



No Man's Land: A Possible Frontier for Healing Encounters

ABSTRACT

No Man's Land in South Africa offers a possible venue for the continuing pursuit of healing. Land is not simply a place for living but is a space where identities and memories are forged. It shapes our social and even spiritual self. Being the locus of human experiences, land therefore is a reservoir of memories and narratives of people. In the context of South Africa's history where painful narratives and memories of its experience of apartheid and colonial past continue to haunt its people, there is a need to explore the significance of land in achieving peace. By reflecting on the functions of No Man's land, this paper proposes a novel path for healing and reconciliation.

Keywords: South Africa, No man's Land, Wilderness, Healing.



INTRODUCTION

One of the things I have noticed in South Africa is the existence of abandoned pieces of land situated in-between communities. I discovered that these lands are called ‘No Man’s Land’¹. During the apartheid, they served as boundaries separating racial groups. It was a crime to cross these boundaries. At present, most of these lands remain uninhabited and unutilized. There are some places, however, where people have built infrastructures or have converted these lands into public spaces such as playgrounds, parks and sports’ clubs.

South Africa has been into a process of transition: from the wounds of its colonial and racial past towards its vision of a healed and reconciled society. When the apartheid ended with the country’s first democratic election in the spring of April 1994, a new hope seemed to have dawned on South Africans that enabled them to dream of a new society. Captured in the expression *Rainbow Nation*, they envisioned a country united regardless of color, political affiliation, culture, religion, gender and economic status creating, as it were, different strands of colors as in a rainbow. In the past 27 years, there have been successes in realizing this vision. Yet with the issues of poverty, corruption and economic instability, along with the persistent concerns on racial discrimination, political exclusion and the rising xenophobic tendencies among some of its people, is South Africa starting to fall back from its vision of a society free from division?

¹‘No Man’s Land’ is not exclusive to South Africa. In fact, there are variety of usage connected to this concept. First, it is a term used to describe a piece of land that served to separate one state from another. It designates a land that is not owned by any state. Secondly, this term refers to disputed lands. Thirdly, The International Encyclopedia of the World War I would tell us that the term “‘No Man’s Land’ has been used ‘since the medieval era to denote disputed territory. During the First World War it was re-coined to describe the terrain between opposing forces, particularly where fronts were static, gaining common currency from late 1914. The term remains current, and is used more broadly to indicate areas of ambiguity and lack of ownership as well as military situations.” (Emmanuelle Cronier, sec. ed., “No Man’s Land,” *International Encyclopedia of the First World War* (August 20, 2015), https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/No_Mans_Land [accessed July 5, 2017].) In South Africa, the term is used in the same manner to describe areas of boundaries that were coined during apartheid. It refers to pieces of land used to separate racial groups in South Africa.

The existence of these “No Man’s Land” symbolize the wounded past of South Africa. They reflect the difficulties that South Africans face today. With this context in mind, this paper would like to ponder the function and significance of these lands in relation to South African society. Moreover, it explores the implications of such spaces in the Christian faith-life and missionary practice.

NO MAN’S LAND: SOUTH AFRICA’S RUBBLES OF THE PAST, CONFLICTS, SEPARATION AND CONTINUOUS PURSUIT FOR WHOLENESS AND IDENTITY

South Africa is a mixed country. People are of different ethnicities and race. This is evident even by just noticing the color of their skin and the language they speak. “Race and ethnicity have been and still is at the heart of South African history, politics, society and economy since the European colonisation.”² In 1656, under the leadership of the Dutch East India Company, representative Jan van Riebeeck set foot on African soil. This group became the first Dutch settlers in the Cape which was followed by a series of arrivals of Dutch and French Huguenots mostly fleeing religious persecution in Europe.³ In 1820, Britain after the Napoleonic Wars experienced a serious unemployment problem, which has encouraged the people to immigrate to the Cape and build it as a colony. By the 1830s, affected by the British’s presence, the Dutch in the Cape decided to trek the interior of the land. This popularly known “Great Trek of the Dutch” was an initiative to avoid the constant British interference. Eventually, Dutch was able to reach places into what is today the provinces of Kwazulu-Natal, the Free

²South African History Online, “Race and Ethnicity in South Africa” (March 23, 2015), <http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/race-and-ethnicity-south-africa> [accessed July 10, 2017].

