

**INAUGURAL LECTURE**

**PROF N SAULE**

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**Faculty of Arts**

**Topic**

**Sek Mqhayi in the 21st Century: Mzantsi youth ideologies within the African renaissance paradigm for sustainable economic and political development**

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### 1.1 Prelude

A hundred years ago this year in history, four things emerged:

- The beginning of the first world war : an event that changed the course of history of the entire world. Mqhayi calls it "*Inyhilikityhawe*," immeasurable destruction of life on earth.
- *Ityala lamawele* was first published by Lovedale Press in September 1914. The philosophy in this book has yet to be put into perspective and try as they do, the students and critics of African Jurisprudence, are struggling to comprehend its depth of meaning. For the next hundred years, I believe, it will still be a puzzle with which to contend.
- Mqhayi published a poem celebrating the fall of General Louis Botha's Union Government which ostracized the black people. The poem was republished as part of an essay in 1927.
- He also published an essay including a poem with the title *Mayibuy' iAfrika*, urging the youth in particular to be forefront in the struggle for black political recognition on their own land, South Africa and when in 1992, the late first former president of a liberated South Africa Nelson Mandela, walked out of incarceration to pronounce that "*ubomi bam ndibubeka edlanzeni zenu*," he was putting his life in the hands of the youth, it was as if he was echoing Mqhayi's words in *Mayibuy' iAfrika* that the youth should be vigilant for the future of the country depends on them and should be prepared for it, and when it is delivered from bondage, they are the ones to receive it.

### 1.2 Introduction

Good evening Ladies and gentlemen. I wish you all well if it is only for tonight. You are all very important, and thanks for coming to this lecture. I recognize each and every one of you with all the respect that you deserve, but can you allow me to recognize in particular a few whom we are really privileged to have amongs us *Ikumkani yamaXhosa, Umzukulwana kaGcaleka, ..... ithole lesilo unyana kaSigcawu*. AA! Zwelonke! I also wish to thank the authorities of the NMMU for affording me this opportunity to celebrate the legacy of SEK Mqhayi in the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with a view to interpreting his philosophies, reflections, inspirations and aspirations with regard to Mzantsi youth ideologies within the African Renaissance paradigm for sustainable economic and political development, just in time as the resonances of his creative works are certainly and surely manifesting themselves before us. The second part of my title refers to a liberated youth inclusive of all races in South Africa. Mqhayi was a nationalist with a difference who believed that South Africa is a chosen land by divine intervention which in future, this future, would belong to all those who expend their energies showing absolute loyalty to the rebuilding of the country irrespective of their race, colour or creed (*Indlela yeNkosi, Umteteli wabantu* 4 June 1927:5). Qangule (1979:121) takes this even further in his interpretation of Mqhayi's *uDon Jadu* on the question of nationhood regarding the notion of patriotism: He says:

We shall accept as patriots, irrespective of race colour or creed, all those people who came to South Africa from outside her borders if they adopt her as their country and contribute on no small scale to her welfare. We also draw the attention of the reader to the fact that when Mqhayi wrote his books South Africa was a British colony - it is logical then to embrace as patriots all those who came to South Africa from any of the overseas countries that formed the British Empire.

On the other hand, esaleka umsundulu, Ntantala (1971) referring to Mqhayi on uDon Jadu maintains that:

According to him the first step towards making the people of South Africa a nation would be first to recognise that there are more things that unite them than divide them and no grouping should regard itself as superior to others. Having been introduced to and accepted Christianity and Education as a norm and pillars of nation building in his essays, Mqhayi views the black people of the country as a community increasingly committed to a future in the modern world. Any suggestions in terms of policies and methods that sought to create divisions amongst blacks and again between blacks and whites are seen as militating against the spirit of nation building and unity.

Many scholars regarded the book as a dreamland, Mqhayi's madness at thinking that a black man would one day be a free person in this country. Ladies and gentlemen, the rest is the history that we witnessed recently.

## 2. Further acknowledgements

In a lecture celebrating the legacy of SEK Mqhayi, it seems especially important to acknowledge and thereby remember the assistance that made my task uncomplicated when designing this lecture. I was in part inspired by the ideas I came across in the research studies of the more than twenty Masters and Doctoral students that I promoted over the past few years. This lecture is also inspired by a number of socio-political, historical, Indigenous Knowledge Systems literary factors and of course by advocations by some of our legendary leaders among whom I dare mention, Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, Muziwakhe Anton Lembede, and Steve Biko of recent times and farther back, RM Dhlomo, Dr Xuma, Robert Sobukhwe, and far back in time, RWB Rubusana (uMmCirha wakuGompo), Langalibalele John Dube, UMaFukuzela) who, protesting against the Land Act Bill which became the Land Act of 1913, said, *'Why must we, alone of all the peoples of the earth, condemn ourselves to serfdom in order to be permitted to live in our mother-country, while every nondescript from over the sea, be he black or white, is allowed to thrive on the fat of our land, and to erect a home wheresoever he will?'* (Davis 1975, 520), typical South African situation at present, to which Mqhayi later was to write, *'Bawudla ilifa umhlaba woobawo bethu,* (making their heritage, the land of our ancestors); the resolute Bhambatha kaMancinza; the great Jongumsobomvu Maqoma (*injarharha yoNothonto*); the great King Shaka and the great King Phalo and of course my father uMvulane, who could neither write nor read, which was not his fault, but was a wonderful scholar.

There are two conceptions that I wish to share with you tonight, which form the essence of my lecture and these are : celebrating SEK, Mqhayi in context and the unveiling of three projects that are a culmination of

the research I have been doing for the past number of years. Without intending to undermine anyone's integrity, I want to think that what you know about SEK Mqhayi is like a tiny word in an a huge Encyclopaedia. Prof Opland, working on a project with me, once remarked that looking at Mqhayi is like a child playing on a field so big you cannot see the edges. True to what Tata uGoven Mbeki said to me in a conversation facilitated by Zola Yeye, uTshezi of **Umhlobo wenene**, (23 July 2001): *uMqhayi wayemkhulu kakhulu, emkhulu nakunaye siqu, kodwa engazazi* (Mqhayi was very big, even bigger than himself, but he did not know it) Among the things Tat'uMbeki said was that, he finds it strange that nothing of note has been done to honour Mqhayi, either by Fort Hare or any other university for that matter. He passed on at the end of this month that year before we could have a meeting in which he promised that he would tell me more about SEK. One of the projects that I have designed to be unveiled later this evening is a development emanating from our conversation.

