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Transition, Transformation

Albie Sachs, Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela
& Zahira Asmal

*Zahira Asmal in conversation with Albie Sachs & Pumla
Gobodo-Madikizela about democracy, forgiveness & memory.
The conversation took place at the home of Albie Sachs
& Vanessa September on 15 May 2015.*

ZA: I am sad to admit that the euphoria of 1994 has waned to some extent for me, for two reasons – our apparent lack of direction and leadership, and the minimal effort some South Africans have made to engage with our history and with each other. I am grateful for my freedom – political, social, economic, spatial and cultural – all tangible for me. I am also grateful to the people that have led us to democracy. I am happy to call Cape Town home and I love that Cape Town’s beauty is so accessible to me. However, I am reminded that all this beauty means little if we are unable to access freedom equally. Pumla, you said previously that you only discovered Cape Town’s beauty in your adulthood. Why is this so?

PGM: I grew up in Langa and, despite apartheid and the things it limited me from experiencing, I had a very happy childhood due to our sense of community. The word community applied to township life. When I was in the United States, everyone talked about the beauty of Cape Town. I realised then that while living in the township I knew very little about Cape Town’s beauty – although I could see it in the distance, I did not experience it first-hand. It seemed that people elsewhere connected more to the beauty of Cape Town than I did – the mountain, the ocean and so on. I wondered about this while living abroad and realised that although the mountain is visible from anywhere in Cape Town, and especially from Langa, for me it was a distant beauty. I never

experienced this beauty but only saw it as an object. I never actually reflected and engaged or made it a part of me as one would appreciate a piece of art or music – where one would engage on a deeply internal level. It was only when I returned in 1990 with a sense of wanting to reclaim Cape Town – fortunately this was after the release of Nelson Mandela – that I truly identified with the city and appreciated its beauty.

ZA: Albie, what are your early memories of Cape Town?

AS: In 1963, I received my second banning order. It was a notice from the minister of justice restricting my movement and my contact. The big question was whether it would be house arrest or not. Fortunately, it wasn’t house arrest, but I was confined to ‘white’ Cape Town and I couldn’t move out of that zone for five years. I wanted to jump for joy when I heard that it wasn’t house arrest, but I couldn’t let the ‘special branch’ people see how delighted I was because it was less severe than I thought. It would have been a criminal offence for me to drive beyond Bellville, but it was okay because I was restricted to paradise. ‘White’ Cape Town included Table Mountain and the beaches ... but I felt the irony of it. Every Sunday I would climb up Table Mountain and I would feel free – but at the same time, when I looked down the rocks from the top, I’d feel such anger. I’d see this beautiful city and I’d feel its beauty built on pain and expropriation and

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division. It's a terrible feeling when you hate beauty, because the beauty has become toxic. That is something I lived with for many years. Even when I went to other parts of the world that were very beautiful, but where I knew there was also expropriation, it would remind me of Cape Town. Only when we got the new Constitution – when change seriously began – I started to feel relaxed and free with the beauty of this city. When I came back after 24 years in exile, I landed at what was then known as D.F. Malan Airport. There was a group of people singing 'Viva, viva' and it was marvellous. I hugged my mother and then somebody asked me 'Where would you like to go Albie?' I had to carefully consider my answer: would it be to my mother in Gardens (a 'white' area), to Dullah and Farieda Omar in Rylands, or to Bulelani Ngcuka? It was a seemingly simple question:

Where do you want to go? But for me it was not as straightforward as that. It was more about 'Who are you?' It was profound. I was shocked ... affronted. I felt I wanted to come back to my city, to my home. So the obvious thing was to stay with my mom in Gardens. But how could I after all these years of fighting against racism? It was an emotionally challenging decision – I couldn't live in a 'white' area. I was a rebel. I didn't know Bulelani all that well so I decided to go live with Dullah and Farieda, where I felt totally at home. It was marvellous and they were warm and friendly. However, I felt hurt that I even had to make that choice. No human being returning to his city should have to make that decision: to choose to live somewhere that isn't the most convenient or with the people you like the most, or you'd like to be with the most. It's about who you are.

