1. Heritage Day in Simon's Town, 24 September 2024.

Each year, those once forcibly removed from Simon's Town, gather on the edges of Jubilee Square, the middle of this naval base and village, to lay a wreath for those who passed since the previous when they gathered here. They have done so for some 40 years. It is a sad occasion whilst also demonstrating resilience and reminding us that justice remains outstanding. Colour-based expulsions took place in the 1960s and 70s. Those subjected to this apartheid atrocity are fewer each year, but their children and grandchildren now attend, to let us remember, to speak to their loss and their trauma, and to remind us always to stand guard not to let racism or class be a societal norm.

A very old lady, speaking softly, supported by her walking stick told me that she and her family were evicted in 1968. They had a double-story house-cum-shop, opposite the Residency – today the Museum that commemorates their loss. "They were a happy and we were a prosperous family". After their eviction to Ocean View she say: all they had was ended, never to return. She is now surrounded by unemployment, crime and the loss of hope.

Sometime earlier a man, a bit older than myself and I, carried a table down the Residency steps (the Museum), for a function. We had not met. Before. At the bottom I introduced myself and asked about his connection with Simon's Town. He told me he was a Primary School pupil at the local Catholic School. One day he came home to see his mother, sitting on the pavement, her feet in the gutter, and the family wardrobe behind her. Behind that, bulldozers were pulling down the walls of their home. His mother was weeping. – I put my arm round him, and he began weeping bitterly; a man I had never met before.

At a meeting of the Phoenix Committee, the women and men who organize the annual remembrance events, an old man tells me that he recently took his grandchildren from Ocean View, the place they were evicted to, to Simon's Town to show them the home he grew up in. The terraced house on a steep slope looked in fine fettle as he took advantage of the parking bay right outside the place of his childhood. He pointed to the windows and wanted to tell his grandchildren of the joy that was once his. At that moment the front door opened and the woman, with no seeming grasp of the past, told him not to park there as she was waiting for her husband, 'who always parks there'. He drove home in silence he told me. The past is not gone.

During an unreasonable altercation at the Museum, some time back, once again a White person, objected to the time it took for two teachers, both in their 50s, to get out of his way. His words, 'we won the war; what have you ever done?' His words are not forgotten and remain engrained in the minds of those in ear-shot and all who listened to the story. The teachers, one who was now teaching in the UK, had come to bury their mother; and a family also once forcibly evicted.

Back at Jubilee Square, cars honk to tell the mourners to get out of their way. Five or six white folk have come to show contrition and shame for the deeds once done in their name. In silence we participate and afterwards are welcomed at the Museum by the Ocean View ladies who baked cookies for us and served tea and coffee. It is convivial as the past is not discussed.

It pains me anew, at so many turns and occasions, day in and day out, that White South Africans remain oblivious and choose to ignore the past. What is it I or we can do, so that contrition rather a cold shoulder is the message that comes from the former perpetrator class.

When their own soldiers would not fight their wars any more, they used the soldiers of other countries to act as their proxies. Then they invented drones so soldiers see less and less of the killing and damage they cause. War has become a computerized chess game. In all this humanity sinks, ever lower.

2.

3. Pieces about my pieces.

On the back of the photo my mother wrote (in German): 'Horst engaged in the big wash with Herero woman Lucia, 1948, - 3 years old'. Where was this? - It was in the backyard of our rented home in Bahnhofstrasse, nearest to the railway station, not a salubrious part of this all-white village as it then was. The front door opened on to the street and of the few rooms one was sub-let to another tenant. In the photo you see the drum where water was boiled to then be tossed into the big 'balie' or tub. I look as though I'm finding pleasure in my (probably) momentary experience. Lucia – I do not remember her nor do I know her surname – looks down at what she is doing. She must have known she was likely to be included in the photo, but she shows no emotion. Yes, she is a proud woman, expressed by her coming to work in her traditional Herero dress with unmistakable head-gear.

On the face of it this displays what might have happened in hundreds of thousands of white South West African and South African homes on laundry day. No washing machines (yet) but Black women coming from the township to do the weekly washing. That the little White boy should be engaged or maybe was taught what is means to wash clothes conveys a sense of closeness to the servant and maybe be even a moment during which I was taught a lesson about the chores the 'others' did for us. Maybe…

But looking at the picture when I stumbled upon it in my boxes of fading photo's in 2024 I cannot escape something far deeper and prescient. A short walk from our home lay the towns graveyard. It was well-maintained by an old white man my parents would greet as Mr-so-and-so. My mother's parents' home, in the 1920s was even closer to the graveyard - a home

my mother remembered with great fondness. And to the east of the graveyard, first and included within the timber walls surrounding it, to keep out the ever-drifting desert sand, was the also colonial, small Jewish graveyard. Beyond it there lay the mass of untended graves. Here and there a cross and the occasional shorter small box-like structure, suggesting a child being buried there.

