

**USING PAST EVENTS TO CONSTRUCT A PRESENT: VOICES  
AT THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION  
HEARINGS**

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## **1. Introduction**

In a letter to the *Sunday Times*, on 4 December 1996, Archbishop Desmond Tutu wrote that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission ‘remains a risky and delicate business but it remains the only alternative to Nuremberg on the one hand and amnesia on the other’. Many commentators have seen the business of the TRC as having more to do ‘with nation-building than with excavating and re-writing the past’ (Minkley 1997:32), in other words more to do with creating a present and building for the future than with digging up the past.

What the TRC has made abundantly clear is the central role of language in creating, recreating and struggling over past experience, as well as in attempting to assert a new value system in South Africa. The media have played an important role in shaping public consciousness of the Commission. Not everybody has been able to attend the public hearings, or view them live on television, and most South Africans’ perceptions of the event have been moulded by reports and debates in newspapers, on television, and the radio. Radio Zulu weekly TRC report, for instance, had more than a million listeners.

The purpose of this paper is twofold: on the one hand, I wish to demonstrate how the huge media show that the TRC was and still is has deliberately privileged certain meanings over others, has manipulated the resources of language in the interest of togetherness; on the other, I want to consider how different voices articulate the major issues confronting the TRC today, *viz.* reconciliation vs justice. After giving a brief outline of the TRC mandate and the structures governing the Amnesty Commission, I will focus on a case study, widely referred to as “the St James massacre”, and first sketch the political contexts in which the two major events of the case study took

place. I will then analyse intersubjective strategies around issues of values and Judgements in a number of spoken and written texts around the case study, using Appraisal, a theoretical framework for the analysis of evaluative meanings in texts.

## **2. The TRC**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is based on the final clause of the Interim Constitution of 1993 and passed in Parliament as the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, No 34 of 1995. The commission's purpose was to establish as complete a picture as possible of the nature, causes and extent of gross violations of human rights. It was charged with establishing the fate of victims on all sides of the conflict, creating a forum for victims to relate their stories, granting amnesty in appropriate cases and recommending measures to be taken for the granting of reparation. The commission comprised three committees: a human rights violations committee, a committee on amnesty and a rehabilitation and reparation committee.

The task of the Amnesty Committee was to consider applications for amnesty for acts associated with a political objective and to grant amnesty when the following requirements are met:

- that the act, omission or offence was associated with a political objective;
- the act, omission or offence took place between the period 1 March 1960 and 10 May 1994;
- full disclosure has been made.

THE Amnesty hearings started in April 1996. Many people have been heard, from well-known figures like Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and Craig Williamson to scores of unknown people, perpetrators and victims of violence in the 34 year-span specified by the commission. For this paper, I chose to focus on the hearings relating to an event which on the one hand achieved high media coverage at the time and, on the other hand, involved “ordinary” people caught in the web of political violence.

## 1. Case study: the St James massacre

On Sunday July 25 1993, at 7.30 p.m., 11 people were killed and 58 injured when gunmen burst into the St James church in Kenilworth, Cape Town, threw hand grenades and opened fire on the congregation with AK 47 rifles. On 9 and 10 July 1997 in Cape Town, the Amnesty Committee heard three of the men responsible for the attack; only one of them had been convicted of the offences and sentenced to 23 years imprisonment. On 11 June 1998, the three were granted amnesty.

These are the bare bones of the case. Before I consider a number of texts relating to both major events, the attack in 1993 and the amnesty hearing in 1997, it is necessary to place the events, briefly, in their socio-political contexts.

“Ideological milieu” is a notion coined by Wade (1996:135) which I believe offers an efficient means of characterising the socio-political context during both periods of the case study. According to him, the concept is similar to Pennycook’s “discursive field” which she describes as having ‘disciplining effects: it defines the criteria by which Judgements of what is good, bad, right, wrong and so on can be made’ (1994:242). Wade suggests that a discursive field/ideological milieu can be thought of as ‘a supra-ideology, encompassing and providing a degree of coherence and organisation to all the constituent ideologies of the dominant bloc’. He characterises the ideological milieu two years after the democratic elections in South Africa and the installation of the new government in terms of the following list of themes: *democracy, non-racialism, egalitarianism, reconciliation, nation-building and restitution*, noting that such terms ‘presently enjoy almost “buzz-word” status, being used frequently in more or less appropriate contexts to confer credibility and legitimacy on programmes and actions’. These themes certainly apply to the situation in 1996 and 1997, when, for instance, the objectives of the TRC are described in the Act as ‘to promote national unity and reconciliation in a spirit of understanding which transcends the conflicts and divisions of the past’ (Hansard 1995:1339-40).