³In the mid-1500s until the mid-1600s, Huguenots were persecuted in France for their religious beliefs. Therefore, thousands of Huguenots fled to countries such as Switzerland, Germany, England, America, the Netherlands, Poland and South Africa, where they could enjoy religious freedom. The Dutch East India Company encouraged the Huguenots to immigrate to the Cape.

State, Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and Northwest.”⁴ By the end of the nineteenth century, South Africa was then divided into four territories: The British colonies of the Cape and Natal and the two Boer republics. “The various black farming groups and the descendants of the Khoikhoi, the Bushmen and the slaves had very little, if any, political voice and had most of their land taken away.”⁵ “Between 1899 and 1901, the Boers and the British fought a vicious war which the Boers lost.”⁶ Then, the whole South Africa became a British colony. This paved the way for the establishment of the one state of South Africa as we know it today. This was after the British and Boers agreed to the establishment of the self-governing Union of South Africa.

Three days after the establishment of the Union of South Africa on June 20, 1913, the Union’s Parliament passed the Act 27 of 1913, the Natives Land Act. This commenced the legalization of a systematic marginalization of the Black people. Socially, many people were casted out from their own land and hindered from participating in politics. Economically, many people lost their land which was their source of income. They also had very little possibility of being hired into high paying jobs since those were reserved for white people.

This situation worsened when many other legislations based on racial classifications were passed. First, the Natives Urban Areas Act of 1923 declared urban areas reserved for White people and Black people needed permission to be there. Second legislative action was the Population Registration Act No. 30 of 1950 that legalized the racial classification during the apartheid. This Act divided the South African population into three main racial groups: Whites, Natives (Blacks), Indians and Coloured people. These legislations entrenched racial segregation. Only white

⁴Max Du Preez, *A Rumour of Spring: South Africa After 20 Years Of Democracy*, (South Africa: Zebra Press, 2015), 163.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

people had the right to vote, access to state security and protection as well as representation in the National Assembly. Apartheid became the machinery to establish the supremacy of the White and legally marginalize those who are not. By creating and designating Bantustans⁷, the government was able to mitigate the people's struggle and justified the land dispossession of the natives.

One of the famous cases of dispossession and racial separation is Sophiatown, a black neighborhood in Johannesburg. With the established racial groupings, authorities in 1954 flattened and designated Sophiatown as a white area. "The sixty thousand black residents were transported thirteen miles out of the town to what was to be known as Soweto."⁸ This psychologically derailed many people. The anguish, fear and pain of being separated from their land wounded them. This greatly contributed to the present situation in South Africa. Apartheid created a space for boundaries, the so called No Man's Land.

In 1994, the colonial and apartheid regime collapsed and a democratic government was founded in its place. It was celebrated, not only by South Africans but by the rest of the world. Yet even today, after 27 years, many South Africans continue to be seized by existential questions such as: Are we free? And, if not, why not? In view of their disheartening past, who are we as a country? Kevin Ritchie, a renowned South African journalist, noted:

[R]acism is not something that happened in the past, and that even if it did – and ended it with the dawn of the miracle of the Rainbow Nation – it cannot be

⁷Bantustan, also known as Bantu homeland, South Africa homeland, or black state, were designated by the white-dominated government of South Africa as pseudo-national homelands for the country's black Africans. The Bantustans were a major administrative device for the exclusion of blacks from the South African political system under the policy of apartheid, or racial segregation. Bantustans were organized on the basis of ethnic and linguistic groupings defined by white ethnographers; For example, KwaZulu was the designated homeland of the Zulu people, and Transkei and Ciskei were designated for the Xhosa people.

