

# CURRICULUM REFORM AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

**Written by Constitution Hill and the Human Rights Media Centre**

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**Title: Transitional Justice and Curriculum Reform in South Africa**

## **Introduction and Background**

The case study locates curriculum reform specifically in history education in South Africa's schooling system. It explores the impact of history education on social cohesion in schools and among out of school youth, and teachers' role in reconciliatory education in post-apartheid South Africa. The study is a collaboration between the two-member Sites; Constitution Hill (ConHill) and the Human Rights Media Centre (HRMC). The report is based on desktop research; a teacher and learners survey; interviews with human rights practitioners and programme developers ((See Annexure A). The programmes of Constitution Hill (ConHill) were reviewed and their alignment and impact to the history education curriculum outline. The report was compiled through programme reports; interviews with history curriculum practitioner; Claire Dyer who provided an overview of the work done by Constitution Hill to develop a history programme aligned to the strategic intentions of government's policy interventions. The report documents the informal education initiatives of the Human Rights Media Centre (HRMC) through information collected from the organisation's reports and an interview with Shirley Gunn, HRMC's Executive Director. Shirley Gunn is a former anti-apartheid activist, Umkhonto we Sizwe member and commander of the Ashley Kriel Detachment. She is currently the executive director of the Human Rights Media Centre (HRMC), an NPO that aims to promote an awareness and activism about human rights through various narrative history projects, educational material and social interventions. She is also on the board of the Khulumani Support Group, an organisation for victims and survivors of apartheid-related human rights violations. Gunn offered valuable insight and reflection on some of the organisation's key projects and the educational and transformative impact of these areas of work.

## Background

Between 1948 and 1990 the white minority National Party government organised South African society and public institutions, including schools which separated learners spatially; and racially. Under the apartheid education system had its own education syllabus (curriculum). Before the apartheid government Bantu education Act of 1953; 90% of black schools were state aided mission schools. The Act of 1953 demanded that all such schools register with the state, and removed control of African education from the churches and provincial authorities; also, separated the financing of education for Africans from general state spending and linked it to direct tax paid by Africans themselves; which meant less was spent on the education for black learners.

With South Africa's dawn of democracy in 1994; emphasis was on education reform to build social cohesion; and entrench values of the new Constitution of RSA (1996). The Constitution of the country provides a legal framework for the reform of educational system; outlining the "right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable"... and a right in regard to the establishment of "independent educational institutions" (RSA, 1996a: Section 29(2) and (3). The rights to education are set out as follows in the Constitution (RSA, 1996a): 29 [1] Everyone has the right- (a) to a basic education, including adult basic education.

The earliest curriculum development in the 1990's was influenced and drawn from the People's Education movement; and various worker education projects which were a distinctive product of the community and trade union struggles of the 1980s; brought in by the African National Congress (ANC) government, and civil society partners (Cross, Mungadi & Rouhani, 2002). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process in South Africa signalled a major shift in South Africa; while offering a watershed moment to rebuild the country through a rich source of common political identity committed to constitutional democracy and human rights birthed in 1994. The commission's work was benchmarked on the occurrences of the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre purposed to have a spiritual, historical, educational and political significance. The Sharpeville Massacre marked a poignant time in the history of south Africa's fight against apartheid, occupying a central place in the fight and protection for human rights globally. The TRC was established in 1995, focusing on the gross human rights violations committed under apartheid. For transformation to be achieved; the TRC was therefore an important starting point for citizenship education.

The policy shifts post-apartheid for a new curriculum intended to give rise to a constitutional democracy where a learner is an empowered active citizen; in a socially cohesive society. The National Development Plan (NDP) was developed in 2010 by a National Planning Commission (NPC); and released in 2011 to be a guiding tool for South Africa's policy formulation and implementation of interventions by government; business and civil society organisations to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. A diagnostic report released in 2011 by the National Planning Commission (NPC) indicates that the quality of school education for black people is poor. A review of the ambitious National Development Plan revealed achievements and failures of 25 years of democratic rule in South Africa since 1994. At the start of the second phase of the democratic transition in 2012, the newly adopted National Development Plan (NDP): Vision 2030; set to serve as a roadmap for a more efficient and effective pathway for an integrated and socially cohesive country.

The South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996, section 3[1]) states that all children in South Africa must “attend school from the first school day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of seven years until the last day of the year in which such learner reaches the age of fifteen years or the ninth grade whichever comes first”. Within this band of compulsory education from grades 1-9, South Africa has a very high rate of participation (over 95%), even by global standards (Branson et al. 2013: 12; Fleisch et al. 2009: 41; Sabates et al. 2010: 2). Most school dropout in South Africa occurs in grades 10 and 11, resulting in 50% of learners in any one cohort dropping out before reaching grade 12 (Spaull 2015: 34). Most the learners would have been exposed to history education; which is compulsory within the grades 1-9 bands.

### Government Curriculum Reforms

The Lifelong Learning through a National Curriculum Framework document (1996) was the first major curriculum statement of a democratic South Africa from which it expressed its intended outcomes as “A prosperous, truly united, democratic and internationally competitive country with literate, creative and critical citizens leading productive, self-fulfilled lives in a country free of violence, discrimination and prejudice.” Supported by the Constitution of the RSA (1996); in 2000 the South African national government made recommendations for the promotion of a values based history curriculum which focused on three key elements. The first is to develop the intellectual abilities and critical faculties among all the children and young adults in our schools; which would contribute towards a democratic society where citizens are informed by a grasp of their history and of current affairs. Secondly, the educational philosophy where democracy emphasise inclusiveness; necessary but certainly not enough to discourage or outlaw harmful and illegitimate discrimination; and thirdly an educational philosophy that provides learners with the tools to solve the many problems that come with being human throughout the life cycle. The ten fundamental values which learners were to be exposed to and espoused through the education curriculum were democracy; social justice; equality; non-racism and non-sexism; ubuntu (human dignity); an open society; accountability; rule of law; respect; and reconciliation. The manifesto on Education and Democracy was developed by the Department of Education in 2001; its ideals were based on universal rights for every human.

The process to achieving a value-based education curriculum set the government on a path to launching a curriculum change in post-apartheid South Africa; which were initiated immediately after the election in 1994 when the National Education and Training Forum began a process of syllabus revision and subject rationalisation. The purpose of this process was mainly to lay the foundations for a single national core syllabus; which was aimed at curriculum developers that would remove overtly racist and other insensitive language from existing syllabi.

