Black Liberations Movement Mosaic

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Oral History Interview

with

Mr. Jeff Peires

By James Chapnick and Amy Wlodarski

King William's Town, South Africa

August 10, 2008

Interview with Jeff Peires

Interviewed on 10 August, 2008

Location: King William's Town, Eastern Cape, South Africa

Interviewer: James Chapnick

Transcriber: James Chapnick

Black Liberation Mosaic

James Chapnick: This is James Chapnick interviewing Professor Jeff Peires in King William's Town. It is August tenth, 2008. Now, professor, could you just state your name and that you're willing to be interviewed today.

Jeff Peires: I'm Jeff Peires, and I'm always, uh, looking for publicity, (laughing in the background) so I'm excited to be interviewed.

James Chapnick: And also I have a form here for you to sign afterwards stating that you're willing for this to be deposited in an archive. Is that okay?

Jeff Peires: No, for that I expect a hundred-thousand dollars. (laughing in the background) Yes – no that's fine.

James Chapnick: Alright, well, thank you very much for that.

Jeff Peires: Drank too much coffee. (more laughing)

James Chapnick: So I'd just like to start off by asking where you were born.

Jeff Peires: I was born in Cape Town.

James Chapnick: And why did you decide to become an historian?

Jeff Peires: Uh, didn't like the alternatives, flunked out of English, and just liked history. I had inspirational teachers, and also I started to realize that you cannot actually understand where you are unless you understand where, where you're coming from, and also how the situation in which you find yourself, uh, developed.

James Chapnick: And where did you study?

Jeff Peires: I studied at the University of Cape Town, University of Wisconsin.

James Chapnick: Okay. So I'd just like to ask, how do you think the representation of South African history has changed since the end of apartheid?

Jeff Peires: I think the representation of South African history – maybe we should start before the end of apartheid, because, uh, when we had the old, uh, government, the apartheid government in power, they had lost credibility, especially in the, the field of heritage. They had lost credibility, and the myths that they were peddling – the myths of,

um, you know, the ox wagon, and the pioneering spirit – they had lost credibility even among their own supporters. Uh, it was only here and there – because they had this policy of ethnosizing everything, of saying, you know, we don't have one nation in South Africa, we have got twelve or thirteen nations, and then unfortunately some of the – some opportunistic politicians in parts of South Africa, especially in KwaZulu, they rose to that bait, and tried to, created sort of, ethnic particularisms, uh, wherever they, they happened to be. Um, also the, the general racist attitudes that were implicit in apartheid had stopped being explicit because we, we had a far more, uh, subtle, you know, idea – the idea of different nations, rather than the idea of whites are superior, and blacks are inferior. I mean, we can pull out those quotes from the 1950s, but from about 1960, the emphasis of the old government was to say everybody has to have his own culture, and, in fact, they rather overdid that in places like, um – big cities like East London, next door to where we are now. Normal black people were frankly embarrassed by having, you know, girls going around, you know, wearing so-called traditional dress when that's not actually the way that they lived, or not the way that they thought. So I think that, uh, by the time we achieved democracy in 1994, uh, the country as a whole, barring these one or two ethnic holdouts, we were ready for a new historical narrative. One that would aim at reconciliation and nation building, you know, as personified by Mandela and by Bishop Tutu – the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. So in a way we – we did not have strong myths to overcome. Uh, of course we – together with the Zulus, you could say – there was a segment of the Afrikaans population, uh, that, uh, had a kind of a neo-Nazi image of the Afrikaner, but those also came to grief, especially in the incidents that happened in the homeland of Bophuthatswana. So that idea that any South African group,

uh, could survive in isolation from other South African groups had also been pretty much rejected, even by, uh, the, the supporters of apartheid. So we were really able to, to start trying to look at the things that brought us together, uh, also not neglecting that we are a diverse – uh, I think my colleague over here knows more than me (referring to another person in the room), but, you know, the whole idea of celebrating diversity, as well. Uh, so, uh, so unity in diversity, yeah.

James Chapnick: So do you think that in, say school curriculums, it's possible to present a unified South African history, or do different perspectives have to be looked at?

