

Master Specialization on “Peace, Trauma and Religion”

South Africa Excursion Report

28 April to 6 May 2018



View of Cape Town from Table Mountain



© ACRPJ

Group of students and professors of the VU in BoKaap, Cape Town, South Africa

Content

Introduction	4
(De-)Colonizing Streets and Statues (<i>Jan Willem Stenvers</i>)	5
Muslim Presence in Cape Town: Dutch Islamophobia & Our Colonial History (<i>Alina Jabbari</i>)	8
When Christian Faith Communities Fail to Address Social Issues (<i>Kirsten van der Ham</i>).....	11
Introspection for a Just Peace (<i>Schuyler Pals</i>).....	14
Apartheid: “Post” in South Africa, Present in Israel? (<i>Geke van Vliet</i>)	17
Experience Arts(cape), Experience South Africa! (<i>Truus van der Sloot</i>)	19
Arts for Leisure or Politics? Leisure or Politics Through Arts? (<i>Daniel Serrano Bernal</i>).....	22

Introduction

Peace, Trauma, and Religion (PTR) is a masters specialization in the Faculty of Theology at the Vrije Universiteit. As the name suggests, this specialization focuses on three main, and often entangled, subjects. Religion often plays a supporting role in conflicts around the globe, and the world is well acquainted with the trauma religious figures can inflict on the most vulnerable in our societies. Still, religion has the capacity to be a powerful tool for peaceful conflict resolution and transformation. Religion is a motivator for a just peace.

This year PTR decided to focus on three subjects related to the field of peace, trauma, and religion: Colonialism, Racism, and Slavery. Much of this year studies was spent examining Christian theological support and cooperation with colonialism, racism, and slavery. These studies are theoretical and led students and faculty to examine how decolonizing theology may look and how certain theological formulas provided the underpinnings necessary for the brutal subjugation of most of the world. For the limitations of theory on what is it happening in reality, a field study is necessary to go deeper understanding and comprehending these themes. In conjunction with the theoretical exploration of these topics Prof. Fernando Enns and Prof. Eddy van der Borght led an excursion to Cape Town, South Africa.

South Africa is most famous for its Apartheid Regime and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which helped to bring about a peaceful transition of power. Cape Town is the only place in South Africa where all three topics studied in PTR this year historically occurred. Furthermore, while the TRC was a watershed moment in the world of peacemaking, it did not automatically bring about a just peace. Much of what Post-Apartheid South Africa is still struggling with is the legacy of Colonialism, Racism, and Slavery – the intersection of economic, racial, and gender injustice). Cape Town provided an opportunity for a deeper understanding of these topics in the lived experiences of Capetonians. Cape Town also gave us a deeper understanding of the intergenerational disagreement on the TRC, as a new generation has begun to wrestle with the narrative of the “Rainbow Nation” recognizing it as one of the ways to undercover interconnected problems that go beyond color classification.

In what follows, students and faculty have written their reflections on the ten days excursion 28 April - 6 May 2018. Each writes them with their own perspective on a matter that struck them deeply, which does not necessarily represent the opinion of the whole group. Although, the efforts to build a more inclusive society after 1994 are relevant, the reflections show that the remains of Apartheid are still alive. We learned about the specificities of spaces and places, but we also heard the shouts for social justice in each local society and community. The topics range from traces of colonialism in street names, statues, and memorials to how faith communities – churches and mosques – contribute to shaping South African society, in the past and today.

(De-)Colonizing Streets and Statues (*Jan Willem Stenvers*)



Jan van Riebeeck statue, Cape Town

One of the main roads in Cape Town is called “Heerengracht.” Living on one of the canals in Amsterdam I joked after noticing: “I flew 12 hours to find myself at home!” This is just an example of one street, but actually everywhere we went we found remembrances from when the Dutch or later the British ruled the space in street names, statues and places.

On a square alongside Heerengracht you find a statue of Jan van Riebeeck who established the Dutch settlement, which is referred to as the founding of Cape Town and also modern South Africa. Due to this everywhere in the country statues and streets are named after him. Everyone in South Africa knows of this Dutch man, but the strange thing is that he is not so well known in the Netherlands. Speaking for myself: I knew his name, but not much more than that.