But these themes did not apply to the period 1992-1993 during which the St James attack took place. The ideological milieu, then, can be described in terms of the following themes: *violence, fear, retaliation, negotiation*. While CODESA and the Multiparty Negotiating Forum were thrashing out the details of the Interim Constitution, political violence claimed the lives of thousands of people across the country. Chris Hani was assassinated early in 1993. In the weeks prior to the St James attack, between July 2 and July 13, more than 200 people were killed in the East Rand in townships such as Tokoza and Kathlehong. On August 25, one month after the St James attack, Amy Biehl, an American exchange student was stabbed and stoned to death by a group of youths in Gugulethu. But on July 2 1993, the date for the first non-racial democratic elections was announced and on July 26, the draft interim multi-racial constitution was published. In the same year, Mandela and de Klerk were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

My textual analysis will show how the pressure of the ideological milieus in 1993 and 1997 helps construct and naturalise certain kinds of meanings around the events of the St James attack and the amnesty hearing.

## **2. Framework for analysis**

The framework chosen for analysis is Appraisal theory, which is concerned with exploring the discourse semantics and lexicogrammar of the language of evaluation, attitude and intersubjective positioning. In particular, it seeks to provide an account of how language construes and negotiates the interpersonal relationships of solidarity and power. It encompasses aspects of the grammar that, in other contexts, have been grouped variously under headings such as modality, hedging, evidentiality, attitude and stance. Appraisal is mainly realised lexically although it can also be realised by whole clauses. Because lexis is the most fluid area of language, and the meanings of words are constantly under renegotiation and change, it is often not possible to state whether a lexical item has attitudinal colouring, and which value is being realised, until it is considered in context. Additionally, the interpretation of interpersonal meanings 'is not

only dependent on the co-text but also on the sociocultural background and positionings of the interactants' (Eggins & Slade 1997:126).

As the network reproduced in Appendix 1 shows, there are two main categories of Appraisal: attitude and graduation. These will now be defined briefly, with examples taken from the texts which will be analysed in detail in the next section, identified as T1 for Text 1, etc. Under the category of attitude, one recognises:

1) Resources for construing emotion (AFFECTION)

By appraising events in Affectual terms, speakers/writers invite their audience to share their emotional response, or at least to see that response as appropriate, or at least as understandable. The system takes into account not only authorial Affect, but also emotional responses attributed to other social actors. Examples in the texts include: 'motivated by a desire to spread **fear** and **shock**' (T2), 'we are **sorry**' (T4).

2) Resources for evaluating human behaviour (JUDGEMENT)

These evaluate behaviour positively or negatively in terms of culturally and ideologically determined norms. Two broad categories are identified: first, social esteem involves admiration and criticism, typically without legal implications. As Martin (1997:24) puts it, 'if you have difficulties in this area, you may need a therapist'. Social sanction, on the other hand, involves praise and condemnation, often with legal implications: 'if you have problems in this area, you may need a lawyer' (Martin 1997:24). An example of negative social esteem value is found in 'a **diabolical** act' (T1), while negative social sanction can be illustrated with the following: '**political violence**', '**retributive killings**', '**massacre**' (T1).

3) Resources for valuing texts and processes (APPRECIATION)

Appreciation evaluates texts, artifacts and abstract constructs such as plans and policies. There are few examples of appreciation in the texts under scrutiny. The nearest illustration could be '**major political milestone**' (written about South Africa's draft interim multi-racial constitution, in T2), but, in the particular context

in which the phrase is found, this phrase has been analysed as construing high positive Judgement.

All of these evaluations can be inscribed, that is, the evaluation is explicitly presented by means of linguistic items carrying the Affect/Judgement/appreciation value, as the previous illustrations show. But the evaluation can also be evoked by tokens, that is, superficially neutral ideational meanings which have the capacity in the culture to evoke a particular response. For example, when an applicant says '**I was taking orders from my Commander**' (T3), the clause is analysed as carrying the value of high positive social sanction; from the applicant's perspective, obeying orders from one's superior is doing the right thing. When a witness at the TRC hearing asks which of the applicants killed his wife, and says 'my wife was sitting right at the door ...**she was wearing a long, blue coat**' (T4), the clause carries high Affect value.

The second main category is that of graduation, the resources for raising or lowering intensity or sharpening the focus. Examples from the texts under scrutiny include: '**inherently** evil nature of' (T1), '**shocked him to the core**' (T1), which both amplify the values expressed by 'evil' and 'shocked'.

In addition to the two main appraisal categories of attitude and graduation, one needs to consider the system of engagement, whereby speakers/writers negotiate positions for themselves and their readers. White (1997:4-5) argues that such stance values as *I believe that, perhaps, I think that* or *it seems that*, which are traditionally construed as indicating certainty /commitment or uncertainty /lack of commitment to truth values, alternatively or additionally signal willingness to 'engage with' one's audience. Authors take on a position and simultaneously leave open the possibility of alternatives or contradictions. Examples include: 'can **hardly** be a coincidence' (T2); 'everyone **ought to** stand together' (T2).

Finally, the identity of the human participants implicated by the various evaluations needs to be noted. For instance, one needs to see whether people are named (*de Klerk*), attributed a social or political role (*Afrikaner Volksfront leader General*

*Constand Viljoen*) or given a group affiliation (*unsuspecting Sunday evening churchgoers, the great moderate majority of South Africans*).

## 1. Textual analysis

For this analysis, I selected six texts: two newspaper articles which appeared in July 1993, the day after the St James massacre; extracts from the depositions made at the TRC hearing by two applicants and one witness, in July 1997; finally, two newspaper articles published in July 1997, the day after the hearing. All these texts, fully analysed, can be found in Appendix 2.

