

Hope out of anger, resentment and fear

Ghosts of the past confronted

This special edition of *Kampusnius* features a symposium on Social Cohesion that was presented by Stellenbosch University and the Municipality of Stellenbosch – as part of the University's Heritage day celebrations in September. Following the Executive Mayor's welcoming speech, Dr Mamphela Ramphele presented the keynote address. The other speakers were Father Michael Lapsley and Prof Russel Botman.

We can model success for Africa

I am talking about our ghosts and the need to lay them to rest as an essential step for us to become who we really want to become – a prosperous democracy which celebrates the best that it has to offer.

Just as a few words of introduction, I would like to talk about our province as, on one hand, the most well-endowed province, but on another, the most haunted one – and I want to talk about the ghosts that haunt not just our province but our country, and about how the transformation process is literally spooked by those ghosts. I will end with a focus on how, by talking about the unspoken anger, resentment, fears, we really can generate hope for our future.

What do I mean by the Western Cape being the most well endowed and yet the most haunted? In a way, because we are the first place where there were real formal settlements in our modern history, we represent the best that geography could offer in a country. How many countries have got two oceans, a famous coastline, and the beautiful topography that you see?

Every part of our province shows you the variations that really make for a spectacular kind of landscape and wonderful possibilities, which is, in a way, why we are the most un-African part of Africa because we have a Mediterranean climate. I mean, which part of Africa has got a Mediterranean climate, other than those on the Mediterranean rim?

So, there is something very unique about us, and it's that uniqueness that allows us to produce wines to kill for, fruits, and all of the goodies. But it is also here that we are blessed with diversity which makes us a truly cosmopolitan region of South Africa. Many regions have got a dominant this or that. Here, there isn't one single dominant group. We are all here. We are all representing all of our ancestors who came from the East, from Europe, from the real indigenous people of this country who were here long before some of our ancestors descended, as mine did from the Nigerian coast right down across Botswana to here.

So, it's an absolutely special place, and it's not surprising that we have got the strongest innovation platform. Just think about the universities here, this University for starters, and then of course the sister universities in this area. And so we have a province that really is unique and that is worth celebrating and worth growing into a real

leading province. But oftentimes the most beautiful houses and spots are the most haunted.

There was talk in the media some time ago about the Premier's house being haunted. What a beautiful piece of property, but you know, ghosts don't mind. In fact, they love beautiful places because it means that they have unfinished business in that beauty that they want to transact.

Now, ours is the most haunted province because of the fact that it's the oldest settled province in modern history. The conflicts between the various peoples happened here. Slavery was practised here, and we are left with major unresolved identity questions and crises.

The ghosts of the province and the country are predictably along South Africa's fault lines. The issue of race – it's not just black and white with the policy environment we live in, it matters how black you are as well.

So, we have that as an added major problem in the Western Cape because this is one province where people who look like me are not the majority, and

yet we can't come to grips with that. We've got to recognise that here the majority of people come from the history of this place, which is a history of mix, and instead of fighting that we should be celebrating that.

We also have fault lines along issues of class. Because of the legacy of the past, some people have and others don't have, and those divisions are not getting better, they are getting worse. In part, because those who have get more and more, unfortunately, and Russell [Prof Botman] being a man of the cloth can explain that better, or a man of theology can explain that better, how for those who have little, even the little gets taken away.

Issues of gender are a major problem in South Africa because they are so common across all of our cultures. Whether you look at indigenous cultures, you are looking at the Dutch culture, you are looking at the French, you are looking at the English, you are looking at whatever it is that is a subgroup of South Africa, that is a major problem.

There is an assumption that leadership is male and that women are there,

(cont. overleaf)



DR MAMPHELA RAMPHELE, a former managing director in human development at the World Bank in Washington, qualified as a medical doctor, obtained a doctorate in social anthropology and (at the University of Cape Town) became South Africa's first female vice-chancellor. She grew up in what is now the Limpopo Province, where she had to continue her medical outreach work when she was banned from the Eastern Cape because of her political activism. Dr Ramphele has authored a number of books and serves on the boards of several top companies. "South Africa shows up its best when we give ourselves time to converse about our hopes, our fears, and our aspirations for our country," she said at the Social Cohesion Conference in Stellenbosch. "I couldn't imagine a better way for Russell [Prof Botman] to establish a footprint of his leadership of this great institution by doing anything other than what we are doing today," she said.