### 3. SEK Mqhayi

SEK Mqhayi is that isiXhosa traditional *imbongi*, writer, journalist, historian, politician and many other things, who once remarked in 1923 that the people of South Africa in their diversity, have more commonalities than differences, and if anything, they are all the same, but differ in common languages.

Before I get you all confused with my adopted foreign language English, can I assure you that I have not in the least adopted its culture, neither its mentality nor philosophy, or its linguistic profundity, only the words will be in English, but the rest underneath the words, is isiXhosa. Mqhayi always insisted, "I speak my own language because I will never be confused or confuse anyone," true to the words of Nelson Mandela that "If you want to speak to the mind of a person, speak to him in a language, but if you want to speak to his heart, speak to him in his own language." With the pragmatic idea in mind that we are from a diverse multilingual and multicultural post modernistic background, I therefore propose to speak my language isiXhosa, in English.

### 4. Contextual Background

I am advancing a celebratory synopsis of Mqhayi, uMzima, uBhomoyi kaCedume at a time when the South African contemporary society is attempting to restructure itself in order to regain lost values before it can successfully and rationally embrace values of other people. In my presentation, I have mindfully taken cognisance of the plight of the so called lost generation, especially among our youth, those who have become strangers in their own land – no language, only misguided and distorted cultural values, no self, distorted history - this of course because of indoctrinations of some psycho-socio-histori-cultural and political imperatives. Strangely enough these are some of the issues that SEK Mqhayi warns us about in his creative works and has made efforts for us to see, but unfortunately no one listened or saw anything. Now that we "have the truth but denied the truth and now that we have the light, but we sit in darkness, Shivering, benighted in the bright noon-day sun," and now that we are all blind, I think, this evening is the right time to see.

Lest I forget, because of the nature of this lecture, I have deliberately stripped it of all its academic luxuries, that is, theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches. I have instead chosen to be more aesthetic, integrating theory into the discussions and not necessarily scrutinize how theories are connected to the reflection herein. It is that kind of a lecture into which you can read a number of theories, for example:

memory and historical consciousness, sociolinguistic and sociocultural theories, Africanism vis-a-vis *uBuntu*, Marxist ideologies and to a certain extent critical discourse analysis. An MIT approach so to speak, that is a Multi-Inter and Trans-disciplinary narrative. My discussions are going to assume a balancing act between the academic sensitivities and accessibility to the non-academic diaspora without undermining anyone's integrity.

## 5. Important Sources

There are a number of sources that inform the ideas, opinions and assessments in this lecture with some of which you may not be familiar: The Kaffir Express, a newspaper that circulated in the mid 1800s, especially the intellectual media debates transpired around 1857; a book published in 1837 written by Rev Justus Campbell titled "The wrongs of the Kaffir nation," and a number of newspapers. These are the sources and many more others that SEK Mqhayi must have read and if my theory of memory and historical consciousness serves me right, it is these that informed his tenacious character that we as scholars and his followers knew and enjoyed, and even at this moment still admire and hopefully the youth, which was always his focus, would one day be afforded an opportunity to study the works of one of their African intellectuals.

After reading these publications and Mqhayi's essays and articles, you develop the sense that there were two histories that were being written simultaneously, one with a colonialist holy art though good intentions to save the black man from self destruction sanctioned by the Grahamstown Journal and one that exposed the British imperialist hidden agenda with undoubted proofs by Campbell (1837: 5) to which he refers as, "*that narrative, which displays a colony of the British nation systematically oppressing the aboriginal inhabitants by harsh and unrelenting injustice and enlarging its boundaries by acts of violent spoliation ..... for without such proofs it would be difficult to believe the astonishing accusations of our colonial history. These proofs now exist in abundance, and there has been nothing wanting but labours of a compiler to set before the public, 'the wrongs of the Caffre nation.'*" Needless to say that some of the proofs he has written about, some of which corroborate with Mqhayi's articles and essays, have come back to preoccupy the new South Africa, twenty years into its democracy.

For instance, after 177 years since Campbell's book was published, if you look at the space between the Western coast from the sea, right up to the mountains beyond Beaufort West and down to the sea, going east up to the Kat River including the Hogback, towards the north beyond the Stormberg range and the so called White corridor from the sea to the Orange River, the words that, "*we have been a scourge to the aborigines ..... and with shameless duplicity made dishonest treaties, which we have dishonestly broken, and by sheer robbery seized on a vast extent of territory, which our ignorance of good government has rendered unavailing for any useful purposes, and which even now is thinly inhabited by a scanty population of unquiet settlers,*" seem to have been written yesterday.

Only now that the settler farmers are quiet and secure, but still very few compared to the vast amount of land they occupy. Obviously, the legacy of colonialism fortified by that of Apartheid, is still with us. Part of that land is where the Mqhayi's and many others were uprooted after 1860 (eMthocwa naseDidima – Fort Fordyce) and were sent scattering all over the land beyond Tyhume River and the Great Kei. The Gonzana station, eGqgesi, is the only remaining name that indicates that the Mqhayis were once occupants of that

part of the land. Gonzana was his great grand -father, a councillor of King Ngqika. Would I be crossing the line Madam chair if as a small flea in the time of our freedom, I plead for the objective of justice of our authorities, as SEK Mqhayi does in his articles and essays, to have Mqhayi's piece of land eMthontsi be returned to the Mqhayi present generation, a land that had been the sole property of their great grand fathers. Included in this group would be the Khoisan people about whom Mqhayi intimates that "to be a Khoisan was enough to be killed," the colonialist dragging in unsuspecting boer commandos into the dastardly act of wiping out a race of people.