My parents would never walk through or over these untended graves but I recall, not once, the refrain: those are the graves of the Herero who died in this town when the *Spanish flu decimated them after WWI in 1918*. The adage was not uncommon '*they don't look after their dead in the way we do*'.

I calculate: Lucia might have been a woman of twenty-five or thirty-five, born during or just after WW1. That might locate her in time but it begs context: a genocide. Lucia, as well as my mother kept their lips sealed about the genocide; the former a victim and now oppressed under Apartheid, silently in mourning and suppressed anger, the latter the purveyor of a lie, and still the beneficiary of oppressed labour.

The truth was, and still is, that the wind-swept mounds were those of people who died in the Swakopmund concentration camp the German colonial forces operated here between 1904 and 1908 when Herero and Nama fought the colonial power. Further up the Swakop river, whence to town Swakopmund gets its name, lay the fertile lands where once Herero tended to their cattle herds; now the farms of well-to-do German famers. Lucia, born during the decade after the genocide committed against her people would have been the daughter of survivors of the genocide in which a mere 20% of her people survived. Now impoverished and landless, Lucia had to move down-river to beg for work from the very people who sought to kill, decimate, exterminate her. The stoic face of Lucia in the photograph reveals no smile or pleasure at a toddler whetting his hands in the washing-tub.

More pieces about my pieces to follow next time.

4. **The breaking of the United Nations.**

During our struggle against Apartheid, one task I remember our leaders called for, was to re-affirm South Africa's and all its people's support and belief in the importance of the United Nations Organisation, its institutions and its mandates. This was important. We would have to reverse the damage the Apartheid rulers had done through ignoring and denigrating the UN whenever they could. We were to teach people anew the (now ever growing) importance of collective world efforts to mediate and secure peace, tolerance, justice and equality – also when it did not suit this or that country.

We are now at a much more desperate point in world history where the USA, the faltering Empire, continues as the self-appointed Gendarme of the world, vetoing world opinion and doing just as it likes. It has done this for a long time. Re-building the UNO, with a Security Council constituted differently from the one we have today, has been raised by countries from the Global South - and most Recently by President Cyril Ramaphosa. May we not just take note of his call and that of others. **Civil society discourse needs to pick up on the immense damage the USA has done to international mediation,** negotiation and compromise rather than military conquest.

We are on the brink, more than ever, of possible nuclear war! Putin, Trump and others have raised the stakes like never before. Biden, Starmer do the same with a slightly more subtle choice of words. **We need a South African peace movement** like Betrand Russell and Canon John Collins once led in the 1950s in the UK. It served to educate a whole generation. SA is not at the heart of the to-and-fro but we need an educated public.

We need to counter the platitudes politicians mouth when they advocate war as a just tool. The **military industrial complex globally but also in our own country** has to be countered to the point of non-existence! Denel, aided and abetted by Rheinmetal (50% shares) of Germany, are building destruction right outside of Cape Town, in Somerset West. Cynically Germany uses its leverage in South Africa to deliver armaments into war zones its own foreign policy does pretends to disallow. **Why does our civil society not do more to stop our Government from being an arms producer?**

From 18-24 September South Africa hosted Africa's largest Air and Aero-space defence and trade exhibition. Minister Angie Motshekga and President Cyril Ramaphosa advertised it as a vehicle that could bring billions of Rands in investment and trade to our country. **Where is the voice that says NO! We need a peace movement!** And let us reject the justification that this brings investments and jobs! – There are other ways than building destruction and to then contribute to the race that hastens **extinction on earth!**

5. **Let us remember, always!**

The 12th September this year marked the 47th year since the torture until death of **Steve Biko**. His extraordinary role in re-shaping and re-invigorating resistance to Apartheid oppression deeply challenged the exiled ANC and PAC of that time.