PGM: I think the point about 'who are you?' is still with us Albie. I recall that when I decided to 'reclaim' Cape Town, I continued to experience this sense of 'the other'. Although I had the sense that I belonged in Cape Town, the people who surrounded me everyday gave me the feeling that I did not. They made me feel like I did not belong. I just wanted to be – to be normal. In some

instances, I would be the only black person and the only single mother. I had the sense that I was being watched and I felt that I needed to protect myself from the gaze and judgement. So there is a difference between who I think I am and who others think I am.

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- Albie Sachs

AS: It's still so strong in this city today. When I returned to Cape Town, I would not have automatically chosen Gugulethu or Rylands as my choices of places to go to – to move to on my return to Cape Town. The 'white' areas have undergone more change in the sense that there is a movement into 'white' areas, while there isn't a movement to de-racialise the formerly black areas. The only part of South Africa where I don't encounter that segregation is on the premises of the Constitutional Court building and in the old Fort prison, because we created a whole – physically and emotionally and in terms of function. We invented it, we created it and I felt a sense of elation going to work every day. It's such a beautiful site. It connects Hillbrow, which is teeming and difficult and exciting all at once, with the beautiful northern suburbs ... with the bureaucratic Braamfontein. Transformation and change ... the old and the new. It was because we created an embryo of a new nonracial South Africa and I felt for the first time ever in my life that I'm just Albie going to work. Whereas here, where I live in Clifton, it's different, it's still a 'white' area.

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People know that, they feel that. It's not exclusive to 'whites', it's not by law any longer and there are moments when it really opens up to the whole population but, in that sense, the spatial impact goes back hundreds of years. It's not just the laws of apartheid. It's still heavily imprinted on the city, the way it looks and the way you feel when you're in the city.

ZA: There is no doubt that apartheid had a devastating effect on the lives of millions of people in South Africa, socially, economically and spatially. I have learned that the devastation has left no person unaffected, victim, perpetrator or the privileged. We're all affected by crimes against humanity and other hurtful acts. I've wondered if transformation could take different forms. There are small hurts, there are devastating hurts, there are hurts that affect individuals, others that hurt families or neighbourhoods and others that seem to harm nations for decades. How do people forgive the hurts and heal? Is it possible to simply ignore the past and get over hurt and move on? Forgiving one person is one thing – how do we forgive a government or an institution or a system of abuse?

PGM: When I started in my field, which is the study of the relationship between trauma and forgiveness, my focus was very much on this journey of forgiveness. In recent years, though, I've come to question the word 'forgiveness', and I've asked myself if it is indeed the appropriate word. I'm working on a piece entitled 'Forgiveness is the Wrong Word'. This piece was inspired by the questions people ask in many parts of the world that I travel to and where I speak to people about my work, my research with the backdrop of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and, more recently, my experiences in Rwanda and in Germany reflecting on the dialogue between survivors of, or children of survivors of, the Holocaust and children of Nazi perpetrators. I've learned a great deal from this and have begun to consider if 'forgiveness' is the right word for this

process we are referring to. I am convinced that change does happen. People do move from a position of hatred, resentment, anger, the perception of the other – whether it is a perception of the perpetrator or the perpetrators themselves reflecting on who the victim was – something does change. And so, in my work now, I'm interested in the question 'what does change mean?' How does change come about? How do you understand the subtle shifts? We like to use words to explain things. But sometimes we can't explain these processes, and to simply say it's 'forgiveness' doesn't tell us about the very subtle moments when people engage. One word cannot sum it up. It might be the way you look at me, the way you say you are sorry, or the way you explain how you killed my mother, or what my mother was wearing when you killed her. There is something that happens in that moment ... in that space between us when we are engaged and I'm telling you about the terrible things I did to your family, to your loved ones, that you want to hear. Some people don't want to look at perpetrators. So I think in response to your question, the first thing I'd say is that forgiveness itself as a word in this context is wrong.