Because of the limitations of space, the newspaper articles were all taken from *The Star*, a Johannesburg-based daily, with a mostly white, middle-class readership, and in the selected extracts from the Amnesty hearings, I left out the lawyers' questioning. The trickiest challenge posed by the transcript extracts consisted in analysing the applicants' depositions. They spoke in Xhosa, but their words were immediately translated into and transcribed in English. After checking with a couple of Xhosa-speaking informants, it appeared to me that the translations were sufficiently faithful to the probable original wording to warrant analysis.

### 1 The St James massacre: July 1993

TEXT 1: news report, *The Star*, 26 July 1993 ('Outrage at "evil" nature of attack')

This 'hard news' article reflects what White (1997,1998) and Coffin (1997,1998) call the "reporter stance", characterised by no unattributed explicit Judgements. The article is structured as a series of quotes as the journalist gives a list of prominent politicians' reactions to the previous night's attack; all politicians are carefully and fully identified, e.g. *State President de Klerk and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, ANC spokesman Carl Niehaus*. All these voices, across the political spectrum, are inserted into the text by means of reported comments, either through direct speech or indirect speech, sometimes with a "mediatised" turn of phrase like *spiral of political violence*.

Reporting verbs are either neutral (*said*) or overtly negative (*denounced, warned, condemned*).

Interestingly, there are only a few, repetitive, expressions of Affect: *shocked and horrified, outrage, shocked him to the core*. The bulk of the evaluation is made in terms of Judgement, and more particularly social sanction. In other words, the horror of the attack is not presented in terms of emotions but in terms of ethics. An opposition is set up throughout between condemnation of the attack (e.g. *a diabolical act, perpetration of violence, the massacre*) and praise of the peaceful process of negotiations (e.g. *a peaceful and negotiated solution, political settlement, a transition to a democratic South Africa*). Equally interesting is that there is no mention of assailants' or victims' colour.

TEXT 2: editorial, *The Star*, 27 July 1993 ('Ending terror')

In this text, the "commentator stance" is apparent, characterised by free occurrence of unattributed Judgements. As in Text 1, there are only a few evaluations of Affect (*terror, fear, shock*) and strong Judgemental condemnation of the massacre set in opposition to the peaceful process of negotiation currently taking place. Participant identification is made in terms of group affiliations: *civilians, churchgoers, white section, blacks, populace, authorities*. A strong opposition is marked between the perpetrators (*murderers, culprits*) and the rest of South Africans, leading to the final *we/them: We cannot afford to let them get away with it*. Colour is mentioned, but only to place both whites and blacks in the same camp of victims of violence. The writer's engagement signals (e.g. *clearly motivate, in particular, the best answer*) invite response, dialogue, involvement on the readers' part.

These two articles are representative of the many others which appeared in the English press (including the *Sowetan*) in the few days following the attack. I see here a concerted effort to promote certain meanings over others: to downplay Affect values and favour Judgements of social sanction, in order to keep readers' mind firmly

focused on the national goals of law and order (much is made of the need for retribution), negotiation and unity, the 'new' South Africa of the interim constitution.

## 2 The Amnesty hearing, 9-10 July 1997

TEXT 3: extracts from depositions by Mr Mlambisa and Mr Makoma

When considering the depositions by the two applicants, one needs to remember that they were under oath but, helped by their advocate, they were shaping their statements in such a way as to meet the requirements for amnesty.

What is striking in the first extract is the manner in which Mlambisa seeks to justify his actions. First, he gives high positive social sanction Judgements to both the situation in South Africa at the time of the St James attack (e.g. *to free the Azania, the African want their land back*) and to the present situation in 1997 (e.g. *we are free, we can come forward and tell the truth, we do have democracy*). In so doing, he manipulates the historical context, dismissing the changes that had already taken place in South Africa (e.g. the unbanning of the ANC and other organisations, the repeal of a number of apartheid laws) and the negotiations that were taking place in 1993. Secondly, he gives high positive social sanction value to the obedience required of APLA members (e.g. *I was taking orders from my Commander, the policy of the APLA*), thus diminishing, while justifying, his personal responsibility for the attack. He also repeatedly stresses the opposition between blacks and whites at the time of the attack (e.g. *Boers, the White areas, White people, Blacks, the White churches*).

These strategies are also followed by Makoma, who adds high positive social sanction values to the present situation of peace and democracy (e.g. *it is a new South Africa, there is peace among the Africans, Whites and Blacks*). Both men are thus stressing, for their immediate and potential audience, the high positive values of the current South African context.