Father Michael Lapsley, Dr Mamphela Ramphele, Alderman Patrick Swartz and Prof Russel Botman at the conference on Social Cohesion. It was presented in the Endler Hall as part of the University's Heritage Day celebrations.

Conference a significant milestone for Stellenbosch

In his welcoming address Alderman Patrick Swartz, the Executive Mayor, described the conference as a very significant milestone in the history of Stellenbosch, and in the relationship between the Municipality and the University – which, through joint agreement, "have committed themselves to charting a new future course for a town that shares both a colonial and apartheid past."

This commitment has been documented in a memorandum of understanding aimed at Reinventing Stellenbosch – creating a conducive environment with space for "all the people in Stellenbosch to find solutions to the common challenges currently confronting us."

One challenge, addressed at this conference, is: "What should hold us together in Stellenbosch? And is it possible for us as residents of this town to unite behind and for a common cause," said Alderman Swartz.

"Our recent past has taught us many lessons and it is my wish that in moving forward we look through those issues in a manner that speaks to unity, truth and a sense of justice.

By jointly hosting this conference, Stellenbosch Municipality, with other stakeholders, is initiating discussions with residents of this town about the kind of Stellenbosch we would like to see emerge for future generations."

He said Stellenbosch faces significant challenges. "Within a sustainability framework we have to address the backlogs in housing and infrastructure on the one hand, while continuing to be a developmental municipality in terms of improving the quality of life of the majority of our citizens."

We should celebrate our history of mix

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well, you know, they can do some interesting things, but quite frankly, they are not serious. When we talk about leaders, we are not talking about them.

Language is a major issue

Language is a major issue, and I should speak very carefully, being on this campus, about language. But it's a major issue, not just for Stellenbosch. It's a major issue of South Africa. We very courageously declared 11 languages official, but we didn't develop the policies, the practices to really live out our multilingual dream.

And so, by default, we have become a predominantly English language-speaking country, and that's a tragedy. Not because there's anything wrong with English, but because we have impoverished ourselves by not developing our other languages to the extent that we could be the most unique country in the world. If we turned these 11 official languages into true, truly live languages, we would be unbeatable when it comes to competition.

Oftentimes I note that when Chinese premiers and presidents travel, it's not that they can't speak English – they can – but they use their own languages to communicate as world leaders. I am dying for the day when I see my President speaking in Zulu because that's his mother tongue. He has got beautiful turns of phrase in Zulu, but now he's got to force himself into this English language, which is not his natural forte, and that is a big issue for us.

So, oftentimes Afrikaners feel that they are the ones who have been disadvantaged. At some meeting that I addressed talking about the South African scenarios, somebody said: "Well, we Afrikaners lost everything in 1994 because even our language was taken away from us." I said: "Well, be my guest. Where have you heard of Sepedi being spoken anywhere?" Here we are in a place where Afrikaans is not just being spoken, but it's a live language.

So, we should be very careful not to look to this issue of language as a particular problem of a particular South Africa. It's a national problem, and all of us as a nation have to deal with it. It is in dealing with it in that way that we will be able to leverage this issue into a major competitive advantage for South Africa.

So how are all of these issues spooking the transformation process? First, there isn't really a shared understanding of what transformation is. For some it is simply redressing what went wrong in the past. We have to do the opposite in order to have it – you are transformed, and that is a major problem because what happened in the past was in large measure wrong in focussing on advantaging one group at the expense of others.

Now, we can't just simply reverse that and then advantage yet another group, even if that group is a majority group. It's not the way to run a modern economy because you are actually leaving out the investments that we have made willingly, or unwillingly, for the last 300 years.

Are we surprised that we are not just running out of water because we are a water-scarce country, but our infrastructure is falling apart because

we let go of the white male civil engineers who were running our little towns. It's almost like you have made an investment in buying shares in a particular company, but because you don't like the head of that company you throw away your shares. I mean, where is the wisdom in that? That is what we have done.