## 6. The Visionary SEK Mqhayi

With all that background, and many other things that occurred after he was born in 1875, Mqhayi always foresaw things in the future, sometimes too far into the future that even his peers began to doubt his sanity, let alone the people, who were lucky enough to witness his traditional *Imbongi* escapades, but could not comprehend him. It is for that reason that I wish to focus the whole purpose of this lecture upon a particular Mqhayi's visionary exposition which he published in 1923 when he was forty eight years old, twenty two years before he passed on. The following was his dream, my dream and the dream of the Mzantsi youth embedded in the following isiXhosa words:

***Zesithi sakukhululeka kwingcinezelo yegwangqa,(liberation) kuchithwe iintlanti ngamadoda kwakhiwe ezintsha,(rebuilding of the country) kumiswe amatye ezikhumbuzo zabo bazenza idini bafela emadabini, (memory) kuvuselelwe izikumkani kwakhiwe isizwe, kugcinwe umthetho, (political development) kulondolozwe amasiko nezithethe,(Social cohesion) kulinywe amasimi (economy).*** (SEK Mqhayi 1923)

Certainly who ever read these in 1923 in (Umteteli wabantu), never thought that the first line of this excerpt '*zesithi sakukhululeka kwingcinezelo yegwangqa,*' would be a dream come true in 1992, when Nelson Mandela walked out of the Poolsmoor prison into the new South Africa. I am more impressed by the finality in those words. The excerpt can easily be contextualized to the present as for instance:

- ***Zesithi sakukhululeka kwingcinezelo yegwangqa*** – liberation from colonialist and likewise oppression followed by political freedom and democracy
- ***Kuchithwe iintlanti ngamadoda kumiswe ezintsha*** – total departure from traditional socio-economic practices to modern scientific socio-economic systems
- ***Kumiswe amatye ezikhumbuzo zabo bazenza idini bafela emadabini*** –construction of memorial monuments for those who sacrificed their lives fighting and dying in battles for the many to live.
- ***Kuvuselelwe izikumkani, kwakhiwe isizwe, kugcinwe umthetho, kulondolozwe amasiko nezithethe*** – restore and revive the legacy of kings and not destroy it, preserve culture and uphold and respect the rule of law.

As for instance, in my opinion, the destruction that the Ntlhapho commission did as many amaXhosa believed supported by views from the researches conducted independently by Embo Media and Umnombo and as if that was not enough, the recent threat by government to dethrone a Thembu king. Our government has a democratic right to remove kings and threaten just as the colonialist and the apartheid government did to render this country less African and culturally barren. This is the kind of history that no

one wishes to see being repeated. After King Phalo, that there became many kings in the Xhosaland should be seen solely from its political perspectives. Peires (1987) testifies that indeed the monarchial establishment was always the target of the colonialists to destabilise the natives, render them leaderless and easy to conquer. A political strategy had to be devised to ward off invasions for survival, and in my opinion if the present government wishes to transform the *status quo*, it is not by instituting a Ntlapho commission, but by allowing the kingdoms to solve the situation themselves, they would come up with a more equitable if you mean rightful solution. The history of the struggle started with them and hence in one essay Mqhayi discusses the inevitability of a revolution in the political and social leadership. Paying kings a salary is a recipe for corruption. To me the best would be to empower the communities so that they can take care of their kings, that is their duty.

SEK was best known for his intriguing *izibongo*, and for his novel *Ityala lamawele*, which will be 100 years old next month since first published in 1914, popular as ever. It is however for his visionary essayistic writings that I wish to celebrate him today as I intimated before. Between 1914 and 1944, he contributed more than 200 essays to the now defunct newspapers *Umteteli wabantu*, *Abantu Batho*, *Izwi labantu* of which he was editor between 1901 and 1909 and *limvo zabantsundu* signing them with manner of names and pseudonyms: *Unzululwazi*, *Ntabozuko*, Lord Sheshegu, SEK and *eMthontsi*. Most of his essays and articles as well as poems have yet to be published in book form. Professor Opland has published a few unedited volumes with a deplomatic translation, but that is only a tip of the iceberg. His manuscript entitled *Xhosa Literary Media: spoken and printed words*, five years after finishing it, is yet to be accepted by any publishing house. What befell Mqhayi with some of his manuscripts that later disappeared without trace, is now befalling Prof Opland. I will come back to this paragraph a little later.

## 7. SEK Mqhayi and Women leadership

This being the women's month, is it not strange that Mqhayi published an essay in 1924 closing off with a poem which he had earlier declaimed with reference to the Women's Manyano of which Chalotte Maxeke was one of the leaders. Earlier on he had declaimed a full eulogy directed at the youth that was gathered at Mngqesha, *Komkhulu kwaSandile* during a Ntsikana Memorial Ceremony, saying:

*Amaqobokazana angalal'endleleni, yazini kunyembelekile! An exhortation that, young women entrusted with a task, difficult as might be, will stop at nothing to see it through successfully.*

*Amadoda oyisiwe, makuphathe abafazi : Men are overwhelmed, let women take over*

*Siwanika iliZwi, alishunqula :We give them the Word, they cause chaos*

*Siwanike imfuno, ayishunqula, :We gave them education, they blunder*

*Siwanika ukongamela, akushunqula, :We give them authority, they corrupt it*

*Sibangawanika umhlaba, awushunqula :We even give them the land, they sell it*

*Sibangawanika ubukhosi, abushunqushunqula: We give them kingship, they cause hostility*

This is quite extraordinary, considering the time period during which these words were articulated when gender equality was a norm. He is obviously looking beyond the Women's Manyano which is the subject of the essay to embrace all women leadership, traditional and modern. As a matter of fact, Mdluli (2013:39) acknowledges that *tibongo* of women leaders traditional and modern by women praise singers challenge any idea that women by virtue should be relegated to the back seat. Her declaration that in terms of *tibongo*

