

What is reconciliation?



The case for Reitz Jamie-Ryan Turkington

What is reconciliation? In an article inspired by her experience of reporting on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Anjie Krog chose to view it as part of a concept called “interconnectedness toward wholeness”.

Albeit an amorphous concept for many, reconciliation finds its home in many of the world’s most influential doctrines.

In Christianity, the predominant religion at the UFS, it is located in passages such as “turn the other cheek” and “forgive them for they know not what they do”.

In struggle doctrine, you will find a yearning for reconciliation in this passage in the Freedom Charter: “that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities”.

In African philosophy, you will find reconciliation embedded in the beliefs of African communities across the continent, and South Africa in the case of ubuntu. Kwame Gyekye maintains that communitarianism is the defining characteristic of African culture. According to him, communitarianism “deeply cherishes the social values of peace, harmony, stability, solidarity and mutual reciprocities and sympathy”.

For humanists, reconciliation is about reverting back to a “heart of peace” and attempting to understand the actions of the perpetrator in a way that reaffirms the inherent good in any individual.

Last week’s announcement by Prof. Jonathan Jansen that Reitz would be reopened, charges would be dropped, and

those responsible for the video would be invited back to study gives reconciliation a unique meaning in the context of this university, and the community comprising it.

Firstly, reconciliation is an inception of sorts, a step towards interconnectedness. The need to reconcile presupposes that there is an absence of felt interconnectedness and that the first moves in that direction need to be taken.

Secondly, reconciliation in the wake of the reopening of Reitz is a choice. To elaborate: the socio-political context for reconciliation was created by the announcement and now the UFS community is presented with an opportunity to choose whether to reconcile or not.

Thirdly, this choice will be based on the values and backgrounds of individuals within the community. Since reconciliation is nestled in at least one of the doctrines that influence our worldviews, it is not entirely a choice that will be made based on a foreign concept.

Given our context, the question for many now will be “on what grounds should we reconcile?”

This is a difficult question, and one which the individual needs to answer internally.

The question that precedes this process of rationalisation is more important to ask ourselves: should we reconcile or not? Forgive me if I come across as overly simplistic here, but is reconciliation not what all of us, with varying degrees of success and moral rectitude, have been striving for?

If it is, then this is an unprecedented opportunity to do so, it’s as simple and as complex as that.



Hectic week, the Sheriff officially comes into town!

It’s been a while since the last edition and a lot has been going on. The inauguration of the Sheriff took place this past week and I hear it was a grand event and everyone was invited, did you go? One thing that will be very interesting to see though is how the relationship between the President: Moses Masitha and the Sheriff develops. The Sheriff feels we should be an elitist university where only the best are accepted and the President thinks we should be all about access.

Your National headlines: Our government just loves spending

It has been a while since the last edition so choosing which national headlines to go with was a bit of tough choice for me, but one thing that has constantly been in our faces has to be the over-spending of the government. The Department of Education has been the biggest spenders splashing out

between R100-R267 000 on a budget vote party. You probably thinking, what is a budget vote and why the hell are they celebrating it? Your guess is as good as mine!

These guys then figured this isn’t enough, so they followed it up with the R1,2 million spent by both the minister of basic education and the minister of higher education on new luxury vehicles. To their credit these were BMW 7 series and probably Blade figured he would never get another opportunity like this, since he does lead the “let’s share the wealth” Communist Party. The DA summed it up perfectly,

“Unfortunately this lavish spending by the ANC-led government shows no sign of abating, as President Jacob Zuma publicly calls for financial austerity but repeatedly fails to act on those that don’t listen to him. All bark and no bite results in public officials who fear no consequences.”

Just when you thought things couldn’t get any worse, the minister of Police spends over R570 000 on his

hotel bill, staying at the... wait for it... the Hilton, that son of a *****! Enough said!

Put your hand up if you’re a doosh-bag

This one was a bit difficult to find, but I went deep into Facebook and there it was waiting for me. A link on Moses’ page has the inauguration speech from the Sheriff and the where it was announced that he was dropping the charges, the doosh-bag has to be Thomas Thabane for his comment on the speech:

“this man thinks he eloquency can fool us. Wat he has committed is a tragedy indeed, as he declares that somethings will not happen on his watch, this will also not happen on our watch. we were prepared 2 dwn our pens last year & we succeeded, nothing will stop us frm succeeding again!”

Seriously dude, you think we need this right now? Shut up!

“Conscientious stupidity”



Philo-kovsie-cal Henry Shimutwikeni

Martin Luther Jr. said, “Nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.”

For those of you ignorant as to the meaning of ignorance, it is the lack of knowledge, or a wilful lack of desire to improve the efficiency, merit, effectiveness or usefulness of one’s actions. I am embarking on this discourse because I have discerned that on this campus many students display a general disinterest in the issues surrounding them, stating numerous excuses and reasons which in my opinion are ultimately pivoted on deliberate and diligent ignorance.