Jeff Peires: Um, I…I think one thing that had been absorbed by school history, (clock chimes) um, – by high school history, you're talking about – um, was, you know, there was a general rejection, uh, of the idea – I don't know if you know, uh, Brecht's poem, you know, a worker reads and asks questions.[1] There was a general acceptance, uh, right across – again with the significant exception of KwaZulu – that we really needed to look at what people were doing, uh, rather than what politicians were doing. Um, even among the Afrikaans community, the heroes of old were, you know, like, people laughed at this stuff, uh, they didn't aspire to be like the, the grandfathers. So the problems that historians faced, uh, in the immediate run up to 1994, and after 1994, was not so much how to, sort of, de-Nazify the curriculum, but how to restore, uh, the discipline of history to its, uh, what we had thought was its correct place, because for a long period until quite recently, uh, you, you could only start history, I think, uh, in the senior-secondary-school level. You had some sort of mish-mash of social studies or something. So, um, at the

[1] The narrator refers to the poem *Questions from a Worker Who Reads*, by Bertolt Brecht.

level of education there was a misconceived idea, uh, to say that we don't need history, we need maths, you know. We don't need more people in humanities, we need more people, um, you know, in science. Uh, then again, another problem that one faced was – again, I Shouldn't really say this, but – various academics had been signed up by different publishing houses on, on spec, you know, and then you'd have, uh – and then they'd write their history text books, uh, in anticipation of what the new curriculum was likely to be. And then you had like ten academics from ten different publishing companies on one committee deciding what the curriculum should be. (laughs) So that, um – and everybody was pushing the things in their curriculum that they had already prepared, you know – no, I mean, I mean that's obviously and exaggeration, but, but those kinds of little things did, uh, bedevil, uh, the, the school curriculum – uh, people like Professor Asmal took a direct personal interest, you know, in trying to get a new history syllabus that was acceptable, uh, to everybody, you know, on the road. But – and they deliberately went out of their way not to get ANC aligned ideologues onto the committee - I mean in a way, um, I think this was counterproductive. So again one wound up with a sort of whole lot of compromises. Um, the, the other thing where there was a general consensus is that, uh, South Africans in general are incredibly, uh, ignorant of the rest of Africa, and, uh, people in European countries, or North American countries know a great deal more about, you know, the history of Ghana, the history of Nigeria, you know, the history – you know, the great kingdoms of Buganda, and so on – than South Africans do. Um, so, so there has been quite a big move to get South Africans to feel themselves to be part of, of Africa, but then again you had got some people in influential positions, still in existence today, uh – there was, there wa a guy named Credo

Mutwa who, uh, during his early youth, worked as a bookshop assistant in Potchefstroom where he got hold of a whole lot of books by a man named Richard N. Hall that explained how great Zimbabwe was built by the Queen of Sheba, or something. And then he [Mutwa] passed this off in his very, very popular books, like *Indaba My Children*, as if this was the wisdom of the witchdoctors, you know; whereas the very term witchdoctor is an abomination. So you'd got a lot of – then you had got the whole of the Shaka Zulu crowd, you know, you had a whole lot of the "ancient Egyptians were really black African" crowd. So, uh, you know, you'd got a whole lot of these, sort of, conflicting narratives, um, and uh, to, to, to contend with. So those are the kinds of things, uh, that really have made it difficult for us, I think, to teach, you know, the learners in school what, in my opinion, they would need to know.

James Chapnick: Okay. And to discuss another aspect of change since the end of apartheid, how do you think the commemoration of history has changed in museums and monuments?

Jeff Peires: Um, it's changed a great extent, but I don't think it's changed as much as it, it needed to change. Um, there's been a lot of work done, uh, in, uh – like one notable museum is the McGregor Museum in Kimberly, which was really old Boer War stuff, and they, they sort of went down into the cellars and up into the attics, and they found some amazing things that had just been pushed aside because it was, uh, black things. So that, um, you know, it has changed – it's always difficult what to do with heritage. I mean, one museum in the Chris Hani, uh, District that is worthy of note is the museum at