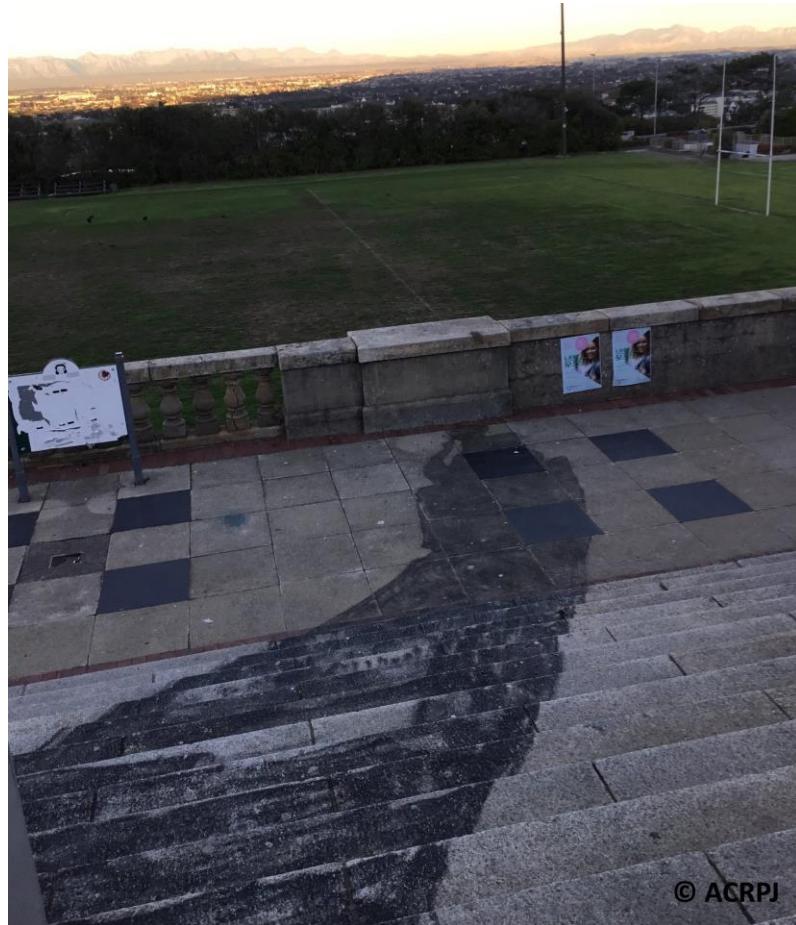
From the main stairs at the University of Cape Town – also known as UCT – you have a view of the whole area of Cape Town. At the end of the stairs you can find a statue of Cecil Rhodes. A man who – long story short – made a very big contribution to the wealth and expansion of the British colony in the southern part of Africa.

Rhodes’ big dream was to build a railroad from Cape Town to Cairo all the way through Africa. To symbolically represent that desire the face of that statue was placed in the direction to the city, as if he is looking over Cape Town and further over the (“hinter”) land of his railroad. For some years Rhodes was Prime Minister of the Western Cape, the area around Cape Town. At that time, he implemented a law, which reduced the right of land ownership for natives. This is sometimes seen as the forerunner of the Apartheid system.

While we became more aware about how Apartheid and the colonial past define people’s lives and also social-economic status, I began to realize what these symbols might

mean for people. Everywhere in the city you are confronted with the colonial past, which is not strange because Cape Town was “founded” through colonialism. The question is: are these men the heroes of modern South Africa?

Imagine, being black, living in a township, growing up under Apartheid where you are told that you belong to “the wrong side” of society, of human life. You are not automatically allowed to enter every part of the city. Then Apartheid ends, and you can walk freely through your city. Except everywhere in the streets you are reminded of this ‘white’ European past, which you don’t belong to because you are originally from a tribe or your ancestors were brought to Cape Town as slaves to benefit that ‘white’ history.



Cecile Rhodes' shadow statue, University of Cape Town, Cape Town

How can you say that you are trying to overcome Apartheid and colonialism, while simultaneously honouring those who created the system as heroes in the main squares? Removing and renaming everything cannot be done overnight. But in South Africa – and also in The Netherlands – it would be good to be aware of the street names and statues and to ask the question: how are they a reflection of the society we want to be? What is the legacy that we want to show, to others and to ourselves? We don’t have to deny the past. We have to reflect (self-) critically on the past and decide what symbols we need today.

As you can see on the pictures, the statue of Rhodes isn’t there anymore. It was removed after a lot of protest. Students of UCT told us how white supremacy seemed to be the norm at the campus. During a housing shortage on campus, black and coloured students seemed to be the ones falling off the boat when applying for a room. In history courses, you would learn mainly about European history. You could also take courses in African history, but they were not the main courses.

The statue became a thorn in the side for students. It became the symbol for everything that was wrong at the university. So it was not only a protest against the statue, but also the colonial mind-set that it symbolizes. The protest movement against the statue and policies of the university became known as “Rhodes Must Fall.” It was one of the main triggers for larger student protests in the whole country, called “Fees Must Fall.”

After the statue of Rhodes was removed, the protests were not over. The symbol at the centre of the university was removed but it still has not gone through a process of decolonization. Someone painted the shadow of Rhodes next to the plinth where the statue was standing, to tell that the aftermath of colonization and white supremacy is still present. The shadow is a reflection of experiences of students nowadays.

There are also steps taken in another way. For example, this year the public lecture hall is named the “Chris Hani Building.” Chris Hani was one of the main figures in the struggle against Apartheid and was shot dead in 1993. And there is statue of Nelson Mandela placed above the door to one of the main buildings. These are heroes of an actual past, of a legacy those students, who protest against colonial structures and mind-sets, want to live forth.

Muslim Presence in Cape Town: Dutch Islamophobia & Our Colonial History (*Alina Jabbari*)

My first time in Cape Town was half way into 2013, when I started my year long studies at the University of Western Cape, and I have been returning ever since, making this trip my fourth time to the city. It is a place where I have ‘family’, some of my closest friends, and a place that I have come to call home. I want to reflect and share on why for me, a Muslim who is born and raised in the Netherlands and with a mixed ethnic background, Cape Town of all places feels so much like home.

Claremont Main Road Masjid, “Faith, Justice, Compassion,” Cape Town



The total percentage of Muslims in South Africa make up around 1,5%, yet their past and present form a significant part of South African history and is entangled with Dutch history more than the average Dutch person realizes.