⁸Ibid.

*blithely wished away. We learnt unequivocally, not that we needed reminding, that we are still, sadly, a nation of racists prone to sticking our head in the sand and simultaneously pointing finger at one another.*⁹

Ritchie admittedly says that “if we (South African) are not a fundamentally racist society, we are at least a racial society. We do see things through racial prisms, we do retreat to racial laagers, we do lash out at those who we perceive threaten our livelihoods.”¹⁰

Healing and reconciliation do not happen instantly. It is a process that takes time. South Africa is a country searching for wholeness and identity. The people have been deeply wounded and the present crises seems to suspend the healing process. The existential question of who they are in the land of South Africa remains valid and relevant. Reflecting on South Africa’s history and its current situation vis-à-vis its identity as a country, we can say that South Africa is a “*Land of No Man*” in a “*No Man’s Land*”.

NO MAN’S LAND IS A LAND FOR ALL: AS A PLACE OF DISTORTED IDENTITY AND PAINFUL MEMORY TOWARDS A PLACE OF ENCOUNTER AND FRONTIER FOR HEALING AND RECONCILIATION

‘No Man’s Land’ is a product of oppressive and unjust social structures. It exposes the wounds of many South Africans and the struggles they have faced as they have striven to reconcile and build themselves together since the liberation of 1994. Given South Africa’s history, one must see land issues as central to its people. Our consideration of land therefore must go beyond the economic and political discourse.

⁹Kevin Ritchie, “We won’t be lucky this time,” *Pressreader* (Oct. 19, 2016), <https://www.pressreader.com/south-africa/cape-times/20161021/28190877267728> [accessed July 24, 2017].

¹⁰*Ibid.*

Land is not simply a solid part of the earth. Land is always connected to us and we are connected to the land. It is very influential in shaping our lives. In economics, land is where all natural resources are inherently found. It is the source of livelihood and sustenance. In anthropology, it is viewed in terms of its connection to people. It is a space in which we adapt to our surrounding—to the trees and rivers, buildings and roads, to the neighborhood and to the parks. Thus, land is a place that we occupy as a source of security and identity.

According to Philip Sheldrake, “place is a concrete and symbolic construction of space that serves as a reference for all those to whom it assigns a position.”¹¹ It gives meaning to those who live in it. He continued that “place has three essential characteristics – it engages with our identity, with our relationships and with our history.”¹² Sheldrake asserts that:

[P]lace, like time, is among the most universal cultural categories although it clearly operates in different ways in each specific context[...] it has a determining influence on the way people behave, the way they think, the rhythm of their lives and their relationships.¹³

This close link between man and land is universal. People are associated with their geographical locations. People are products of a culture that exist in places. A person is shaped by the environment that surrounds him/her. The way of life, belief systems and traditions of a specific area mold the person who grew up in that place. Thus, the place where one grows defines an inherent identity of the person. A strong bond is built between a person and the place. Walter Brueggemann, one of the leading proponents of the theology of land notes:

¹¹Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory, and Identity*, (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press), 8.

¹²Ibid., 9.

¹³Ibid., 4.

*Place is space which has historical meanings, where some things have happened which are now remembered and which provide continuity and identity across generations. Place is space in which important words have been spoken which have established identity, defined vocation and envisioned destiny. Place is place where vows have been exchanged, promises have been made, and demands have been issued.*¹⁴

Brueggemann develops the idea of land as memory in two aspects. First, land is a memory of identity. It is a silent witness to all the events that are connected to life. Places occupy a space in one's memory because many memorable human activities have happened on it. Places in which we have memories of are engraved in one's heart and mind. As such, land functions as stimuli of the memories connected to it. Thus, a person's understanding of the self and the way a person react or respond to certain situations are very much interwoven into this land as a memory of identity.