In 2001; the Education Ministry launched a new system of values in education which strived to create an identity of South Africanness (Ministry of Education 2001: 111). History education was not incorporated into the first wave of curriculum reform during the immediate post-apartheid period and was initially omitted from the first curriculum revision in 1996 (Tibbitts & Weldon, 2017, p.444). In 2001-2002, history was revised into the national curriculum. In 2003, the new history curriculum was launched. At the core of the new history curriculum was the pedagogical approach of historical enquiry, aiming to introduce approaches other than the rote learning of a single official narrative and allow for engagement with diverse narratives of history (Tibbitts & Weldon, 2017, p.445).



The curriculum reform that followed in 2005 referred to as Outcomes Based Education (OBE); was intended to emphasize experiential and cooperative learning; pursue the values of diversity in the areas of race, gender and culture; develop citizens who are imaginative and critical problem solvers; and enhance integration in education and training. This transition to an outcome based education curriculum meant that the teachers' role was no longer that of an authoritarian – shifting the view of teachers and their role from a positional to personal authority. This had to be a challenging shift of power in the classroom, where traditionally the teacher was a knowledge holder. For all its purpose and intention; the learning outcomes could be left to the learners and teachers for a variety of interpretations by teacher and learner; considering the different school's norm; ethics and culture. There is nothing within the OBE framework to prevent such a latitude of interpretation that would mute even the modest directions signalled in an outcome (Jansen; 1998).

While the education system reform processes were implemented; with renewed emphasis on the history education curriculum during the period 2001 and 2013, societal challenges such as inequality; violence and poverty were spilling over to school spaces (Amnesty Report International; 2011). In the South African context; where schools are still spatially segregated along racial and class lines; with the poor grappling with their perpetual inherent inequalities and dilapidated school infrastructure. School grounds mirror their historic and current realities. Lefebvre's 'moments' of space (1991, p. 33) suggests that school space is simultaneously a physical, mental and abstracted, and everyday lived or experienced space. School as part of society extends beyond its borders; rituals and routines, participation in external activities such as excursions, shapes learners' worldview beyond the classroom. The problems associated with school violence paint a bleak picture of violence in South African schools (Prinsloo, 2008), including threats of violence, psychological abuse, robbery, physical assaults, gang violence, corporal punishment, sexual violence and bullying (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). In addition to the existing National School Safety Framework, Safety in Education Partnership Protocol between the Department of Basic Education and the South African Police Service, additionally government launched the National School Safety Framework (2015) and the Bill of Responsibilities (2017) to mitigate the rise in violent acts in schools.

In 2012; the implementation of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) was an important step in achieving educational reforms especially between former resourced and under-resourced schools. CAPS typically bring about significant changes in the methods of assessments, time that learners must spend in the classroom from grade R-12 and new teaching approaches. However, CAPS has been plagued by challenges. The teachers are often frustrated by curriculum changes owing to lack of clear technical expertise to carry out teaching responsibilities (Mdtshane, 2007). The lack of effective and supportive training processes for teachers, specifically in the adoption of new methods for teaching history, has compromised curriculum reform and its ability to engender transitional justice aspirations in South Africa (Tibbitts & Weldon, 2017, p.443).

In 2015, there was a government proposal to make history education compulsory at a high school matric level. This proposal included the consideration of incorporating elements of the history syllabus into the subject of Life Orientation. Implemented in 2001, the Life Orientation program was aimed to teach students about topics such as sexual and physical education, future career options, citizenship, and, depending on the school, religion. This range of topics is designed to prepare them to live healthy and productive adult lives. However, in practice the program is not always successful due to a lack of resources, teachers who are not trained to teach Life Orientation, and unmotivated



students. Despite its high profile in anti-apartheid education, the subject has not received the same attention as science and math in the post 1994 debates, and was sidelined by Curriculum 2005 and OBE reforms because of the emphasis on constructivist notions of knowledge which devalued formal historical learning. Research and recommendations on this proposal were conducted by the History Ministerial Task Team (MTT), presented to the Department of Education in 2018. Based on extensive research and collecting inputs from educators in each of the provinces, the MTT's report recommended that history be made a compulsory subject and that the necessary negotiations and resource allocations be made. The MTT decided against the incorporation of history education into the LO syllabus, based on resistance from educators on the basis that history may be diluted if some elements were transferred, and due to inherent inequalities between schools and discrepancies in resources provided to learners and the way in which the Life Orientation syllabus is taught would be an inhibiting factor (Report of the History Ministerial task Team, 2018). However, the MTT did state that a case could be made for citizenship with aspects of History within it, to become part of Life Orientation (Report of the History Ministerial task Team, 2018, p. 130). There seems to be no follow through on these recommendations yet.

### **Teaching of Recent History/Arts and Culture/Human Rights Education: Education Programmes at Constitutional Hill**

Constitution Hill is a living museum that is a national heritage site ideally located between Braamfontein, Parktown and Hillbrow in Johannesburg. The site is home to the Constitutional Court, the Old Fort, the Women's Jail, Number 4 Prison, and various other heritage related buildings. It offers programmes designed to educate about constitutionalism, democracy and Human rights for school learners, students, and public members. Their school education programmes are CAPS aligned to make sure that a visit to the museum is not just an excursion but a continuation of learning in an exciting manner. These programmes include an education programme facilitator, a one-hour tour and a one-hour CAP-aligned educational programme. Some of the school education programmes are available, A journey through Constitution Hill, Learning from our leaders, Bill of Rights workshop, My South Africa: Thand' Mzansi, Art, Human Rights and Justice, and human rights and the Constitution Hill and history.

Constitution Hill on average hosts 150 schools per annum, with 65% of this number being public schools and 35% private schools. This was the situation before the Covid -19 Pandemic, and the number of schools was increasing by about 5% every year. ConHill saw a decline in numbers with the advent of the Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020. Schools were closed and when they reopened, the Department of Education cancelled school excursions.