It was during our

tour through the neighborhood of BoKaap that we learned more about this in detail. Our guide, Mohammad Groenewald, spent 2,5 hours with us narrating the stories of the first Muslims that were brought to the Cape as slaves to the struggles facing the Muslim community of BoKaap today. While it is often well known that the Cape was colonized by the VOC (Dutch East India Company), having the land ruled by a company and used as a refreshment station on their way back and forth between The Netherlands and the Indonesian archipelago, it is less known that during that time, people were enslaved from Indonesia and brought to work in the Cape. The prohibition by Dutch rule to practice Islam was resisted, and people practiced their faith in secret. In combination with exiling Indonesian Muslim intellectuals to the Cape, such as Tuan Guru and Tuan Said Aloewie, Islam as a religion stayed and spread amongst the enslaved and defied the law of the time that allowed no other religion than that of the Dutch Reformed Church to be practiced. It was only in 1804, when the Cape fell under British rule, that Muslims slowly gained more religious freedom.

Today, the Muslim community of BoKaap is the only community of colour that lives near the city center. The Group Areas Act declared areas such as District Six and others that form the present day southern suburbs white, forcibly removing whole communities to areas far away from the city. BoKaap was not removed during that time, so

that the government could argue “Apartheid is not that bad. Look, there are still coloured people in the city,” using it as a cover up. However, today this area is faced with the violence of gentrification, which should be understood as a new form of forced removals.

With this history in mind, and shifting our perspective to the Dutch society, I believe we need to change our understanding of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiment that is present in the Netherlands. Here the narrative goes that these feelings of fear and hate are reactionary, a response to strangers in our society brought here as labor migrants who rebuilt our country after the ruins of the Second World War, a fear for acts of violence and terrorism. Rather, this anti-Muslim sentiment and hatred goes back much further, to when the Dutch did not allow religious freedom in Indonesia, enslaved people from Indonesia and Malaysia, and sent those who were considered a threat to the Indonesian colony off as exiles to the Cape. As such, we cannot see ourselves in isolation from this Muslim community that still forms a big part of the Capetownian society.



© ACRPJ

Tour in BoKaap, “We love Bokaap. No to gentrification. Stop ghastly ungodly buildings in BoKaap.” BoKaap neighborhood, Cape Town

For me then, as a Muslim woman from the Netherlands coming to Cape Town, it was the first time that my religious identity was not understood as a threat, something backward, something violent, or something enforced upon me. While being a religious minority, the perception or understanding of my very being would not change when my religious identity came to the surface. I can be all of me in this space, including the freedom to practice and live my religion in the way I feel most comfortable with.

When Muslims in the Netherlands claim their right to be here, show pride or defiance in their religious identity, they continue to be othered. They are told they do not and will not belong. They are met with judgements of backwardness, or feelings of fear. Visiting Cape Town then does not only feel like coming home, but also always feels like a reminder of how things can be, living as a Muslim minority. You can be both defiant, proud and Muslim in any way you would like to be, whilst being considered and treated as a full and equal part of society.

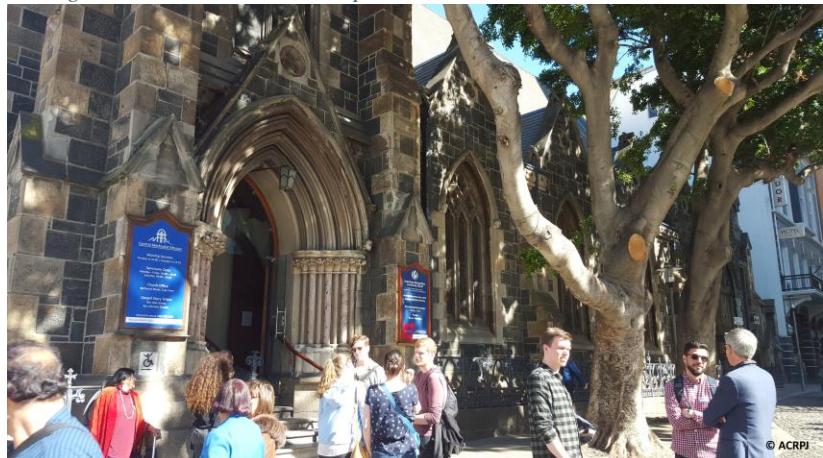
When Christian Faith Communities Fail to Address Social Issues

(*Kirsten van der Ham*)

During our trip to South Africa, we met a lot of inspiring people who told us about the current challenges of the South African society. A phrase that often came up during these meetings is: “Churches fail to address the current issues in the South African society. They only talk about ethics, but fail to make it applicable for the current situation.”

The encounters we had with churches in Cape Town was, however, very different. We visited churches that are highly engaged in the struggle for justice and peace in South Africa. However, this was not my first visit to South Africa. I had lived in Stellenbosch previously, which is a 45 minute drive from Cape Town, for six months. When I was in Stellenbosch, I had encounters with Christian faith communities as well. One of them was a church that would be classified as predominantly white in South Africa. There was no mention of the challenges within the South African society in that community, neither during church services nor in private conversations. Even during the nation wide student protests in 2016, “Fees Must Fall,” it was not spoken about, while police were present all over campus to squash any attempt to join the student protests happening all over the country. The church remained silent. When I looked at the website of that particular church to compare it with one of the churches we visited in Cape Town, there was a lot of information about what the next Sunday service would be about. In comparison, the Methodist church we went to in Cape Town on April 29, 2018 shares information about the issues around land on its website.