The second aspect of the memory of the land is that it is a place of narratives. Narratives are the memories and stories of people. A place is a space in which people's narratives are coined. Thus, experience of displacements distort one's identity because of the loss of memory and the suppression of stories. Narratives are not just about past events but of present and the future as well. Being conscious of the past is not simply a melancholic remembering but an act that "opens us to the possible actions rather than to a passive acceptance of the way things are."¹⁵ Memory is powerful in giving us the lessons of the past and in enabling us to live in the present with those learnings.

¹⁴Ibid., 5.

¹⁵Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred*, 20.

In South Africa, the experience of forced relocating and segregating people according to race has created a grave wound. This experience of displacement divested many people of their identity and of the right to decent lives. Albert Nolan described this as the topmost form of human suffering where “people are deprived of a place to live, a space to be, of a security of a home [...] Perhaps the most cruel form of social engineering in South Africa is the policy of what is euphemistically called ‘resettlement’.”¹⁶ Decades of aggressive and inhuman attacks distorted their identities. The “history of dispossession is constitutive of the social and political identity of Black people as a group, inclusive of people who may not themselves have experienced land loss or forced removals.”¹⁷ The experience of being physically uprooted resulted to a distortion of their identity.

No Man’s Land is a living and symbolic representation of the South African experience. It is a testimony of those who were dispossessed of land and rights. At the same time, it is symbolic of the whole country’s search for identity as they journey towards becoming a new country by breaking away from their past. Nevertheless, this crisis of identity does not only call for the pursuit of an envisioned future but also the challenge of incorporating the memory of the past.

Moreover, the memories connected to No Man’s Land are painful memories. The memories of it are still fresh for those who suffered. They are still haunted by the unfortunate experiences of violence and deprivation as well as the trauma of dreams being shattered. After more than twenty years of liberation, South Africa has still not dealt properly with their past and the symptoms of their wounds are still manifesting.

¹⁶Albert Nolan, *God in South Africa: The Challenge of the Gospel*, (Maitland, Cape, South Africa: Clyson Printers Ltd.), 55.

¹⁷Du Preez, *A Rumour of Spring*, 169.

At present, South Africa is a “story of divided races seeking a common course on the same land.”¹⁸ This is shown by using No Man’s Land as a concrete and symbolic representation of the country’s distorted identity and painful memories. However, South Africa’s challenge is to transform this image into a redeeming vision, e.g., its quest of a “Rainbow Nation”.

No Man’s Land is inviting those on the opposing side to enter into the frontier. In Schauderville, Port Elizabeth, I witnessed such an encounter. Schauderville is one of the Coloured towns in Port Elizabeth and adjacent to it is a White area. The community initiated the building of a soccer pitch and now, it serves as a playground for both communities. Children from the separated communities are encountering each other in a very profound way. This encounter facilitates relationships. It is a promising foundation for dialogue, a simple start of a journey towards a common goal of having a united country.

No Man’s Land as a symbolic place for encounter is also symbolic of the country’s quest for healing. The invitation is to imagine symbolically entering into a No Man’s Land. It means to be in a position of unfamiliarity and vulnerability as one meets the other. Healing must begin in acknowledging and accommodating one another. It involves stripping oneself of biases and prejudices conjured by the past and the willingness to trust and listen.

No Man’s Land as a frontier invites us to enter into an unknown space. It is to stand on a ground that could reveal either the good or bad. It is a place of stepping out of one’s comfort zone and embracing the unfamiliar. It will make a person vulnerable in the face of the other. To be in such a position is not easy. It takes courage and a leap of faith trusting the goodness of the other.

¹⁸Alec Russell, *After Mandela: The Battle for the Soul of South Africa* (Great Britain: Hutchinson, 2009), xxii.

The wounds of the past demand healing. Without such healing, South Africa will continue to be plagued with bitterness and conflicts originating from its past. One way of healing the historical wounds of many South Africans is giving them the space where their stories are heard. Thus, every South African is invited to stand, concretely or symbolically, in a No Man's Land as a space of story-telling. Like Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela dreamed more than two decades ago, this is the only way toward healing and reconciliation.