So we need to really think very carefully about what is our understanding of transformation. I understand transformation to be about the structure of change so that the whole becomes larger than the sum of the parts. One of the problems of apartheid was not just that it was unfair – it was also not wise. It was "onnosel" from the point of view of ignoring the majority of talents and focussing on 10% of the population. Just dumb management, dumb leadership.

So, we can't now reverse-engineer, another dumb process. Thus we really

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need to have a serious conversation about what we understand by serious structural change, because we need that. We cannot continue. For example, today we are having this conversation, but because of the persistent structural separations, the geography of apartheid makes it difficult for people from wherever to be here because we haven't even sorted out how we overcome those distances via viable, well-planned public transport systems.

So we've got issues that require addressing, but we mustn't in the process throw the baby away with the bath water. I believe that our transformation process, if approached properly, will lead to a serious examination of our social relationships.

I get frightened sometimes when I visit my friends who are now upper class and they are black like me and they are talking about, you know, my maid and my garden boy. Yes, just simply jumped into the shoes of what they saw happen in the past. We can't say we are transformed if those attitudes still persist.

The same thing applies to issues of how comfortable are we as an African country. I hear now the banks are scrambling, there is a new scramble for Africa, and people talk about "We are going to open an African office in Nigeria." Excuse me, where are you? Right?

Or people say: "Well, I am going to Africa, you know, it's really important that I show my children Africa." But Africa is here, where we are. We have fallen into such habits of mind and of thinking that even black people speak in those terms.

Leading African country

So, it's a real serious problem of deep structural changes and philosophical reorientation, so that we have a vision of ourselves as a leading African country that has endowments that should make us take even greater responsibility to make sure our continent is a suc-

cessful continent. We should be modelling Africa's success on its own terms, not a wannabe China, wannabe Europe, but a truly African country that has all of these endowments I spoke of.

But for that to happen we also need to make sure that we deal with the issue that the values in our Constitution have to be lived. We create a very cynical society when we have a Constitution that is celebrated, but our day-to-day practices, starting with our politicians, our private sector, ourselves in our homes, in our institutions – how are we modelling those values?

We talk about equality, we talk about respect; where is it? And our leadership styles, I mean you see some of the people who are the new elite and the way they conduct themselves as leaders, it's shocking. The same thing with women who are newly in positions, some of them even wear pinstripe suits. I mean, it's a serious problem.

We need to re-imagine leadership, we need to re-imagine ourselves.

So how do we transform and transcend the past? I think we need to start with the structural realities that the legacy of human development patterns has left us with serious dilemmas.

How do you have leadership and management of our major institutions that reflect the talents of all of our people, when in fact the history did not give many of us access to our talents – I mean I didn't do mathematics until I was in matric. That has made me not able to become a mathematician.

I have to accept that. Instead of fighting and pretending that I could, there are other things which I can do better, and if we accepted that, we would be able to develop very rapid pipelines where we transform the landscape of who is skilled and who is not skilled in what areas. We need to deal with the psychological scars. We will be very, very unwise to ignore the persistent inferiority and superiority complexes.

How do you explain our leaders going to Soweto and speaking English? Why? Who are they talking to in Soweto in English? They are talking to somebody else to show "Look at me, I can." But the real issues of how we talk to citizens as leaders, to customers as private sector people, to students as university leaders, is to help South Africans become comfortable in their own skins, to be able to celebrate who they are, because it's when they are happy with who they are that we can be a really amazing country.

We have to deal with the superiority complex that says "I am where I am because I am smarter than those black people; you know, they never get it right." It's there, those thoughts are there. People either voice them or don't voice them, but they are there, and unless we deal with them – the superiority and inferiority complexes that continue to spook our transformation – we really have a problem,



Dr Mamphele Ramphela and Prof Russel Botman

because they make it very difficult to have the social cohesion that we are looking for.

Let me quickly talk about the issues of unspoken anger, resentments and fears. We have to celebrate the successes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but there was one huge fault, which was to ignore the issues of socioeconomic rights, and those were supposed to be addressed by the reconstruction and development process. It didn't happen.