“behind every successful woman, there is a woman,” should be considered in line with Mqhayi’s philosophy. His is a poem that is infused by a common eccentricity of steadfastness that defines the inner resilience with which women, are bequeathed. Because of their **stubborn fairness**, they become an embodiment of democratic values and as such role models and a symbolic hope not only for the empowerment of women, but also for their total liberation from all negative perceptions and oppressions. It is a poem of survival that portrays day to day experiences of women whose cardinal goal is to live life to the fullest despite its testing crises. This poem could be viewed from the premise of women empowerment in the South African 21<sup>st</sup> century context - women breaking new grounds as leaders in the business, political and other economic sectors as well as social communities. People might have thought this assertion by Mqhayi at that time, was sheer lunacy for anyone to pronounce, but you only have to look at Sobahle’s (2013) critique of Nontsizi Mqwetho’s poetry who is described by Mbeki as “the most prolific Xhosa woman poet of the 20<sup>th</sup> century” (Sobahle), to see the revolutionary consequence in the lines above. Sobahle, citing Opland (2007) on Mqwetho says that “the poetry she left, immediately establishes her as one of the greatest literary artists ever to write in isiXhosa, an anguished voice of an urban woman confronting male dominance, ineffective leadership, black apathy, white malice and indifference, economic exploitation and a tragic history of the 19<sup>th</sup> century territorial and cultural dispossession. In her expose, Sobahle utilizes the Critical Discourse Analysis with which among other things she interrogates social power abuse, inequality as demonstrated by a text and linguistic expressions in the social and political context. The use of language as a tool to evoke deep emotions is the concern of CDA, the analysis of which takes us beyond the level of description to a deeper understanding of any narrative. This is exactly what Mqwetho does in her poetry in the same way as what Mqhayi intimates in the lines above from an essay celebrating the great deeds of women traditional and contemporary leaders in their own right, and hence the day to day talks about South Africa being ready for a woman South African president – “*amadoda oyisiwe.*” Mqhayi is certainly turning in his grave with excitement to hear that what he foretold in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is emerging as a reality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. You be the judge! *Khanyela watyholwa!*

## 8. Youth in education, Political leadership, Economy and Language

Mqhayi’s concern about the youth runs as a golden thread through his articles and essays. He maintains that the youth is a symbolic representation of the peoples aspirations for political freedom, equality and the liberation of South Africa as a whole (*Umteteli Wabantu*, 4 May 1929). It is important that the mature educated youth should be carefully ushered to the front to serve the people in their early lives and not wait until there is war and then suddenly it is thrown into the front to perish. Their innovative and experimental ideas should be respected.

*Xa sifuna uhlanga lwethu lume, umsebenzi wethu uya kuba kukuqeqesha usapho ngeyona ndlela kuba le nto kuthiwa luhlanga nekamva kuthethwa usapho olu.*

(If we want to establish a **nation**, our duty would be to mentor the youth in the correct way, because the nation and its future is the youth.)

As was mentioned earlier Mqhayi speaks openly about youth development in the columns of *Abantu Batho*, *Izwi labantu* and *Umateteli wabantu*. Among other things he asks the question that (*Imfuno neLizwi, Umteteli wabantu* 2 July 1927) why should an educated young person fresh from college wait to find a job instead of using his education to create a job for himself and other people. He claims that this problem is based on the fact that from the beginning, education was introduced by the church to the blacks for subservience, something that continued long after the governments took over responsibility to develop education that only forced people into poverty, something he says can only worsen with the passage of time. His form of education with a vision (*Umteteli wabantu, Ingqeqesho yosapho* – mentoring the youth, 4 May 1929), is that of discovery and invention (science and technology), creativity and *ubunzululwazi*) ground-breaking, that kind of education that will talk to the people of South Africa. Poor SEK Mqhayi, if only he were to know that the South Africans of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are best consumers of all kinds of products from the world intellectually and otherwise. In the article entitled *Imfuno yezandla (Umteteli wabantu* 23 January 1932), his views are strong against what he calls (a) *imfuno yencwadi* and (b) *imfuno yobucaka* in the developing world. According to SEK, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, most of the South African youth is not educated, the mere fact that they are sitting at home with degree certificates unable to translate their knowledge and information to discover and rediscover, invent and manufacture.

Central in his debates about education is language. In 1923, he published an article in which he laments the deterioration of isiXhosa and he says learning English only will be disastrous in future. Destroying a language is destroying a people if you should consider what a language means to its speakers. South Africa is still struggling to come to terms with the loss of African languages with their speakers coming last intellectual debates all round. I am not sure if the efforts of our government are sincere enough. You cannot develop a community using a language foreign to them, says Mqhayi. Academic debates on language development and intellectualization have only been a matter of theoretical play field. African languages, in my opinion are worst off than they were in the past. The more debates are carried, the less practical progress is made in developing intellectualization and multilingualism with a vision – Mqhayi and Sol Plaatjie's vision that languages are not only a catalyst for proper intercultural communication, but a means to nation building and economic as well as political stability. In our 21<sup>st</sup> century scenario in their development it would appear that these languages the one step forward they take is replied by three steps backward. Mqhayi in his essays makes the suggestion that a multilingual youth in the frontline, with languages as a tool, a realistic prerequisite for the African Renaissance has a better chance of developing this country to a great nation. South Africa is ignoring this at its own peril – the concept of a new South Africa which we achieved and which Mqhayi portended, a multilingual colourless society is definitely not what we see happening, may be with time, it will come.