What is important is to reflect on what the possibilities and potentialities are that open up when people from two sides come together. We find that so much emerges from these encounters and most of it is unplanned. I refer to it now as the emergence of the unexpected and I use this phrase because that is exactly what it is. Although people sometimes say that they want to forgive, they also feel that they need to have a reason to forgive. People need to see for themselves if the person is deserving of a change of heart – 'are they deserving of my outstretched hand?' and 'are we saying that we can now journey together?' I can touch your hands – you're no longer the monster that I thought you were. That is part of transformation. So, in my opinion, a good starting point is to understand the true meaning of the word. What is most important in terms of our notions of what is meaningful about

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transformation is the subtleties, a lot of which cannot be described in any language.

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Another example is the word 'healing' – some believe that people never heal from trauma. I disagree with that. I think that perhaps the words that we use do not capture in a meaningful way these journeys that we engage in after much trauma. Healing, for instance, might be that I'm not open to the possibility that this person, who murdered my loved ones, can be part of my community. I might not even want to speak to them, but I may be open to the fact that he/she is now living a few doors down from me. I've seen this in Rwanda. I've seen people wrestle with the use of language. They use it but it's often contradictory: one minute they're talking about forgiving and the next they feel a welling-up of hatred, especially when Christmas comes, Rwandan people are deeply religious, and Christmas is a holy celebration – and so they would say when Christmas comes or when April is approaching, I feel anger for these people, and yet they sit together regularly to discuss how to make their community inviting for all their children while they're growing up. 'How do we make it safe? How do we reassure them that this is not going to happen again? How do we create a future for them?' So, it's complex.

Although people say, 'yes I have forgiven the person', come the anniversary of a loved one's birthday, or Christmas or another April, and all comes down, crushing their spirit. But, in most of these conversations, people will often refer to that

moment of change and transformation. That moment of encounter when something happened, when they witnessed in the conversation with that person something that changed – firstly, something that changed them, and secondly, when they witness on a day-to-day basis the enthusiasm of these people to embrace a new life and a new identity for themselves. I see these processes of transformation as a kind of consciousness change. It's the transformation of consciousness, because that consciousness in the past is a consciousness that says 'I believe that you are my enemy'. That's my consciousness. That's my sense of identity. The way I separate you from me and my group. But, once change happens, transformation follows. There is a new subjectivity – actually, I refer to it as a new inter-subjectivity – because it's not just me who is changing, it's also our encounter with one another that is changing. We are now defining ourselves and each other in a different way. We're telling it as if it were a new narrative about our past and therefore about our future. So, I'd like to see in these processes all the layers of complexity rather than giving it one word, namely forgiveness.

ZA: Albie, the person connected to the bomb blast that almost killed you in Mozambique approached you around the time of the TRC. How did you deal with that?

AS: I totally agree with Pumla. The word 'forgiveness' doesn't register for me. I met the guy who organised the bomb in my car that cost me an arm and because he was going to the TRC he wanted to see me. He didn't use the word 'forgive'; he didn't say 'sorry'. I'm glad. You can't say 'sorry I blew off your arm'. What do I say to that? 'Aah, it's all right, don't worry.' You know, it's kind of absurd. That wasn't the nature of the relationship and I was pleased that he had the courage to come to see me. There was self-interest involved. I think he might have been concerned that I would oppose his amnesty – and I was curious. Who is this guy? I've never heard of him. He didn't have a name; he