Sterkstroom, which is an extremely small town – was also the hometown of the former apartheid Prime Minister B. J. Vorster. So it was all dedicated to Vorster memorabilia – now if you go to Sterkstroom today, and you say you want to see the B. J. Vorster stuff, they take you to, like, a little alcove, and they draw this curtain, (laughing) after they've asked you why you want to see it. I think the, the, the problem, however, that museums face, and this would apply to – I said, I don't know those museums like the museums in Cape Town where they, they, they get a lot of visitors – is there's a sort of innate resistance to museums, as museums are places about things that are very old, and very irrelevant, and you only go there as part of your formal education, you don't go there to, sort of, uh, enjoy yourself. So that, whereas the – and this is completely at odds with what the actual, uh – the people who administer museums, and the directorates that manage museums have got very, very different perceptions, and they try to, to change this. Uh, but I think the government's real thrust has been more in terms of, uh, the memorials. Here, perhaps, we've not been as, uh, quick on the draw as, um, other societies. There's, uh, there's a park in Moscow, and you can go there, and uh, all that they've got there is old busts of Lenin, and Marx, and so on. And maybe that's what we should've done. Um, and in fact – I mean, in Zimbabwe at a very early stage they took all the statues and things of Cecil Rhodes and they put them in a corner somewhere, and I'm not sure why we haven't done that, but we, we really haven't done that. But what we have done is, I think, you know – as a country, as a government – we've energetically pursued the construction of, uh, new memorials, and especially because we got such a, a very rich, uh you know, struggle history. So, uh, you've got this proliferation of heritage trails; you've got these initiatives like, uh, well the one that comes to mind is Freedom Park; you've got

especially in the wealthier areas, particularly in Gauteng, you've got those sites like, uh, the old fort, uh, places where political trials were held – that those places are being, uh, rehabilitated, of course, you've got, uh, probably the best known site in the country, you've got Robben Island. Um, again, I think we – I was very impressed in, in the U.S., you know, when I went to Alcatraz, at the idea of the self-guided tour, you know, where you get your little sort of tape recorder and you hang it round your neck, and you go and you move around, you know, at your own speed, uh, seeing whatever it is you want to see at your own pace. Um, the whole idea – something else that I've seen in other countries, which are very, very effective, is the diorama, you know, where you've got a whole lot of sort of statues, and noises off and so on. Uh, I don't think we're familiar, uh, with international best practice in terms of our public history. Maybe we've gone too far to try and create huge, uh, monuments, I'm not sure.

James Chapnick: Alright, you mentioned, uh, a minute ago about moving statues, you know, taking all the old statues and moving them to one location. Would you advocate destroying old or irrelevant statues, or at least moving them away, or do you think…?

Jeff Peires: Well, well the worst of the whole lot, you know, which is this one on the cover of this book (points to a picture of a statue on the cover of a book), uh, you know, this amazing thing – it, it just disappeared one day. The whole ground – the face of J. G. Strijdom, uh, the Prime Minister – the apartheid Prime Minister of the 1950s . I mean, so horrified by the New South Africa that the entire floor collapsed, but, um, I'm not sure why we don't do this. We should do this. Um, in the National Assembly, you know, the,

uh the Parliament – in the dining room where the members of the National Assembly used to eat you had all of these big pictures sort of done ala the American Declaration of Independence, of H. F. Verwoerd standing there pointing to a map, which – on which, you know, the apartheid homelands… I think it took us about eighteen months before we managed to, to take those down and put them away. I think it's more a question of not wanting to upset other people's symbols, it's more a question of wanting to, you know, put our own forward. Uh, even – uh, you know, as we, we, we mentioned, uh – even the changing of the names of the streets, uh, it's not gone very fast. I think Limpopo is the only province that has wholeheartedly, you know, did the clean sweep of all its place names. Uh, and then, uh, Johannesburg are slowly starting to replace some of their major streets. In the Eastern Cape – I could be wrong, somebody help me out – it was mainly Main Street in Port Elizabeth, which they changed the name to Govan Mbeki Avenue, and it's not as if Main Street was, uh, a name that was, you know, offensive in itself, it's just that they wanted to honor Mgov by naming a street after him.[2] But, uh, in this province I think, uh, the white community – there's no great resistance to it. I think they see that it's something that, that has to come. It's only in, uh, Grahamstown, really, which was the settler capitol of the 1820 settlers, that there's been significant resistance to transformation in terms of, uh, names. Also got to remember that some of our big cities here, uh, the Xhosa names are actually of Afrikaans origin. So the Xhosa name for Port Elizabeth is Ibhayi, which is the Afrikaans word "bay," and the Xhosa name for, uh, East London is eMonti, which is the Afrikaans word "mond," because it's – mouth – because the mouth, of the, the Buffalo River. But, uh, I mean you take a name like, uh, Charles Nqakula, now the Minister of Safety and Security, you know, he started off as a reporter