ConHill's education team then found new ways to continue engaging with school learners. They have done this by doing outreach programmes, where programmes are taken to disadvantaged schools and non-fee-paying schools in different townships in Gauteng. The number of schools visited in 2019/2020 was thus 189 schools on site. In the 2020/2021 period, this number decreased to 10 schools on site and 60 schools through virtual interaction reached through debating tournaments.





Judith Mason; *The Man Who Sang and The Woman Who Kept Silent*, 1998.

The artworks are a part of the Art and Human Rights programme which focuses on educating learners about history; and was designed to complement the history education curriculum. The programme focuses on the apartheid practices of segregation; including themes on resistance and the struggle for human rights; gender based violence which are themes that can be found in the history education curriculum.

Through this educational programme; which is intended for learners in Grades 4 – 6 and is open to all schools. Their imagination and curiosity is engaged through a creative process of highlighting human rights abuses using art and exhibits on site. Both learners and teachers are supported with history education worksheets and are encouraged to work collaboratively on issues related to peace, tolerance, and reconciliation.

Mason's artwork provides a point of reference to frame discussions on issues such as gender-based violence and sexual harassment which is cloaked in shame, betrayal, anger, and pain. These acts of violence, which persist in the present day, have their roots in the apartheid past. Although art and cultural activities provide spaces to creatively address the trauma that comes with active and historic conflict and as well as provide accessible tools such as dialogue, education, and awareness. It also requires mechanisms to address structural and cultural violence in society and mirrored in schools. Using participatory methodologies that are non-threatening tools for social engagement – learners and teachers are presented with the opportunity to critically reflect on these social issues and begin reimagining new ways of engagement; to create society as they envision. It is also important to note that Ndwandwe requested to sing *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* before her execution, which is now the national anthem of South Africa before being executed. The national symbols have become a tool to build social cohesion in South Africa; and the singing of the national anthem; the key outputs of the social cohesion and nation building strategy involves promoting heritage and culture and proposed activities include making sure that schools fly the national flag and that people support their sports teams.

## Debating Tournament

Constitution Hill hosts an annual debating tournament aimed at high school learners in grade 8 – 12 nationally. Championing constitutional education, by exposing learners to the South African Constitution and the crucial role of the Constitutional Court cases. The key values promoted to learners are Constitutionalism, Human Rights and Democracy. Learners are equipped with debating and negotiation skills through research and training.

The competition aims to be inclusive and is open to all schools. The Debating tournament draws participation from these diverse communities; providing a space to debate, understand the Constitution and its values and to establish a continuous Human Rights learning programme through education and information. The project's use of debate and dialogue as a tool of engagement provides opportunity to build cohesion based on common ground as all parties must listen to each other's inputs to understand and build consensus needed for a winning argument. It is through the open sharing of ideas and opinions and listening to one another that dialogue participants are brought closer together – they begin to get to know one another, understand what is important to one another and, by working together on a common issue, begin to trust one another (Bohm, 2015).

Over the past 16 years the Debating tournament has provided a participatory approach for learners from different contexts; to reflect and remember the history and past injustices of South Africa through research; engaging on contemporary issues and re-imagining a way forward; using the Constitution as a framework. This crucial space provides space to learners to build unity and harmony between the different and diverse sections of the South African Society through the promotion, protection, and appreciation of constitutional values. While some were inspired to pursue careers in the social justice space, most learners took the initiative to their communities and started engaging in local histories.

The truth is people are black, white, Indian and other races. We need to understand that we can never be able to eliminate this idea of race. We need to understand that each one is equal and that's the idea of democracy. We think that, because of our history, racism is something that people are willing to deal with." Nomsa Mboneli; Debating Tournament; Grade 9 pupil from Rhodesfield Technical High School in Kempton Park

## Children's Room – Play Africa Museum

Aimed at the foundation phase: Grades 1 to 5; the Play Africa Museum is the first children's museum in southern Africa and a multipurpose facility dedicated to the needs of children in the foundation phase. Its core focus is on the promotion of children's rights as enshrined in the Bill of Rights and constitutional values. Using tactile; and sensory participatory approaches to learning the center caters for all children including those with disabilities. It holds a special place in the precinct; and its surroundings and is visited by children from ages of 3 – 12 years of age with their families.

Through stimulating hands-on play to spark imagination and encourage empathy, experimentation, problem-solving and a growth mindset in children, their families and educators. The museum's offerings include the use of indigenous storytelling; empowering children with playful learning opportunities in creativity, personal expression, and the arts; Ubuntu and civic engagement in a democratic society. The use of arts and culture is woven throughout the programme delivery – using

tools such as puppets; music; poetry and multimedia which was strengthened during the COVID19 environment. In this space, children and their families are exposed to and come to enact the values and rights of the Constitution through creative and interactive displays and activities such as a Mock Up Court. The museum provides an opportunity for families of different races, classes, ages, religions, and nationalities to interact and engage with each other. These interactions speak more loudly than any lofty declarations around freedom and reconciliation.



Children's Court, an interactive exhibit that uses play to introduce children to South Africa's judicial system

### Public Exhibitions

Constitution Hill has built an archive of oral history interviews and collected historical images; videos; struggle posters and other materials for archival. Through its exhibitions programme, the site uses photography, film and innovative education methods to engage learners on issues related to prejudice, tolerance, peace and understanding. During the School exhibitions walk-about, learners are shown videos that focus on the history of South Africa, they listen to audio oral history accounts of the past and view photo exhibitions. The content of these education materials highlights the history that is not taught at schools. Exhibitions also include temporary exhibits; developed by the community which cover contemporary issues as they occur in society; and facilitate discussions on difficult issues .

### Festivals

The annual Human rights festival has built a community and network of Civil Society Organisations; Academic; Government and other stakeholders to develop art and cultural programmes on 21 March Human Rights Day. The Human Rights festival has created a critical mass – growing from an attendance of 250 participants in 2013; to over 8 000 festival goers engaged to face contemporary issues of conflict, and human rights violations. Multidisciplinary tools such as theatre; poetry; music; film; food; books; exhibitions; a Human Rights walk, and other cultural engagements are used as



participatory methods of engagement. The festival allows for a wider reach and facilitates focused collaborations within the bigger context. It inspires the nation and cements the protection and promotion of human rights by associating it with cultural activities, which are part of the fibre of communities. Members of the community find opportunities to be part of a movement; this includes learners who curate an educational programme as part of the festival. The festival has grown to become a space where Civil Society Organisations; researchers and government share research findings on Human Rights Violations; Campaigns and interventions. The Human Rights festival is an emerging movement which holds its network of members accountable to the promise of the Constitution of the RSA and its values.