## 9. The Future of Politics

Mqhayi is that isiXhosa writer who published essays and poems between (1925 – 1930) about General JMB Hertzog and choosing to end each stanza with the chorus: *Hertzog, jou dorring; Hertzog, jou slegte ding!* Remember, that Hertzog from the moment he became Prime Minister in 1924, with his separatist policies, laid the ground to isolate blacks from any political participation, ultimately totally removing those in the Cape from the voter's roll in 1936. In the poem uTsalitorho from the essay *Ivoti ekoloni* (*Umteteli wabantu* 12 February 1928), Mqhayi has great admiration for Hertzog's strong leadership qualities, but his ultra-racist predispositions and hence the irony in the chorus. In the essay *Ivoti ekoloni* (*Umteteli wabantu* 12 February 1928), Mqhayi's rejection of the Hertzog Bill as a move contrary to uniting South Africa politically, is embedded in the thesis that people without a vote, destabilised and disunited as they were after the vicious colonial rule, might cause more instability as the oppressed people would struggle to regain what was legitimately theirs, the vote and their land. In the essay he dismisses it as nonsense that black people were not ready to be included in white politics, a phenomenon with which the Natal and the Cape colonies had successfully experimented. And following this, he published in an essay in 1933 in which he says that he is giving the then present government and those that might follow after it only 50 years before it is taken over by a government of the people, a democratic government, but immediately warns black leaders especially to take lessons from the Great Trek of the Boers (*Imfuduko yamaBhulu Umteteli wabantu* 27 August 1927), persuading them to undertake a great trek like the Boers, but their great trek will not be to travel across rivers, climb over mountains, fight battles with dangerous animals and venomous snakes and clashing with tribes on their way to the destined land. Theirs will be easy because (*Nathi ngokunjalo imfuduko le ilula, kuba asiyiyo yokushiya ilizwe, kukushiya imikhwa le isixinzelele ezantsi, umona, intiyano ngobuhlanga, ukukhweletelana ngamawonga, intle bendwane, ubuvila, nokuthengisana ezintshabeni. Umzi ontsundu uya kumelwa kukumanyana, uthethane uvane, ufuduke kumanxowa amadala okuthelakiswa nokuliswa wodwa. Kakade izihlangani azinakube zingabikho, nezinyeliso, nezisongelo zokuba kuvukelwe umbuso. Enyanisweni ukuba sizama ukwenza into eyinto, sizama ukuyiphumeza, kukho abaninzi kuthi abaya kubanjwa, bekwabaninzi abaya kufa.*) "it is not to leave a country, it is to abandon the bad habits which pull us down, envy, racial hatred, fighting over positions, backbiting, laziness, and selling one another to the enemies. Black people should unite, negotiate to get closer, and move away from old habits of allowing themselves to be made to fight amongst themselves. There will be conflicts, there will be mud slinging and threats to rebellion. It is true that if we try to do something successful, there are many who will be arrested, and there are many who will die."

The recent South African liberation struggle was not without casualties. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we are still counting the damage and there are still many whose graves are yet to be discovered or will never be discovered. But I am not sure if we have succeeded in great trekking, really. Almost every day, we read reports on corruption in high places, people fighting for positions, laziness, – the frequency of protests against lack of delivery at present is a manifestation of laziness and incompetence on the part of some of our leaders. Mqhayi knew it.

To me, what is even more interesting is the sequence of his predictions: In 1914 he writes about the demise of General Louis Botha's Union Government, in 1923, he designs a cabinet structure of a future South Africa, which would have a Chamber of traditional leaders and veteran politicians irrespective, from all over the country (I do not see this happening), in 1933 he makes the prediction of 50 years for a new order to be

established and in 1939 *uDon Jadu* was published – “the new South Africa,” as Burns-Ncamashe (2002) remarked. Interestingly, one of the duties that Mqhayi assigns to the Chamber is question of the return of the land (*Umhlaba, Umteteli wabantu* 1924), especially that which was robbed from the natives after treaties were endorsed – the case of the Eastern Cape in particular.

At this point I want to quickly take you through the four lines which form part of the essay (*Umteteli wabantu* September 1927), implied in the discussions above. In this essay (*Umteteli wabantu* September 1927), his idea of a people which revolves around two concepts, namely, one nation, one government and one nation, one flag, goes beyond the popular notion of economic, religious and social unity in some of his well known poems to imply the political liberation of the African countries. It would appear that Mqhayi was aware of the developments that the future might bring to the country especially if this is considered against the background of his idea of a vote for all in an essay published in (*Umteteli Wabantu*, 15 December 1928) as a vindication of a black man's and woman's struggle for liberation, which only needs to be translated to the present situation to elucidate his remarkable foresight. Presently, the people of South Africa are united under one government, the Government of South Africa, with one flag. This seems to fulfil Mqhayi's prophecy (*Umteteli Wabantu*, September 1927), that it was only a matter of time before the situation in the country at that time would come to an end and a new order, a democratic order, would be established. He predicted that an effort towards achieving democracy would precipitate a vicious cycle of intense political struggle during which there would be a period of increasing bitterness, hostility and violence, which if continued unchecked, would lead to a serious degeneration of human values. As he put it, the South African dream of peace and oneness which will reign supreme among the people of South Africa will one day be realised when:

1. *Kuza kukrazuk'uManyano -*
2. *Iphel'indaba yolwanano;*
3. *Indwe yon'isaza kuba nye;*
4. *Kuthethwe ulwimi olunye.*

(Rent asunder the Union will be -

Secret dealings will come to an end;

There will be one flag;

One voice there will be).

The four lines above are pregnant with meaning. This exposition is part of an article that I intended to publish in a journal a few years ago, but it was returned to me with a remark that the English was sub-standard in a report that was written in broken English by an academic *nogal*. I never attempted to publish that article. Such academics never escaped Mqhayi's hawk eye. In the column in the newspaper, *Abantu Batho* entitled: *Bathini na abantu Jamjam? Batho Bareng* (1921)? (What do people say Jamjam? a column he shares with Sol Plaatjies, who writes in Sesotho, SeTswana, isiZulu, isiPedi what have you, because he could