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wasn't a person and he was the 'enemy' – abstract – and then suddenly I met a real person and there was definitely a fascination between us. He was looking at me – the man who tried to kill me. I was looking at him, thinking that this was the man who tried to kill me. Out of curiosity I asked him to tell me about himself ... I think that any human being would ask out of curiosity. He started telling me about his family. He was so eager to tell me about his family and what a nice mother he had and how elated he felt that he made his parents proud, because he advanced in the army. He was telling me that he advanced in the army and became a good killer and, sadly, he didn't even realise how naïve that was, but it was a useful moment for me. A little less mystery out there: now it's a human being ... a person. After chatting for a while, I said, 'Henry, I can't shake your hand.' That was his name. Henry. 'Go to the TRC, I have to get on with my work, maybe we'll meet again one day.' I forgot about him but about nine months later, at a party, I heard someone say 'Albie'. I turned around and found myself face-to-face with Henry. He was beaming and told me that he went to the TRC and said he spoke to Bobby and Sue and Farook – he was on first-name terms with people who were in exile with me ... people who could also have been hit by the bomb. He went on to tell me that he told them everything I had said. I reached out and shook his hand. This was intuitive. It wasn't thought through. He walked away beaming, elated – and I almost fainted. It was a shock for me. I heard afterwards that he left the party and that he went home and cried for about two weeks. I don't know if it's true. I'm holding onto it. I like the idea that he cried for two weeks, and then the way I tell the story is he's not my friend. I won't phone him and say, 'Henry, let's go to a movie together' but, if I'm sitting in a bus, which I occasionally do, and he comes to sit down next to me, I'll say, 'Oh, how are you getting on?' I'll do so only because we're living in the same country – for me that's fantastic – because that goes well beyond that purely personal thing between him and me. We're trying to create a country where we're not trying to kill each other,

where we have real laws that are meaningful to people and where these historic hatreds are being handled and dealt with so that we can get on with our lives. I find this empowering. Somehow the notion of reconciliation is presented as nice, and kind and generous to the people who've done awful things to you. I don't see it quite like that, but I take my cue from the person who – surprisingly and unexpectedly – turned out to be an enormous mentor for me: Oliver Tambo. He came from a deep rural, peasant background. He was also a committed Christian. I'm very urban, I'm internationalist, I'm cosmopolitan. We couldn't have been more different, but we were united in our opposition to apartheid. Pumla grew up in a powerful community with lots of energy. I remember hearing musicians playing jazz music many years ago and I often say that they created our Constitution in music long before we created it in words. Partly, healing comes from that spirit of common endeavour to transform the whole society, to get rid of apartheid and to build on the empathy and ubuntu and connections between people. It's a huge reservoir of potential strengths for transformation and change, but what I felt with Oliver Tambo was the spirit that he had. I still feel that some white people are too narrow minded, trapped and/or self-centered to ever imagine a country belonging to everybody. We, as African people, will prove to the whites, to ourselves, to the world, that it is possible for black and white to live together. It's not just a futile dream, because we have that openness of spirit, that generosity. We also have moral power and, if you like, historical power and community power. We embraced a strong position – and it was about not giving up something. It's actually an elevation of your strength and of your spirit. I feel that so strongly with some individuals, who are much like Oliver Tambo. Mandela had that same spirit in everything that he did – and so I see that as the foundation for transformation and healing, much more than people simply saying 'okay, you've said sorry, you got down on bended knees, maybe you've humbled yourself a little bit'. And then it's over. For me, that's a very mechanical process,

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almost like a court decision. As Pumla said, these are relationships with levels of subtlety and intimacy: the conscious, the unconscious, the surprises that come up all the time. And in that sense, I think that South Africa has advanced more often in terms of the detail than it has in terms of the overall relationships. What gives me enormous joy and satisfaction is when I come down to the beach in this still 'very white area' on the Day of Goodwill or on New Year's Day and I see it packed with people from the townships, from the flats, from Oranjezicht and Sea Point and they're all having so much fun and enjoying themselves. Not being non-racial, just being themselves in a setting where everybody feels free. Kids splash about in the ocean and eat ice creams and moms shout at their kids and the kids shout at their moms and dads and all the rest.

ZA: People just being 'normal'.

AS: It is normal and it's fun and I still get a kick out of it. I shouldn't.

ZA: Why shouldn't you?

AS: It's not 'normal' for me yet. In the sense of it's still ... let me put it this way: it shouldn't give me special delight. But it does. It gives me a South African delight. A special delight as a kind of triumph over what we were told was impossible, what never seemed feasible, what we always believed in ... and I suspect that I still hope that for quite a long time ... but to my dying day it will continue to be a source of delight.