[2] The narrator refers to Govan Mbeki, father of Thabo Mbeki, as Mgov.

on the Daily Dispatch. And I remember when I was kind of researching my, my first book in the 1970s, and Charles Nqakula was reporting (clock chimes) for the Daily Dispatch – there was a banner headline: "Who was King William and what did he ever do for South Africa?" That, of course, was the high tide of, uh, BC [Black Consciousness] consciousness, but, um, it's like people have got more important things to worry about. This is something that's a bit hard to explain.

James Chapnick: So then who is concerned about changing names?

Jeff Peires: Uh, you know, one would be – one would be reluctant to make, uh, a blanket statement. Advocate Mancotywa, the head of the National Heritage Council, uh, has been – who's himself is originally from Umtata – he has been putting pressure on the MEC [Member of the Executive Council] for Arts and Culture this province, and she's been putting pressure on the mayors, saying "there's not one name that's been changed in the whole province," and "when are you gonna do something about it?" Uh, the only thing is, they, they've changed a couple of the spellings of, uh, some of the names, they've got rid of some of the offensive words, like Bushman, and so on. But, I think it's that, uh…. I don't think people are deeply offended. Uh yeah, once, uh, are by the colonial names – it's the only way to explain it really. Um, you know, there, there's a rumor, which I think is totally baseless, that Mdantsane, the big township outside East London – the suburbs of Mdantsane don't have names, they're called NU 1, NU 2, NU 3, and so on. And a rumor got out, which I think is totally not true, that NU stood for "Native Unit." And then when people started to – heard that rumor, they got absolutely furious, and they took immediate

steps, and they've changed the name, or their in the process of changing that name. I think it's that people, uh, again, um – when Transkei was so called independent, they changed the names of all the Transkei towns, uh, to Xhosa names. And there were those names where the, the place had an established name, where those names stayed. For example, there's a little town called Elliotdale, but nobody calls it Elliotdale, they call it by its Xhosa name, Xhora. But then there's another town close to Queenstown called Lady Frere, and there's another town the other side of Umtata called Mount Frere. Now, I mean, Mount Frere was, uh - I mean Sir Bartle Frere – was one of the most bloodthirsty governors South Africa ever had, uh, made, you know, Colonel Graham look like, you know, Mother Theresa. Uh, and – but because those places didn't have, uh, authentic Xhosa names, like, uh – Matanzima invented Xhosa names for them – Kwabaca for Mount Frere, and Cacadu for Lady Frere. The people just didn't take to it – didn't make sense to them. So I think there's a sort of, uh – I think if people were deeply offended, people would have done something about it, uh, long ago. It's just some – they've somehow grown up with those names, they don't mean anything to them.

James Chapnick: Okay, um, well moving on then, I guess, I'd like to ask you about how the Black Consciousness Movement has been commemorated in the Eastern Cape.

Jeff Peires: Well, uh, I think there's a definite, uh, wish to co-opt Steve Biko into the, uh, struggle pantheon. Um, but, otherwise, I think there's a great deal of personal veneration for Robert Sobukwe. I think there's a lot more interest now that the political consensus of the last fifteen years is slowly breaking down, uh, there's a lot more interest in these

figures intellectually than there used to be, but, in general, I think the tendency, uh, of the mainstream is to go back to the, the roots of the ANC as it's perceived – so where did we deviate from, uh, you know, ANC principles. Um, I think the whole, uh, disappearance of the fact that Biko didn't really have any political heirs outside of AZAPO, the whole way in which the, the leaders of the Soweto Uprising – the only ones that, uh, became prominent are people like Tokyo Sexwale, for example, that joined the armed struggle. Um, I think the political traditions of South Africa are much more, uh – traditions of process, uh, you know, the mass democratic movement, the armed struggle, the community – it's a very, uh, un-ideological struggle. I mean, if you look at the South African Communist Party, for example, uh, they don't really have, apart from being extremely – say what is – what does it mean to be a member of the SACP? Really it means that you are strongly for the workers, and strongly against the capitalists, but that's, that's about as far as it goes. So, um, I don't think I'm the right person to answer this question, but, uh, I think BC has had to contend with, uh, very, very strong mainstream current – not only, uh, in terms of, uh, you know, the ANC, but also in terms of, uh, the PAC, which in terms of it's – until its self-destruction – had actually captured that intellectual space.