TEXT 4: extract from deposition by Mr Ackermann, and dialogue with the applicants

In this very emotional scene, Ackermann, who was opposing the amnesty application, asks if the applicants remember shooting his wife, and requests that they should

apologise for their actions. Key issues concerning some of the functions of the TRC come to the fore: the need to know and confront the truth, the need to talk, the need for reconciliation and forgiveness. These issues are woven into the powerful interaction of Affect and Judgement choices, and very many clauses and phrases, in fact, combine the two. For instance, Ackermann's pleas to the applicants to look at him (e.g. *to turn around and to face me, the first opportunity we've had to look each other in the eye and talk, I would like to hear from each one of you as you look me in the face*) and his plea to know who killed his wife (e.g. *it is important for me to know, it is important for your people who suffered, to know who killed, it just is*) construe both high Affectual and social esteem values: talking, facing one another, knowing, are essential to the healing and reconciliation process, they are also the right things to do. Overt expressions of apologies and forgiveness (e.g. *we are sorry for what we have done, please do forgive us, we want reconciliation, I forgive you*) also fulfil the dual functions of Affect and social esteem: release of emotions and the right thing to do in the present context.

The scene seems to vindicate what many members of the TRC have repeatedly stressed: the value of talk, of open confrontation between victims and perpetrators. Glenda Wildschut (1997), Commissioner on the TRC puts it this way: 'Many who have testified publicly have stated that they now feel relieved that they have had an opportunity to share their experience, even if some of the questions remain unanswered.'

### **3 The reports of the hearings, July 1997**

TEXT 5: news report, *The Star*, 11 July 1997 ('Face me, weeping man tells wife's killers')

The article which focuses on the same scene as is shown in Text 4 is interesting both for its choice of quotations from the hearing and for its framing of these quotations. The quotations all centre on the key issues identified earlier: the need to know, the need for forgiveness and reconciliation. In the journalist's framing comments, there are

very few signals of negative social sanction regarding the St James attack: *the gang, killed by submachine gun fire and grenade shrapnel, the massacre*. Instead, the introductory lines and subsequent comments all bring high Affect values to the fore, which readers are invited to share: *face me, weeping man, wife's killers, church terror attack, grieving survivor, his eyes red-rimmed, his eyelashes wet with tears and his voice shaky with emotion, an emotional Ackermann, choked, in staggered phrases*. At the same time, the applicants are identified by their full name, as *young men*, and, repeatedly, as *Apla soldiers*. Their identity is thus constructed in such a way as to stress justifications for their act. Fittingly, the last sentence of the article contains the key words *forgiveness* and *reconciliation*. The meanings that are made in this article thus seem to gather round the cathartic effects of the hearing, understanding the past, and building a new present.

TEXT 6: news report, *The Star*, 11 July 1997 ('Face-to-face with death and heartbreak')

The reporter stance is in evidence again, apart from the introductory few lines. These lines serve the purpose of focusing readers on the two main Appraisal values which will be echoed in the rest of the article: Affect and Judgement. The use of tokens of Affect (e.g. *snuffed out, how has it felt*) is coupled with the Judgement value of *St James massacre* and *killings*. Thereafter, one sees the typical list of voices, characteristic of this stance, inserted through neutral reporting verbs (e.g. *said, spoken, told, was quoted as saying*).

The voices articulate and invite readers to share their emotions, and their judgements not of the 1993 attack but of the notion of amnesty. As in Text 4, expressions of forgiveness fulfil the dual functions of Affect and Judgement. The ordering of the voices is, I believe, significant. The first voices (Bowers, Ackermann) articulate the theme of forgiveness. The next two (Harker and Anderson) articulate the theme of justice (in the sense of the punishment and protection of society provided by the formal justice system) with strong modal forms (e.g. *have to, shouldn't, must be made, must be, must pay*). The last voice, Williams', is more ambiguous: the quotation chosen by

the journalist highlights Affect values of sharing and talking, but also the negative sanction Judgement evoked by *attack* and *enormity of the damage*. Throughout the report, the use of pronouns keeps stressing a strong *we / they* opposition (e.g. *I've forgiven these people, we oppose their amnesty applications, not because we don't forgive them, we do, but because they must pay for their crimes*), in contrast to textual effects in Text 5, which seemed to be attempting to gather people together.

These two newspaper reports articulate the tensions around the TRC endeavour, which were voiced repeatedly throughout 1997. On the one hand, there is recognition of the need to, in the words of Dullah Omar, Minister of Justice, 'transcend the divisions and strife of the past' (Hansard 1995). In this view, the TRC and the notion of amnesty constitute the only response possible to a specific kind of wrongdoing, namely large scale politically motivated crimes, and forgiveness and reconciliation are the right thing to do. The journalist's covert stance in Text 5 appears to reflect this view. On the other hand, this response has been challenged by considerable public criticism, illustrated by the voices in Text 6: 'for many people the main ethical issue in relation to our historical processes is justice, not truth and reconciliation' (Verwoerd 1997:5).

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of six texts relating to a TRC Amnesty hearing has shown the systematic favouring/disfavouring of certain interpersonal meanings. The task of media texts (including the TRC hearings) is to construe some aspect of a news event as maximally salient or significant. Such interpretations are necessarily ideologically and culturally determined. In particular, judgements of behaviour, which abound in the six texts, depend on the set of social values to which the evaluators and their audience, who typically represent not only individuals but also more general socio-political positions, subscribe.

