

BECOMING WORTHY ANCESTORS

ARCHIVE,
PUBLIC DELIBERATION
AND IDENTITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Benedict *Anderson* Kwame Anthony *Appiah*
Martin *Bernal* Pumla Dineo *Gqola* Carolyn
Hamilton Xolela *Mangcu* Ntongela *Masilela*
Frederick *Van Zyl Slabbert*

Edited by
Xolela Mangcu

BECOMING WORTHY ANCESTORS

ARCHIVE,
PUBLIC DELIBERATION AND IDENTITY
IN SOUTH AFRICA

To Jo-Anne

With Gratitude.

Best
Xolela
24/09/11

Edited by
Xolela Mangcu

Julien

To forgotten histories

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PREFACE

XOLELA MANGCU

In 2006 my colleague Carolyn Hamilton invited me to be a fellow in the Constitution of Public Intellectual Life Project at Wits University. The aim of the fellowship was to deepen and broaden discussions around the role of the archive in South Africa. I took up this question in relation to the making of a new South African identity asking: why does it matter that nations should care for their archives, and that they should develop a sense of shared identity? And why should these processes take place in the public domain? How could nations possibly speak about a shared sense of identity in pluralistic societies where individuals and groups also have multiple identities? And how, as Hamilton asks in her essay in this volume, can such conversations be given relevance in public discussions of reconciliation and development in South Africa?

In order to problematise these questions I thought it would be useful to invite outside scholars to join local commentators in a series of public deliberations on the contestations of archive and identity that often characterise new nations. The outside scholars I invited are regarded as leading authorities on questions of national identity and archive in the world.

In my essay, which opens the discussion in this book, I describe as evidentiary genocide the denial of the role of the Black Consciousness Movement and the Pan Africanist movement in the narrative of democracy in South Africa. In fact, denial is only part of the story. Even more dangerous has been the 're-presentation' of black consciousness as a nativist movement – quite the furthest from what it was, and from Steve Biko's description of black identity in strictly political (as opposed to biological) terms. Aimé Césaire once said that 'blackness is historical and there is nothing biological about it.'¹ The exclusion and then 're-presentation' of black consciousness from

the public archive has had deleterious effects on our political culture, particularly in terms of how we think about identity, progress and development – a point that Carolyn Hamilton also makes in her chapter, which closes this volume.

In his chapter, Ntongela Masilela seeks to redress what Hamilton calls 'the neglect and negation of the archive of black intellectual history'. Masilela has put together the most comprehensive online archive on black intellectual history, giving truth to Edward Said's argument about how the Internet has altered the inert concept of the archive we have inherited from the past. Titled the New African Movement, the website brings to life the contributions of nineteenth and twentieth century black intellectuals such as Tiyo Soga, John Tengo Jabavu, WB Rubusana, Magema Fuze, SEK Mqhayi, WW Gqoba, Sol Plaatje, RV Selope Thema, HIE Dhlomo and Benedict Vilakazi. While Masilela's primary motivation is to redress the negation of the archive of black intellectual history, his website is also racially and ethnically quite eclectic. It also includes scholars, writers and political figures with varying political and intellectual outlooks – from nineteenth century missionaries such as John William Colenso and Alexander Kerr to Mohandas Gandhi, Clement Martyn Doke, Fatima Meer, Alex La Guma, Peter Abrahams and many others. Masilela's essay is an example of what is possible when scattered materials are convened as an archive. In mapping the transmission lines of the circulation of ideas among the New Africans, Masilela uses his web archives to make a contribution to the reconfiguring of the 'archive'. Later in this volume Carolyn Hamilton describes the archive as 'the circumscribed body of knowledge of the past that is historically determined as that which is available for us to draw on when thinking about the past'. In his chapter, Masilela gives close attention to the formation of intellectual constellations and draws our attention to the processes by which the intellectuals of what became known as the New African Movement sought, as early as the mid-nineteenth century, to imagine a new African modernity. Their modernity incorporated the African past in ways very different from the intellectual texts

of European modernity, effectively using the new newspapers of the time as the setting for public deliberation on African modernity. Masilela's essay in this volume emphasises a long tradition of problematisation, whether of the ideas of tradition and chieftaincy, the popular and the classical, or of modernity and collective democratic leadership. It is, in that sense, a much needed antidote to nativist essentialism.

