

# Confronting the Horrors of Apartheid: The Case of the Documentary film *Night's Journey into Day: South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation* (2000)

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## Summary

The heinous crimes of Apartheid have come and gone, but they left bitter scars and memories in their trail. Through the documentary narrative, *Night's Journey into Day: South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation* (2000), this article seeks to explore the horrors of Apartheid and to discover its political and ideological contradictions. The article will delve into the realities and ambiguities of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. This Commission was tasked to bring to the surface the "buried" narratives that are constantly fighting to claim space in the history of South Africa. *Night's Journey into Day: South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation* has particularly been selected as the subject of scrutiny because its discourses reflect that members of the South African society can have the capacity to live beyond the brutalising memories and horrors of Apartheid. This soul-searching journey, motivated by the documentary, humanises individuals as they are brought face to face with perpetrators of violence and the truth behind the violence is revealed, which then give room to a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation. The documentary inspires all international audiences to re-think their positions vis-à-vis issues of racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia, other forms of discrimination, and social and political injustices.

## Opsomming

Die afskuwelike misdade van Apartheid het gekom en gegaan, maar dit het bittere letsels en herinneringe agtergelaat. Met hierdie artikel word die verskrikkinge van Apartheid met behulp van die dokumentêre narratief, *Night's Journey into Day: South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation* (2000) verken en word die politiese en ideologiese teenstrydighede daarvan onder die vergrootglas geplaas. Hierdie artikel graaf diep in die realiteite en dubbelsinnighede van Suid-Afrika se Waarheid-en-versoenings-kommissie onder voorsitterskap van aartsbiskop Desmond Tutu. Die opdrag aan hierdie Kommissie was om die "vergete" narratiewe, wat voortdurend om 'n plek in die geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika moet meeding, na vore te bring. *Night's Journey into Day: South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation* is in die besonder gekies as onderwerp van bestudering omdat die diskoerse daarin weerspieël dat lede van die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing oor die vermoë beskik om verby die onmenslike herinneringe en verskrikkinge van Apartheid te lewe. Hierdie selfondersoekende reis, wat deur die dokumentêre film aangemoedig word, vermenslik individue namate hulle van aangesig

tot aangesig voor die plegers van geweld te staan kom en die waarheid onderliggend aan die geweld onthul word, en dit laat ruimte vir 'n gees van vergiffenis en versoening. Die dokumentêre film inspireer gehore internasionaal om hul posisies jeens kwessies van rassisme, xenofobie en Islamofobie, ander vorme van diskriminasie, en maatskaplike en politieke onregte te heroorweeg.

## **Introduction: Theorising Documentary Film Narratives**

To understand the nature and manifestations of documentary films, it is critical to start with John Grierson's famous dictum that a documentary narrative is "the creative interpretation of actuality" (Ward 2005: 6). This famous dictum has been quoted, misquoted and rephrased many times over the years. The crux of the matter centres on the question of how to capture reality (or part of it) without using specific aesthetic devices that tend to soil the presumed "... naturality, singularity and purity" (Gray 1991: 170) of documentary genres. Since a documentary narrative deals with factual information, real places, people and events it forms the basis of the world of actuality. This is evidently demonstrated through the documentary film *Night's Journey into Day: South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation* (2000) which uses real characters, real places and factual information to provide authenticating evidence about the brutalities committed during the era of Apartheid. The language of the documentary and the people who are its actors make up the core of the narrative; they are the meaning and the message of the stories being narrated.

Although documentary films deal with factual information, real places, people and events, the question of obtaining hundred percent "objectivity" is not tenable. This is true of the documentary under scrutiny which deploys cut-up pictures, video enhanced images and historical narratives to support its discourses. This act of "historying" (Rosenstone 2012: 11) has wider implications to "historiophoty" (11) which is defined as 'the representation of history and our thought about it in visual images and filmic discourse' (11). In this case, our thought about the history of Apartheid is provoked through how narratives of horror are represented in the documentary film, and this is embedded within the truthful visuals and accounts of people who participated in the killing and the relatives of the victims that grieve for their perished beloved ones. Alluding to how fictive elements are blended with documentary facticity, Renov asserts that, "... nonfiction contains any number of 'fictive' elements, moments at which a presumably objective representation of the world encounters the necessity of creative intervention" (1993: 2). The creative moments captured through *Night's Journey into Day: South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation* (2000) are infused within "timed" emotional language of the grieving relatives, cut-up newspaper images of police brutalities, sound and music which are all designed to heighten human emotions, create suspense and dramatic effects. Also, what constitute the narrative of the documentary are only four cases that were selected out of a

