

Remembering Apartheid in South Africa

1. History

Before 1488: region south of the Sambesi was primarily settled by San hunter and gatherers, later by bantu speaking peoples.

1488: portuguese navigator Bartolomeu Dias rounds the cape

1652: Jan van Riebeck, commander of the east india company, founds refreshment station at cape of good hope – dutch settlements follow

→ wars between the dutch settlers and the african peoples (Xhosa, Khoikoi)

1795: occupatin of the british begins → overlap of the situation with their own demands

1899-1902: the South African war

1948: National Party wins the election → implementation of Apartheid starts

Apartheid

The SANAC (South African Native Affairs Comission) publishes in 1905 a paper which systematized in many ways thinking about segregationist „native policy“ for the future:

→ several „Native Acts“ follow: 1913: Natives Lands Act, 1923: Natives (Urban Areas) Act

1927: Immorality Act and others

In the 1960's Apartheid gets to its height: besides the institutionalized racism, persecutions, torture, and murder through the state take place in order to put down the resistance movements.

2. Remembering the Past

- since the ending of the apartheid, the state, political parties, civil society and ordinary people need to attempt to deal with their past.

→ several actors on the institutional level are engaging in the field of remembrance: the state, Churches, NGO's, Artists

TRC

- aim to built a national identity through the creation of a collective memory and the establishment of historical truth

- critiques:

- TRC reached only a small number of victims because the definition of the human rights violations are narrow, only the most severe crimes that stood in a political context were adressed (murder, torture, „severe ill-treatment“)

- the consideration of the everyday administrative horrors of a system legally defined as a crime against humanity is lacking → the institutional violence of apartheid itself remains unexamined

- through the Amnesty Committee, many perpetrators left unpunished

Amazwi Abesifazane (voices of women)

- project which is part of the NGO „Create Africa South“ (2000)

- aim: promotion of healing and recovery of individuals and communities that have been affected by human rights violation

- women articulate their traumatic experiences of the Apartheid-era in making „memory -cloths“

(embroidery appliqué and beadwork) → the used beads are not only adornment but play a part in cultural rites of the Zulu and Ndebele (marriage, courtship, homage to ancestors)

- a national archive of memory-cloths has been built with more than 1500 cloths until today
- each cloth is attached by a profile of the artist and her story in a short form
- Cloths are shown in galleries in Durban and Petermaritzburg as well as in exhibitions in Europe and the USA

Khulumani

- Khulumani is Zulu for „speak out“, founded in 1995 by survivors and victims families of the Apartheid
- groups of victims meet regularly to exchange their experiences of Apartheid
- further aims as a victims lobbying group:
 - Reparations applications and appeals
 - Disappearances investigations
 - Victim empowerment programmes (psychological, referrals, theatre for healing);
 - Direct assistance to victims and their families (medical, psychological educational)
 - Commemoration services in honour of fallen victims

IHOM

- project established by a pastor → addressed to the emotional and spiritual process of remembering
- organization of workshops in which the participants can share their experiences in an interactive experimental way

“The power of the workshops lies in their experiential, interactive nature, and their emphasis on the emotional and spiritual, rather than intellectual, understanding and interpretation of the past. Through an exploration of their personal histories, participants find emotional release and as a group gain insight into and empathy for the experiences of others. These processes prepare the ground for forgiveness and reconciliation between people of diverse backgrounds, races, cultures and religions.” (www.healingofmemories.co.za)

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