But importantly he broke the tide of White South African liberal guardianship and patronage – the 'we will speak for you', 'we do it for you'. He provided the seed, waiting to be watered, of a new Black assertiveness. He also changed White South Africans who heard him. In the National Union of Students, its elected President at the time, **Neville Curtis** nurtured a new radicalism that took 'the struggle for academic freedom' to involvement in liberation from racist rule. The Christian Institute and a few other organisations similarly adjusted and thanked Steve for his clarity. Importantly it was the academic **Rick Turner** who provided the foundations for a new-found class analyses, that challenged a young generation to re-read Class and Colour, written by Ray and Mary Simon, published in 1968.

It is this year, also 20 years since the passing of **Beyers Naudé**. The Kagiso Trust together Rhodes Business School organised the Beyers Naudé Memorial lecture. You can view and listen to the speakers on this link: https://bit.ly/BNML.

On 24 September **Pravin Gordhan** died at the age of 75. He must rate as an honest, humble former Cabinet Minister and before that civil servant, who did not seek wealth, revel in pomp, and at the same time lived politics within the collectives of an ANC and SACP.

Baldwin Sjollema (1927-2024). He died on 6 September at his home in Geneva. We corresponded until recently. A few years back he stayed with us when he took up painting! In his late 70s. I recall visiting him when he was head of the Programme to Combat racism at the WCC in the late 1970s. He was instrumental in 1972 for the PCR to commit funds to liberation movements. After he retired from the WCC we invited him to become a Trustee of the IDAF. I valued his advice and insights greatly. His autobiography *Never bow to racism*, stands proudly on the bookshelf in my study.

Read the Wordpress comment, not least to see what Arch Tutu had to say about him many years ago.
https://baldwinsjollema.wordpress.com/francais/

James Mathews (1929 – 2024). He died on 7 September. Proudly, on the same bookshelf I have a copy of his first book of poems, signed by him on 11 December 1972 at our home in Parkhurst, Johannesburg. He had come from Cape Town for the launch of his poetry, together with that of Gladys Thomas. He stayed with us. It was Peter Randall the head of the Special Programme of Christian Action in Society, otherwise referred to as SPRO-CAS II, who identified these two gifted poets and writers, whom the mainstream publishers at the time chose to ignore.

We later met in London and then back home – having several friends in common. Hamba Gahle, James!

Peter Randall (1935 – 2024) Peter passed away on 5 June. Peter and I worked closely together from April 1972 until my exile in April 1976. He founded RAVAN Press – a pioneer in progressive publishing in its time.Together we established the SPROCAS II, White Community Programmes that complemented Bennie Khoapa and Steve Biko's Black Community Programme. Read more about him:

Peter Randall: a pioneering publisher who established ...

The Conversation
https://theconversation.com › peter-randall-a-pioneerin...

27 Jun 2024 — **Peter Randall**, a pioneering **South African** activist publisher and educator, passed away on 5 June 2024 in Johannesburg. He was the co-founder of Ravan Press.

Bennie Khoapa: And on Sunday, May 5, we lost another champion of justice and equality with the passing of Ben **Khoapa**, and **renowned Black Consciousness activist**. Read:

Tribute to Tower Ben Khoapa - Amandla Magazine

amandla.org.za
https://www.amandla.org.za › tribute-to-tower-ben-khoapa

According to reports the University of Cape Town, after it resolved to break relations with Israeli academic institutions, lost R300 million in promised donations by 'Philanthropists', presumably all of them South African. Strong voices have condemned these unnamed 'Philanthropists' who 'hold the University of Cape Town to ransom'.

During the SA Apartheid years we in the struggle, fought to isolate South Africa academically – and the effect of this was important and significant.

My interest here is in those who 'nobly' call themselves "philanthropists". Who are they? How large is their bargaining power in academia, NGOs, wider civil society and recently also, as 'partners' in Government? Where did they get their money from? How did their daddy's and granddad's get super rich? How much power do they exert?

We demand that Government accounts for our tax money and how it is spent – and we regularly complain bitterly at the way our taxes are used by our Government. But this other, large, hidden hand is mostly **admired** for being 'generous'. Applicants grovel endlessly to gain favour with them. They also fund political parties!

The biggest ones are known: Oppenheimer, Rupert …. and I could mention at least 10 more. They wield untold power, but there are many, many others, not so large but none-the-less with enormous collective power. All of them should be compelled to reveal the unsavory way their forebears made fortunes. This is important in the SA case, precisely because fortunes were amassed in our country when outsiders came and made fortunes on the back of Black labour, dispossession in the wild west of copper, diamonds, gold and other more.

I have little doubt that this is blood money which instead is traded today as kindness, the giving of something we should be grateful for.

Re-think! Here is another colonial legacy that exerts power right into the present day.