So, we have got the majority of South Africans, some of whom participated in the TRC in the hope that things would get better, still being where they were, and some of them in worse positions.

Socioeconomic inequities

How are we going to really address the socioeconomic inequities that are crippling people, undermining their dignity? The first and foremost change that needs to happen is a philosophical re-orientation. This notion of a government that delivers, that's how the RDP failed. You can't deliver houses to adults – deliver this, deliver that!

If we change that mindset to an approach that poor people, however poor, have experience, have talent, have energy. If you leverage that, then they become agents of their own development, and they are unbeatable once they do that, because then they move from being passive agents or

blem at source. Now, we have to change our mindset, okay, and that also will deal with what is called the stereotype threat, where we fear doing the right thing because we are afraid to fail, because then it will prove that black people will fail.

Fear of loss of control

On the other hand, we fear loss. I mean, a lot of the ructions here on this campus are the fear of loss of control by people who have traditionally been in charge of Stellenbosch. Now they see this Russell [Prof Botman], they say "O Here, God" [said in Afrikaans], the University is in trouble, but they get surprised the more they engage with Russell, the more they see well, you know, Russell is Russell and he's not very different from us, the same aspirations, the same everything. But for that to happen we need conversations.

So, overcoming the legacy of spatial segregation, of cultural walls, including language and ways of being, also requires us to move from the certainties that we often hide behind.

You know, people will speak without any fear of contradiction about "the races" in South Africa. I thought we were educated and we knew that there was only one race, which is the human race, but we have become so kind of set in our ways that we continue, notwithstanding the scientific knowledge we have, to speak in these terms.

The same thing about language – we continue to ignore the fact of our multilingualism and think only in terms of which language dominates.

So, let me end on a note of hope. South Africa is a country of infinite opportunities and capabilities. We surprised the world by settling. It wasn't a peaceful settlement as people say. Lots of people died around that time, but we got our act together after messing around for a long time. So we can still get our act together now.

Fifteen years down the line we are no longer young teens, we now have to grow up into an adult democracy, and that requires further conversations. We need in those conversations to look at our strengths, our weaknesses, and in celebrating our strengths we will have the courage to address our weaknesses.

Our greatest strength is being an African country that is truly unique, that has all of the possibilities of modelling just what success can look like for Africa.

“We need in those conversations to look at our strengths, our weaknesses, and in celebrating our strengths we will have the courage to address our weaknesses. Our greatest strength is being an African country that is truly unique...”

recipients to being real citizens who participate in the growth and development of the country.

That in itself will help address the issues of prejudice, of denials, of fears, because right now you and I as taxpayers believe that we are carrying this burden for these people who are (and somebody said it to me) "breeding too much." Of course, but go back to the Afrikaners in the 1930s – how many children did they have per woman? It had nothing to do with breeding; it's about socioeconomic circumstances. Have you seen a woman who is educated, like me, having 12 children? They don't have time for that, right?

So, you want to sort out the pro-



I am honoured to speak here today, especially to speak after one of our living ancestors, Dr Mamphela Ramphele. I wish to call to mind great men among the alma mater of this university who gave all in pursuit of our common humanity – such as Braam Fischer, Beyers Naudé and Anton Lubowski.

In early July I received an email written on behalf of Professor Botman requesting me to come and speak at this day conference around the tentative theme of laying ghosts to rest for an audacity of hope. I am still not quite sure who the ghosts are.

Furthermore, it was suggested that the title for my speech might be: *Tortured, traumatised but not broken: the South African spirit and vision of hope.*

The question I ask myself is what is God's dream for Stellenbosch, God's dream for South Africa? What will enable the realisation of that dream?

What is your dream for Stellenbosch? What kind of university would you like your children and grandchildren to come to? For those of you who have made Stellenbosch your home, perhaps for many generations – what is your vision for this town? Are you in danger of despairing or are you full of hope? Or does it vary throughout every day? Are you acting today to make your dreams come true?

What time is it now in South Africa, 15 years after the birth of democracy, [almost] 150 years after the birth of this university?

There is plenty to be depressed about – at least if you only eat the diet provided by our media – perhaps even the discourse at some of our dinner tables.