host of cases that were handled daily by the Truth and Reconciliation commission. Metaphorically, these four cases represent those “absented” narratives that could have complemented the narratives of the included cases or even present divergent thoughts and perspectives. Viewers are left to imagine the seriousness of the “excluded” narratives on the basis of those that were included. The “essentialist notions” (Ward 2005: 8) of what a documentary “is” seem to view documentary as a transfixed mode of filmmaking. However, to establish the liminality invested within documentary narratives, key questions should arise from the ontological status of the image, the epistemological stakes of representation and the potentialities of historical discourses of nonfiction (Renov 1993). Thus, an analysis of any documentary narrative will have to take cognisance of its tropic or figurative character, and the reality that a documentary employs many of the methods and devices of its fictional counterpart.

### **Inside South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Model**

There have been mixed reactions directed towards South Africa’s model of Truth and Reconciliation from the day it was conceived. In the documentary to the *Night’s Journey into Day: South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation* (2000) the chairperson of Truth and Reconciliation commission Desmond Tutu makes it unequivocally clear that the South Africa’s model was going to be based on restorative justice. Tutu argues that Western methodologies and epistemologies of establishing justice and peace do not fit in “the jig-saw puzzle” of traditional African jurisprudence (Huyse 2008). What Tutu is implying is that the western methods of retributive justice are “too cold” and too impersonal to create or restore amicable relations between the victim and the perpetrator that were eroded through violent encounters. According to Tutu, the African philosophy on modes of justice, healing and restitution are aimed at,

the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationship. This kind of justice seeks to rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community he or she has injured by his or her offence.

(1999: 51)

On a positive note, Tutu’s (1999) model and methodology of approaching peace and reconciliation were viewed as a turning point from retributive justice that supports prosecution with the potential of souring social relationships. Huyse (2008) optimistically comments that South Africa’s model with its vetting or lustrations, public hearings, call for promoting the spirit of forgiveness, is one of the best models that African nations could embrace. In addition, Alex Boraine – the TRC’s vice-chair positively comments that,

“essentially the TRC was committed to the development of a human rights culture and a respect of rule of law in South Africa – which are some of the special features of democracy and good governance” (Huyse 2008: 35). The documentary under scrutiny has been built on the basis of Tutu’s philosophy of what constitute justice in South Africa. However, for critics such as Mahmood Mamdani, the South African’s TRC “exemplifies the dilemma involved in the pursuit of reconciliation without justice” (1996: 4). Mamdani (1996) raises critical points that interrogate the basis for healing and forgiveness in South Africa since it seems that “*all*” legal decisions based on “*who*” and “*who not to*” to prosecute were decided upon by the ruling elite and “voices” from church leadership. Many people in rural South Africa who had genuine grievances were left out (Lemarchand 1998), and yet the government officials continues to paint an exaggerated picture about TRC successes without proffering in-depth analysis about its long term social, political and economic ramifications. For instance, it may not be a misnomer to point out that in South Africa the “cracks” and “fissures” of TRC are now being felt through “suspicious social relationships” and continual unequal distribution of material wealth between whites and blacks. From the experience of South Africa, what should be said is that peace; healing and reconciliation should not only be promoted through political negotiations and official rhetoric but that they also have an economic dimension. Unfortunately, of the selected cases in the documentary *Night’s Journey into Day: South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation* (2000) no character has seriously considered how the economic factor played a critical role in bolstering the political power and ideological convictions of the Apartheid system. Actually, it is the political factor, military mighty and ideological beliefs of Apartheid that are heavily contested in the documentary with no close reference to the economic dimension of Apartheid.

If one considers the line of argument taken by Mamdani (1996), it may be necessary to bemoan a condition experienced in South Africa in which the ruling elite and church leadership such as Desmond Tutu decided on the type of justice that was supposed to be meted on perpetrators of violence in South Africa. This is a clear case of official meta-narratives playing “judge and jury” to matters that needed wider consultation and fuller community participation. The “silences” and contradictions that emerge became a distinct character of South Africa – a nation thriving to become a modern democracy, and yet “papering over the cracks” of sharp economic and racial inequalities. In fact, the contradictions of South Africa’s TRC are subtly captured by Lemarchand who posits: “But how can ‘change of heart’ come about where there is neither truth nor justice, or better still, when justice is intended to reflect official truths” (1998: 12). In South Africa, the official “truths” manifested itself in the form of political amnesty and negotiations extended by the government to the vanquished apostles of the Apartheid system.

