedompark.co.za/cms/index.php?option=com_joomgallery&func=viewcategory&catid=19&Itemid=46.
9. A Freedom Park Trust Media Release on 31 August 2006 announced that the names of more than 2100 Cuban soldiers would be inscribed on the wall (Freedom Park Trust 2006b). This has since been accomplished.
10. See, for example, Anonymous (2008, pp. 12–13), reproduced as Appendix N in Breytenbach (2008, pp. 585–587).
11. Hofmeyr’s statement that ‘the omitted soldiers never resorted to killing fellow South Africans’ (see Jetstreak 2007) might have held for most individuals who wore the SADF uniform, but not for the institution. As such, it is either deliberately self-serving or incredibly naïve. Apart from failing to acknowledge that SADF troops deployed in the townships killed anti-apartheid activists and MK/APLA cadres in the course of their duties, it ignores

the evidence of cross-border operations by special forces (such as the Matolo raid by Recces on Maputo in January 1981) that killed exiled South Africans. Hofmeyr also ignores the evidence of the 'hit squads' and other 'dirty tricks' directed by the Military Intelligence Division and the SADF front organisation, the Civil Co-operation Bureau (CCB) (see Sanders 2006). For a set of images taken on the occasion of Hofmeyr's dedication, see: http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://i169.photobucket.com/albums/u230/Boerevryheid/Vryheidspark%2520Pretoria/Pretoria11.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.boerevryheid.co.za/cms/index.php%3Fpage%3Dvryheidspark-pretoria&usg=__p6y5LG6H64YCOWpm1ia5QwqcTs=&h=450&w=600&sz=108&hl=en&start=18&tbnid=gZXdUcPEx6ZZpM:&tbnh=101&tbnw=135&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dpretoria1%26gbv%3D2%26hl%3Den.

12. Kidd and Murdoch (2004, p. 4). It has also been possible to honour both sides of the American Civil War at memorials erected on battlefields such as Gettysburg.

Notes on contributor

Gary Baines lectures in the History Department, Rhodes University. He has published in the fields of urban and public history, music, literature, photography, film and cultural studies, and more recently has ventured into war and memory studies. He has co-edited (with Peter Vale) *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late Cold War Conflicts* (Unisa Press, 2008).

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