There is a small town called Harnosand in the northern part of Sweden I visited a few years ago. I was there at five minutes to midnight on 5 December a few years back. Despite the below zero temperature there was a giant multicultural festival which lasted from midday to midnight.

Some years before that, Harnosand had a reputation as a very racist town. The town had a small refugee community. Because of the xenophobic and racist attitudes that dominated, few people mixed with the refugees. A young woman called Sara Wallin was the exception. She befriended the refugees. Very tragically, one of the refugees was psychiatrically disturbed and murdered Sara.

The town was on a knife edge. Ready to explode. Even whilst deeply grieving his beloved daughter, Sara's father, Stig, decided to start the *5 to 12 Movement* – his conclusion was that time had run out and it was now five minutes to midnight.

He decided that he would start a movement in his community. He began by creating informal spaces where the old Swedes and new Swedes could meet each other as people. Once a year they would have a cultural and musical festival to celebrate their diversity. Stig was not an ostrich, nor was he naïve,

He faced reality, but said "However... nevertheless" – and today Harnosand is renowned as a town that is diverse and inclusive of all who live there.

Is that not God's will for Stellenbosch?

There was a very dark day in our country's history when Chris Hanu was assassinated. Perhaps we had never been as angry as a people as we were on that day. We teetered on the edge of civil war – even some would say, race war. Nelson Mandela was not yet the president, but it was he who was brought out to speak to the nation.

He said that it was true that this beloved leader was killed by white people, but "However... nevertheless", it was a white couple that led to the arrest of the perpetrators. Instead of all killing each other, an election date was agreed and we moved forward to our first democratic elections.

One of my favourite organisations is a very small one, *9/11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows*. A group of people who lost their relatives in the horrible events of September 11, 2001 – despite the clamour for war and revenge – said "However... nevertheless", we do not believe in revenge. You may not go to war in the name of our loved ones. You can bring perpetrators to justice without causing untold suffering to others.

In 1992 I returned to South Africa after 16 years living in Lesotho and Zimbabwe. The first thing which struck me on my return to South Africa was that we are a damaged nation – damaged in our humanity – damaged by what we had done, by what had been done to us, by what we failed to do – and all of us with a story to tell – all of us carrying within us deep feelings – some of which are toxic because of what we had experienced.

If we were to become one nation living together in peace and harmony we would have to listen to one another's stories. Some of us began to set up safe and sacred spaces where we could speak and listen with the heart to one another – places where we could vomit out the poison which had filled our hearts.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission provided us all with an opportunity to listen to each other's pain. Tragically, many white people, especially Afrikaners, felt they were being attacked, and looked away. Personally I gave evidence to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Kimberly Town Hall – with more than a thousand people present but no white people.

It was an opportunity lost – it could have been a time when we travelled towards each other. It was like that for a few – perhaps even some of you pre-

Future generations: What will they say about us?



FATHER MICHAEL LAPSLEY, director of the Institute for Healing of Memories in Cape Town, dedicated his speech to the women and men of Stellenbosch who were slaves and to all who fought against slavery. Lapsley, who was banned by the SA government in 1976, then became chaplain to the banned ANC in Lusaka, Zambia – where he learned that he was on the SA government's hit list. It was only in April 1990, three months after Nelson Mandela's release from prison, that Father Lapsley received a letter bomb in the post, hidden inside the pages of two religious magazines that had been posted from South Africa. In the bomb blast he lost both hands and an eye and had his eardrums shattered.

sent today, a facing of what we had done to one another, which changed people for ever – yes, an evil system, but "However... Nevertheless", each of us is capable of being both perpetrator and victim even at the same time.

One day soon after democracy was born here, I was invited to speak at a seminar in the northern suburbs of Cape Town. I was taken to task for talking about the period between 1948 and 1994. I was reminded that from 1899 to 1902, "we were the victims and now we are the victims once more. Please don't confuse issues and talk about us as perpetrators."

In my experience, many of us are very clear about the ways in which we are victims but very hazy about the ways in which we are perpetrators. Whenever I have to face myself as a perpetrator, then I have to deal with guilt and shame. Denial becomes a tempting option.