Visiting the Methodist Church in Cape Town



The Methodist church of South Africa has a history of rejecting Apartheid and battling the injustice in society. It is, thus, not surprising that the Methodist church gave a completely different image than the church in Stellenbosch. The Methodist church, we

visited on our first Sunday in Cape Town, organises several meetings on issues that are present in the South African society. Even during the service we attended, current issues were addressed immediately. A man told the congregation about the ongoing bus strikes and how hard it was to get from his township to the city center; it took him four hours to get to work and four hours to get back home. He posed the question, “is this real freedom?. People were promised freedom after 1994, but if this is freedom, we are going in a wrong direction,” he said. Furthermore, the sermon spoke about the fear that people experience

when they walk the streets. The church service addressed several elements that are problematic in South African society.

On May 3, we visited Langa, a township and suburb of Cape Town. There, we met an Anglican priest from Bonteheuwel, the area next to Langa. He shared experiences from the work in his congregation; during the Apartheid regime, people were told they did not have the right to cross the boundaries of the area they lived in. Several people in his congregation still do not leave Bonteheuwel. It was even the first time that this priest himself visited Langa. The mindset of Apartheid is still very present in people's habits. They feel as if they do not have the right to cross the boundaries of their area, and cannot enter spaces that used to be classified as white. To overcome that, the priest takes his congregation members to those spaces, in order to show them that they have the autonomy to enter those spaces. He even prefers to do those kind of activities over leading a church service, for it connects with people's realities.



Slave Lodge Museum, 1000 Women Voice exposition, Cape Town. "God gave everyone authority. As a woman you have the power. Power to get help. Power to change your life." Ntombenceba Ntombela

The last encounter we had with a Christian faith community in South Africa, was with the St. George's Cathedral on our last Sunday in Cape Town. This cathedral has a history of being committed to the struggle against Apartheid, mainly because this used to be the church of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The Saint George's Cathedral was highly involved in several strikes and marches against Apartheid and even nowadays it is known

for its commitment to the struggle for social justice, equality and human rights. This is part of the identity of the church. When the sermon started, it immediately addressed not only societal challenges in South Africa, but also international issues, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict. It did not involve scripture or dogmas that much but focussed on the political engagement of the members of the church.

These churches we visited are in sharp contrast with the national tendency. Unfortunately, many churches choose not to engage in political matters and are pushed to the background more and more. On the one hand, this is understandable because the Dutch Reformed Church played an instrumental role in the justification of the Apartheid system. On the other hand, faith has the ability to bring about change within a society and to motivate people to advocate for that change. It can equip people to deconstruct Apartheid structures. The encounters we had with Christian faith communities are an example of that.

Introspection for a Just Peace (*Schuylar Pals*)

District Six is a historic section of Cape Town close to the present day Central Business District (CBD). Historically, District Six was a thriving cosmopolitan community where everyone in Cape Town society could be found. This thriving mixed community was an anathema to the Apartheid regime, so District Six was declared a “Whites only space” and 60.000 nonwhite residents were forcibly removed.

As a part of our trip to Cape Town, our group was able to take a tour of District Six with former residents to hear their stories. One resident spoke about the violence and indifference under Apartheid. White Afrikaners could drive around the townships on their way to play tennis, while riots were tearing the townships apart. When confronted with these facts, the response is overwhelmingly one of ignorance as to the true nature of Apartheid.



District Six Museum, Cape Town

Apartheid involved every aspect of society to be constructed and maintained. Economic, cultural, political, and legal means were all utilized. The infrastructure was built to make distinct communities separated from each other by highways and railroads; townships were boarded by railroads and highways to keep the communities contained and controlled. In fact, the public transportation system was only constructed to help black and colored South Africans to get into the city for work. Even the tax system was integrated into the Apartheid system; non-white South Africans would pay a tax, which was then used to pay for their train tickets out of Cape Town. There was no way to avoid the effects of Apartheid, yet many white South Africans were willfully ignorant of what they were

participating in. The system of Apartheid induced moral indifference in those benefitting from it.

Apartheid was bureaucratized and integrated into every part of society. Enzo Traverso argues it is in the nature of bureaucracies to create separations between people and the ultimate aims of their work. Traverso pulls from Max Weber's *Economy and Society* where Weber describes the aims of a bureaucracy as "the principles of calculation, specialization, and the segmentation of tasks into a series of partial, seemingly independent

yet coordinated operations."¹ This fragmentation in the process to the final project and the specialization of workers innately ties moral indifference to modern bureaucracies. A fully developed bureaucracy, according to Max Weber, is fully dehumanized; it seeks to eliminate love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, emotional elements which escape calculation from official business. This rational and dehumanized bureaucracy is embodied by the specialist, who is rigorously objective and indifferent to the affairs of men.



Visiting District Six Museum. Map of the former District Six, Cape Town

It is the indifference of a bureaucratic system that sets it apart; it does not rely upon fanatics or sadist, but on the normality of jobholders and family men. Hannah Arendt notes in her essay "Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility" that we missed how the family man, deeply concerned with the well being of his wife and children, was "transformed under the pressure of the chaotic economic conditions of our time into an involuntary adventurer, who for all his industry and care could never be certain what the next day would bring."² This created a docile man, who for the sake of his pension, life insurance, and the security of his family was ready to sacrifice his beliefs, honor, and human dignity. It was, as Arendt notes, the satanic genius of Himmler that after such degradation and economic uncertain that such a man would willingly do anything when the ante was raised and the bare existence of his family threatened.