The *Star* reporting of the St James massacre in 1993 and the TRC Amnesty hearings in 1997, addressed to a largely white, middle-class audience, appears to channel the

readers' interpretation of the events towards the need for peace, unity and reconciliation, despite the horrors of the past. At the same time, there is also an acknowledgement that much ambiguity and lack of consensus exist concerning the notion of amnesty for politically motivated crimes. The analysis of extracts from the TRC transcript also reveals, in the depositions made by two applicants and one witness, the same drive towards forgiveness and reconciliation, and the same ambiguity regarding amnesty.

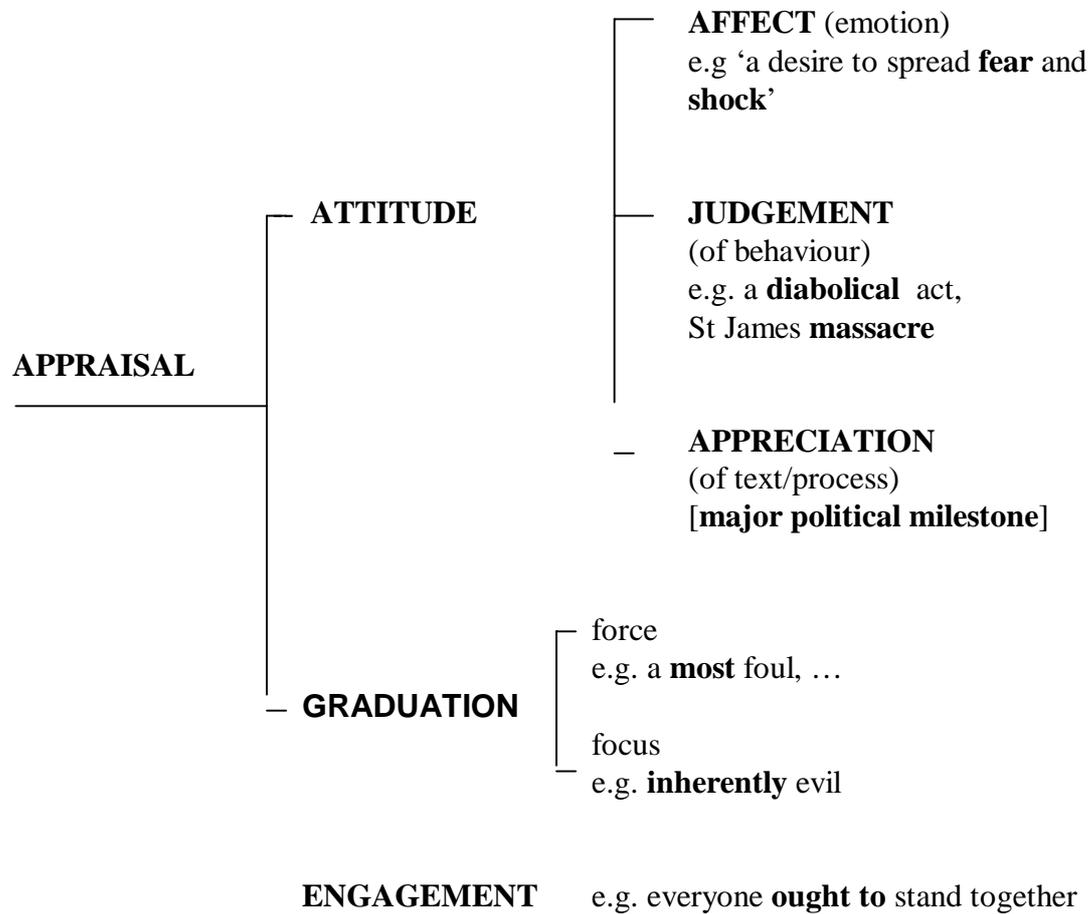
The task of the TRC was to advance reconciliation and reconstruction, thus 'helping to strengthen the (moral) basis of an emerging democracy' (Verwoerd 1997:5) but the very notion of reconciliation has been at the centre of considerable controversy and the current debates around the effectiveness of the TRC appear to mirror many of the uncertainties, fears and contradictions prevalent in post-apartheid South Africa. A textual analysis of the kind which has been carried out in this paper helps further one's understanding of these contradictions.

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## APPENDIX 1



## A SIMPLIFIED REPRESENTATION OF THE APPRAISAL SYSTEM

Source: Coffin (1998)

## APPENDIX 2

TEXT 1: *THE STAR*, Monday 26 July 1993OUTRAGE AT 'EVIL' NATURE OF ATTACK

*State President de Klerk and Archbishop Desmond Tutu* denounced the “evil” nature of those who killed nine worshippers in Cape Town last night.

*Archbishop Tutu* called it a **diabolical act** – “a **most foul, despicable thing imaginable**”.

*De Klerk* said he was shocked and horrified.

“The **attack** on a church introduces a new and horrifying element into the **cycle of violence** which we are currently experiencing and points to the **inherently evil nature** of those involved in the **perpetration of violence**,” a *government spokesman* quoted de Klerk as saying.

*De Klerk* said: “The great majority of **decent** *South Africans* must not allow **outrages** such as this to **undermine** our **common effort** to achieve a **peaceful and negotiated solution** to the problems of our country”.

*Tutu* said: “We in the Church of the Province extend our deepest condolences to the bereaved and our sympathies to the injured and all those of the Church of England in South Africa.”