The late Frederick van Zyl Slabbert takes up the theme of the use of the past to suit present-day ideological interests, and puts the accent on individual notions of identity. According to Slabbert, the past is being selectively drawn upon in South Africa today to establish Africanism in an exclusive sense as the new dominant ideology. Taking as his starting point Thabo Mbeki's 1996 'I am an African' speech, Slabbert offers a critique of the concept of 'African-ness' as a value-laden ideological concept of nationality, ethnicity and race. While Mbeki's speech contained an inclusive vision of the African, the current political climate makes it clear that a coloured, Indian or white person is not generally seen as an African. Slabbert takes his cue from the so-called 'National Question' outlined in the ANC journal *Umrabulo* No. 23 and put before the ANC National Congress in June 2005, which is about 'the liberation of Blacks in general and Africans in particular'. To Slabbert, the racialisation of public policy through affirmative action and black economic empowerment programmes go against the non-racial idealism in Mbeki's speech. In his view, the moment one moves away from a geographical definition of the African one enters a world of ideological agendas and value judgments. He asserts that he is African because he is from Africa, because he grew up and lives in South Africa and because he has a South African identity document. He concludes on an uncompromising note: by inventing the past to suit current ideological pursuits, it becomes more difficult to avoid repeating mistakes in dealing with the problems of the present. Slabbert's essay thus prompts us to consider how an exclusionary discourse of Africanism can work to alienate significant sections of the population. Equally, Slabbert's contribution draws

our attention to the challenges that face white South Africans as they grapple with their African identity and in assuming their responsibilities as citizens who can enter spaces of public deliberation as individuals committed to the problematisation of identity.

Martin Bernal's challenge is the critical excavation of the archive to back claims of human achievement. I have known Martin Bernal from my student days at Cornell University in the early to mid-1990s. Anyone interested in the role of Africa in the world would have been attuned to the heated debates that came in the wake of the publication of *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Western Civilization*. The *Black Athena* series is now widely regarded as a watershed in the study of African origins of Western civilisation, effectively challenging the way European scholarship has denied and suppressed Africa's contribution to the West. In the first two volumes of *Black Athena*, Bernal presented archaeological and philosophical evidence of Africa's contribution. In the third and final volume (of which his lecture provided a preview), Bernal offers linguistic evidence of Africa's contribution to Greek civilisation. He argues that since about 40 per cent of Greek vocabulary is of Egyptian origin one does not have to be a racial nativist to make and sustain the claim that Africa was the fount of European civilisation. This argument is likely to spark as much controversy as did the previous two volumes, which attracted the criticism of those who said they were methodologically flawed; the praises of those who felt vindicated in their claims of African civilisation; the disapproval of those who argue that black scholars have made similar points before; and the outright opposition of conservatives such as Mary Leifkowitz who edited a critical volume on Bernal entitled *Not Out of Africa: How Afrocentrism Became an Excuse to Teach Myth as History*. Leifkowitz, a well-known classisist and conservative activist ironically accuses Bernal of lack of objectivity and of presenting mythology as history. But Bernal concedes that all intellectual work is ultimately political. Bernal refuses to be co-opted by purists of the 'out of Africa' variety or yield to the criticism of the 'not

out of Africa' variety. 'I am the enemy of purity,' he famously declared in his lecture, arguing that ancient Egypt was just as diverse as is human society but that there can be no questioning that Egypt is the vortex out of which early Greek philosophers were educated and inspired. Bernal argues that Egypt's role was a widely acknowledged fact until the rise of racism and anti-Semitism in nineteenth century Europe. This was left out of the colonial archive so as to provide new ideological underpinnings for modern racism and colonial rule.

Pumla Gqola argues against the popular conception that there is an absence of women intellectuals in the public domain, and suggests that in looking for the intellectual contributions of black women we should go beyond the nightly television news to other outlets and publications in which women intellectuals are actively involved. She also suggests that the best way to understand black women's intellectual contribution is to read against the grain of the inherited archive – instead of looking at women's intellectual history as a linear, teleological development we should pay close attention to some of the contradictions that have emerged and that may not fit a singular narrative. For example, while it is often assumed that people like Phyllis Ntantala, Epainette Mbeki and many others were simply following and supporting their husbands in the liberation struggle, Gqola demonstrates that many of these partnerships were forged by women and men who came independently into the liberation movement. The narrative of the 'supportive' spouse has to be critically examined.