¹ Enzo Traverso, *The Origins of Nazi Violence* (New York: New Press, 2003), 41.

² Hannah Arendt, "Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility," in Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism, trans. Jerome Kohn (New York, NY: Schoken Books, 2005), 152.

Bureaucracies, by their very mechanization, create an indifferent emotional response to their exclusionary acts. It does not matter if the bureaucratic system is running Apartheid or the “Final Solution,” it still places itself between the perpetrator and the victim. It is not the perpetrator who excludes but the very system itself, and it is a system the perpetrator must participate in, in order to survive. The cold indifference this system generates allows the perpetrators to look away or to zoom into an “exotic exemplar of suffering” which not only acts to satisfy our perverse desire to see suffering but also appeases our conscience for having turned away from the suffering in the first place, Miroslav Wolf notes. Participants in the system do not rebel against it because it is seen as inevitable and unchangeable.

We should be frightened at our ability to be morally indifferent to unjust systems, but very often we do not even notice our indifference. Working for a just peace and reconciliation requires a lot of introspection. When the very systems we construct encourage us to be indifferent to its effects, our battle becomes fighting this indifference and the feeling that the system is inevitable and unchangeable. This is particularly important for those who benefit from the participation in and maintenance of the system.

Apartheid: “Post” in South Africa, Present in Israel? (*Geke van Vliet*)

Right before we went to South Africa I did my PTR-internship at the Palestinian organization Sabeel in Jerusalem. During my time in Jerusalem, I saw with my own eyes and heard with my own ears what Palestinians are suffering from. I saw Palestinians who are not able to cross the wall, because they do not have the right permit. I heard stories from people who were forced to leave their village, so Israelis could occupy their houses and their villages. People spoke about these situations in words of discrimination, but also called it “Apartheid.” Hearing these stories about Apartheid influenced my focus and my experiences during the study trip to South Africa, which I will describe below.

Our trip focused on post-Apartheid in South Africa, which explains the title of this report. However, the more stories we heard in Cape Town and the more places we visited, the more we realized South Africa is only theoretically a post-Apartheid country. Reality showed us a different situation. The history of South Africa, but also some of the present situations, are very similar to the situation in Israel-Palestine nowadays. One day in particular showed great similarities with the realities I saw in Palestine.



On Thursday, May 3, we visited the District Six Museum and District Six itself. District Six was, before Apartheid, known as a neighborhood where all ethnicities and races lived together. It was a vibrant, peaceful neighborhood, where people with different backgrounds met. During the Apartheid regime, over 60.000 of the inhabitants of District Six were forcibly removed. District Six became a “whites-only area.” We learned about this history in the District Six Museum, before we visited the place itself. A former resident showed us around. We were told that District Six is redeveloping, so that former residents can return to their old neighborhood. However, it is hard to prove that you once were an inhabitant of District Six. Furthermore, the environment has changed and the new houses are not affordable for everyone. The redeveloping program thus sounds promising, but still leads to segregation.

In the afternoon of the same day, we went to visit Langa, a township of Cape Town. Langa was designated as, and actually still is, a Black African neighborhood. In Langa, we

visited the Pass Museum, a small museum about the pass laws that existed during the Apartheid regime. People who were caught not carrying their passes, were imprisoned in a cage (for women and children) or a small room (for men). At the end of the day, those people were tried for breaking the pass laws. They did not get an official trial, but were condemned within 2 minutes, since they were black.

At the end of the day we were hosted for a performance at the Guga S'Thebe Theatre in Langa. This is a place that “supports the next generation of artists and performing groups,” as the flyer of Guga S'Thebe Theatre says. This next generation showed us a music performance as well as a dance performance. It was an inspiration to see the investment made to teach of these children about arts and culture and it definitely empowers them!

Thus, the day in District Six and Langa was a day that showed an obvious resemblance between the Apartheid regime in South Africa and in Israel-Palestine. On the



one hand I realized it is shocking how big the resemblance is between those two cases, and how we still seem to struggle with recognizing Apartheid. When you look at the facts, it is obvious that Israel uses the same system against Palestinians as the white regime in South Africa once used against black and colored people. How is it that we keep struggling to notice such a horrendous regime?