Do we seek to bury and forget the past or to remember and to heal?

Some have asked: Would South Africa's history have been different if there had been a TRC at the end of the South African War of 1899 – 1902, if we had been able to face the truth not just of what was done to the Afrikaner people, but also to countless black people?

Of course that is not far enough back. Have we truly faced what slavery did to us? Some are beginning to look at how communities in the Western Cape have experienced gratuitous violence without interruption down through the centuries. What would it mean for Stellenbosch to truly face that it is a town and an economy built by slaves?

Chief [Albert] Luthuli once said that those who think of themselves as victims eventually become the victimisers of others. People give themselves permission to do terrible things to others because of what was done to them. This is true of individuals, communities and nations.

"Nevertheless... however", there is another road open before us. It is the road of victim – survivor – victor. Of travelling beyond what was done to us, beyond being simply survivors to becoming participants in creating a different kind of society.

I know that for myself, God helped me, through the prayers and love of many, many people, to realise that if I was filled with anger, hatred and desire for revenge, I would be a victim for ever – that they would have failed to kill the body but they would have killed the soul.

What is it that enables people, as

individuals, communities or nations, to move away from victimhood?

We need to have both knowledge and acknowledgment.

Those who have been victimised need to have public acknowledgment that what was done to them was wrong – that those who did terrible things to others AND those who benefited are truly sorry.

Often the community of victims holds on to the memory of what happened, whilst those who benefited and, even more, their descendants, remain blissfully ignorant of what happened.

In the country of my birth, in Aotearoa, New Zealand, there was a colonial relationship with Samoa. Growing up there and going to school,

All of us have been shaped by all that happened to our parents and grandparents.

How about those of you – the young people of today – leaders both of today and tomorrow? You have no reason to kill each other in the way that we did – but are you living in psychological ghettos reproducing old prejudices and outmoded traditions based on fear and ignorance? Or are you willing to work at creating new identities – as South Africans, as Southern Africans, as Africans, as human beings? To celebrate and embrace our diversity of races and religions, gender, and sexual orientation, including, without prejudice, those who are intersexed? To celebrate being fully alive?

In 1976 a generation of young people rose up to hasten political liberation. South Africa needs a new generation of leaders who will use every ounce of their abilities to fight poverty and insist that

wealth creation and wealth distribution must go hand in hand – who will be outraged by obscene wealth in the midst of degrading poverty.

Today's new South Africa encourages greed in us as human beings – many of our latest batch of elected politicians compete with each other to accumulate as much as possible. The patience of the masses grows thinner by the day.

There will never be peace in South Africa or the world until together we build societies where the gap between the richest and poorest grows thinner every day.

For too long, we South Africans have been a Good Friday people, crucifying one another. God invites us to be an Easter Day people, recognising and acknowledging the wounds from the past whilst allowing ourselves to be God's instruments to build a just and compassionate society.

If we face the past and acknowledge it, the ghosts will fade away. Then we can embrace the future with the audacity of hope.

The letter bomb I received in 1990 was not supposed to injure me. It was supposed to kill me. Some of us needed to survive to remind all of us of what we did to each other and the consequences that many still live with today.

"Nevertheless... however", much more importantly, I hope and pray that in some small but significant way, I can be a sign to you, that stronger than evil and hatred and death are the forces of gentleness, of kindness, of justice, of life, of God.

“ If we were to become one nation living together in peace and harmony we would have to listen to one another's stories. ”



Father Michael Lapsley and Alderman Patrick Swartz



“ Social cohesion is the glue that binds the people so that all of them would call the same place home. Home is where they share warmth, love, calamities, challenges, loss and laughter. ”

We are far from a cohesive society, sad as it may be. One only has to page through our newspapers to realise that South Africa has moved from the miracle of 1994 to a society that needs a miracle to see our democracy survive and thrive.

It is not my intention to dwell on the past, but I think it is imperative to acknowledge (in the words of historians) that we can only build a future on our past; we can only move forward if we know where we came from.

