ECOTHERAPY IN POST-CONFLICT HEALING:
A STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF EX-COMBATANTS IN THE EASTERN CAPE TOWNSHIP OF MDANSTANE

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCE (SOCIAL WORK)

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DECLARATION

I, Sifingo Mbona hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work. I have not submitted it for degree purposes at any other university and have acknowledged in the text and in a list of references at the end of the thesis, all information derived from published and unpublished work of others.

Signature

Date

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

During this research project, an attempt was made to understand the role of ecotherapy as a therapeutic model in post conflict healing. The aim was to evaluate the application and significance of ecotherapy as an intervention strategy for post conflict healing for individuals who were exposed to violent encounters during the liberation struggle. Eight respondents (involved in the arms struggle) from Mdanstane Township in the Eastern Cape, were taken through a series of workshops as part of an ecotherapy healing process.

The research concluded that all the participants had suffered from some form of traumatic stress because of their exposure to violence and violent experiences. Moreover, on closer examination the situation of ex-combatants proved to be more complex and often volatile, due to the absence of social support, loss of social status, absence of economic, employment opportunities, and the dislocation from their families and communities. Subsequent to the ecotherapy intervention, a positive outlook amongst the participants was recorded. Furthermore, there was an indication of a significant increase in their sense of self-worth and personal development, which influenced the manner in which the participants viewed the world, related to their families or communities and responded to life in general. Essentially, the research findings, conclusions, and recommendations contributed towards a better understanding of ex-combatants and the value that could be derived from ecotherapy as a post conflict healing method for individuals and groups exposed to violence and trauma.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS  
ABSTRACT  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1. Introduction</td>
<td>01-02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. Statement of the problem</td>
<td>03-04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3. The South African context</td>
<td>04-06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4. Aims and objectives of the research</td>
<td>07-08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5. Summary</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Introduction</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. Trauma</td>
<td>10-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3. Trauma, conflict and ex-combatants</td>
<td>12-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4. Ecotherapy: An approach based on our rootedness in nature and the wilderness</td>
<td>14-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1. Ecotherapy and post-conflict healing</td>
<td>18-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2. Wilderness therapy as a model of eco-therapy</td>
<td>20-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.3. Wilderness therapy and development of the self concept</td>
<td>26-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.4. Wilderness therapy and community development</td>
<td>28-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.5. Wilderness therapy and group participation</td>
<td>29-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5. Eco-therapy and healing of ex-combatants in South African society</td>
<td>33-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6. Summary</td>
<td>35-36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction.......................................................................................................................37-45
3.2. Research limitations ...........................................................................................................45-46
3.3. Research design and methodology ..................................................................................44-48
3.4. Sampling..........................................................................................................................48-50
3.5. Data collection..................................................................................................................50-53
3.6. Data analysis.....................................................................................................................53-54
3.7. Ethical considerations.......................................................................................................55
3.8. Summary..........................................................................................................................56

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction.......................................................................................................................57
4.2. Finding of the pre-interviews ...........................................................................................58
   4.2.1 These social issues including family...........................................................................58-61
   4.2.2 Community participation .........................................................................................61-63
   4.2.3 Work..........................................................................................................................64-69
4.3 The process of eco-therapy ...............................................................................................69-84
5. Summary............................................................................................................................85

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction.......................................................................................................................86
6.2. Use of ecotherapy for post conflict healing ....................................................................86-87
   6.2.1. Creating an encounter were past and present meets ...............................................87-88
   6.2.2. Initiating new citizenship and shaping community life .............................................88
   6.2.3. Providing a holistic approach ..................................................................................88