We recently had a week long Symposium on campus leading to the official inauguration of Prof Jansen as our new Rector. I was flabbergasted when I asked someone to accompany me to one of the discussions and they informed me they had no knowledge at all of the Rector’s inauguration. Shocked at this, I decided to indirectly to ask everyone that I spoke to that day as to what they knew of the Symposium

or the Rectors inauguration. The feedback was disturbing, and what is worse is that some people are unaware of the fact that they are unaware.

During the SRC election campaign circuses I was disturbed when one of the candidates had no knowledge of who the incoming Rector was, yet he wanted to be a leader of this campus. Inevitably destiny dealt with him. He wasn’t elected. Nonetheless, during those very elections only about 25 percent of students voted. Granted, this could be a consequence of various factors, but I am confident that ignorance played a major role.

We are at one of the institutions where the highest level of learning can be obtained in South Africa, but yet we choose to deliberately ignore information that affects us. If at University level such diligent ignorance is displayed then I weep for the uneducated masses depending on us for enlightenment. If you expect knowledge and information to grow legs and do door to door, you are fantasising. Don’t ask me what the poster says! Read it for yourself.

Then there are those who in defence

of their ignorance say that “ignorance is bliss”. If as an adult, you genuinely believe this, then you are drowning in information but starved for knowledge. A pragmatic example is someone who says that because they don’t live in a University residence the issue of integration does not concern them, so they won’t bother themselves with it.

When the University is concentrating all its intellectual efforts on a certain matter that doesn’t “affect” you, this will possibly result in less effort being dedicated to whatever it is that does “affect” you. The absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence. Just because you don’t feel the effect of something it doesn’t mean it doesn’t affect you.

Further, I cannot at all console with those who claim they are too busy and don’t have the time. No one is ever too busy to know and I feel that this is the conscientious stupidity that Martin Luther King JR refers to. Obviously we cannot construct an ignorance-meter that measures level of knowledge, but once we adopt an attitude of constructive curiosity, then we are headed in the right direction

“Jansen got it wrong this time round”



The case against Reitz Thomas Thabane Motsoahae

This serves as my humble opinion on the reopening of the Reitz hostel by the rector. The opening of a residence is not the point; the point is what that particular residence represents. When the video surfaced last year two general conclusions were drawn, firstly that as disgusting (to say the least) as it was, it came as no surprise at all, secondly it was just a the peak of the iceberg as there is a bigger racial problem in the university. When students marched to show contempt for the video one of the demands was that Reitz be closed precisely to get rid of this cult mentality of the residence. Reopening of Reitz is going to take us back in that it will evoke the tensions that existed last year as it will pit the different groups of students against one another, and will further not get rid of the cult mentality of the residence as it is a known fact that instead of showing remorse and becoming part of the general university the former patrons of Reitz decided to have their own little “vlokstad” in a high school in Universitas.

The reasons given by the rector to reopening Reitz just add salt to injury and quite frankly he thinks we are stupid (and this university claims to breed intellectuals) First of all, when he took this decision out of his own excitement he did not bother to consult anyone. And history will tell us decisions that come in on the side window are never

right and always have evil motives. He claims that it is gesture of reconciliation. How will he achieve this because it is going to create difference of opinion along racial lines? How are we to reconcile with people who never apologised or showed remorse for their actions? He must take us seriously and realise that reconciliation is a two way process. He further decides to drop charges against these boys and readmit them to the university! We demand justice as it is the only way the four delinquents can be punished because it would be sad if people decide to inflict their own justice which might be outside the ambits of the law. He says that he is going to “reparations” to our mothers who are victims of these boys. This is so pathetic and shameless because he is exploiting the material conditions of these ladies and seeks to shut them up with money. No amount of money can compensate the travesty these ladies suffered, which I can not begin to imagine myself.

Jansen has been talking big and showing great vision but he got it wrong this time round. We can not let one man take us to the dark days of last year by evoking painful memories. Reopening of Reitz in the same context as it was before the video is not an act of reconciliation but a slap in the face; no residence should bear the name of Reitz in the first place.



“I can forgive because I have been forgiven.”

Prof Jansen explains why charges will be dropped and the Reitz-boys invited to continue their studies.

“Being an elitist university is a shameful thing.”

SRC: President, Moses Masitha, condemns the elitist approach favoured by Prof Jansen.

“Die bron van inkomste is voordelig vir die manne. Gaan die Universiteit koshuise vergoed vir die verlies aan inkomste?”

Nkosi Dangube, SR: Mans Interne Skakeling, wys op die finansiële implikasies van die sluiting van senior bonds.

“Our university is intellectually dead!”

Prof Jansen really heaped the positive reinforcement on UFS’s students this week.