speak and write all languages in South Africa, Mqhayi says: *Kunceda ni ukuba umntu afunde de ayityekeze, de anconyelwe nokusoma ulwimi lwasemlungwini ngeyona ndlela kanti ukungumdlungu kolwakhe? Loo mntu ke usebenze ngamandla wada waphumelela, athe akuphumelela wasebenza ngamandlakazi aphindiweyo ukwenzela ukuba angaze aphumelele omnye umntu*) (What is the use for a person to study and attain the highest degree and be known to speak English so well, when he is useless in his own. That has worked very hard to succeed and having succeeded, he doubles up the effort work hard so that his fellowmen do not succeed as he did). No wonder Madam Chair, there are so few doctors and professors in our midst. Mqhayi saw it well into the future 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Written in 1927 (*Umteteli Wabantu*, September 1927), the four lines which are an extension of a series of essays dealing with the same subject, focus on the future of the country implied by the auxiliary verb **za** in *kuz*a (line 1) and *yon'isaza* (line 3) and further hinted in *kuthethwe* in line 4. The effect of the immediate future tense auxiliary, however, permeates the entire poem. This effect nullifies the indefiniteness of the concord **ku** in *kuz*a in the first line and *kuthethwe* in the last line. Line 4, *kuthethwe ulwimi olunye*, significantly portrays a definite situation of unity. The vertical link formed by the two indefinite formatives (line 1 and line 4) is in fact a strategic device used to strengthen the voice of hope and commitment in Mqhayi. The juxtaposing of the definite future tense auxiliary *kuz*a with the indefinite concord **ku** in *kuthethwe* only serves to reveal Mqhayi's positive frame of mind. His message is clear and his intentions are explicit. That a change in the politics of the day is imminent, i.e. that the Union Government will come to pass: *kuz*a *kukrazuk'uMnyano*, is expressed in strong and emotive language. Mqhayi is uncompromising in articulating the wishes and aspirations of the people. This effectively creates an atmosphere of hope and expectation for all those who felt that they were represented by Mqhayi.

A strong sense of imminent change is further created by the employment of yet another emotive word *krazuka* (tear apart). This is an action-related predicative which illuminates more about the overtaxed-close-to-explosive patience of the oppressed rather than the demise of the despised regime. Mqhayi in fact once remarked that it was a mistake for the majority of the people of South Africa to be left out of the National Convention of 1910, implying that the coming to an end of the Union Government would only be the fulfilment of a long overdue dream. In this vein it is understandable that Mqhayi uses a predicative that implies a violent action. Human rights were violated and an unceremonious end to an illegitimate government would therefore be appropriate. It is interesting to note that this short poem achieves a note of finality through predicatives arranged in an ascending order. For instance, the definite future tense construction *kuz*a *kukrazuk[a]* in line 1, which has strong implications of a violent action, is complemented by the short form of the perfect tense, *iphel[e]* in line 2, which is suggestive of the restoration of some order

and stability. The same pattern is repeated in *isaza* and *kuthethwe* in lines 3 and 4 with increasing resolution. Themes dealing with the restoration of order are a common feature in isiXhosa literature, especially poetry. In the line, *iphel'indaba yolwanano*, (line 2) Mqhayi's strength of expression is in its subtlety. The words *indaba* and *ulwanano* combine to imply an idea of secrecy and mistrust of the colonialists, thereby making Mqhayi's voice, which quests for liberation, more resolute. The parallelism expressing corresponding ideas in *kukrazuka* and *iphele* in the first and second lines respectively is an accurate poetic device cleverly employed to draw attention to the seriousness of the situation.

The issue of the flag, which Mqhayi raises only in the third line, is strikingly interesting. The implications of a flag for any people are deep-seated. Mqhayi's dream of having a South African flag representative of all its people came true when at the beginning of 1994 the divisive flag of apartheid South Africa was lowered in ceremonies all around the country and the flag of a united people, the New South Africa, was raised. This whole scenario clearly demonstrates Mqhayi's visionary power, his ability to interpret the future in terms of the present. In a sense, in any democratic situation a flag is a symbol of unity and therefore his postulation *kuthethwe ulwimi olunye* (speaking with one voice), is not without substance. Although there is controversy over this issue, it seems that in the situation envisaged and propounded by Mqhayi, the right of the individual would always be respected. What more could one hope for in this country but unity as has already been suggested.

It should further be noted that each line in the poem contains a significant meaning which when added to the whole poem magnifies its credibility. Line 2, *iphel'indaba yolwanano*, has far reaching implications. In the first place it does not speak well of the leaders of the country who were believed to have been responsible for the loss of land to the colonials. For instance, in an essay titled *UNdlambe (Umteteli Wabantu*, 17 November 1928) Mqhayi, echoing the sentiments of the people, accuses Ngqika of first selling his people and then the land to the foreigners, *wathengisa ngesizwe, wananisa ngomhlaba* (He sold his people and thereafter the land). Peires (1987:79-108) gives a graphic picture of Ngqika's associations with the colonial authorities and other politicians, black or white who fraternized with colonialists, in projecting their selfish images to the black people. The history of the amaXhosa people is in fact fraught with allegations of secret deals after which not only their kingdoms disappeared but also their land and wealth. 'Justus' Campbell (1837:32) also expresses a similar view:

Thieving and lying have been the two great characteristics of the conduct of the colonists towards their [Xhosa] neighbours for the last thirty five years.

One ought to be aware of the enormous odds that faced Mqhayi at the time. He and others like him were greatly disadvantaged and that perhaps contributed to the special obligation he felt towards his people at

the turn of the century. This sentiment, which characterises him as a forceful and visionary individual, is shared by Jordan in (Popkin 1978:319).

## 10. Mqhayi and the Church

Mqhayi's relationship with the church is unqualified. Be that as it may, likewise the church receives from him severe criticism because of its so called double dealings. In his essays, *Imfundo neLizwi*, *Indlela yenkosi*, *Imfundo yosapho*, *Imbali* .... He does not hide the fact that Jongumsobomvu Maqoma was betrayed by Rev Balfour at a time when Maqoma was busy negotiating that the Xhosaland be a British Protectorate just like Botswana and Lesotho. Maqoma had great trust in Rev Balfour who acted as a mediator only for him to call British troops to arrest him and he ended on Robben Island – mission accomplished, that is why they were called missionaries. On his arrest Maqoma remarked that, *Abefundisi abamhlophe bangaze bathenjwe* (White church ministers must never be trusted). According to Kuse (1978:14), and later this developed to a generalization that *ungaze umthembe umlungu*. I am not sure if in the 21<sup>st</sup> century we have moved to close the gap or there is more mistrust. Mqhayi (Kuse 1978:14) is also very critical of politicians who used Christianity as a means to project their selfish images to the black people. In this regard he says:

The columns of *limvo* in the first decade of the 20th century make it clear that missionary publishing houses determined not to promote those ideas of Mqhayi which registered his observations that the political interests of the Xhosas were being betrayed by white Christians and white men of liberal persuasion in collusion with the white racists.