*Political parties* expressed outrage that **worshippers** could be **murdered** in a **church** and were unanimous in condemning the killings.

*Afrikaner Volksfront leader General Constand Viljoen* said the killings justified his call last week that *Afrikaners* should arm themselves.

While he condemned the **brutal massacre**, he warned that such incidents would not stop until a **political settlement** which catered for all political parties was reached.

“If we cannot **go to church in peace** any more, what hope do we have of **going to the polls peacefully**?” asked *Democratic Party Law and Order spokesman MP Robin Carlisle* after visiting St James’s Church last night. The church is in the centre of his constituency.

*Carlisle* rushed to the church as soon as he heard the news.

The scene that greeted him shocked him to the core: “Not so much because of the bodies, but because it happened inside **a place of worship**.”

“Tell *General Constand Viljoen* and all those **other bastards** who are advocating **violence** to come to the church and see for themselves,” he said.

He warned that this “latest twist” in the **spiral of political violence** could spark **retributive killings** by those who wished to use the **massacre** to further their **political ends**.

*Law and Order Minister Hernus Kriel* said the **attack** was one of the most shocking and **callous crimes** South Africa had yet seen.

“It is a **crime** made all the more **horrific** due to the fact that it was committed in **a church of God**.”

*ANC spokesman Carl Niehaus* also condemned the **attack** and demanding that the **killers** be brought to justice as soon as possible.

*PAC spokesman Barney Desai* said the massacre was perpetrated by people who wished to prevent **a transition to a democratic South Africa**.

*The PAC* would **never attack** a church, he said and he demanded that the **killers** be tracked down.

The Church of the Province is separate from the Church of England. Both have their own structures in the country.

Bold: Judgement (-); bold underline: Judgement (+); italics: identity

Underline: reporting verbs; dotted underline: Affect

**TEXT 2: THE STAR, Tuesday July 27 1993**

**ENDING TERROR**

The Cape Town **massacre** marks a new low point in South Africa's **downward spiral into horror**. Even by the **depraved standards** of *those who* seek **political advantage** in **killing defenceless civilians**, an **attack on unsuspecting Sunday evening churchgoers** is about as **vicious and callous an act** as could be contemplated.

The timing of the **atrocities** – on the eve of a **major political milestone** – can hardly be a coincidence. The **faceless murderers** were clearly motivated by a desire to spread fear and shock among *the populace*: in this case *the white section in particular*. *Many blacks* too have fallen victim to similar deliberately timed **acts of terror**: most recently, and shockingly, *the eight* killed on Daveyton on Sunday night.

A variety of **extremist groups** could be responsible for these **insane deeds**. The aim clearly being to disrupt a **peaceful settlement**, the best answer is for **the great moderate majority** of *South Africans* to redouble their efforts in pursuit of **peace**, thus nullifying the efforts of the **perpetrators**.

Irrespective of colour or creed, *everyone* ought to **stand together** and **help** the *authorities* find *the culprits*. A **tiny criminal minority** is trying to **destroy** the very fabric of **the new society that the majority** is creating. *We* cannot afford to let *them* get away with it.

Bold: Judgement (-); bold underline: Judgement (+)

Italics: identity; underline: Engagement; dotted underline: Affect

**TEXT 3: AMNESTY HEARING (applicant: Mr Mlambisa)**

ADV BEMBRIDGE: What was your motive for taking part in the attack?

MR MLAMBISA: I also wanted to be the part of *those who* were going **to free the Azania**.

ADV BEMBRIDGE: How did you think this attack would contribute towards freeing Azania?

MR MLAMBISA: *The government* would have noticed that *the African* **want their land back** and along the line, *they* would have given *us* **freedom** as we can see at the present moment, *we* **do have democracy**.

ADV BEMBRIDGE: Is that democracy not rather as a result of the negotiations that took place between all the political parties?

MR MLAMBISA: I won't know that. Maybe negotiations took part, but the only thing I know, it was a pressure from the APLA movements.

ADV BEMBRIDGE: How did you think this attack would make the White people give your land back?

MR MLAMBISA: Like now, we are **free**. We can come forward and tell the truth, we are **not radicals any more,** we are **the peace loving people.**

ADV BEMBRIDGE: How did the attack contribute to that though?

MR MLAMBISA: Because **democracy.**

ADV BEMBRIDGE: How did the attack lead to democracy?

MR MLAMBISA: It was **a pressure to the government by the APLA.** *The government* noticed that *their people* are **dying**, so they must do something.

ADV BEMBRIDGE: When you say that the government noticed that their people are dying, what people are you referring to?

MR MLAMBISA: *Those who* **oppressed us.**

ADV BEMBRIDGE: The White people?

MR MLAMBISA: Yes.

ADV BEMBRIDGE: If you look at the people sitting in the two rows behind me, they are all people who were part of that congregation at St James that you attacked, do you not see many people there who are not White people?

MR MLAMBISA: I can see them.

ADV BEMBRIDGE: How would it assist you to attack them at St James?