### Intergenerational Dialogue

The programme's aim is to pass down the "baton" and ensure that there are no-recurrences through education about past injustices. Through an intergenerational dialogue programme; led by women ex-prisoners (Sizoyasibuye) who were held on site during the peak of apartheid for crimes ranging from petty to political activities; the site engages youth. The ex-prisoners give first account experiences of the past injustices. Young people take up this as an opportunity not only for reflection and learning from the elders; but have demanded accountability and responsibility for some of the decisions made with regards to policy formulation. The decline in membership of the ex-prisoners due to ill health and some passing away has taken away the human engagements. The contributions made by women in South Africa's political history is not told enough. They too were in the trenches, they were great and fearless leaders, they sacrificed their lives and were at the hands of the oppressive white regime.



Portraits on Constitution Hill mural of women ex-prisoners (in order) Cecilie Palmer, Lillian Sere, Mally Mokoena, Zubeida Mayet, Joyce Dipale, Khayo Mafuna and Mmagauta Molefe (Photo credit: Nardstar)

### Justice under a Tree

The tree was a chosen symbol as it shelters and protects, roots itself firmly, stands strong against the sometimes-raging elements as a symbol for the constitution. This symbolic tree: in the South African

context is a tree telling of African life and an African way, as it is under a tree that traditional justice is dispensed. This conceptual departure is employed through Constitution Hill's dialogue programmes. In response to recent conflict and acts of violence resulting in social unrest and looting in June 2021; the site implemented a rapid response intervention facilitated through dialogue.

Often volatile; the conflicts are approached through a multistakeholder approach; bringing in skills to mitigate all risks associated and offer support which is often needed. Dialogue is an important and necessary tool for building relations between groups and contributing to long-term peacebuilding processes (Galtung et al., 2002). In a context of prevalent hostility and violence against foreign nationals in South Africa one wonders why citizenship should be the basis for social cohesion.

### **Informal Education Initiatives of the Human Rights Media Centre**

The Human Rights Media Centre (HRMC) is a Cape Town-based NGO and is a long-standing member of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience. HRMC has undertaken several informal education initiatives and projects since 2000, aligned with transitional justice practice, promoting remembrance of local histories and positive social transformation in South Africa. The organisation's work and narrative arts projects incorporate the use of multimedia and participatory methodologies. Details and insights on these projects were provided by HRMC's Executive Director, Shirley Gunn, in an interview conducted for this report on 5 October 2021.

#### **The Memorialisation of the Trojan Horse Massacres in Athlone and Crossroads**

The Trojan Horse History Project was a key project which engaged school learners and a group of young people, educators as well as the communities at large. This was a narrative arts project centred around the memorialisation of the 1985 Trojan Horse Massacres in Athlone and Crossroads in Cape Town. The memorials and media produced tell the story of the Massacres that occurred when a Joint Operation Command consisting of the South African Police, Railway Police, and Defence Force disguised themselves as railway workers and, hidden inside large crates carried on a truck, ambushed and opened fire on the young people in the street. The memorials created over the course of the project aimed to remember this tragedy, to tell the stories of the affected communities and families and honour the lives of Michael Miranda (12) Shaun Magmoed (15) and Jonathan Claasen (21) from Athlone, and Mabhuti Fatman (20) and Goodman Mali (19) from Crossroads; the five youths killed in the Massacres. The community and the country knew of only the one prong of the security forces ambush strategy that affected Athlone in the Western Cape and which had been the focus of a TRC special hearing in 1997. However, HRMC endeavoured to tell the full history, which was that it was a double-pronged ambush affecting both Athlone and Crossroads communities.



Pictured from left to right: Mural by artist Faith47 in Crossroads and school learners viewing the Trojan Horse memorial in Athlone

The project inspired engagement and participation of grade 11 learners at Alexander Sinton High School in Athlone. The students put on a play performed on the day of unveiling of the Athlone memorial on Heritage Day 2005 which featured a performance of a poem written by Belgravia youth in 1985. The organisation also created accessible educational media and resources on the Trojan Horse story. This included a series of six cartoon-style standalone posters about the massacres, also published in the book, *If Trees Could Speak*, named because trees lined the streets where both atrocities occurred and were thus witnesses to the events, Gunn explained. The well-researched book tells the story of the double-prong massacres and illustrates the life stories of family members of the slain youths from Crossroads. These books were given out for free at several books launches and gifted to all eight high schools in Athlone and sold at cost for R40.

The HRMC also facilitated a Heritage Project that included learners from Crossroads and Athlone, and later students from Langa as well. Together with Magnet Theatre in Cape Town, the group created a play, depicting the event and experiences of the affected families from Crossroads, working from the historical record and life stories in *If Trees Could Speak*. As Gunn recounts, “it was a huge learning experience for the performers, who had never performed something about our contemporary history”. As part of the production, the performers also had the opportunity to spend time with the mother of Goodman Mali killed in Crossroads, known affectionately as Gogo. In terms of the group’s engagement with the history and stories they were telling, “the opportunity for the young actors to connect with an affected family was so powerful”, Gunn explained. The performers were debriefed after performances as they were from local working-class communities and the stories touched them very deeply.





Pictured from left to right: Actors performing the play; facilitated discussions that followed the performance.

There were eight performances of the play in Crossroads and Athlone, and one in Salt River with discussion facilitated with audiences afterwards. From the discussions that followed the performance, there were always very deep conversations that emerged (Gunn, 2021). Gunn recounted the performances for Khulumani Support Group members at Community House in Salt River. During the performance, some of the older members became incredibly emotional. A Swiss researcher who was present at the screening wrote about this and commented that “there wasn’t a therapist at hand”. Gunn explained that “this is a Northern critique about how we deal with trauma”, observing that the community members are there to console and support and that “it is the people themselves that are most equipped to help each other” (Gunn, 2021).