NO MAN'S LAND TO GOD'S LAND: A SPACE OF COMMON IDENTITY AND SHARED MEMORIES

The church has a vital role in the manifold struggles of South Africa. It is one of the strong voices that awakens the country and the rest of the world. With the leadership of Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the church was at the forefront in the struggle against apartheid. In the Catholic Church, Albert Nolan became the leading figure in contextualizing theology with the sufferings of many South Africans. Both of them became heralds in proclaiming the Good News to South Africans. They prophetically denounced the evil of apartheid and announced the freedom and liberation of the people.

Moreover, land is a faith discourse. In the creation story, the connection between humanity and land is already established. Walter Brueggemann stipulated that this concept is "suggested in biblical language by a play of words. *Adam*, that is humankind, has a partner and mate, *adamah* (land)."¹⁹ This concept strengthens that covenantal relationship analogously portrayed in a relationship between a man and woman. Like man and woman, humanity and land are in a relationship that creates society and establishes a family.

¹⁹Walter Brueggemann, "Land: Fertility and Justice," in *Theology of Land*, ed. Bernard Evans and Gregory Cusack, (Collegeville, Minnesota; Liturgical Press, 1987) 41.

In the experience of the Israelites, land has been a concrete manifestation of YHWH's covenant. The whole history of the Jewish people was grounded on the covenant with YHWH and their establishment in the Promised Land. The relationship between YHWH and land is explicitly expressed in their faith. Throughout the history of the Israelites, land has been at the forefront of the struggle and the liberation of the people. During the time of Moses, God intervened and rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to the promised land of prosperity, flowing of milk and honey.²⁰ Thus, for the Jews, the land is a sacred place. It is a gift from YHWH, a fulfillment of His promise to their ancestors. It is where YHWH established them as a people. As such, the land is an integral part of their identity as God's chosen people.

In Christianity, however, there is a shift in the understanding of land. This shift centers on the sacredness of the people instead of a geographical connection. The promise of salvation is not limited to geographical boundaries of land or ethnicity. God is now brought out of geographical confinement into a transcended space. It is in the faith in Christ that salvation is achieved. For Christianity, the Christ-event is the definitive act of God.

With this view, the place of the Jewish Promised Land becomes largely symbolic.²¹ It is symbolic of God's covenant which is realized in Christ but is yet to be fulfilled in His second coming, the *Parousia*. The Promise Land of YHWH is the Kingdom of God, which Jesus proclaimed. This Kingdom of God is not to be expected in a concrete space. Rather, it is manifest in the people of God whose head is God's utmost revelation—Jesus. The focus now is not on the land but on the person.

²⁰Ex.3:8, 17 (New American Bible Revised Edition)

²¹Ibid.

In Christianity, “the traditional Jewish sacred places continue to have some importance and appeal, this was primarily because they were places where Jesus, the source of meaning and the focus of hope, lived, died and was resurrected.”²² Concrete places are not out-rightly rejected but become important when viewed in connection to Jesus. In this way, “the place became a spatial expression of a life, a teaching and a theology.”²³

Both the Jewish and Christian tradition, though different in their focus, affirm the sacredness of a place. On the one hand, the Jewish tradition highlights the importance of a concrete land in terms of molding the identity and memories of a chosen people. On the other hand, the Christian tradition lead us into a reflection of place in a symbolic manner where identity and memory are intertwined in the person of Christ. Christianity might not give so much emphasis to occupying the place but the sacredness of it is kept.

Land, indeed, is a faith discourse. If we are to engage in the question of the No Man’s Land, our faith is not alien to it. In fact, our faith tells the sacredness of land to people. It is an avenue wherein we, as missionaries, can relate to the experience of the people. Our narrative of faith is not alien to the narrative of South Africans.