Visit to District Six guided by a former resident, Cape Town

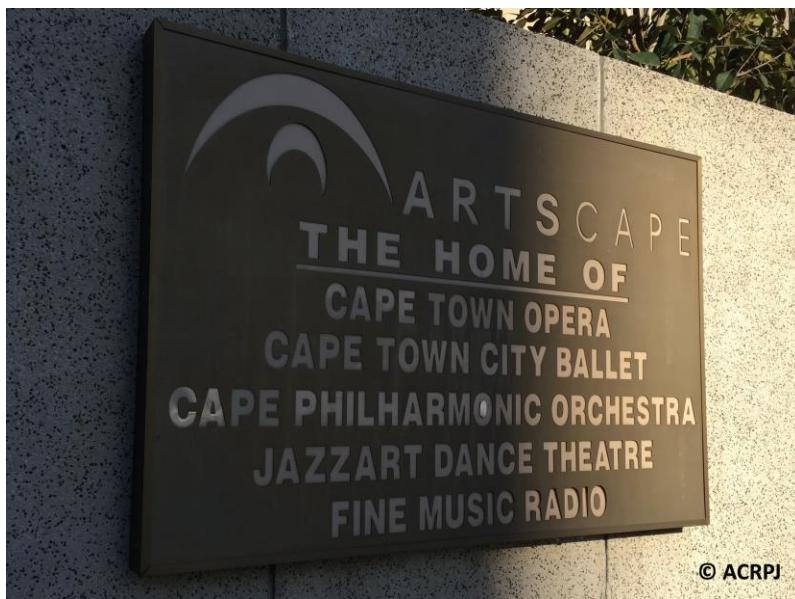
On the other hand, it provided hope to learn about the legacy of Apartheid in these two neighborhoods, knowing that Apartheid in South Africa at least theoretically ended. However, the Palestinians still have a long way to go. They have been forcibly removed, and still are being removed today. They do not even have a realistic perspective on returning to their home towns one day. They have to carry their ID's with them all the time and are not able to cross the lines to places that once were their hometowns. They experience the fear of being imprisoned without a fair trial. But Palestinians will also tell you about their hope for better times, hope for a fair existence and hope for living in freedom. And with a large part of the world struggling to recognize Apartheid in Israel-Palestine, Palestinians have at least one country to focus their hope on and that supports their case: South Africa.

Experience Arts(cape), experience South Africa! (Truus van der Sloot)

Imagine you are on an enormous theatre stage and you can perform freely. You share your laughter, you share your songs, you share your pain. Now imagine foreign visitors coming over, wanting to learn about your country, South Africa. What will their experience be like?

Reaching out

Coming to Artscape Theatre in Cape Town, we, as foreign students of the VU University Amsterdam, did not know what to expect. We found ourselves in a cultural festival, called "Suidoosterfees." In former times, it used to be full with Afrikaner festivities, now it is welcoming everyone. Today Artscape hosts the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra, the Cape Town Opera, and the Cape Town City Ballet, and it has even added a Jazzart Dance Theatre, but behind the scenes there is much more to be seen. CEO Marlene le Roux is



namely passionate about arts and education. Therefore, it is more than a pluriform platform for the artistic community to engage with each other. It is a 'safe space' to share and learn about arts and reaches out to many, especially young people in the Western Cape region. They come to watch performances, to get involved in music, or to participate in reading

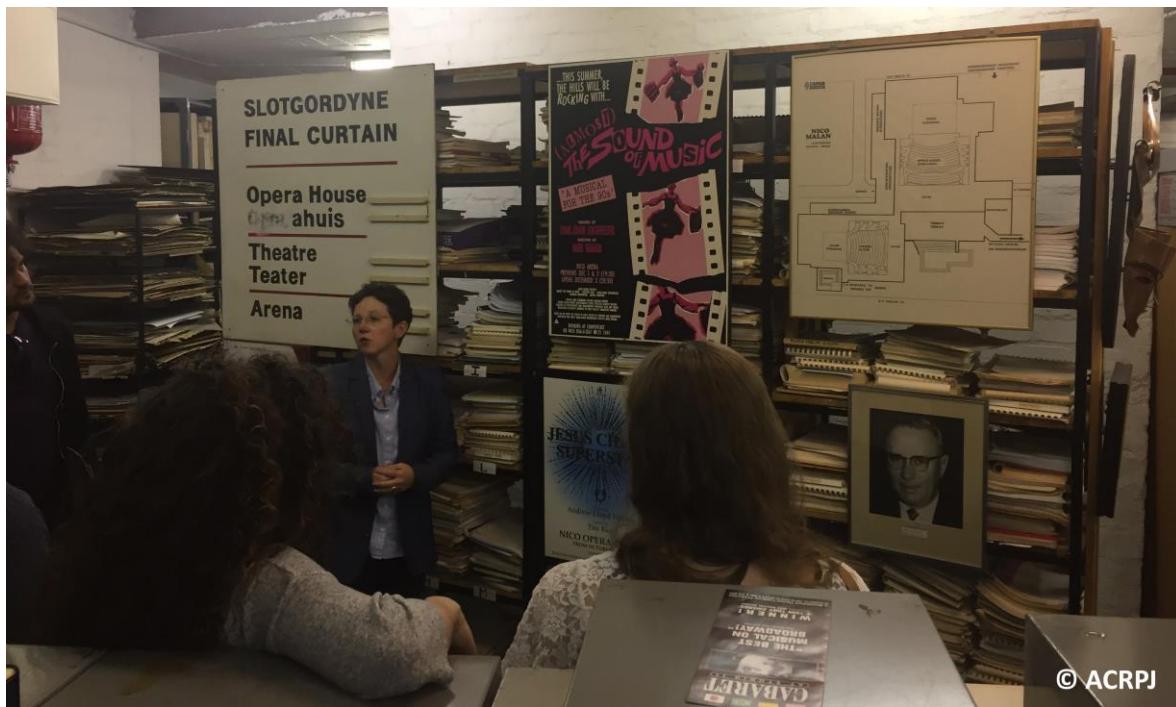
projects, intended to perform arts in each of South Africa's mother tongues. All these are like stepping-stones for an inclusive arts arena. Funded by the provincial government and the City of Cape Town it seems as if the Cape Town Suidooster wind is blowing fervently for social cohesion.