ZA: What happens when there isn't compassion and empathy? What happens when people claim ignorance? What happens when people refuse to acknowledge someone else's past, someone else's pain?

PGM: It really depends on a range of situations, but I can tell you that when people say they don't know, it's a struggle for them. I think that, in some cases, it is not about not knowing, but rather

about being blind. I think it's important to have compassion exactly for that. When engaging with these questions, I wonder what I would have done had I been white in South Africa and that helps me in a way to transcend any feelings that may prevent me from connecting with the person. I arranged for Albie to present a lecture at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein at the end of March 2015 – this was a part of a series of lectures on trauma memory and representation. His theme was on sites of memory as sites of conscience. He was speaking about Robben Island and the Constitutional Court and District Six and, of course, being Albie, he introduced himself in the story and the bigger picture – the larger political context. People were extremely moved by his talk. One woman approached me and Albie, stating how moved she was by the presentation. However, she claimed that she had no idea that any of the atrocities actually occurred. In a sense, Albie held up a mirror to the audience not only in terms of what he said but also in terms of the consequences of that history on his body. I think it made some people feel ashamed. After Albie's visit, we hosted Philip Miller, a music producer. The music he played at the university was woven with actual voices from the TRC. Once again, I was approached by some people who felt ashamed and who denied knowing what went on in the country. Why is it that these people, after 21 years, and after all these stories have unfolded, claim to be ignorant of the happenings? It's not as if they were in Siberia. They were in Cape Town and they could see the fires burning and they could read the newspapers about what happened to Albie, what happened to Nelson Mandela, and what happened on Robben Island. How can they say they didn't know? There are people, of course, who are in pure denial. People who say, 'oh, I worked hard, my parents worked hard, they came from London' and then don't even see the irony. They came from London, they were very poor, they came to South Africa, they started building a business ... there is just no sense of real reflection on black people who were here who couldn't build a business, even if they worked hard. Working

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hard didn't help black people. Then I also have the question in my mind ... well, you came from London ... I wonder where you moved to? Was it to Rondebosch, or perhaps to Claremont where people were forcibly removed? Is that the home you own now? I have these questions even if white South Africans don't often ask themselves these questions. So, you get white South Africans who are just in pure denial and then you get people such as those I referred to in Bloemfontein. You find people like that here in Cape Town as well. People in whom you can see a deep pain and sometimes, in fact, they break down and cry. They ask themselves: 'Why did I not know? Why did I not express my sense of outrage at what was going on?' It's a regretful reflection and one has to embrace these people because you want to move them to the point where they really face their shame, because without facing the shame and the guilt, they're stuck there and when they're stuck there, they can't engage. They can't do all the things that Albie's talking about of just being South African and being the caring South Africans or human beings we are hoping for in our country.

ZA: Why are certain South Africans in such denial of our past?

PGM: Why do you think Albie? It is an important question and one that I don't think we may have final answers for. Why are people in denial?

AS: One has to look at contradictions and how people manage contradictions. I think, partly, there's still a hell of a lot of racism and it lurks around in different ways. Sometimes you read the commentaries on News24: it's so vicious, it's so filled with bile ... it's so angry from whites who are living it up and to whom life has been good. What the heck? They rage on and any example that they can come up with of black failure is just thrown around – you get a sense of defensiveness. It's unbalanced. It's irrational. So, I think that's one of the elements involved. I think it's the inability to handle shame and to acknowledge injustice. The part I find most painful is their inability to

acknowledge continued privilege – unconsciously they're actually living very well. There are huge advantages that still go with having a white skin, and with being a guy. To let go of all that, I think, provides a certain tenacity for the assumptions of superiority and inferiority that continue. It has an ugly tone to it all the time. It makes me feel there's a lot happening in the unconscious that can't be explained simply in terms of the realities. And yet, sometimes, the same people are kind and decent, and contradict the very points that they're making. I think part of the adulation of Mandela was his elevation to superhuman status – he was an almost extraterrestrial figure – and white people just adored him. I think that, that was very unfortunate because it's difficult for anyone else to compare with him. I think what we need to explore is that a lot in South Africa is ambivalence and contradictions – the same people who can be kindly and generous in one setting, can be spiteful and nasty in another setting. I don't think it's particularly a South African thing, but I think in these times of transition and change, it comes out far more noticeably and flagrantly than it would in other countries.