Kwame Anthony Appiah traces the modern nation state back to 1648, when the Treaty of Westphalia divided the Holy Roman Empire into a collection of largely German speaking nation-states each with its own sovereign. Something more, however, was required for the modern nation state to emerge, and that quality is what Johann Friedrich Herder has called its '*volksgeist*' or national ethnos. Appiah problematises the idea of a common heritage or a common 'national ethnos' that often informs the formation of the nation state. The idea of a common heritage is sustained not only by denying the reality

that individuals and communities have different recollections of the past, but also that they choose what to remember on the basis of present-day political exigencies. The production of the past, and the very archives out of which that past is produced, is always a matter of present-day decisions and choices, of exercises of power and acts of resistance: 'In truth, national history is a question of what we choose to remember, not just in the sense of which facts we use for our public purposes, but equally in the sense that we choose which facts actually count as ours.' Appiah invites us then to look closely at how we decide which facts will count as ours, pointing out that how we make those decisions determines our future. 'South African identity, like that of any living nation, is a work in progress. Its meaning will repose in an archive that remains to be written.' He also counsels that ultimately it is not nations that remember, but individuals who play that important role in the making of the archive. The remembering, however, does not take place in a vacuum, for the recognition of individuality is not the same thing as individualism; people live in the context of relationships with others who collectively shape their identities, with the state, educational institutions and the media also playing a crucial role in the making of identity. Appiah argues that nationality is only one aspect of an individual identity. Ultimately, people are more than their identities, they also have identity interests, which can either be fulfilled or undermined by public policy.

Benedict Anderson is one of the world's foremost scholars of nationalism, and his work *Imagined Communities*² is arguably the most frequently cited book on nationalism and national identity. Drawing on his more recent work, the article *On the Goodness of Nations*, Anderson urges us to consider afresh the nature of the social glue that brings nations together, to what extent it is squeezed out of the past, and the extent to which it can be set in the present so as to imagine a collective future. If Appiah is less sanguine about collective imagination, Anderson draws on Max Weber's argument that we ought to be 'worthy ancestors' – hence the title of this book – to the

future unborn, the future that thus imposes obligations on the present to be preserved and actively to cultivate the goodness of the nation. The second source of this goodness of nations comes from obligations imposed on the present by the past or the innocent dead. Anderson notes the way in which the nation rummages through its archive to find worthy ancestors from its past, and embarks on continuous processes of memorialisation. The third source of this goodness lies in the present, and is particularly about how the nation treats its children as 'innocent' by, *inter alia*, not allowing them to vote, which absolves them from the atrocities that characterise the life of the modern nation (of which genocide is the most chilling). In *The Age of Extremes*, Eric Hobsbawm argues that modern technology turned the killing and maiming of large numbers of people into impersonal warfare: 'so the world accustomed itself to the compulsory expulsion and killing on an astronomical scale, phenomena so unfamiliar that new words had to be invented for them "stateless (apatride) and genocide".'³ For Anderson, the preoccupation of social groups and nations is not happiness in heaven or torment in hell: it is the quite earthly possibility of extinction through genocide. Anderson believes that the goodness of nations, which can be expressed through shame at the behavior of one's nation towards others, serves as an antidote to such destructive forces.

Carolyn Hamilton's essay goes to the crux of the matter, which is how the archive becomes the source of authority for making claims about the past in order to justify present-day actions and policies. Hamilton makes a useful distinction between 'archive' and 'archives'. 'Archive' is an epistemological concept that circumscribes what evidence from the past is considered legitimate or is to be included in the narrative of the nation. 'Archives' refers to the actual storehouse of collected materials from the past. Both archive and archives constitute what Hamilton describes as 'the archive.'

Logically, then, the archive is a source of contestation, and this is precisely why public deliberation is vital to discussions of the archive. Hamilton notes that the South African government

has convened a Habermasian public sphere through public institutions and policies, particularly around the three themes of reconciliation, development and identity politics. However, this public sphere is equally inflected with power, which leads to 'the exiling of unwanted memories', various forms of cultural conservatism and nativism and the corralling and silencing of dissentient voices. Not only is the archive compromised but there also tends to be a bias towards heritage discourses over archival ones. At the heart of the chapter is a call for new archival discourses informed by the principle of public accessibility and an ongoing responsibility of citizens to engage with the archive in both its epistemological political sense and as the storehouse of materials from the past.