No Man’s Land is inviting the Church most especially the missionaries to be engaged. No Man’s Land, concretely and symbolically, is a frontier for missionary involvement. Mission is to go to the No Man’s Land. No Man’s Land could be a place to encounter God in the wilderness. In the biblical narratives, wilderness is a very symbolic place. The wilderness of the Bible is a liminal space—an in-between place where ordinary life is suspended, identity shifts, and new possibilities emerge. Through the experiences of the Israelites in exile, we learn that while the Biblical wilderness is a place of danger, temptation and chaos, it is

²²Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred*, 37.

²³Ibid.

also a place for solitude, nourishment, and revelation from God.²⁴ It is where identity is forged.

In the Old Testament, God liberated the Israelites from slavery by leading them out of Egypt and into a barren wilderness. In the wilderness, they experienced thirst and hunger. Moses prayed for God to sustain them, and God responded with water and manna.²⁵ In their forty-year journey in the wilderness, they were nourished and transformed as God's chosen people. The wilderness served as a space that forced the Israelites to confront hunger, fear and isolation. It was where they experienced God's immanent and transcendent presence, which ultimately led to the formation of the identity of Israel.²⁶

Turning to the New Testament, "wilderness" is often translated as *eremos* (or *eremia*), which means an isolated place. The image of wilderness signified critical junctures in the life of Jesus.²⁷ In the Synoptic Gospels, one important juncture of Jesus' life happens in the desert. This event is important in understanding what it means to be in the wilderness. Let us look closely at the account of Matthew 4:1-11 (The Temptation of Jesus).

In that story, the wilderness is a place of hunger and struggle, as well as a place for the establishment of Jesus' identity as the human and divine Son of God. This experience of Jesus in the wilderness can be used in understanding No Man's Land. The temptations of Jesus are a repetition of the temptation of the chosen people in the wilderness. In the same manner, South Africans are in this wilderness experience where they are being tempted. They are in that liminal place wherein choices have to be made in order to overcome the evil and to fulfill the will of God. This temptation is threefold.

²⁴Jenny Philipps, "Jesus and Wilderness," *American Bible Society Resources* <http://bibleresources.americanbible.org/resource/jesus-and-wilderness> [accessed September 10, 2017].

²⁵Exodus 16:1 – 15

²⁶Exodus 15:25-26; 20:1-2

²⁷Holmes Rolston, "Midbar, Arabah and Eremus- Biblical Wilderness," *Environment and Society Portal*, <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/wilderness/midbar-arabah-and-eremos-biblical-wilderness> [accessed September 10, 2017]

First, the devil tempted Jesus to command the stones to become loaves of bread. The devil was less interested in Jesus' ability to perform miracles but that he may give in to hunger. "It was hunger that was the occasion of the major temptation in the exodus. The people had experienced a new freedom, but they longed for the food of bondage."²⁸ In the midst of hunger, people developed mistrust because of unmet expectations. Therefore, Jesus overcome this temptation by learning to trust even in the midst of hunger. Many South Africans are experiencing a different kind of hunger. These are valid hungers but the question remains: can they, as one country, learn to trust one another in the midst of their hunger?

The second temptation was a challenge. The devil challenged Jesus to throw himself from the pinnacle of the Temple. "He is asked to endanger his life. The question of self-preservation was at the heart of the second temptation."²⁹ In a way, Jesus was being led to believe that loving God meant freedom from pain. Suffering and pain are realities that we cannot avoid. But can we still love even if it hurts? South Africans have been wounded so much. Although apartheid has ended, its effects are still manifest. The challenge is to heal these wounds and pain in order to create a reconciled society.

Lastly, the third temptation came in the form of "something concrete and tangible: immediate power."³⁰ The devil offered Jesus the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would worship him. "He tested Jesus about his attitude to power and wealth. However, Jesus preferred in the love he couldn't control, rather than accepting tangible substitutes in power and prestige."³¹ Nothing could sway Jesus away from the mission that God had entrusted Him. The new South Africa offers new opportunities. Sadly, these opportunities

²⁸Dennis McBride, "Jesus and the Gospel," (Unpublished material, 1993).