From inception, the Heritage project continued for seven years and elements of the Trojan Horse Heritage project are still ongoing. One of the major challenges in sustaining these types of engagements and education projects is funding. “Funders will not fund for years on end”, and so, “so much of this work is done just out of sheer passion, with very little money” (Gunn, 2021). Gunn also explained the challenge of trying to overcome the social divisions caused by apartheid, “unfortunately, even with all this tireless effort, still today we have the Athlone community not fully accepting the double pronged nature of the Trojan Horse story”. Racism persists.

### Intergenerational Dialogues

HRMC has also hosted intergenerational dialogue sessions. The organisation hosts one day sessions with small groups of approximately 25 people with a balance of ages and genders. Films are played for participants as catalysts to open the conversation. In one more experimental session in 2019, a podcast series was selected as the media from which dialogue would be initiated. The podcast, ‘Who killed Dulcie’, is a seven-episode series about the assassination of anti-apartheid activist, Dulcie September in Paris in 1988. This intergenerational dialogue, including some family members of Dulcie September and others who had lost parents in the Struggle. As the session involved six hours of listening, Gunn provided mandalas to colour in and clay to mould while participants were listening. The podcast was followed by an intense one-hour discussion. These sessions were intensive and

carefully managed. Selected people were invited; “people who are ready to talk and share” (Gunn, 2021). The chosen media was intended as a starting point for conversation in which participants would offer reflections, drawing on personal experiences and memories.

### Participatory arts projects: *Breaking the silence: A Luta Continua*

*Breaking the silence: A Luta Continua* is a travelling exhibition that has been hosted at 11 different museums in South Africa and was hosted by universities in Liberia, Sweden, and California. The exhibition documents a process involving over one thousand Khulumani Support Group members in the Western Cape, and the collaborative work between the Human Rights Media Centre and KSG that spans almost two decades. The KSG members used scrapbooks, body-maps, photographs, memory cloths, drawings, paintings, art banners and film, to tell the stories of their lives under apartheid. The purpose of the process was twofold: “to give unacknowledged heroes and survivors of the struggle against apartheid a chance to remember and express their experiences, and to create a record that might honour their sacrifice and educate future generations” (The Human Rights Media Centre, 2021). During the period when *Breaking the Silence: A Luta Continua* was based as a temporary exhibition at the Apartheid Museum, an educational program was developed for students to engage with the displays through a workbook which they would refer to (Gunn, 2021). The exhibition was so successful in terms of the engagement from school learners that the exhibition ended up staying for much longer than the initial six months it had been commissioned for.

### Books and Films by HRMC

One of HRMC’s major projects has been the making of the *We Never Give Up* trilogy, a series of documentary films which follow the lives of 11 victims of apartheid and their ongoing struggle for reparations following the TRC. The final film in the series, *We Never Gave Up*, is being released this year. The films have been shown to film festival audiences and is used by universities worldwide including to Justice and Transformation Honours students at the University of Cape Town as an aid to understanding the unfinished business of the TRC, the government’s failure to provide reparations, and the impact this had had on the lives of victims and their families. These films are part of the *Breaking the Silence: A Luta Continua* traveling art and memory exhibition.

HRMC has produced and published many books which are collections of individuals’ stories and lived experiences of apartheid. These include *Voices from the Underground: Eighteen life stories from Umkhonto we Sizwe’s Ashley Kriel Detachment* (2019), *Knocking On: Mothers and daughters in struggle in South Africa* (2008), *Labour Pains for the Nation: Eight women workers share their stories* (2007), among others<sup>1</sup>. Although these are not necessarily produced with the intention to be used by schools or to support the national history curriculum, they are valuable educational resources.

Certain books have also been translated into isiXhosa. The range of books can therefore be used in a multifaceted way, “they cut across language, Life Orientation, and history” (Gunn, 2021). These stories help to promote understanding and empathy and gain insight into different lived experience

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<sup>1</sup> There are also published collections of stories of people living with albinism, experiences of people with congenital blindness, and stories of refugees living in South Africa. All books and films produced by HRMC can be found here: <https://hrmc.org.za/books-and-films/>



of apartheid, its impact, and its legacies, far deeper than what is found in most textbooks. Gunn also stressed that it cannot only be from books that young people learn about history. Reflecting on the best possible ways to teach and get young people to engage with the past, she emphasised the importance of trying multimedia approaches to reach young minds. Especially, she says, in the absence of a strong reading culture among South African youth and the relatively low number of high school students who take history as a subject (Gunn, 2021). History, Gunn believes, should be a compulsory subject for high school learners. “We can learn so much from one story if it’s told to its fullest”, said Shirley, speaking to the power of storytelling. This is particularly true of those stories that have been unheard or side-lined within state-sanctioned metanarrative of the anti-apartheid struggle.

## Challenges

### Covid-19 Pandemic

Covid-19 and the onset of national lockdowns has created major challenges for all schools and education programmes run by civil society organisations. In terms of hosting participatory projects and intergenerational dialogues, Shirley Gunn from HRMC said that the challenge with organising these types of processes is that “it is near impossible with covid to do face-to-face work” and the reality is that these types of engagements cannot logistically be hosted or do not translate in the same way on digital platforms (Gunn, 2021). COVID19 posed a challenge in implementing large events such as festivals and on site activities for learners. Although digital media was used as an alternative space; the lack of engagement with the physical objects on site took away the emotive and realness to content with history of the site

### Lack of Government Will

There is an evident lack of government will to sustain transformative history education interventions beyond specific events or days of remembrance. There is limited reach and lack of commitment and proper funding and support to sustain transformative programmes and transformation of school curricula. Moreover, state organs like Con Hill engaged in educational work face challenges and red-tape due to bureaucratic processes, causing delay or preventing interventions dealing with pressing issues (e.g. xenophobic attacks and the recent unrest in South Africa) from being realised.

## Lessons and Reflections and Recommendations

As South Africa still battles with its painful past; characterised by an institutionalised unjust system; the education curriculum is one of the critical tools it could use to target youth in building social cohesion to provide space for dialogue, building trusting relationships, and healing. A learner who participated in the focus group study stated that South African history was taught in a restrictive way and focused solely on those who were at the forefront of the various movements. She thought that it would be better if it focused on everyone, as then everyone’s sorrow and suffering would be considered. A strategic approach through the education system can create new ways of engaging and thinking about the past and the present, resulting in the inclusion of diverse and marginalised narratives; and promotion of shared values and cultures.