Hamilton identifies areas where the engagement with the archive should take place. For example, she argues that there is in South Africa a palpable hunger for literature, whether in the form of novels or memoirs. These forms of affective expression need an engagement with the archive – but an engagement that is outside the evidentiary paradigm and practices of much archival work: 'the vitality of discourse in these areas is because they are regarded as creative and as being concerned with affect, as opposed to reason, evidence and history'. Literature often involves the telling of multiple truths, and thus tends to leave the formal archive and its certitudes wanting. Hamilton also calls for greater engagement between the archive and the political arena. This is important if we are to avoid the insider/outsider narratives that have had chilling effects, sometimes even involving genocide.

The participants in the original series of deliberations took up my questions in a range of different ways. Some of the contributions are distinctly scholarly, others polemical, invocative or recuperative. I have retained the unevenness of the original series in this volume in order to ensure that the significance of each distinctive response is registered on the terms in which it was offered. The chapters also retain the colloquial and accessible format of the public lecture in an effort to provide effective entry points into the various authors' larger,

and sometimes more esoteric, bodies of work. This book is not without limitations. One of those is the tentative nature of the essays, particularly those written by foreign scholars, a quality that is far more honourable than the presumptuousness that has characterised much of the writing about Africa. As Kwame Anthony Appiah puts it: 'South African identity, like that of any living nation, is a work in progress. Its meaning will repose in an archive that remains to be written.' The critical message of this book is that the writing of that archive must be an integral part of our public life, involving a continual opening and democratisation of the already convened public sphere through ongoing public deliberation.

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EVIDENTIARY GENOCIDE: INTERSECTIONS OF RACE, POWER AND THE ARCHIVE

1

XOLELA MANGCU

MEMORY, POWER AND NATION BUILDING

Central to this book are questions of memory, archive, identity and public deliberation. These chapters consider why it matters that nations should care for their archives, and why those archives should inform discussions about a sense of shared identity. I deliberately distinguish between shared identity and common identity, for while we cannot speak of a common identity and experiences, even within a group of people, the concept of 'shared identity', by definition, suggests the existence of multiple individuals and groups who have a stake in the continued existence of the nation.

But this book does not seek to settle age-old debates about shared identity in pluralist societies. Its aim is to highlight how the archive is often employed to make certain identity claims and, in the process, to privilege certain identities' histories over others. At its worst, this claim-making leads to the genocide of individuals and groups in the name of the nation or, conversely, the genocide of the nation in the name of groups. As Benedict Anderson puts it in his chapter: 'No nation looks forward to happiness in Heaven, or torment in Hell. What it fears is the quite earthly: the possibility of extinction through genocide.' To use a cliché, memory becomes the weapon, quite literally.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu has explained the role that memory plays in affirming individual and group identity – but also as a weapon of extinction:

My identity is linked very intimately to my memory ...
What I know is what I remember, and that helps to make

NTONGELA MASILELA

The duty of Bantu intellectuals is to create an intellectual awakening which will stimulate thought and set our faculties in motion. This can only be done by organisation, by lectures, debates, reading and writing. Therefore it is important that the educated men of our race should interest themselves in institutions whose aims and objects are the intellectual and spiritual development of the race.¹

Will our intellectuals be equal to this test? When time comes for constructive thinking and planning will our leaders give a lead on behalf of their people or will they, in turn, be led by the nose by leaders of other races who can be depended upon to seize any opportunity to speak for their followers? Time will show. But we fear that unless our intellectuals get into the sufferings of their people; and weave themselves into their unvoiced fears and anxieties they will never speak the feelings of the people.²

THE NEW AFRICAN MOVEMENT AND ITS BEGINNINGS: FROM
SOGA TO MQHAYI TO SEME

One fundamental issue encountered in the reconstruction of South African intellectual and cultural history in accordance with the newly emergent epistemic paradigm of the New African Movement is that of establishing a conceptual structure of its periodisation. With whom or with what governing idea should this periodising begin, and how should its end be determined? In his magisterial work *Beginnings*, Edward Said taught generations of postcolonial intellectuals and Third World scholars that the beginnings of intellectual processes

SOME DO CONTEST THE ASSERTION THAT I AM AN AFRICAN

3

FREDERIK VAN ZYL SLABBERT

A few introductory remarks about my own philosophical development will help to contextualise the issue that I want to focus on. The issue is on the one hand an invented historiography – the invention of history – and the harm it does to a society; and then, on the other hand, the use of race as an instrument of policy implementation.

I must say at the outset that for me the concept 'race' has no scientific basis whatsoever, but the fact that people believe it makes it real in its consequences; and it is those consequences that we have to deal with most of the time.