PGM: So, race would very much be in the center of these expressions or experiences of contradiction because, when you think of transformation and white people, they must feel affronted with regards to their identity – you've taken who I am...

AS: Yes. I fear that in South Africa nobody feels in charge. Everybody feels dislodged, and you find the same sentiment in all communities. There's no ruling class. There are people who are in power politically, but they're not in power culturally, socially and psychologically and, certainly not, economically. There are people who are very powerful economically, but who feel a little bit besieged now, because they don't run the show and they're restricted in all sorts of ways. You find it in different communities where people believe that issues are endemic to their community. For example, I might mix with people who classify themselves as Afrikaners and who are deeply

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worried about their language and being disrespected and feeling marginalised. Then I see black students at the University of Cape Town saying the same thing, but in a slightly different context, feeling all the pain, and it's neither acknowledged nor recognised. I don't know if one can develop a theory of dislodgement and, even if so, how do you respond to that? I think that Cape Town is a strong city that evidences this feeling of the old: it's called the Cape liberal community. It has a certain sense of self-satisfaction of being seen to be anti-apartheid and more progressive and more liberal. They could put everything onto the Afrikaners, and now suddenly they're the ones in the dock and it's very unsettling and disturbing for them. It's shocking actually. It's distressing. People living in Langa, where Pumlá grew up, they're still living in Langa. In terms of the material conditions there, there have been some improvements, but nothing like Pinelands just across the way. So, it's a very fragmented city in that sense, but I think the fact that movement is possible, that there are places of encounter, that there are moments of fantastic joy that totally transform Cape Town, is fantastic. Those moments are important because they show that it is possible. So, you need memories and dreams. Memories of past moments, dreams for the future. Even if they contrast with a shabby, miserable reality, they do inspire elements of hope and in that sense, I can see little points of hope in Cape Town, but huge transformation still awaits. Getting the law out of the way was vital. I think I love the idea that Parliament is here. Parliament is more than just the seat of the legislature, it's Africa if you like, in Cape Town. It serves as a reminder to Cape Town that we are part of Africa and it's also a reminder to Africa that Cape Town is a part of Africa. Africa is diverse and this is part of the diversity of Africa. I think that's the strength that Cape Town has. It could be devastating if it's turned into something negative, such as the idea of a beleaguered African impoverished minority, claiming that we are being denied our rights and people are being denied their rights in day-to-day living. We need to express our African identity, but

the African identity is not a uniform identity, it's an identity that embraces diversity, that welcomes the Creole if you like. Because if ever there was a Creole city in its creation and origins and development, it is Cape Town.

ZA: Does our Constitution go the distance in protecting the vulnerable, giving people dignity and enabling people to realise their full potential and their dreams? Does the Constitution and our democracy do that?

AS: The Constitution on its own can't do that. On its own it is just a piece of paper. But this isn't just any old piece of paper, it's the one we wrote. So that was the fulfilment of a huge dream of living together as equals in one country. A fantastic dream and the fact that we achieved it validates dreaming and gives me, personally, the confidence that we overcame the impossible and we can do it again. But it's more than just a document that organises society and gives people the vote. It has core values. It's got a strong sense of history. It's very much, as I see it, an emancipatory document, but it's not self-fulfilling. It's not self-executing. It depends upon people in this country – enough people organised in different ways to take advantage of the possibilities that it creates. The huge difference of the past is that the previous Constitution shut down possibilities and allowed only a small section of the population to feel validated and important and significant. That has totally transformed, and I think that that's an enormous asset. We also have the instruments in the Constitution to at least protect people from the most invidious forms of dispossession and violation. I think it's vitally important that we will never again experience capital punishment and corporal punishment from this day, never again have pass laws, never again have censorships in which boards say what you can read and what you can't read, people banning newspapers and so on. We take all that for granted, but that's enormously important in achieving the kind of equality that we want. You don't have to put yourself on the line anymore.