MR MLAMBISA: As I've said before, that **I was taking orders from my Commander.** And if you are just shooting, if you are just shooting someone within many people, you just get shot to everyone. That was **the policy of the APLA.**

CHAIRMAN: I didn't get that clearly, maybe it wasn't translated or interpreted, just say that again please. The last part of your sentence, if you just shoot, what did you say?

MR MLAMBISA: If you are in a place where there are *Boers* mostly, because *APLA* was attacking the suburbs, which means the White areas, we exactly knew that in suburbs the residents were *White*, so the churches that were there, were attended by *White people*, because *Blacks* were not going to *the White churches.* So if there were a few *Black people* in there and the majority was *White*, then **there was no reason for us not to attack.**

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**TEXT 3: AMNESTY HEARING (applicant: Mr Makoma)**

MR MAKOMA: *I as Khaya*, as I was deeply involved in this, but there was nothing I could do, to let this not happen because **this was an order from above** and as *a soldier* **I had to obey the instructions.**

I am so sorry, **please forgive me.** To *those who had been injured and their loved ones who passed away*. I know there is no one who had **the right to kill**.

But **the situation in South Africa** led us as we were young as we were, to do **those things** because **we grew up in a violent country.** We were seeing **our fellow Africans being shot and killed** by the Whites.

All in all, I don't know if you grew up **in such circumstances**, wouldn't you expect such things to happen because we were not involved in **the struggle** because we wanted to, we were **forced by the situations.** There is nothing I can say.

If you do **forgive** me, or you don't, it is all up to you. But the information you wanted to know who did this, *I as Khaya*, I told them what I did and how was I involved. That is all, thank you.

ADV ARENDSE: How do you feel towards or about White people now, today?

MR MAKOMA: What I can say today, **it is a new South Africa** and I also know that **this new South Africa came through struggle by the Africans.**

So *the Whites* **are also people**, we were not fighting them because they were *White*, we were fighting them because of **their deeds as the White nation**.

If today, as I am listening on television and radio, because I am in prison, they said there is **peace amongst the Africans**, *Whites and Blacks*, I am happy to see that. As *Whites* they are not looking to *Black people as animals* that were supposed **to be killed**, armed or not armed, sleeping or alive, young or old, because what they did were not directed to old people, they were directed to **the youth as Africans**, as part of the *African nation*, we made a decision that we won't tolerate such a thing.

So, when there is **peace**, I am also prepared to take them as human beings. If they are also **taking Africans as human beings**, people who have **the right to live, to go anywhere, to say anything independently** because by the time we were involved in this mess, **such things couldn't happen**.

And as **we were young**, blood was still very hot, we couldn't tolerate those things. I don't say that gives me the power or the will to go out and kill as I wish. **I was obeying the instructions from my Commander.**

As he couldn't come forward and agree to this because he passed away, because it is clear that we are the ones that have to answer. I am saying to the parents, those who lost their children, injured, we are very sorry.

Not because of the **St James massacre**, but in **everything that happened under the name of APLA**, because it was **the situation in South Africa during those days**. We were also forced to do such things. I am finished, thank you.

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**TEXT 4: AMNESTY HEARING (Mr Ackerman)**

ADV BEMBRIDGE: Mr Ackerman, can you tell me, or tell the Committee do you think that in the political climate and having regard to the political developments that were going on at the time of the attack, that it in fact achieved anything or it was an appropriate attack in the circumstances, or justifiable in the circumstances?

MR ACKERMAN: Mr Bembridge, it is difficult for me to answer that because I am so subjectively close to the happening. In retrospect I can see now that the **apartheid government** was **an evil government**, that in some respects that the opposition to it was **legitimate**.

I must tell you that in my own personal opinion, I think that the gravity of the attack and the fact that it was a defenceless church, people at worship, that I cannot under any circumstances condone that in terms of an armed struggle and I must stand with that answer.

ADV BEMBRIDGE: Is there anything else you would like to say to the Committee at this stage Mr Ackerman?

MR ACKERMAN: Yes. May I address *the applicants*? May I ask *the applicants* to turn around and to face me? This is the first opportunity we've had to look each other in the eye and talk. I want to ask *Mr Makoma* who actually entered the church - my wife was sitting right at the door when we came in, where you came in, she was wearing a long, blue coat, can you remember if you shot her?

MR MAKOMA: I do remember that I fired some shots, but I couldn't identify, I don't know whom did I shoot or not, but my gun pointed at the people.

MR ACKERMAN: It is important for me to know if it is possible, as much as it is important for your people who suffered, to know who killed. I don't know why it is so important for me, but it just is.

If you don't remember, I will accept that. I have heard you through *your Attorney* say and into the microphone, apologise and I have also heard *your leadership* extend an invitation to *my church leadership* which is still required, I think, to be considered, that they want to come to our church to offer condolences and they said that they would bring you along, whether or not **you receive amnesty in a show of reconciliation**.

I would like to hear from each one of you as you look me in the face, that you are sorry for what you have done, that you regret it and that you want to be **personally reconciled**. You can speak in your own language directly to me, you don't have to worry about the microphone.

MR MAKOMA: We are sorry for what we have done. It was **the situation in South Africa**. Although **people died during that struggle**, we didn't do that out of our own will.

