

International Partnerships for South African
Culture, History and Education — workshop
Durban 2 — 5 Nov. 99

- honour to participate . .
- on behalf of RIC . . congratulations and appreciation to institutions . . in SA & USA who are contributing to success of workshop — and what flows . .
- The title of the workshop identifies 3 specific areas for discussion, viz Culture, History and Education; each of which hold out challenges for heritage workers.
- We ~~realise~~ ^{believe it is the task} that the ability of cultural institutions to convey their messages in an exciting and accessible manner to the public at large.
- Let me immediately admit that this is not an easy task
- I wish to make some remarks about the "History" part of the workshop. In my view this is a major challenge not only for the participants of this workshop but for all people — academics & non-academics — who are interested in our history.
- ~~the~~ The textbooks that we studied at school and University were partisan, with numerous omissions, falsehoods, and distortions. In many if not most of them, the liberation movement, and landmark events are either omitted altogether, or appear as footnotes. In some, Ex Pres Mandela is described as a "terrorist"
- what worries me is the apathy and apparent unwillingness on the part of up and coming intellectuals to do serious research into our past — and to write
- [eg on Amandla ngawethu . .]

②

Ideally we should strive to reach a position where all our people, irrespective of the cultural, religious, language and ethnic backgrounds, and differing historical experiences, should in the end be able to feel that they are part of our rich heritage. This would be the ideal situation.

However, taking into account the 350 years of racial polarisation it is unrealistic to expect that people and communities will respond uniformly to everything that is researched and written, or to every message conveyed by our cultural institutions.

But we must consciously strive towards this goal.

Allow me to mention our Robben Island experience. You are all aware that it was declared a National Monument, and we are confident that in December UNESCO will declare it a World Heritage site.

I have had the privilege of accompanying scores of foreign and local groups to the Island. ^{we} begin by conveying to them ~~the~~ ^{the} hardships, sufferings, humiliations and indignities, ^{of brutality} that ~~was~~ political prisoners experienced. That is part of ~~a~~ reality - and it must be conveyed to visitors ~~that~~ by our guides, and by other means, such as literature, exhibitions etc. ~~It is something that can never be forgotten.~~

However, in keeping with the policy of forgiveness, reconciliation and nation-building, while we ^{don't} ~~can~~ not forget the dark prison experiences, the main message emanating from R.I. is a message of the triumph of the human spirit over the forces of evil, message of victory.

- From prison to parliament to President

Premier

Private citizen

(Pensioner)

④
The Among the tasks of our historians there is urgent need to record ~~at~~ what to my mind were ^{some} pivotal components on our long walk to freedom.

These include

- the legal & underground struggle within S.A. esp
- the 1976 Soweto uprising (Kusasa & UDI)
- the armed struggle
- the Exiles led by Oliver Tambo - Pres. Mchaka et
- last but not least - the international solidarity

An important ^{part} of our struggle was to isolate apartheid S.A. from the civilized world. The international community was asked to cut off all links with S.A. - diplomatic, cultural, sporting, economic, trade & educational

It was the MSU that was the first University in the USA to heed the call of the ANC. It was the first to disinvest its pension funds from S.A. Other universities followed later. Many news did

in paying tribute to MSU this morning we express the hope that its pioneering contributions will be recorded by our historians

③
we have visitors from all over the world - and of course an increasing number of S.Africans are visiting the Island. Last year ± 200 000 visitors

This year ± 250 000 - 10 000 school kids

~ R.I. is not a museum in the conventional sense, but as one of the several new heritage sites in S.A. the purpose remains to reflect the past experiences as the foundation to look to the future.

It may be surprising to many present here.

from The overwhelming majority of visitors - South African & foreigners alike - we have very positive, often emotional feedback. ~~It may surprise some of you~~

From ^{my} experience, an aspect that evokes very much ~~attend~~ ^{on} interest, is the fact that on the full time staff of the Island we have ex political prisoners and some ex-prison wardens, who today work as a team to ensure the successful functioning of the Island. - Difficult situation - to achieve

At the risk of being immodest I think I can safely claim that R.I. is the flagship of the new legacy projects undertaken by the DALST.

Experience & Steps
In conclusion may I say a few words about MSU. Aware of MSU's close links not only with R.I. but with other cultural & educational institutions it is not surprising that MSU should be the prime mover and participant in this event. In the context of the stirring and often intoxicating developments leading to the first democratic elections of 1994, the very existence of institutions like MSU tend to be overlooked. I hope it is not presumptuous of me to remark that among the many challenges that face this workshop is to initiate projects that will be devoted to the recording of events, the role of institutions, & the contributions of individuals - in other words to record the combination of historical forces, both local & foreign that led to the ushering of our new democracy

MSU

Durban - Nov 95

- Libraries archives must be people/user friendly
- Many of us first saw the inside of library & museum after a release.

Jhb - Bmsc - late February

- we didn't even speak of archives, which was a remote concept

- History

encourage oral + written history

- my speech on Simon v. d. Stel evoked questions from 2 academics
- ~~his~~ his photo hidden

- archival access - must at all times respect the wishes of individuals

- the past must be sensitively handled, while not wanting to hide under the carpet, at all times the approach should not conflict with task of nation building, it is very delicate

- Anglo - Boer war was fought last week in Dkh
- in prison we had briefs of this

- Don't stifle constructive debate

- R.I. focus must be balanced with other pressing } history must be
female + white etc } complete, not
Sobukwe served his sentence on mainland } all leaders in R.I.
Yengwa
John Nkomo

- what we have inherited - good + bad - it is the heritage of all
S Africans - Bl wh Africa, Egypt, Africa, India, India, Zulu, Xhosa,
- we have to promote understanding of it & respect of edict that we inherited
- the past must be studied & understood. We don't say accept

everything without quarter. But the past must not be allowed
to engender divisions, strife, suspicion & conflict — shall it be
the Tshaka monument; the battlefields of Isidabana, Vroan monument,
Votrikke monument, Taal monument.
we must ease the way for all S. Africans to

- Thanks to MSA

- continuator of historic relations

- may seem ironic that the very institution that was a ^{the} forefront
to isolate S. Africa apart from S. Africa in the field of culture, is now again in
the forefront of building close relations again.

- history of MSA

- my visit (I'm sure the results of all) to MSA is like home. The
hospitality staff, the personnel are all warm towards S. Africa

- my month long stay

- MSA published my book.

- R.I.C.

- The last century of the millennium began with the Anglo Boer War
ends with Democratic S. Africa. I'm surprised that some ~~controversial~~ ^{African} headlines

"bitter ender" has not gleefully commented that the defeat of the
English rugby team by a predominantly ^{S. African} African team, was
the final blow of the war between Brit & Africa that took place a
hundred years ago