James Chapnick: Alright, um, I'd also like to ask you, do you think the Civil Rights Movement and the anti-apartheid movement are in any way comparable?

Jeff Peires: Um, I really don't know enough to answer that question. Um, I think there have been, uh, times in the history of South Africa where the models, um – where the

black American struggle, uh, was very, very influential, uh, here in South Africa, and particularly in the 1920s where Marcus Garvey had tremendous impact on black South Africans, and again in the 1940s. This is not something that you read in a book, but if you move around the rural areas – except many people have passed away – um, during the Second World War, uh, there was immense interest among – by black South Africans in what black Americans were doing to, um, improve themselves. Uh, I think, uh, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, um, in the sates, you had got this polarization – I mean we shouldn't really, I don't think, beat about the bush – uh, the issues between the ANC and the PAC were also largely issues between the United States and the Soviet Union, uh, and I think as the ANC was the political movement that was aligned with the Soviet Union, and there was a perception that the PAC was something that was cooked up by the CIA to undermine the ANC. You know, that unfortunately – the level of the rhetoric, and the perceptions – you know, that said I think figures like Martin Luther King are known, and I think Mrs. King was here on a, you know, on a number of occasions. Um, I think another problem in answering your question might be that in the early 1950s, I think maybe, what five, six years, uh, before the Civil Rights, uh, Movement really, um – I think it was about the late '50s, um – was over here, you see in the early '50s with the ANC's Defiance Campaign of 1952, that was when the idea of nonviolent action, which South Africans got from – specifically from India, uh, through the old Natal Indian Congress and Transvaal Indian Congress. Um, and then in 1960, or thereabouts, there's this well known confrontation between the National Executive of the ANC, then underground, and Chief Albert Luthuli, because Luthuli was very reluctant to give up violence, so – Chief Luthuli was very reluctant to give up non-violence, uh, but

the ANC had felt, you know – and this is expressed by many famous statements by Mandela that there comes a time in the life of any people, you know, that you've got to take up arms. So this, this maybe a truism, and also – see the main direct American influence, uh, on the ordinary black people in this country was in Natal through the American Board Mission, and through the institutes through those generations – the Ohlange Institute and Adams College – all of those people that fed into figures like John L. Dube and, indeed, Luthuli himself. So, um – but my uninformed perception would be that, uh, at precisely the time that the American Civil Rights Movement was, um, starting to become more visible to distant countries like ours, was precisely the time that, uh, the ANC, and the PAC even more so, were turning away from non-violence to a far more confrontational, uh, way of expressing themselves.

James Chapnick: Alright. (clears throat) And, could you also describe your role in the Amathole Heritage Institute and the Chris Hani heritage, um, Initiative.

Jeff Peires: I should say, Amathole Heritage Initiative. Um, I don't think my role is really very – a very interesting thing. I think the – these initiatives are very interesting, happily talk about those. You want me to talk about those?

James Chapnick: Please do.

Jeff Peires: Um, okay, the – uh, the first major heritage initiative, uh, that I know of in the Eastern Cape, um – I think you do understand that in the Eastern Cape we have got six