The use of innovations such as art; culture and technology for participatory engagement are increasingly important to appeal to youth. A long-term investment in local community models that use art and culture methods for social change could support ongoing creativity, enabling practitioners to deepen their methodologies as they reach out to new communities and inspire new visions for the future. Increased focus also needs to be given to the value of sites of memory and historical archives in history education. There is a disconnect between the government's intentions and local realities and disjuncture in the way in which the government approaches engagement with civil society on education initiatives. Commitment to increased collaboration with civil society, better planning and resource allocation, and consultation with communities are vital steps in the effective development and sustained education programmes.

### Recommendations

- **Build and strengthen inclusive community engagement beyond schools designed to build trust and responsibility**

The persisting issues of inequality; poverty and unemployment have a spillover effect on access to quality education and have manifested themselves into violence; crime; and intolerance. The values-based education in schools needs to be supported by more formal strategies that would contextualise the realities of learners and provide them with moments of reflection and engagement with frameworks such as the Constitution to empower them with the Bill of Responsibilities. A community engagement process is central to designing context specific interventions that would benefit communities and make the intended impact and transformation.

- **Develop community-based interventions designed and driven by learners for oral history projects**

Community-based interventions which invite school learners and out-of-school youth to undertake oral history projects encourage a focus on local histories. In the process, narratives of the apartheid past and lesser known local activists and leaders will be acknowledged, promoting democracy and development in their communities (Jardine, 2011, p.82). It is important for there to be meaningful inclusion and representation of different voices in the teaching of history, going beyond the grand narrative. A learner who participated in the focus group study said that she “struggled to connect with the roots of my own history as a black South African. I’d like to learn more about the origins of my culture as well as the true history of South African governance.”

An educator noted that young people receive a watered down or diluted sense of history and react strongly when they do hear an in-depth account. Going beyond the written word and using other media presents powerful ways to confront and engage with the past, emphasis being on the lived experiences of people during apartheid. These approaches need to be taken seriously and with great care and respect, mindful of the difficulties of reopening the wounds of the past and ensuring that no further harm is caused.

- **Progressive re-interpretation of memorials and sites of memory for contemporary understanding**

Alongside public statues and memorials inherited from the colonial and apartheid eras, narratives must be provided that contextualise the history being represented. This can be done through simple, informative plaques at the site, written in local languages of the region. This will encourage critical remembrance and understanding of memory sites and their place in the narratives that shape our history. In the focus group study conducted, one educator stated “Learners must be taken to these sites. Workshopped by survivors. Debates. They need to feel.”

Community consultation and collaboration is essential in the development of new memory sites, and in the re-interpretation of old, to capacitate local communities through work with sites of memory.

- **Provide increased support for museums and sites of memory**

Museums and sites of memory have significant potential as spaces for learning to promote remembrance and critical engagement with the past. For sites of memory to contribute to peacebuilding; promote social cohesion and non-repetition of past atrocities, there must be a strategic intention by the government to develop and sustain museums in South Africa. Most of these institutions face permanent closure due to lack of funding, now more than ever because of the Covid-19 pandemic and onset of national lockdown regulations.

### Recommendations for collaboration between government and civil society stakeholders

- **Collaboration on curriculum development**

Curriculum revision and development should entail an inclusive public process in which civil society organisations engaged in both formal and informal educational work around memory, reconciliation, and the promotion of human rights and social cohesion, can offer inputs. Experts and practitioners from these organisations can offer constructive insights in terms of facilitating productive and healthy dialogues and participatory methodologies for addressing the past and dealing with sensitive content. Education departments at museums should be included in this, particularly as museum trips are worked into certain schools' history syllabus. The inclusion of multiple stakeholders and representation of diverse voices is essential to curriculum development - in terms of historical content and in crafting educational materials and methodology. This is something civil society organisations must also take cognisance of, and hold themselves to, when developing educational projects and resources.

- **Development and dissemination of information should match the “new” culture of youth; and evolve as ways of engagement change.**

The use of multimedia approaches should be accessible and encouraged. For example, Con Hill has developed the animated Bill of Rights which is available online and is proving to be a preferred platform for young people to engage with the Constitution. In the case of participatory engagements, participants should have agency to choose the creative means or media through which they reflect their learning and engagement with the educational content.

- **Teacher training and support**

In post-conflict societies, especially in contexts where education is viewed as key to social transformation, teachers become mediators of transitional justice in classrooms (Tibbitts & Weldon,

2017). Acknowledging teachers' role and potential in promoting social transformation, it is important to also recognise teachers' limitations in both resource or technical constraints and in personal agency to embrace the role being asked of them (Novelli & Sayed, 2016, p.16). Educators in South Africa are tasked with the challenging responsibility of teaching about apartheid history and human rights abuses, and sensitive recent history such as the TRC, while the country continues to face the legacies of that history: inequality, discrimination, and division along racial and class lines - on a societal level and acutely seen in the education system. Therefore, it is crucial that teachers receive accompanying training and support when introducing new methods and media for teaching history. Not only in terms of capacity and methodology, but also in terms of teachers' personal engagement with the history. Promoting social cohesion in and through teaching needs to be structural as much as psychological (Novelli & Sayed, 2016, p. 16). Therefore, fundamental to history education that intends to promote social cohesion is the way in which educators are equipped and trained to teach history, and the way in which they exercise critical self-engagement with the past - addressing personal experiences and internalised biases - and are supported in that process<sup>2</sup>.

Educators in the focus group study felt that what is prescribed is rigid and doesn't cater for all groups. They feel it favours one group while being biased against another. They state that the curriculum does not meet the needs of the black learner and they battle with this as the people who need to promote this material. They see some areas as being irrelevant and detracting from what they ought to be teaching in schools, "the vast experience of our history", as one educator put it. Finally, they feel that the curriculum and the guidelines they are given are not comprehensive enough to respond to changes in the country's history.

There is a great need for curriculum reforms and new methodology in history education to be shadowed and for training and support to be provided for teachers. Dialogue programmes or workshops designed for educators to address their own relationships to the apartheid past, to their learners, and to one another, have been shown to have positive results. This is an area where the government can continue to collaborate with civil society organisations engaged in this type of work, not just to offer support in terms of capacity-building and accessibility to resources for educators, but also to make sure that they are willingly and actively teaching the content with the intention of raising the historical consciousness of learners.