It is **the situation that we were living under**. We are asking from you, please do forgive us. All that we did, **we can see the results today**.

MR MLAMBISA: I am also asking for an apology. As **we were working under orders**, we didn't know that this will come to such a place. We wanted to be **where we are today**. **We were working under the orders**. As **the TRC is alive today**, we hope that this will come to an end. I hope that **you do forgive me**, because I ask for **forgiveness**. Thank you.

MR MKHUMBUZI: I also want to say I do apologise to *those people who* were in the church at that time, while there was **that shooting**. We also thought that we would meet

with the *church members*, those who were there. Even if we can also go to the church to show that we want reconciliation with them under the circumstances that we were, I also say please forgive me *to everybody who is White and Black*, who are **in this new South Africa**. Thank you.

MR ACKERMAN: I want you to know that **I forgive you** unconditionally. I do that because I am a Christian and I can forgive you for the hurt that you have caused me, but I cannot forgive you the **sin** that you have done. Only God can **forgive** you for that and I plead with you, when God saved me, he gave me something that I can't explain and that is **love**.

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**TEXT 5: THE STAR, 11 July 1997**

FACE ME, WEEPING MAN TELLS WIFE'S KILLERS

*Apla soldier* in **church terror attack** asked by *grieving survivor*: 'Can you remember if you shot my wife?'

*Dawie Ackermann*, his eyes red-rimmed, his eyelashes wet with tears and his voice shaky with emotion, asked the three men who this week admitted to having been part of **the gang** that killed his wife, to turn around in their seats and face him.

It was an unprecedented request by a witness at an amnesty hearing of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

"This is the first opportunity we have had to look each other in the eye," an emotional Ackermann told *the three young men, Gcinikhaya Makoma, Bassie Mkhumbuzi and Thobela Mlambisa*.

*The three men* are applying for amnesty for the July 25 1993, St James Church massacre. Earlier yesterday, Makoma admitted to being one of *the two men* who entered the church.

*Ackermann's wife Marita* was among the 11 people who were **killed by submachine gun fire and grenade shrapnel**.

"I want to ask Mr Makoma, who actually entered the church ... we were... my wife was sitting right at the door where you came in. She was wearing a long blue coat. Can you remember if you shot her?"

Makoma replied that he did not remember who he had shot.

"I don't know why it is so important for me to know," Ackermann choked, "it just is."

In staggered phrases, Makoma told Ackermann: "We are sorry for what we have done. It was **the situation in South Africa**. We didn't do it **out of our own will**."

"We are asking from you, please forgive us. All that we did ... we can see all the effects of what we did."

*Mlambisa, the driver of the getaway car*, was next to speak. He apologised to *Ackermann* and repeated his earlier explanation that he had been **acting under orders from his commander** in *Apla, the military wing of the PAC*. All three applicants were *Apla soldiers* at the time of **the massacre**.

*Mkhumbuzi*, who waited with Mlambisa in the car, asked for **forgiveness** and offered to revisit the congregation of the St James Church in Kenilworth "to show that we have **reconciliation**".

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## TEXT 6: THE STAR, Friday July 11, 1997

### FACE-TO-FACE WITH DEATH AND HEARTBREAK

How has it felt for *those who were in the pews* on the day of the **St James massacre**, and for *Amy Bielh's parents*, to watch and listen as *the men* who snuffed out the lives of those close to them recounted the motives and moments of **the killings**?

*Marietjie Bowers*, who was shot in the shoulder and neck in the church, told The Cape Times, the Star's sister newspaper, on Wednesday: "I was unsure how I would feel seeing the **attackers**, but when I saw how young they were I felt so sorry for them. They are the age of my children and I feel sad for *their parents* and for their wasted lives."

*Dawie Ackermann*, whose wife Marita was killed, told the Cape Times: "I have gone on record saying I love and **forgive** *these people* and seeing them sitting there today really tested that."

*Dawn Harker* lost her two sons, Gerrard (21) and Wesley (13) in the St James church massacre.

[...]

Harker was quoted last Friday as saying: "I've **forgiven** *these people* because nothing I can say or do will bring my sons back. That's in the hands of the Lord."

She said: "I just feel like they (*the killers*) shouldn't be out (of jail). If **you break the law of the land** you have to be **punished**."

"They went into the church specifically **to kill** ... **the law** must be carried out to the full extent and they must **pay for their crimes**."

[...]

*The Rev Ross Anderson* of the St James church said he had **forgiven** the men, but he still expected **justice**.

"We oppose their amnesty applications, not because we don't **forgive** them – we do – but because they must be made **to take responsibility** for what they did," he told the Cape Times on Wednesday.

*Paul Williams* was shot in the back, and still needs crutches to walk. But he has **forgiven** *the Apla men* who shot him, and would like to meet them.

He spoke to the Cape Times on Wednesday about his experience of attending the amnesty hearing: "I am looking forward to meeting them, and I have a few questions I would like to ask. I want to know their reasons for **the attack**, who gave the orders on the night and if they can understand the **enormity of the damage** they did, not just to *myself* but to *so many families*."

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underline: reporting verbs AND/OR engagement; Wave underline: Affect  
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