## **Provoked to Kill: Nofeme, Mongezi and the Manifestations of Black People's Anger**

The documentary *Long Night's into Day* starts by chronicling the history of the Apartheid system; its horrors of violence, its racial politics reminiscent of Nazism and its eventual collapse and demise under black people's revolution aided by international pressure. Appearing on a foggy screen the history reads:

For forty years South Africa was governed by the most notorious system of racial discrimination since Nazi Germany. When it finally collapsed, those who had enforced apartheid's rule wanted amnesty for their crimes. As a political compromise the Truth & Reconciliation (TRC) was formed. Amnesty would be considered on a case by case basis in exchange for the truth. Those already convicted came hoping for pardon. Those whose crimes were still unknown came out of fear of being exposed. Some came seeking redemption. Over 22 000 victims told their stories to TRC. 7000 perpetrators from all political parties applied for amnesty. These are four of their stories.

(Reid & Hoffman 2000)

From the above brief history, it is ironic to note that those who committed crimes against humanity during the era of Apartheid were the first to initiate the discourse of "amnesty, forgiveness and reconciliation". The call for amnesty was critical to ease racial tensions and political suspicion characterising the post-Apartheid era but the call goes on to point towards the source and ontology of "truths" that dominated the hearings of TRC. However, even when a documentary narrative is said to be the source of "truth" Renov (1993: 7) probes us to ask: "What truth?" "Whose truth?" The idea of reaching a "political compromise" during the TRC hearings insinuate for the presence of dominating "truths" of those that called for a political amnesty. Thus, the itinerary of a truth's passage (with "truth" understood as propositional and provisional) for *Long Night's into Day* is qualitatively akin to fiction. What differs is the extent to which the referent of the documentary sign may be considered as a piece of the world plucked from its everyday context rather than fabricated for the screen. Furthermore, that TRC was born out of a "political compromise" has a strong bearing to the reality that, "Truth is produced, induced, and extended according to the regime in power" (Minha 1984: 7). Other "truths" given as authenticating pieces of evidence to show the brutality of Apartheid system are captured through visual images that depict stampeding blacks youths fighting Township battles with baton stick wielding white policemen. At this point the voice-over of the narrator says that, "In the final days of Apartheid violence escalated throughout South Africa. Thousands died. But one death made headlines around the world" (Reid & Hoffman 2000). A newspaper cut-up shows the heading which reads: "MOB KILLS U.S STUDENT". Amy Biehl, a U.S. student was killed in the

black township, and the killers got 18 years imprisonment for each. The news reader goes further to announce that: “The high profile amnesty hearing of 1993 of the Full Bright extent student Amy Biehl is begins in Cape Town today. Four convicted young men walked down the streets stoning and stabbing Amy Biehl.” The racial politics played out through the death of Amy Biehl is that she is more important than the deaths of thousands of black who receive little if no coverage in Western sponsored media. When the documentary comments that, “But one death made headlines around the world”, it is constructing the “truth” often replayed in western media that the lives of blacks are “worthless and dispensable” (Mugabane 2007: 30) that they do not deserve full media coverage or even deserve coverage at all.

The lawyer representing the defendant, Mongezi Manqina’s reads his affidavit:

The car stopped and the driver Amy Biehl stumbled out of the car and started running towards the Caltex Petrol Station. We chased her and I tripped her and she fell down. I asked one person in the crowd for a knife. I got the knife and moved towards Amy Biehl as she was sitting in front of the box facing us.

The narrative suddenly shifts to show Amy’s father giving testimony to how he received the news of his daughter’s tragedy. The suspense created by the sudden shifting from one narrative to the other shows that the “truth” in documentary film narratives can be dramatised, suspended, made more interesting and intriguing by the fictional aspect of suspense (Ward 2003). These moments which a presumably objective representation of the world encounters the necessity of creative intervention, are deployed in order to capture the attention of the audiences who are kept guessing about what will come next. Actually, this feeling is sustained following the testimony given by Amy’s fathers who says that: “I was in the middle of the meeting and it was during the noon hour when my secretary came to the door and motioned to me. I came out and she said you have a family emergency call”. Before the announcement of the sad news is made, audiences are made to wonder when the narrative shifts to Manqina who finished the remaining part of his story: “I took the knife and stabbed her once in front on her left side. I had the evidence that this blow was fatal. I accept that it must have been the wound that which caused her death.” Black anger founding its outlet through Manqina’s violent action can also be felt through the testimony proffered by his cousin sister Solatshu Mongezi who says that:

To be honest I didn’t care much because she is a white lady. She is white; she is white .... How many blacks have died? Fare and first, I did know that my cousin was involved there but even if he was involved we would remain feeling the same. She is a white woman. What the hell was I to care about her?