The problem is, however, that our past is not an open book lending itself to being a roadmap to the future. I use the word “build” because working on social cohesion is like building a house. To build a house you first dig into the soil. Then you realise that in the imperfect trench you need to lay a foundation.

We did this in the TRC. As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has pointed out in their report: “The past, it has been said, is another country. The way its stories are told and the way they are heard changes as the years go by. The spotlight gyrates, exposing old lies and illuminating new truths. As a fuller picture emerges, a new piece of the jigsaw puzzle of our past settles into place.

“The report of the Commission will now take its place in the historical landscape of which future generations will try to make sense – searching for the clues that lead, endlessly, to a truth that will, in the very nature of things, never be fully revealed.”

At best we are thus trying to build a new South Africa on the imperfect truth and an incomplete picture of our past. It is not the best of trenches to work from in building unity and one nationhood. The first fifteen years of freedom and liberation in our country have been very shaky. Problems abound on all terrains and spheres of our society.

The reason? Some among us are making a fundamental mistake: they keep on seeking the perfect truth about our past, but which, by the nature of things, as the TRC pointed out, will never be fully revealed. So we do the next best thing – we work with half-truths.

Today, fifteen years into our democracy, we are still battling to come to grips with the true essence of freedom and liberty. We lay claim to liberty with very little regard for accountability; to our constitutional rights but give no consideration to the responsibility that it brings; and any notion of critical citizenship is thwarted by intolerance towards the rights and freedoms of others.

Working on social cohesion requires a much more perfect and solid foundation. Fortunately we have that in our liberal and progressive Constitution and our Bill of Rights. It reminds us that no right is absolute, no freedom limitless, and that we can only live our rights if we allow others exactly the same rights, freedoms and privileges that we claim for ourselves.

Out of the imperfect trenches we have laid a solid foundation in the Constitution and Bill of Rights – it is

also the foundation for our common and shared future. Something that you and I will have to learn to stand for even though the authorities may be against such a stance.

We have made the imperfect trenches, laid the solid foundation of our Constitution and Bill of Rights. We have now proceeded to build the house, but somehow the house lacks character. The walls are bare and the rooms display an atmosphere of harshness and despair. What is missing is the warmth of shared values.

In a study done by Prof Hennie Kotzé and Ms Cindy Lee Steenekamp of the Centre for International and Comparative Politics at our University, published in February of this year (2009) – *Values and Democracy in South Africa: Comparing Elite and Public Values* – the researchers noted striking features in the levels of tolerance and trust in our society.

These two values are imperatives for the survival of our young democracy. They surveyed opinion leaders as well as the general public. It makes an interesting picture. Because sometimes the values converge and at other times they separate.

Let’s start with tolerance: tolerance is an essential ingredient of democratic politics. This is especially important in a country like South Africa with its deep societal divisions where (in the words of JL Gibson) democracies may risk becoming majority tyrannies.

More specifically, political tolerance is an instrument that helps to maintain a stable democratic regime. According to political scientist Prof Amanda Gouws, political tolerance is directly related to how willing people are to put up with their opponents. It entails the willingness to extend civil liberties to adversaries. It implies

procedural fairness – a commitment to the rules of the game and willingness to apply them equally. Tolerance, she says, is the willingness to extend freedoms to those who are different, and, I may add, to those who talk about different things, who own different things and who have different needs.

But, tolerance is consistently related to perceptions of threat. In other words, “the greater the perceived threat from others, the more likely a person is to be intolerant of the group”.

The study showed high levels of intolerance among opinion leaders and the general public toward “outsider groups” such as immigrants or foreign workers ... and interestingly, they tended to agree that “when jobs are scarce, employers should give priority to South African people over immigrants (a fear that may be associated with a loss of economic opportunities).”

Significant levels of intolerance were also noted among the general public towards having people of other



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religions or other races as neighbours or having a person with HIV living next door to them.

However, it is all not only doom and gloom. What is striking, though, is that the general public showed far more tolerance in 2009 to those adhering to a different religion and to those living with HIV than in a study done in 2001; likewise they are more tolerant of people of a different race group than in 2006.

The study noted rapidly decreasing levels of intolerance among the general public since 2001, and this is an encouraging sign for social cohesion.