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You could use and exercise the right that you've got. So, I see a good Constitution as being crucial to achieving genuine equality and with that, happiness. Happiness, not just ha-ha-ha, you know, but happiness in the sense of feeling fulfilled. Feeling that your life is meaningful. Getting joy and pleasure out of existence. In that regard, the Constitution is a template, it's a dream bred large if you like; it's a set of instruments and it is proof of what is possible. It's merely a facilitator – it's the human spirit and our energies that give it real vitality and real meaning.

ZA: How important is remembering and memorialisation?

PGM: It's very important because it's about acknowledging and recognising people's pain. If used in the context of our past, remembering is important for those reasons and we see it in many parts of the world. The memorials, the monuments and the remembering. The challenge that we face is how people who come from different sides of history remember. How can that be shared remembering? Often, that is where tension starts, because the remembering is so laden with contradictory memories or at least with contradictions in remembering similar events. People may remember certain events as they suffered abuse by the other, whereas the other might remember it as the wiping out of their own community. So, those kinds of things remain a struggle, remain a challenge, but remember we must. This notion of forget the past and move on stems from uncomfortable memories. They are memories that make people feel ashamed. While remembering is important, how we remember is also important because if the idea is to bring people together to engage in a meaningful and healthy conversation about building a future, it is important that people do not use remembering to rub in the guilt. It's about making remembering invitational so that even those who struggle with remembering can reach deep and say yes, I do ... I am facing my shame for this, but I want to find a

way of making sure that it doesn't immobilise me. I think that, in part, many people who are in denial don't have strategies for dealing with the shame. Those who do have strategies, who for instance engage with people across the colour line, engage with people in a way that heals their own shame. The ones in denial make the journey into the future an unhealthy one for themselves because they're part of our community and it disrupts the collective process of moving forward.

The challenge that we face is how people who come from different sides of history remember. How can that be shared remembering?

- Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela

AS: I often think about the complexity of memory and when I think about the memory of the struggle – you're blotting out not only the atrocities, you're blotting out the people I knew from Langa. I used to go there, comrades were from there, they were fantastic people. You're blotting them out and dismissing their courage and their dreams of a future that would be different. That's also been blotted out. You're also blotting out the betrayals and the collapses. In that sense, it's the choices that people have made along the lines and the choices we still make today. There's a continuity in the idea of choices. I like the theme. I don't know why this has come to mind as I'm a totally secular person, but images from the Bible pop into my head – and I only read it in jail. I found a lot of harshness, viciousness and smiting in the Old Testament. There was a lot of vengeance in it, but Solomon and the Song of Psalms and the prophecy of Isaiah were beautiful. I think it fits in very strong with what Pumla is

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saying: a lion laying down with the lamb and converting swords into ploughshares. So, if memory is a sword and you're using memory to smite your enemy today, then it's divisive, it's not healing. It perpetuates division, but with different forms of empowerment. If you take that sword and that same material and convert it into something positive, it is more powerful than throwing away the sword. It's us. We are the people and we transform. We bring about the change and it gives enormous hope. Just as we were killing each other before while we were fighting, that same us are now finding the way forward, and in that sense I think memory can be positive. Using Robben Island as an example: you can go there and say how horrible, how terrible, how vicious, or you can say how wonderful, amazing, and how hope was kept alive and they're both true.

You look at District Six and you feel the anger and rage, yet at the same time you feel the community spirit is kept alive and that's the way I would like to see memory evolving: from an embracing of the past to an understanding of the past, and not diminishing the atrocities. If anything, highlighting them and sharpening them, but not wrapping them up as a sort of exhibit, and isolating them from the general complicated and rich and turbulent context in which these things happened. In Cape Town, there's a very, very rich history in that way.

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