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

are abused by some. The quest for personal glory, power and wealth becomes the priority rather than the promises of freedom, justice and equality. The corruption of public leaders who thrive enriching themselves rather than serving what is best for the people continues to betray the trust of the people

Nevertheless, No Man's Land is not a place to be feared. Rather, it is a place where we can embrace one's unique identity together with the other. If in the past it is a place of vicious and violent encounter, today, it could be a place to encounter each other anew. For South Africans, it could be place to confront the evils that are destroying their real identity and confirm their common humanity as one nation. This is an opportunity to discover life beyond the wilderness that promises a new identity and new memory.

This is not impossible. South Africans have proven for countless times that they are capable of achieving miracles. The long exodus to freedom from the bondage of apartheid is a testament to this. Now is not a time to walk away from the test but is a time to embrace their pain at the same time, celebrate their differences.

CONCLUSION

We cannot change the past. Things that had happened cannot be undone. For the Black people, some of their lands cannot be returned anymore. The wounds of colonization and apartheid are scars that cannot be removed. Those lives that were sacrificed cannot be brought back. However, the present is an opportunity. This is a challenge to South Africans on how to take advantage of these opportunities.

Africans have this beautiful spiritual concept: the *Ubuntu*. It is an ancient spirituality on which their identity is based. '*Ubuntu* is an expression that humans have been created for togetherness.'³²

³² "The Spirit of Ubuntu: An Interview with Alan Boesak," Reflections: A Magazine of Theological and Ethical Inquiry from Yale Divinity School, <http://reflections.yale.edu/article/future-race/spirit-ubuntu-interview-allan-boesak-0>

The idea is that humanity suffers when one is undermined, and one cannot be fully his/her self unless he/she makes sure that others achieved their humanity. It is a recognition also that others' humanity enhances my own humanity. Therefore, a person must embrace others so that I embrace you, embrace the other, and therefore the otherness of the other person no matter what is the color of his/her skin. This is the heart of Christ's message of redemption wherein he reconciled everything to God most especially our relationships and identity as people of God.

To concretize this, I would like to give four recommendations in which the church can be engaged:

1. The church must symbolically acknowledge the reality of No Man's Land. It is to be sensitive to the realities of the new South Africa. Historical and psychological sensitivity should be observed in engaging with the people. In this time, the primary task of the church is to listen.
2. Could there be a possibility of a mission to No Man's Land? This could be something to experiment with. The No Man's Land could be a concrete place to gather people to remember and share their narratives. In this way, healing could be fostered and could facilitate a new encounter between those racially separated.
3. For justice to be served, the church must continue to call for land reform. The landlessness of many people should be addressed. The growing discontent of many people is symptomatic of the economic insecurities caused by landlessness.
4. The church must prophetically stand against the opportunism of those who use their political and economic power to amass wealth and paralyze social services. The present political situation of South Africa is rampant with corruption. This must be denounced.

South Africans are miracle makers. They have the capacity to overcome the evils that can destroy their identity. They are a people characterized by a devotional love for their country and faith in God. Transformation is not afar. The present situation they are in now is a test of that love and faith. It is not a place of despair. Rather, it is their wilderness where their identity is being confirmed and where their memories as new South Africans are being weaved.

To end this reflection, I would like to offer this prayer;

*Nkosi sikelel' i Africa*³³
Maluphakamis'upondo lwayo
Yizwa imithandazo yethu
Nkosi sikelela, Thina lusapholwayo
Yehla Moya, Yehla Moya,
Yehla Moya Oyingcwele

The English translation:
Lord, bless Africa
May her horn rise high up
Hear Thou our prayers And bless us.
Descend, O Spirit
Descend, O Holy Spirit.

³³'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika' has been part of the joint national anthem of South Africa since 1994. It was originally composed as a hymn in 1897 by Enoch Sontonga, a Xhosa clergyman at a Methodist mission school near Johannesburg. More than century after it was written, it has become one of the most powerful tunes in Africa's history, a symbol of the post-colonial liberation movement used in the past and present post-independence national anthems of South Africa.

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