- **Development and dissemination of available and revised materials for teaching the TRC in schools**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has an educational legacy that is fundamental to the ongoing process of transitional justice in South Africa. Through investigations and testimonies documented in the reports, the TRC produced an archival record of the apartheid past and human rights violations. These archives hold great historical and educational value. User-friendly and popular versions of the seven volumes of the TRC reports should be developed and made available

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<sup>2</sup> An example of a successful collaboration between local government and civil society on teacher-training workshops was the Facing the Past (FtP) programme which ran in the Western Cape from 2003. FtP was hosted by the NGO, Shikaya, in partnership with the United States-based NGO, Facing History and Ourselves (FHAO). More information can be found in studies by Weldon (2010) and Tibbitts and Weldon (2017), and on Shikaya's website (<https://www.shikaya.org/facing-history-and-ourselves>).

to the public, online and in hard copies in libraries, schools, universities. In not making this information publicly accessible, the state has essentially played a role in gatekeeping this important part of our history and historical education.

This goes hand in hand with sustaining the pressure on the government to realise and implement the recommendations of the TRC. Honouring the recommendations requires a coordinated effort on the part of the state and holding the TRC unit within the President's Office, where there is greater possibility of intersectional implementation of the recommendations, rather than keeping the unit under the directorship of the Department of Justice.

- **Developing and protecting South African historical archives and ensuring their accessibility**

More collaboration and coordination is needed for national archives of state institutions and civil society organisations (including books and films such as those produced by HRMC) to be protected, accessible, and used to their full educational value and potential in schools, universities, informal adult education curricula, and society more broadly. In Con Hill's work with ex-prisoners, many members who have now passed away did not have their stories documented. Learning from this, and knowing the power of ordinary peoples' stories, there needs to be an accelerated effort in documenting the stories of lived experience under apartheid, especially those whose voices have been marginalised. For example, there is still gender imbalance in whose stories are documented, and women's agency and experiences are largely forgotten in national narratives.

## Conclusion

More than twenty years post the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we have a long way to go in achieving and implementing the recommendations fully and comprehensively. The world ought not look up to the South African model as the panacea of transitional justice without caution and critical eye, drawing from our hard-learned lessons.

In terms of pursuing a transformative history education curriculum in South Africa, it is crucial that the state is accountable in ensuring involvement of multiple stakeholders in the content and crafting of educational resources and programmes, moving from revision to transformation. Fundamental to affecting transformation through history education, is ensuring that history is taught in a way that links the past with the present, emphasising an understanding of how the past shapes the present and how the legacies of apartheid and colonialism endure and impact our contemporary society. Without this understanding, transformation is hindered as we will not have the tools to deal with present-day issues.

During the focus group a learner offered concluding remarks stating that *"I believe that the school curriculum should place a greater emphasis on South Africa's history and roots. It would be interesting to learn about and comprehend diverse cultures; this is something South Africa is rich in, and we should take use of it. I would also suggest that we as students be taught how to lead and how to lead with integrity so that we may leave a positive legacy for those who come after us. South Africa has a rich history and culture, both of which should be explored further."*



The insights and reflections offered by the learners in the study evidence that this work cannot be done without the involvement of those it is intended for. They are reminders to policy-makers of the importance of taking into account the voices and agency of the youth in developing history curricula and charting the way forward for education that is transformative.

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## **ANNEXURE A: Teacher and Learner Focus Groups Report**

**Focus Group Report Curriculum Reform and Transitional Justice**  
**Prepared by Nolubabalo Memese**

### **Participant selection and profile**

The Eastern Cape is the poorest province in South Africa and has the highest expanded and official unemployment rate in the country. Subsistence agriculture predominates in the former homelands, resulting in widespread poverty. Overall, the province only contributes 8% to the national GDP despite making 13.5% of the population. Gauteng is considered the economic hub of South Africa and contributes heavily in the financial, manufacturing, transport, technology, and telecommunications sectors, among others. It also plays host to a large number of overseas companies requiring a commercial base in and gateway to Africa.

The study samples educators and learners from these very diverse provinces. A fairly clear idea of where the country is with regards to curriculum reform and transformation ought to emerge.

### **Methodology**

The ideal scenario would have been in-contact focus group interviews. This would have been easily achieved with the participants from the Gauteng focus group. However, the first limitation was due to the COVID19 pandemic which has necessitated that we limit contact where possible. An even bigger limitation presented itself for participants outside the province. This meant that the focus groups be held completely online. This was easier to do with educators who were resourced in terms of the technology, data, and internet to carry these out. It was a bit more challenging with learners. Although the Gauteng learners seemed to have ease of access as far communication with mobile phones is concerned, the same could not be said for some of their counterparts in the Eastern Cape. As an aside, the tools used for the advancement of transformation and reform should bear in mind the issue of access in delivering this message.

In summary, interviews were conducted via mobile phone, WhatsApp voice notes and emails with answers were also submitted.

## Demographics

Six educators were chosen from the Eastern Cape and Gauteng provinces. Among the educators interviewed, 3 were from the public school system, 2 from the private school system and one was a former official for curriculum development in special schools at the Eastern Cape Regional Office. The educators varied in age and ranged from 40 to 60 years of age.

Seven learners between grade 10-12 were interviewed. Of these, 2 were male and 5 were female. One learner was in grade 10, 4 in grade 11 and 3 in grade 12. Of these, 4 were from the Eastern Cape and 3 were from Gauteng. Four of the learners were in the public school system and 3 were in IEB schools.

All the participants from both groups were black.

## Discussion results

With regards to transitional justice, only two learners out of the 7 interviewed had heard about it before. Three indicated that although they had not heard about it, they were interested. One of the learners who had heard about it indicated that to them they felt it was motivated by “a society’s need to re-establish social trust, re-establish what is good and wrong, mend a shattered justice system, and build a democratic system of governance”. Half of the educators had heard the term before. Most of the educators felt that transitional justice meant a gradual change from one state of being to another. An issue which stood out was the issue of addressing the past in order to ensure that a re-occurrence of the apartheid system does not happen.

80% of the combined group (both learners and educators) had had family members affected by human right abuses in the past. The percentage was slightly lower when it came to personal experience with violations a few of the learners answered no to this question.