We were welcomed wholeheartedly in this space, too. Marlene le Roux spoke from the heart about the struggle for freedom of Apartheid. How arts gave her freedom and visibility, as a black and disabled woman. She got us very much engaged and invited us to experience South Africa, not to simply over-analyze it. She introduced herself as an activist, still busy deconstructing the legacy of colonialism and Apartheid. According to her, many people still do not talk to each other, because of differences in language, culture and religion, although nobody is born with these specific differences. The psychological effect of Apartheid history is huge, since it especially made black people lose their dignity. Despite the reconciliatory attempts of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, most

people in South Africa still suffer today. Many are very poor, having no land, no education and feeling “sold out,” especially the younger generation.

We met more people at Artscape, some of them literally behind the scenes, others guided us through the building. We even experienced what it is like to be welcomed by a Xhosa song, sung by a group of youth in one of the reading classes. It is alienating in a sense, Anglicized and privileged as we are. Plus, sadly there was no time to engage in a conversation. Still, we really enjoyed the show of South Africa’s favorite songs. It felt like a nationwide sing-along, thanks to the enthusiasm of the audience. It makes sense now, what Marlene told us: “we are a country that likes to sing and laugh, we fight all the time....”

Our journey of the day ended with a special satirical one-hour sketch called “State Fracture.” The performance of Daniel Mpilo Richards was mind blowing. He transformed into different characters, from a real estate agent to a chicken. Although it’s hard to follow all the colonial, corruption and creepy confronting jokes, you felt he addressed each and everyone in the audience: “where is your stance in this rainbow nation and why would you still believe in illusions, do you, or don’t you? Moreover, since you laugh about the most absurd realities, what is it actually that you laugh about?”



Visit to ArtsCape facilities, Cape Town

Anybody witnessing?

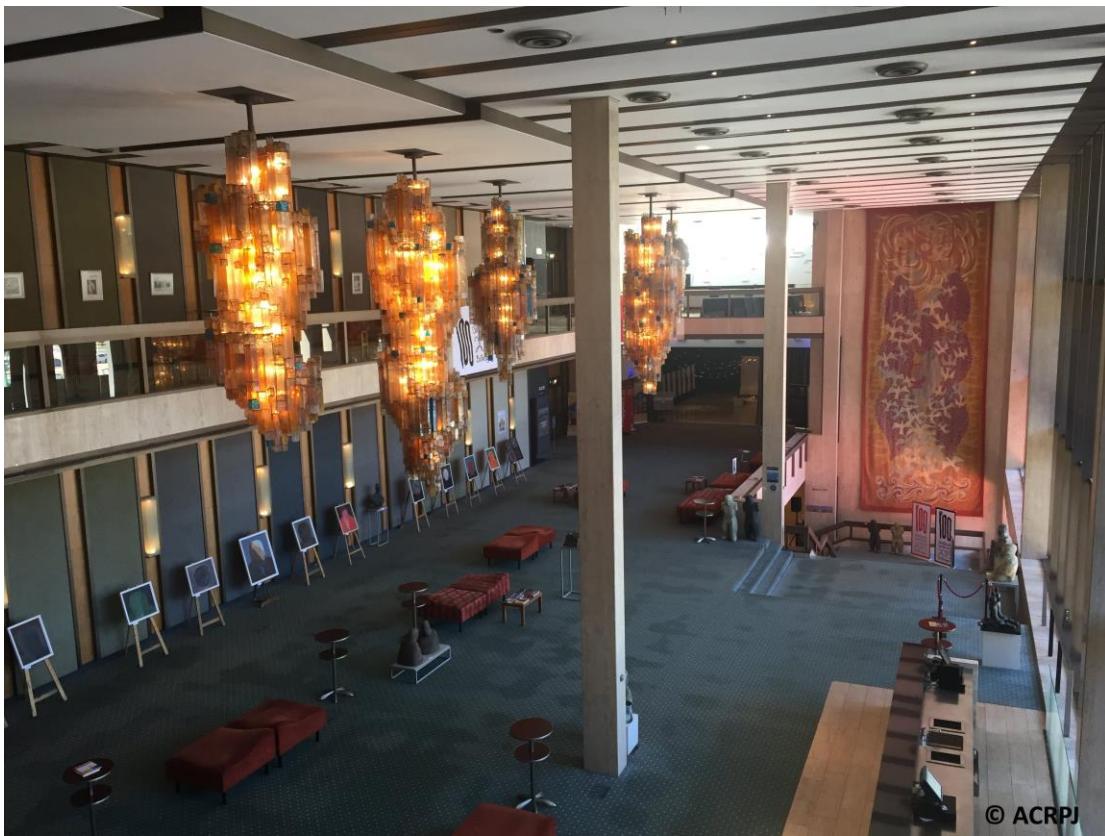
Looking back at this day, I felt like we literally came out of the Artscape archives (your study books as it were) into broad daylight, in the fractured state that makes up South Africa. There used to be a time when Artscape Theatre was reserved for whites only, but it became the first South African theatre that allowed all ‘races.’ When you are poor, even art

is a luxury. I became most aware of this by listening to Germaine that day. He shared how he earned his PhD in Theology, growing up in one of Cape Town's townships. How he studied at nighttime, in an environment with loving family, but also full of gangsterism and drugs. Now he wants young people in his community to see there is more to life than what they encounter daily. Artscape Theatre envisages another South Africa, which it already represents. That is why I will remember Marlene's words: "South Africa, you visit it, we live in it. It is our divided society, but life isn't about "black and white" or "my rights" it's about *all* nuances."

