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## The Next Act: Examining the Role of Theatre of Commitment and Human Rights in Post-democratic South Africa

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## **The next act: Examining the role of theatre of commitment and human rights in post-democratic South Africa.**

### **Abstract**

The paper explores the role of theatre of commitment in advancing human rights in post-democratic South Africa. The notion of the theatre of commitment implies a theatre that has abandoned literary ends, to serve a political or social program or set of beliefs. The post-democratic South Africa is an antithesis of the Apartheid dispensation, human rights state whose construction is based solely on the pursuit of human rights norms. However, South Africa has not been a panacea of human rights as it has envisioned to be, given the socioeconomic inequalities of the past. Nowhere have these past inequalities shown themselves, than in the post-democratic tragic events of the Marikana Massacre on 16 August 2012, when the South African Police Service (SAPS) fired live ammunition into a crowd, killing 34 mine workers and seriously wounding 78. Cumulative the massacre claimed 47 lives, 34 mine workers and ten others who were killed by the protesting mineworkers, including two policemen and two security guards, while three died after the strike. The Life Esidimeni tragedy, occurred between 1 October 2015 and 31 June 2016 when 144 mentally ill patients died while being relocated from a private healthcare facility called Life Esidimeni (A place of dignity) to ill-equipped and short-staffed facilities around Johannesburg. The paper will explore the extent to which the theatricalisation of these two tragic events, demonstrated a cause committed to human rights as the political-moral idea of time on which became the foundation the post democratic South Africa a human rights state. This will be done by an in-depth analysis of Aubrey Sekhabi's *Marikana the Musical* (2017) and Siyabonga Mdubeki's *Isililo* (2020) which are two theatrical productions (play texts) that emanated from the two tragic events.

**Key words:** Theatre of commitment, Human Rights, South Africa, Marikana Massacre, Life Esidimeni tragedy

### **Short of Bio**

Kingdom Montshiwa Moshounyane is an artist-scholar, playwright, actor, and director. He is a cultural activist and arts manager, with vast experience within the South African Creative and Cultural Industries. He holds an M.A. in Drama and Theatre Arts (specialising in directing) and M.A. in Human Rights (Cultural Policy and Cultural Rights) from the University of the Free State. He is currently reading for his doctorate at the University of the Free State, Centre for Human Rights.