The Nationalist Party came to power in 1948. I was at that time in Standard One at Jan Cilliers Laerskool here in Parkview. My classmates were Hendrik Verwoerd, Nico Diederichs and MC Botha – obviously, the sons of the fathers of the Nationalist Party.

After Standard One I was whisked away with my twin sister to Marabastad farm school, 17 miles this side of Polokwane (it's no longer called Marabastad, I think it's called Eerstegoud). There, for the very first time, I really saw and experienced the tail end of Afrikaner poor white-ism. Those were seriously, seriously poor people, and although my grandfather could afford shoes for me, the idea was that we would not wear shoes so as not to shame those who could not afford them, so we all walked around barefoot, winter and summer, and I felt at the end of the winter that I could dropkick a brick from the quarter-line over the poles.

I went to Pietersburg High School and for various reasons became born-again and decided I wanted to become a *dominee* (a priest). I went to Wits University for my first year because there I could do classical studies such as Greek and Latin but

MARTIN BERNAL

In both imagination and reality, Ancient Greece is central to European identity. Since the early nineteenth century, northern Europeans have projected onto the Ancient Greeks all that they like to think good about themselves. They see Greece as the source of poetry, art, philosophy, science, freedom and democracy. They also see its culture as essentially having created itself, through what is called 'the Greek Miracle'. This is seen to have led directly and inexorably to the triumphs of modern 'Western Civilisation'.

By contrast, Ancient Egypt is portrayed as 'exotic' or 'other,' a rich and fascinating culture but essentially sterile and having contributed little or nothing to the mainstream of world history. In my series with the general title *Black Athena*¹ I have argued that both of these images are flawed. Far from being essentially European, Ancient Greece was not pure but thoroughly hybrid, and its undoubted creativity came precisely from that hybridity. Furthermore, the main outside influences on Greece, and those that introduced urban civilisation to the Aegean, came from Egypt and Syro-Palestine.

Opponents of Afrocentrism argue that Egypt was not really part of Africa and stress the fact that it lies on the continent's north east corner. They do not note that the same argument could be used to detach Greece from the rest of Europe because of its peripheral position on the continent.

The Africanity of Egypt can be set out in a number of ways. The first and most obvious is that Egypt is geographically part of the African continent. Furthermore, Egypt has always been connected to central and eastern Africa by the Nile. In this it is unlike, for example, the Maghreb in north west Africa, which for the last four thousand years has been largely – though not entirely – cut off from the rest of the continent by the Sahara.

PUMLA DINEO GQOLA

Nationalism is a contradictory, rather than coherent discourse: its internal contradictions are laid bare in its female figures, in gendered tropes that are inherently unstable.¹

[I]t is perceived as the norm that men will not only lead [political] processes, but also that their participation is never questioned or subject to scrutiny and debate in the same manner as women's participation or leadership roles. This reinforces the notion that conflict, politics and peace building processes are vividly about male power and domination.²

It is one of the ironies of history that the most pervasive and total oppression, the oppression of women, has been to a large extent neglected by scholars within the ranks of the movement. This can be explained, in part, by the male chauvinism which has been the bane of colonial liberation movements, and also the imprecise terms in which we discuss the future socio-economic order we envisage for a free South Africa. And yet, the success or otherwise of our struggle may depend on the extent to which we are able to involve as wide as possible a front of liberation forces against the oppressor regime.³

This paper moves from the premise that there are various Black women's intellectual legacies in South Africa and that they are not self-evident is due to a variety of racialised and gendered processes that mask, mythologise and delegitimise women's agency. Women are (dis)remembered and celebrated similarly across academic, political and other public spheres. On the one hand, we find women in stereotypical, stoic, mother roles,

KWAME ANTHONY APPIAH

ACCOUNTS OF IDENTITY

To make sense of what we now call 'identity' in our public and private lives, it helps to understand the central elements that all identities share, so let me begin by offering my own account of identity, which explains how identities work by talking about the labels for them. Take some identity-label (it doesn't matter which it is): South African, male, Catholic, lesbian, Swazi, Swede ... everything I say here is meant to apply to all of them.

My story has four elements: ascription, identification, treatment and norms of identification. Let me now say a little more about each of these four elements, beginning with *ascription*. The criteria of *ascription* are the properties on the basis of which we sort people into those to whom we do, and those to whom we don't, ascribe an identity label. People will rarely agree on exactly which properties people of a certain identity must have. Are people of European ancestry really Zimbabwean? Are Muslims really French? One form of identity politics involves negotiation of the boundaries of various groups. If being a devout Muslim is inconsistent with being French, you might not be able to go to a state school with your hijab on. If being white is inconsistent with being Zimbabwean, then you might not get the vote.