Arts for Leisure or Politics? Leisure or Politics Through Arts? (*Daniel Serrano Bernal*)

Why is art essential during 24 years without Apartheid in South Africa? What is a possible connection between healing, leisure, and reconciliation? Questions that come to mind walking through the halls full of diverse people, paintings, noise, carpets, and gigantic chandeliers within Artscape in Cape Town. The Theatre gave us the impression of an inclusive space that, at first sight, you will think that art is for leisure and pleasure, but the public, in every performance, is experiencing *catharsis* of the struggle.

The experience in Artscape, District Six Museum, Slave Lodge Museum, and Langa showed multiple possibilities of doing memory. Through art, truth-telling is an action to unveil exclusion discourses in post-Apartheid times, unveiling other systemic violence within society. The racial conflict established by the former colonizers in South Africa left open wounds that were treated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). However, the TRC was not enough to overcome this skin color classification in the territory. Many divisions went deep after 1994 – the first free elections – and the racial problems are still latent in South African society. In this way, Artscape is a space where art exposes the intersectionality of violence. Racism has to be addressed; hitherto this is not enough to understand the violence against women, the class violence, the violence of gentrification, the violence of silence.



Artscape first floor hall, Cape Town

© ACRPJ

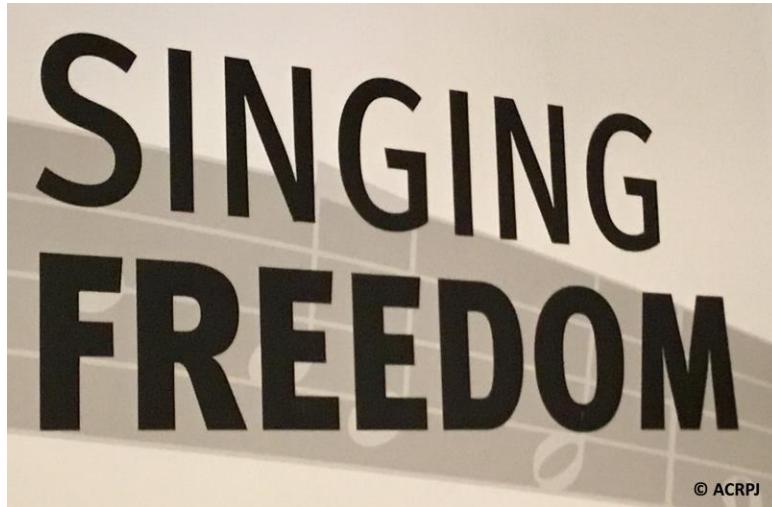
The questions about how people in South Africa are dealing with their trauma were popping up over and over again. The answers at the beginning were blurry and mostly directed to the TRC, though the words of two South African artists, Steve Biko and Miriam Makeba laid the ground to show that art has always been a tool to protest and further, for healing.

“Any suffering we experienced was made more real by song and rhythm which leads to a culture of defiance, self-assertion and group pride and solidarity.” Strong words by the anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko on the spirit of music for the oppressed in his country. The suffering was real day-by-day, but with songs, the collective memory was active, as he said: “was more real.” The lyrics were telling regular stories of violence against the black people, and those sounds were used to unite the exploited.

The artist Miriam Makeba, from her own experience captured in one of her quotes that oppressed black people found strength every time in arts to fight against the system. She was clearly pointing out that music is not only about leisure:

In our struggle, songs are not simply entertainment for us. They are the way we communicate. The press, radio, and TV are all censored by the government. We cannot believe what they say. So we make up songs to tell us about events. Let something happen, and the next day a song will be written about it.

The places of entertainment and information were closed to non-white population but the vibrant culture needed to say something. From side to side they were talking to each other and to the world with rhythmic words and with their own beat.



Slave Lodge Museum, Cape Town © ACRPJ

Arts again have to scream out loud against all types of violence. Nowadays, it is more common to find music, paintings, theatrical plays without any political sense. In some areas, art is even legitimizing gendered violence and not serving as a liberating device for the people. Sometimes in the southern globe, we address northern artists that are shouting against violent systems, and we ignore our co-local musicians and writers that are saying something against violence. Songs with beautiful lyrics entirely mute, paintings full of colors that – in the end – are just an empty space, historical plays that give a safe historical portrayal which builds a bubble for the public of their reality. You can say that the pace of our present societies lets everything happen in a second because of social media. Precisely,

everything happening in a second is one of the paradoxes of arts, which has always been the case. Knowing this, we have, in our hands, the opportunity to open our horizon of arts, trying to be conscious of the alienating messages of mass arts. We also have to give ourselves the chance to enjoy mass and pop arts, however looking for the possibilities to create seeking choose but, also we have the opportunity to create. Art is a place of everything at the same time and place, it is leisure, it is pleasure, but then again, politics, ethics, diversity, and freedom.

Cape Town is full of contradictions, and each one needs to be treated to continue the TRC project to give a safe space to the whole of the population. A task perfectly suited to art. The words said above could be interpreted in a way that art has to be political, but that is limiting it. That is why art is the bridge between leisure and memory, between pleasure and pain of and for a society. Art can dig deep into our souls, let us process problems and discomfort to express ourselves and address the interconnections of societal problems, seeking for different answers. Humankind has various traumas to deal with, and, with the excursion to South Africa, we comprehended the importance of artistic work from different angles to confront the violence, becoming conscious of it, in order to transform it – a task for the past 24 years after Apartheid and beyond.