district municipalities, plus one, uh, one metropole, and, um, the, the idea of heritage as a, really a focus of local economic development – uh, because the Department of Arts and Culture, you know, already was beginning to roll out its own kind of, uh, heritage initiatives, but in terms of these heritage trails, they're always connected more with local economic development than, than anything else. There was an idea that, I think a general and a correct perception, that rural communities were being left behind, that I think there was a vastly exaggerated – still is, in my opinion – a vastly exaggerated impression, uh – you know people are always hearing that for every one tourist you create twelve jobs, or every twelve tourists you create one job – whatever you do. Um, and there was sort of an idea that heritage was the kind of tourism (clock chimes) – was a kind of a golden goose that was gonna create jobs in remote areas. So what happened was the then National Director General of Environment and Tourism, uh, who originates from East London, uh, and some of the other important figures on the National Heritage Council, had been very impressed by what was happening on the Natal battlefields, uh, especially the battle site of Isandlwana, uh, in KZN [KwaZulu-Natal] where the, uh, Zulu army overwhelmed the British. Um, and they took a group of about twenty or thirty, sort of, stakeholders, and opinion leaders, etcetera, from the Eastern Cape, uh, on a tour of the KZN battlefields to say "look, this is what people are doing in KZN, uh, all the important battles, you know, in the Eastern Cape were fought in your area, now, why don't you do something about that?" Uh, and the mayor of Amathole, Councilor Sakhumzi Somyo, uh, was one of that group, and he was very much impressed with this, and as the mayor has got a certain discretionary budget, he then set aside from his personal discretion – discretionary budget, uh, funding to kick-start the Amathole, uh, Heritage, um, Initiative, which has

been going since, uh, 2004. And, as I think you know, they have got four different – they've defined four different routes. And then for a route to be a route that can be traveled, you gotta fix the road – the roads that are not fixed. So, so it's got all of those different kind of positive spin-offs, and gives people a sense of identity, and a sense of pride. Um, but the, the other one, the one that I've been personally more involved with, although I was also involved the Amathole Initiatve – uh, really it arose out of a visit of President Mbeki to, uh, Kantolo, which is the home village of O. R. Tambo, uh, deep in Bizana, in Transkei. And they were horrified, the President was horrified that more than ten years after the advent of democracy and Kantolo is still going backwards, and he said "look, we, we have to do something here, can't just leave this place," and they conceived the idea of building, you know, O. R. Tambo Memorial House, Memorial Library. But people aren't gonna go driving out to the wilds of Bizana, it's gotta be part of something bigger. So they conceived this, this route, uh, running from Bizana up to Umtata, uh, because you've got the Nelson Mandela museum in Umtata, and they appointed a Mr. Mdikane to coordinate, uh, the, the National Heritage Route. Uh, but then after that, uh, this was taken up by Councilor Mafuza Sigabi, the mayor of Chris Hani District Municipality, and then he again used his personal authority and his discretionary budgets to kick-start, um, the Liberation Heritage Route. Um, I think the Liberation Heritage Route, to a much great – uh, Chris Hani – I don't mean Chris Hani the person, I mean Chris Hani the, the district – it's far more focused specifically on liberation issues. Um, the, the, the one of Amathole, it's much more, much more general.

James Chapnick: Now, you mentioned before that these initiatives are very much tied to economic development. Does it ever become a problem when you're trying to create a route that will attract tourists, that you also are accurately representing history?

Jeff Peires: Um, I don't, I don't think this is a problem. I think that, um, you can only – you can only really (pause) – we try to be community driven in everything that we do, and you can only really commemorate something that local people still remember, and still feel strongly about. I mean, you can tell people "something important happened here," but if they don't know it and they don't feel it – so, okay, it's something that happened, not something that means anything to them. So we've really, uh, been trying to deliberate about which, uh, which are the important sites, which are the sites you're gonna identify as Liberation Heritage Icons. Uh, we tried all sorts of criteria, we just threw them all away, and at the end we just decided to go with those sites which the communities feel are, uh, you know, are important.

James Chapnick: Okay, well I think that just about covers everything. Is there anything you would like to add? (referring to Professors Jeremy Ball and Amy Wlodarski)

Amy Wlodarski: Um, only because we've been there, and it would be lovely to have your opinion on three sites of memory that we visited, uh, in the last week. So I'll just name them for you, and you can respond and then I'll name the next one. So, Robben Island, what are your impressions of how Robben Island has dealt with commemorating memory?