Next: *identification*. When a person thinks of herself as, let us say, Swedish, in the relevant way, she identifies as Swedish. This means she sometimes feels like or acts as a Swede, and will sometimes respond affectively in a way that depends on that identity, may feel proud of a fellow national who has just won a race at the Olympics.

BENEDICT ANDERSON

THE ORIGINS OF NATIONALISM

South Africa is a good place to have a conversation about the goodness of the nation. If one looks at the immediate historical origins of nationalism, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, one realises that it arose in the context of a wider popular involvement in projects of emancipation. Jefferson's famous Declaration of Independence speaks in the name of 'The People', but this people has as yet no name. The French Revolution had a huge impact in Europe, the Americas, the Caribbean, and later in Asia and Africa, precisely because of its universalist message, not its local 'Frenchness'. In the nineteenth century, nationalism typically was found in popular movements against emperors, monarchs, and aristocracies, and nationalists in different regions regarded themselves as 'brothers' in a common struggle. The same was true for much of the decolonisation movements of the twentieth century. Nkrumah, Nehru, Tito, Touré, Sukarno and U Nu had all grown to manhood under imperial rule of different kinds, and felt their affinities keenly, even when they did not like each other much on a personal level. Only after the First World War, however, did the nation state become 'normal' across the globe with the initiation of the League of Nations.

At the same time, however, nationalism now has a long enough history for anyone to recognise its dark side. Almost all modern nations are divided along the lines of class, religious affinity, ethnicity, gender, ideology and generation. Many of them have behaved very badly at times, to their own members and to neighbours, and have fallen under the control of corrupt, cruel, and/or incompetent leaders. Why then do nations

CAROLYN HAMILTON

INTRODUCTION

The past – often the site of contestation, frequently harnessed to projects of the present as their justification or explanation, and sometimes pursued for pure interest and pleasure – is the object of continual public, political and academic attention. But does *archive* matter?

Archive obviously matters to anyone who is interested in what proof there is supporting any particular version of the past being promoted, for archive is understood to be the site of the evidence and in the face of such interest it matters whether the evidence is preserved. It follows that archival security matters to those who actively research the past and those in whose care evidence is reposed. Indeed, historical researchers, genealogists and archivists campaign actively for well-managed archives – in South Africa, almost two decades after the transition to democracy, they are ringing alarm bells, raising concerns about inadequate preservatory conditions, poorly-managed institutions, and a worrying lack of skills among archival staff. But does archive matter to everyone else and, if so, in what ways?

In order adequately to pose and answer that question, this essay first unsettles the term 'archive' a little, and then considers the unsettled form in relation to three issues, the identified South African national priorities of ensuring reconciliation, development and social cohesion, in which matters of redress and imagined futures are tied up with each other. Through this focus, the essay offers a perspective on the significance, and the current state, of the relationship between public deliberation and archive in South Africa. It explores the legacy of

Becoming Worthy Ancestors is, in my view, an important addition to the body of scholarship on the significant role that archive plays in the shaping of identity politics and in the opening up of democratic spaces for public deliberation and general knowledge production.

— James Ogude, Professor of African Literature and Cultures,
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Becoming Worthy Ancestors is in part a response to the coarseness of contemporary public discourse in South Africa. Increasingly, political leaders have taken to the podium to deny the role played by different segments of the liberation movement in the attainment of democracy, and have used race and ethnicity as political and economic weapons to silence detractors and to denigrate entire communities. In their different ways, the contributors to this book suggest that the archive (our collective memory of the past) can stand as a reminder of the finest traditions of the struggle for democracy and as a bulwark against political recidivism.

The Constitution of Public Intellectual Life Project at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in 2006 convened a series of lectures on how the archive can inform public deliberation about identity and citizenship, and thereby enable us to become worthy ancestors to future generations. In a changed (and, some might say, degraded) environment of public dialogue, the book goes back to those lectures in the hope of inspiring a re-thinking of what it means to have an inclusive conception of citizenship in South Africa.

XOLELA MANGCU, previously a fellow at The Constitution of Public Intellectual Life Project, is now based at the University of Johannesburg. He is Non-resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, Washington D.C.



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