The racial politics underscored through Solatshu's speech shows that apartheid had succeeded to a considerably degree, to implant the seeds of violence within the minds of young black people who had to kill in order to express their anger and revenge against the oppressive system of Apartheid. So, the racial trope of the so-called black savagery (Mayer 2002) is deliberately challenged in the process of proving the axiom that "violence that begets violence" not that blacks were naturally born violent. In the same breath, Mongezi takes up a strong position in defending his actions by giving various reasons which motivated him to kill:

I stabbed Amy Biehl because I saw her as a target. I was highly politically motivated by the events of the day and by the climate prevailing in the township. Political tensions had further heightened because of the presence of white police and some white passersby had shot at us. Before it all happened I was a person who loved sport. I was in standard 6 at Gugulethu Comprehensive, and after school I knew that come 5 o'clock I would be at the gym. In the week that this thing happened, a student died at Nyanga junction. His name is Shawbury. Before my eyes, he was shot by a Boer (white policeman) while we were singing freedom songs. I felt terrible because he died in my arms.

Another amnesty applicant, Easy Nofemela supported Manqina's position by asserting that killing white people was an expression of anger that simmered among blacks who were harassed, beaten and killed in the townships by white policemen. Nofemela argued that if there had been living reasonably and decently as what human beings should do they would not have killed. However, the "unsaid" in Nofemela's story is that violence could not only be defined in terms of black versus white binary but it also involved blacks that fought among themselves thereby exposing the "fissures" of a black revolution that had been infiltrated by agents of apartheid. Whereas for Nofemela and Mongezi killing was a manifestation of black anger against the brutalizing experiences of Apartheid, for Gcobisa Makana – a male relative of Mongezi, killing whites was accepted as a way of forcing die-hards supporters of Apartheid to yield to the demands for freedom by black South Africans. In other words, a black people's revolution would not have been accomplished without spilling white blood, and it seemed the language of violence was one which was most understood by the adherents of Apartheid. Mongezi ends his testimony by asking for forgiveness to the parents of Amy Biehl.

### **The Cradock "4": Bringing Violence to Black Communities**

If violence was concentrated in black communities it is because the forces of apartheid found it worthwhile to penetrate black communities so that they could neutralise black revolution from within before it spreads its tentacles to

engulf white communities that were concentrated in major towns and cities. The narrator reveals the offensive character of the apartheid:

Being politically active in the rural area in the apartheid South Africa was to be dangerously conspicuous. Teachers Matthew Goniwe and Fort Calata mobilized youths of the community called Cradock making it a focal point of anti-apartheid. They soon became targets of the security police. On June the 27th of 1985, on their way home from a political meeting Matthew and Fort along with two colleagues disappeared.

Infiltrating black communities could not be that easy without making use of other blacks that were used to spy on the activities of those black ring leaders that were marked for elimination. This is exactly what happened to Goniwe, Calata and their friends who were waylaid and caught by the security police. Their charred remains were found dumped in a bush a bit far away from Cradock. The visuals that show the remains of Calata and Goniwe provide authenticating evidence of the horrors of apartheid. In other words, the signifying systems of the images bear the weight of the history of violence perpetrated by the supporters of apartheid (Renov 1993). This manifest display of violence and brutality is done with the express aim to capture the imaginations of the audiences. Thus, audience imagination of the pain and suffering that the victim experienced during their moments of death becomes the tropical discourses of “truths” that constitute the narrative of the documentary under scrutiny (Wolfe 1992). Other “truths” are constructed by Nomonde Calata, the wife of Fort when she testifies about the source of her agony: “That particular evening it was very quiet. I even went out and stood on the stoop looking up and down the street with the hope that I would see the car coming but there was no car coming. I started to lose hope then.” At this point a newspaper cut-up appears on the screen with the heading: “Goniwe and Calata are found dead.” To justify the killings, Eric Taylor talks about how Christianity taught him to hate communists who were viewed as atheists. Black South Africans that were agitating for independence from the shackles of apartheid were labelled as communists or atheists. For their part as mobilisers of the youths in Cradock, Goniwe and Calata were viewed as communists that had to be eliminated because they threatened the existence of institutionalised system of apartheid. In his defence speech, Eric Taylor says that:

I accept that we were there to uphold the present government and apartheid was part and parcel of the government at the time. There were a lot of values I felt we had the responsibility to protect and Christianity of course was one of those values. All the people that I worked with were Christians. You must remember that one of the elements of communism is atheism.