All of the learners felt that a key element to bringing about social cohesion; integration and healing in South Africa was the prosecution of perpetrators. 20% of the educators felt to forgive and to forget was a key manner to achieve this with 80% stating that a reparation program would achieve this. One of the educators added a further element and spoke to the issue of counselling. She felt that black South Africans were never counselled and needed this to understand “*who we are, where we come from, how we became who we are.*” She also felt that “*integration, respect, trying to accommodate and assimilate into one another’s cultures*” were important.

The combined group were of the opinion that Government and Civil Society Organisations should lead social cohesion, healing, and integration. Notably, none of the learners mentioned Museums as place which could do this. 15 % of the educators mentioned museums or sites of memory. One person, a learner, out of the combined group of learners and educators thought the History

curriculum included or promoted education on past human right abuses. The other participants all said this was not so.

Two respondents in the combined group, both learners, stated that the history curriculum needed to go as far back as independence. The rest of the respondents thought it should date to before colonialism.

Some of the personal challenges faced by learners were in a nutshell, that they do not connect to the content being taught. They felt that most of the teachings were about international countries, and one learner says she *“struggled to connect with the roots of my own history as a black South African. I’d like to learn more about the origins of my culture as well as the true history of South African governance.”* The general tone was of this disconnect and that the curriculum did portray black history in a positive light and only in a negative light of an oppressed people. This struck a particular chord in the respondents from the private schools. They felt that history curriculum as it stands creates an environment where it is believed that black people do not have an identity outside of their oppression.

The educators on the other hand felt that what is prescribed is rigid and doesn’t cater for all groups. They feel it favours one group while being biased against another. They state that the curriculum does not meet the needs of the black learner and they battle with this as the people who need to promote this material. They see some areas as being irrelevant and detracting from what they ought to be teaching in schools, *“the vast experience of our history”*, as one educator put it. Finally, they feel that the curriculum and the guidelines they are given are not comprehensive enough to respond to changes in the country’s history.

The combined group felt that the curriculum did not address the issues of past injustices sufficiently. When answering this question two educators strongly felt that it didn’t. When asked about their thoughts on the most effective way to educate about the past, the answer was a mixed bag. Of the educators 3 felt this could be done through visits to museums, 1 said a combination of all of the above, one said through social media campaigns and a final one through commemorating days of historical significance. The learners were evenly divided between social media campaigns and visits to museums.

On the question of what the group thought was the most important for the promotion of history education of the past, the combined answer was social cohesion (20%) and the protection of the Constitutional Democracy (80%). It was noteworthy that among the learners only two feared human right violations “always”, 2 more responded that they sometimes did and 3 not at all. The two male learners on the group were in the “not at all” grouping. Among the educators, two always feared human right violations, one not at all, and the rest were in the sometimes bracket.

One of the general comments from one learner was that South African history was taught in restrictive way and focused solely on those who were at the forefront of the various movements. She thought that it would be better if it focused on everyone, as then everyone’s sorrow and suffering would be considered. The same learner felt schools were doing an excellent job of addressing the human rights violations. It is encouraging to note that learners are open to hearing more about the past from people who had lived through it. As a caution to educators, learners also feel that those

who teach should know their history and how they feel about it or deliver the message plays a role in how students will receive the message.

I would like to conclude this section with these sentiments, expressed by a learner.

*"I believe that the school curriculum should place a greater emphasis on South Africa's history and roots. It would be interesting to learn about and comprehend diverse cultures; this is something South Africa is rich in, and we should take use of it. I would also suggest that we as students be taught how to lead and how to lead with integrity so that we may leave a positive legacy for those who come after us. South Africa has a rich history and culture, both of which should be explored further."*

As far as educators are concerned, one educator stated "Learners must be taken to these sites. Workshopped by survivors. Debates. They need to feel." Another educator note that young people receive a watered down or diluted sense of history and react strongly when they do hear an in-depth account. On the hand, educators feel disempowered in terms of what the curriculum contains. They are also resolute and want to change a lot of their learners. One educator said "we can teach what is relevant and what can make our learners be able to change the narrative of our South African history.

## **Museum comparative study**

### **Robben Island Museum**

The perspective of the Education Officer at Robben Island is that education in South Africa is not transformed and that when the Outcomes Based Education system started, the Department of Education wanted to achieve certain outcomes. Because the educators were not trained, and there was a lot expected from them in a short period of time, museums then entered the space and bridged this gap. From her perspective, museums are playing a vital role to ensure that education in South Africa is transformed. The also work closely with the education department who approaches them with a need to address particular theme for learners. This applies to history and science students as well. They then take the request and create content to meet the need. They also feel that under-resourced schools are their priority and that coming into their space gives them the opportunity to have practical experiences. Robben Island Museum also has outreach programs where they take tourism, heritage, life skills and even mathematics to schools, across all the provinces.

### **Kwa Zulu-Natal Museum**

They have outreach and in-house educational programs. Their inhouse programs consists of general tours paired up with formal lessons. Their topics are based on the CAPS and cover topics from the Natural Sciences, Life Science and History curriculum. They engage schools directly and find out from them which subjects they battle with. There are dedicated education officers who deal with this while tours are conducted by information officers. Formal tours also cover topics outside of the formal curriculum. For example, lessons on dinosaurs, early African farmers etc.

Outreach museum education takes the form of formal lessons. Recently, due to the COVID19 outbreaks they have been doing more outreach programs than inhouse programs due to the limited number of schools coming into the museum. In these outreaches, they focus more on practical



experiments in the life sciences sphere. This is helpful for learners and educators in less resourced schools who do not have for practical experiments facilities. Another outreach program they have is called Enviro-reach and focuses on nature conservation. Public holidays are also commemorated.

With regards to their role in the transformation space, they have exhibitions which start with the San hunter-gatherers, move to early African farmers, Vasco da Gama, The Freedom Gallery and 1994. The museum focuses on culture, history, and nature. They work closely with subject advisers of schools who advise which topics schools struggle with. The museum then focuses on these.

Finally, the museum states that rural school pass rates are low in the KZN province because of the learners have a language barrier. To counter this, the museum has started a reading club (this year) where they are actively fostering a culture of reading as a means of improving the learner's grasp of English so that they can do better with exams.