And obviously his open criticism made him the enemy of the state, a very difficult person who was prepared to die for the truth, as he was described. In our time, we can rightly say that there were and are heroes who were or are prepared to die for the truth.

It is only a person who has not studied Mqhayi's literary works, who does not know that his extensive use of the bible in challenging authority with the truth, is absolute. His declamation of the Prince of Wales in 1925, hailing him, *AA! Zweliyazuza!* (Satyo 1977:138), a symbolic reference to the unstable political situation that Great Britain, with its imperialistic policies, brought to bear on the indigenous people of South Africa, came to be regarded as the most vitriolic sarcasm levelled at Britain and the missionaries. His use of scriptural phraseology does not fail to stir the deepest spring of emotions as in:

Ah! Britain! Great Britain!

Great Britain of the endless sunshine!

She hath conquered the oceans and laid them low,

She hath drained the little rivers and lapped them dry;

She hath swept the little nations and wiped them away,

And now she is making for the open skies.

**She sent us the preacher, she sent us the soldier,**

**She sent us the Bible; she sent us the bottle;**

**She sent us the cannon; she sent us the breechloader;**

**O Roaming Britain! Which must we embrace?**

**You sent us the truth, denied us the truth;**

You sent us the light, we sit in darkness;

Shivering, benighted in the bright noon-day sun.

(Translation by AC Jordan, Satyo 1977)

One only has to look at the debilitating South African situation among the blacks to see the truth in Mqhayi's words – with their majority still illiterate, twenty years into the democracy, as in “you sent us the light (education), we sit in darkness”. That blacks lost their land through the barrel of the gun is a known history. Note the ironic alliteration in the “Bible” and the “bottle”. Note the ironic alliteration in the “Bible” and the “bottle”. The meaning of the bible is understood, but the bottle is something else. For instance, in the essay, *Imbali*, he singles out Colonel Hare, after whom Fort Hare University is named, as one of the cruelest British army leaders, who surreptitiously coaxed amaXhosa chiefs to drink from the bottle and make them sign documents which gave him rights to their land, and the chiefs when sober and denying everything, he would declare war on them legitimising his rights on that land. The history of amaGwali, amaJingqi, Tyhali has pockets of information about this. Mqhayi's nursery rhyme, *Ngubani na lo? Nguyeye!* Is in part a reference to Colonel Hare's vicious dishonesty. Lieutenant Aberdeen is also viciously attacked by Mqhayi for wiping out the Khoisan and amaXhosa in the Northern Cape. His defeat by the Boers in 1899, did not yield any good for the uprooted people. They lived a life of slavery which Mqhayi predicted would one day come to an end. With subsequent governments, things changed.

SEK Mqhayi's view of Britain and the cause of the missionaries, however, is not always clouded in scepticism. In some of his essays he acknowledges that the coming to South Africa of Britain and the missionaries as well as the Dutch bringing with them the light (Education) and the Word

(Christianity) to the Dark Continent was in fact God's divine intervention (*Umteteli Wabantu*, 2 July 1927). This is the self same Mqhayi, who was asked to resign from his teaching post at Lovedale in 1911, with accusations that he brought the education sector into disrepute by refusing to teach history, which he claimed was one sided, only concerning on the history of the Europeans, but nothing about his great people amaXhosa, their kings and their heroes. If anything, they were portrayed as thieves, liars, lazy and good for nothing people. He also refused to teach Agriculture in English claiming that the isiXhosa language was articulate enough to convey the relevant messages and even more effectively than English in any subject, let alone the agriculture with which rural people were familiar. His other accusation was that he tried to galvanise support to form a teacher's union, which would endeavour to transform the education which he terms as an education of mental enslavement. In his draft manifesto, he demands compulsory education for the black children, and that the youth should be offered education that would be discovery and inventive in essence empowering them to be builders of the nation. For this kind of *Toyi Toyi*, he was fired in a dignified way, whereby the authorities asked his mentor Rev John Brownlee to request Mqhayi to resign and he did. After this Mqhayi spent his time assisting with the translation of the Bible into isiXhosa and also monitoring developments with regard to Washington Gumede and Clemence Kadalie 's establishment of the Workers' Union. When it was realised in 1919, he published articles in (*Umeteteli wabantu*) rejoicing over its success.

## 11. Conclusion - Projects

I wish to conclude this lecture by unveiling the the three projects that are embedded in Mqhayi's visionary words: *Zesithi sakukhululeka* ..... The following phenomena characterise Mqhayi's predictions.

***Zesithi sakukhululeka kwingcininezelo yegwangqa, (liberation, freedom and democracy)***  
***kuchithwe iintlanti ngamadoda kwakhiwe ezintsha, (rebuilding of the country) kumiswe amatye ezikhumbuzo zabo bazenza idini bafela emadabini, (memory) kuvuselelwe izikumkani kwakhiwe isizwe, kugcinwe umthetho, (political leadership and the rule of law) kulondolozwe amasiko nezithethe, (Social cohesion) kulinywe amasimi (economy).***

It is hoped that the ideas drawn from this research, which are translated into youth driven projects for every youth to live for the next 100 years, will give substance and voice to the wishes and aspirations of those for whom SEK Mqhayi was a spokesperson by the founding of the:

### (a) SEK Mqhayi Society:

The vision of the SEK Mqhayi Society is to pool together the intellectual wealth of academics from across our language spectrum to research, document and disseminate information and knowledge about our indigenous languages. Encourage cross-languages and intercultural communication by translating great works of our writers into respective languages as a worthy literary heritage.