There are a lot of wrong assumptions in the above defence statements made by Taylor. The first is that since most blacks were against the apartheid system which claimed to have been built upon Christian values and principles, they were supposed to be viewed as communists or atheists. Second, Taylor's statements imply that all Christians should be against non-Christians in fact it is the mission of Christians to spread the gospel to non-Christians. Taylor constructs his "truths" on wrong assumptions which serves to reflect how false Christian practices were used to justify the elimination the "others" [black people] that were viewed as different in many ways – "beyond the pale" (Hall 1994: 258) of humanity. For Eric Taylor the drive to want to eliminate black South Africans was intensified by the film "Mississippi Burning" that depicted blacks being hunted down and killed by members of the Ku Klux Klan in America. However, one of the most shocking parts in the narrative is that despite Taylor's graphic detailing of how he took part in the killing of Goniwe, Calata and their two friends, the TRC chair Desmond Tutu had the audacity to pardon the crimes of perpetrators because prosecuting them implied going against the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation which defined the mandate of TRC. This display of a short memory of hate has received a fair share of blame in post-apartheid where the majority of black people continue to suffer economically with whites owning a larger stake within South Africa's economy. For the principles that guided the operations of TRC, Tutu has this to say:

We make the mistake of conflating all justice into retributive justice whereas there is what is called restorative justice and this is the option that we have chosen. The perpetrators don't go scot free, they have to confess in full glare of TV lights that they did something ghastly.

Tutu's vision of TRC's mandate is supported by Glenda Wildschut – commissioner of TRC who asserts that the decision to make hearings go public was meant to reveal the horrors of apartheid as well as open up possibilities for nation building in South Africa. But, as earlier on argued, nation building in South Africa cannot be fully realised when black people continue to suffer economically even when they still boast of having achieved political independence. Thus, the post-apartheid conundrum is: Why would the dominant powers pretend that things are normal when the glaring truth, which the documentary has failed to reveal, is that black South Africans have not achieved much economically? However, independence in all its manifestations [social, political and economical] has been the reason why Robert McBride joined the armed struggle on the side of African National Congress led by Nelson Mandela.

## **Robert McBride: The Fighter For Freedom**

The defendant Robert McBride begins his narrative by giving reasons why he became involved in the armed struggle on the side of ANC:

By 1985 I was already in the armed wing of the ANC. It was the most logical thing to do. There was no way that non-violent protest would work. I was 22 years old and all my life I had been categorized in racial terms either black or coloured or even worse, non-white. But when I joined ANC, I became a South African and no one referred to me by any racial categorization. I was a South African freedom fighter.

When McBride planted bombs at Beachfront Bar that blasted into bits and pieces the bodies of Jonathan Jeffers, John McKenna, Carl Maddon and Sharon Welgemoed he did not see himself as a terrorist but a freedom fighter. Whereas much of the fighting was carried out through mass protests and confrontations with the apartheid police, McBride argued that these tactics did not yield much damage on the system, therefore there was need to deploy guerrilla tactics to destabilise the enemy. The destabilisation involves the use of arms of war targeting individuals as well as the cultural symbols of apartheid. In turn, the apartheid government carried out cross border attacks in Botswana's Gaborone resulting in the destruction of ten houses, that were thought to be housing guerrillas, belonging to the African National Congress [ANC]. According to the narrator, the houses doubled as guerrilla bases and family houses. But McBride argues that the houses had women and children who suffered heavy casualties, not that the houses were for ANC bases. From the two accounts given, it shows that documentary "truths" can be very subjective, and this is caused by the reality that narratives that constitute a documentary respond to the ideological inclinations of those who have the chance and power to narrate their stories. From this premise, documentary "truths" become luminal and aporic (Fuery & Fuery 2003) escaping the wish to be pinned down on monolithic interpretations.