Jeff Peires: Well, first of all, I should say I've not been to Robben Island for, for many, many years. I was there when they – when it started, but what I found most distressing about Robben Island was, uh – I mean as a heritage site and how it was managed as a heritage site – uh, I thought it was a much too much of a controlled environment. Uh, there's a lot to see on Robben Island, there's a lot to do on Robben Island. Um, there's, uh, you know, it used to be a leper institution, it used to be a – I mean, Mandela and those people were not the very first people that were put to work in the limestone, uh, quarry. Um, when I was there, which was a long time ago, it was very, very rigidly done. I don't think there's any problem with having, you know, ex-political prisoners, uh, sharing their experiences with people, but I think that they would need to, to maximize the site. People should also be given the opportunity to wander around themselves, and, uh, do what they want. I was desperately keen to see, uh, part of the island called Murray's Bay, which is where, uh, the prophet Makana, uh, and, and his confederates stole the whale boats in their attempt to reach shore, and some of them did, you know – they didn't all drown.[3] Uh, but it just want on the program, it couldn't be allowed, so, uh, I understand they've had a lot of problems there. But, um, to me, uh, you got to respect your visitors, and you got to, you got – let them do what they want, and that wasn't happening in Robben Island. I think it is – from what I've heard – it is a lot more, uh, it's a lot less controlled now than it used to be, but I'm – I still figure they, they should let all sorts of people in there doing all sorts of things. It's a nice enough site to accommodate everyone.

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[3] Makana is also known as Nxele.

Amy Wlodarski: The second one is the Amathole Heritage Musuem here in King William's Town.

Jeff Peires: Um, I think the problem that the Amathole Museum had is that it was initially conceived as a museum of natural history. I think it's an outstanding museum of natural history. It's got, for a small town like this, it's got the second biggest, uh, collection of mammals and stuff. Uh, but then you have to like mammals, which not all of us do. Um, I think the leadership of the museum has transformed it to a considerable extent as an educational resource for the people of King William's Town. Um, I presume you've seen what they call their Xhosa Gallery, and of course having staff members there that are extremely knowledgeable, uh, about, about herbs, uh – I mean, you know, the problem is when you see it in a museum everything looks, like, very obvious, you know, as if, you know, you could go and pick up those grasses any old place, and you, you don't really understand, uh, you know, the effort that goes into putting everything in front of you like that. So I think it's a magnificent educational resource, but, uh, I think it's – and I think the, the staff there, and the leadership that they've had in the past been very dedicated and committed, but I don't think they've had the kind of breakthrough to the public consciousness. I mean, they tried all sorts of things, they even – a couple of years ago – they even had a competition in the local paper that, uh, you know, you could go in the museum, and if you could recognize, you know, the thing that had appeared in the paper, uh, you know, you could win something or other. And this was all, all historical and cultural stuff, so I think they've been trying to transform, and certainly if you go there on a normal day, you know during school term, you find hundreds of people kind of trekking

around, and, um, I think that gets – but it's…. There needs to be a culture in the country of recreational viewing. Uh, personally, I think you should get some live snakes in there, or a couple of dolphins, you know. (people in the room laughing) No, it did wonders for Port Elizabeth, you know, I've been there to Bay World. People go there to check the dolphins, and they pick up some culture along the way, I think. It's the same thing with Amathole – people go there to see, you know, the famous hippo. I presume they told you about the curse of Huberta – and I think they might just, uh, stop, you know, on their way. And so I think they're trying, I think they're really trying.

Amy Wlodarski: The third one is the Bhisho Massacre site.

Jeff Peires: Um, I think that there – well, first of all, I mean, again I shouldn't say this on the camera – at least that site is now being kept clean. Uh, for a long time, you know, it was a huge problem with accumulation of our rubbish. I think what's badly needed there, uh, is some kind of display, you know, some kind of little house, uh, maybe with a sort of roll of honor of everybody who was killed. Uh, but just to say, you know, that people were marching up from here, and the soldiers were standing there, and, they tried to break out through this hole in the fence, and was the hole put there on purpose, or, you know, but that whole, whole history of where was Gqozo.

Um, you know, you know—I mean, the whole trial, uh, was totally mismanaged because the guys—the soldiers that were put on trial were the soldiers that were directly facing the, the, the people who were trying to storm Bhisho. So, I mean, there was some kind of excuse for self-defense, which they, of course, used. But there was

another whole bunch of soldiers that were not actually in the direct line of the, you know, of the march. They opened fire from the side, uh, you know, and if they put those guys on trial there would never have been any, uh, argument about self-defense. You switch off the camera I'll tell you something else about the Bhisho Massacre.

[End of Tape]