**(b) The Film: *Ukuzika kukaMendi* (The sinking of Mendi)**

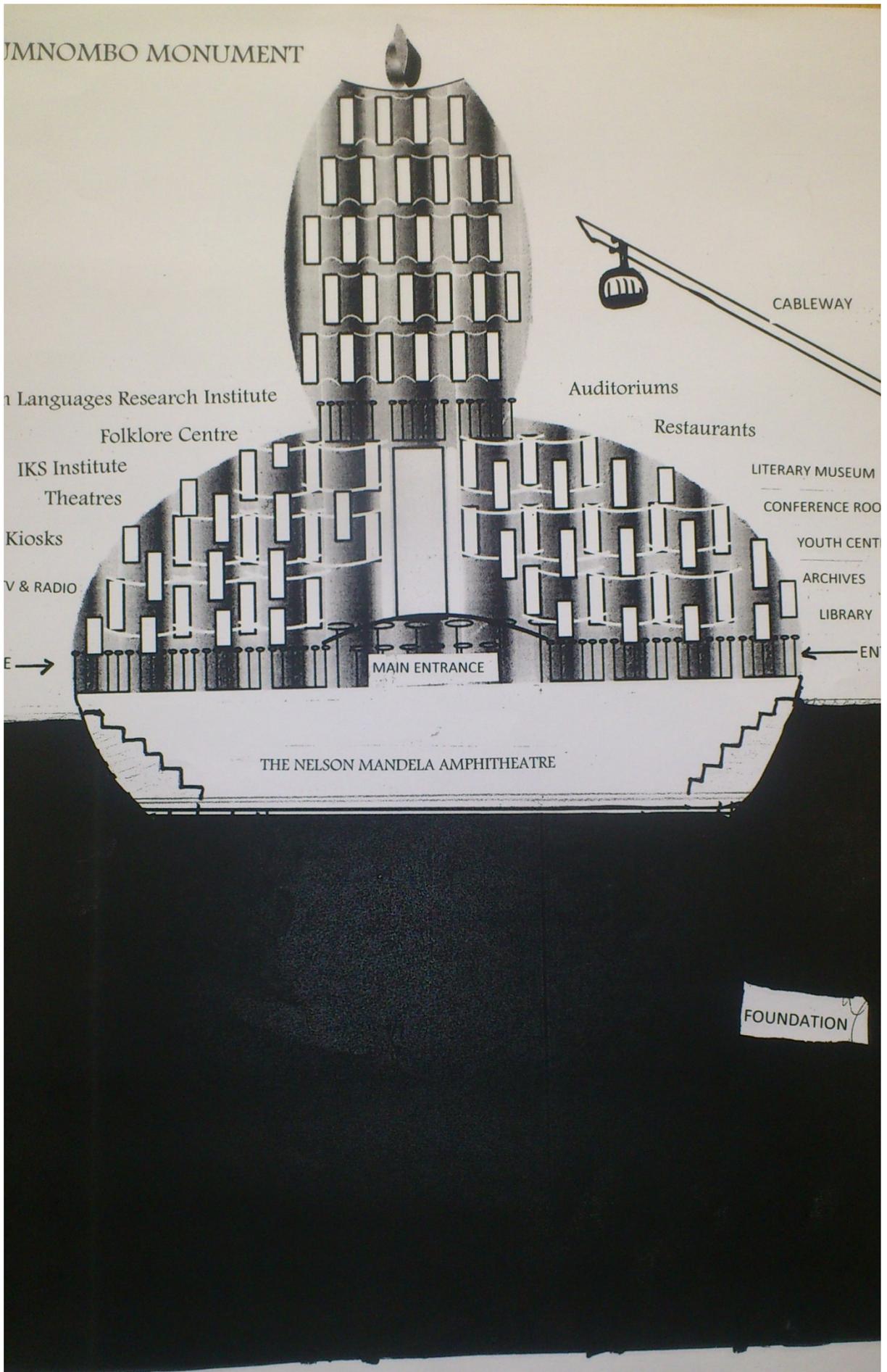
A multi-lingual timeless symbolic memorial of all the brave warriors of our liberation struggle yesterday, today and tomorrow and in the process demonstrate to the world that we are a rich people culturally. To many South Africans especially the youth, the SS Mendi tragedy of 1917 is one of the symbols of the black man's many political struggles of liberation. With the ushering in of our liberated government in 1994, those who are aware of the Mendi history in respect of the black struggle for the liberation of all, bring it to the forefront as a demonstration of the brave few, who died for a good cause for the many. This is done with the purpose and desire that all South Africans should know more about their country's 'neglected' history and their forgotten renowned figures and unsung heroes, past and present including all other efforts of national significance that would fertilize our new democracy. The youth would pride itself of an event symbolic of their grandfather's selfless bravery, dying not only for their country, but also dying to show the way to fight for political liberation. The Mendi chapter precipitated a chain of events which progressively and aggressively intensified until liberation was achieved and a democratic South Africa was established. The sinking of the SS Mendi episode finds expression and meaning not in history text books, but in the literature that poured out from authors, especially poets from all language groups throughout Africa. Very little of that literature found its way to publication and only a trickle can be traced to old newspapers some of which have since ceased circulation.

**(c) Umnombo Monument Project : championed by Embo Media and uMnombo**

An active multidisciplinary (science, technology, politics, economy etc) youth driven memorial monument with an overarching business plan to generate and nurture Mzantsi youth's talent and skill in building that South Africa of which we all dream. It integrates all the ideas espoused in the core quotation above i.e ***liberation, freedom and democracy, rebuilding of the country, memory political leadership and the rule of law, social cohesion, economy.***

It is a mega arts and culture podium, so to speak, to trigger an economic explosion for the Eastern Cape in particular, South Africa and Africa in general well beyond the twenty five years that it will take to build.

12. **Umnombo Monument on the screen.**



The monument will be a colossal statue of between 300 and 400 metres high, a radius of 100 metres with an observation gallery to which visitors could climb in order to enjoy unique and exhilarating views across land. At the very head of the monument the **eternal flame** would be instituted to be illuminated on certain special days marking important historical events in the history of the people. This monument is designed in a manner that would draw energy from the historical landmarks of the Eastern Cape. It will also draw energy from all the metropolis of the country, namely Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, Port Elizabeth, Bloemfontein, and beyond, a symbolic fibre that unites South Africa as a whole. This monument will certainly create a welcome range of facilities such as, instead of spiralling steps, a cable way and all that is indicated on the picture. This is the idea of an active monument which the youth believes will live in each and everyone of them until pyramids are dust.

**I thank you.**