McBride was convicted for the killing of people at Beachfront Bar and Magoo Bar. The newspaper cut-up shown on the screen reads that: "Some whites were threatening revenge". This demonstration of hard-heartedness by a section of whites showed that, if even the TRC had the intention of easing tension between the killers and those who lost their relatives, there could be some people in South Africa who still consider that restorative justice fails short of bringing true democracy within the jurisprudence of South Africa. This claim can be substantiated by the argument that although apartheid was upheld by whites, 80% of those applying for amnesty were black (Reid & Hoffman 2000). Finally, McBride asked for forgiveness from the relatives of the victims regretting that he had caused so much pain to the victims and their living relatives.

## **The Gugulethu 7: Thapelo Mbelo and the Politics of Conspiracy**

The case of the Gugulethu 7 shows that a revolution that is meant to free a group of people can be destabilised from within. When the security police pounced on Gugulethu and killed seven young men in March 1986, they claimed that they had killed terrorists. Their claims were supported by apartheid media which reports that: “Seven terrorists have been killed in an early morning gun battle with police. Shooting started after police foiled ANC ambush against police patrol unit.” On the screen, visuals are shown of badly mutilated bodies of black young men. And to add to the horror of the killing, a corpse tied to a rope is dragged along the streets. But many wondered who could have exposed the activities of these young men whose operations were known to be secretive. When twenty-five police applied for amnesty telling different stories about the case of the Gugulethu seven, it was surprising to find that a black police informer named Thapelo Mbelo played a leading role in revealing the activities of the young ANC cadres.

The fact that the police provided different versions of the stories about the Gugulethu killings means that documentary “truths” can be told using different ideological lenses. For example, during the TRC hearing session when the police were asked why they had killed young men, they argued the young men were armed and had fired at the police when they were told to surrender their weapons. But another version of the story which became popular among the blacks of Gugulethu Township is that the police had lied to the TRC to cover up their sins. Most blacks of Gugulethu that were shown being interviewed testified that the police actually killed the young men and placed their weapons in the hands of the dead bodies so that it appeared as if they were armed and ready to fight with the police. This version of the story appears credible if it is taken within the context of the narrative proffered by Thapelo Mbelo about ruthlessness of the tactics that were deployed by apartheid police to destabilise black revolution in South Africa. Mbelo testified that he was a member of the crack unit in the apartheid police force that was used to spy on the activities of fellow blacks who were then fished out to be killed by the police. His defence argument is that, if he showed that he was not willing, his life and that of his family and that of his relatives were endangered. From Mbelo’s narrative, it is evident that the black-on-black violence that became a common feature in black townships is partly explained in terms of how the apartheid machinery had succeeded in infiltrating the black revolution. A revolution couched in nationalistic and collective terms has a weakness of concealing its internal “cracks” that can be challenged by the existential demands of individuals such as Mbelo who became a spy to save his life and that of his family. Finally, when Mbelo asked for forgiveness, the parents of the dead victims could not believe that a black person had conspired with the forces that they were fighting against.

## Conclusion

This article explored the documentary film *Long Night's Journey into Day: South Africa's Search For Truth & Reconciliation* (2000) with the aim of trying to find out how its narratives capture the "truths" behind crimes against humanity committed during the apartheid era. The first section theories documentary narratives, and argues that although documentary films are built out of factual information they also include fictive elements which tend to challenge its presumed naturality, singularity and purity. The mandate of South Africa's TRC claim to have been built on the "truth" about the atrocities that were committed during apartheid, and yet the decision of what type of justice was to prevail was decided by church leadership. The act of deciding justice for the grieved exemplifies the dilemma involved in the pursuit of reconciliation without justice. The documentary has also revealed that, during apartheid, perpetrators of violence killed their victims for various reasons. The case of Nofeme and Mongezi reflected that black people were forced to kill as way of expressing their anger and frustration against the oppressive system of apartheid. This was, however, different from the case of McBride who argues that killing whites was a way in which black people expressed their wish to be freed from the bondage of apartheid. The cases of the Cradock 4 and Gugulethu 7 reflect that apartheid security police used ruthless tactics such as spying, force and violence to eliminate blacks that were considered to be dangerous to the system of apartheid. It has been argued that the failure of the TRC to extend its discourses in order to cover economic issues has further deepened racial animosity between blacks and whites in contemporary South Africa. Thus, there is a special need to interrogate the nature of reconciliation advocated by TRC with the aim of finding alternative ways of harmonizing race relations in South Africa.

## Filmography

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