What it says is that we are on our way, but not there yet. It seems that intolerance is busy receding, but that we still have a long way to go as far as political tolerance is concerned.

“ Working on social cohesion requires a much more perfect and solid foundation... It reminds us that no right is absolute, no freedom limitless, and that we can only live our rights if we allow others exactly the same rights, freedoms and privileges that we claim for ourselves. ”

Let’s turn to trust levels, as expounded by this research project.

Trust is an important aspect of a democracy since people “do not rule directly but by depositing their trust with delegates and institutions that bear responsibility for aggregating the interests and preferences of the people”.

The study showed that although the opinion leaders from various sectors showed high levels of trust across a few variables such as trust in the people from their families, other nationalities or religious groups, the general public showed far lower levels of trust than the leaders. Less than 50% do not trust people of another nationality ‘very much or at all’. More than half the population (50,7%) indicated that they did not trust people of a different race ‘very much or at all’.

The researchers noted that it was worrisome that after more than 15 years of democratic rule, the public place higher levels of trust in people of another nationality than in people of a different race. Thus, I am

more tolerant of your type, but I don’t trust you yet.

The study postulates that a “minimal form of trust is needed before tolerance is possible, that tolerance makes a deeper form of trust easier, and that deeper trust can lead to more robust form of tolerance. To become established, trust and tolerance must feed on each other in a virtuous cycle”.

It stands to reason that all of us will have to work harder on re-establishing tolerance and trust among all our people and communities – extending across the barriers of class, race, religion and nationality. What is required now is a sustained and concerted effort of bridging into other communities; inviting the foreign “others” in, breaking down the barriers of racial stereotypes and prejudices and finding ways of doing things together for the benefit of the common good.

It is only through this bridging that we can start laying a new and solid foundation for the socially cohesive society that has been escaping us for the last 15 years.

But in line with my metaphor, every house needs a roof. And this is provided by the confidence in our institutions.

Institutions such as the legal system, police and civil service depend heavily upon their ability to solve the problems they were designed to address. Their performance and effectiveness are of the utmost importance in demonstrating the notion of a government for the people – based on fairness, justice and equality. Failure by these institutions to perform and/or any notion of political bias will naturally fuel discord and distrust. The implication for social cohesion is clear, and I think I do not need to belabour this point.

Although the roof completes the house, it does not yet make it a home! Social cohesion turns the house into a home. Social cohesion is thus the glue that binds the people so that all of them would call the same place home. Home is where they share warmth, love, calamities, challenges, loss and laughter.

The Constitution says South Africa is our house. The question is, how do we make it our home? Our challenge in higher education is to do research about the strength of the glue that

binds us together as a family and makes this house a home to all of us – a home with character.

A while ago, Mr Thabo Mbeki, our ex-president, spoke of a country with two nations – one white and rich and the other black and poor. I think he was wrong, as Archbishop Desmond Tutu pointed out in the first volume of the TRC report: “The past is another country”. And Allistair Sparks, in turn, speaks in his book about “Tomorrow is another country”. Essentially we are thus stuck between the country of the past and the country of the future – two different countries altogether.

If we as a society can succeed in learning to live our hard-earned democracy, by building the levels of tolerance and trust among our people as well as re-establishing confidence in our institutions, we will have laid a solid foundation for a more socially cohesive society, and we can walk together toward a new horizon of hope, to the country of tomorrow that is beckoning.

To complete the picture, the Education and Church sectors need to strengthen these efforts by producing moral and ethical leaders. The kind of leaders that are so aptly described in a poem by William Ayot. It is called *The Contract: a Word from the Led:*

And in the end we will follow them

Not because we are paid,

Not because we see some advantage,

Not because of the things they have accomplished,

Not even because of the dreams they dream,

But, simply because of who they are;

The man, the woman, the leader, the boss ...

Standing up there when the waves hit the rock,

Passing our faith and confidence like life jackets,

Knowing the currents, holding the doubts,

Imagining the delights and terror of every landfall:

Captain, pirate and parent, by turns,

The bearer of our countless hopes and expectations,

We give them our trust

We give them our effort,

What we ask in return, is that they stay true.

