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John: Tony, perhaps we could start with an overview of the whole process of your work as a cartoonist, before we come to the detail.

Tony: John I’ll describe the process. The first thing is that a cartoonist’s job is not a 9 – 5 job. I have, or pick up, ideas, inspirations and concentrate on things throughout my working day, and when I’m lying in bed at night; it’s just things that are on my mind.

John: In fact, I imagine that it’s quite often particularly when you’re relaxed, isn’t it … In the bath or lying in bed?

Tony: Oh yes. In a bath, indeed … lying in bed, or musing on things. Something just pops up, and I might wake up at night … it’s been a sleepless period … Something on my mind that just jels. I do like to keep a pencil at the bedside just in case. Cartoons are at their best when they are in opposition. That is why I found the Mandela era quite difficult, because you know I was having to deal with a moral icon, a person who was modest, didn’t have any superior or jumped-up ideas about himself, unlike other politicians that I could mention from previous eras, who were easier to deal with. The apartheid era I found I was at my best, because I felt that I was very much more passionate about issues at stake then. The injustice was horrendous, the folly being pursued by the government at the time was absolutely unbelievable, and I think professionally speaking it was my most inspirational period. So I think that’s just an observation.

John: It sounds a very important one.

Tony: It’s a very important one.

John: Those issues really engaged you at a gut level?

Tony: They did indeed. I felt quite passionate about things at that time. And then of course we had the transition and Mandela and the ANC coming into power. A hero of the liberation movement taking over the reins of government, and I almost felt quite inhibited because I felt it was unfair to be too critical. Also a cartoon is a very all-or-nothing statement. You criticise, you can’t say “The health services are in a mess, but they found
them in a mess and they haven’t got any money”, all this kind of thing. So you can’t enlarge on the topic, and explain it, so that’s why it was quite difficult at that time to do cartoons, commenting on that.

John: You’re taking a single frame photograph.

Tony: Yes, a single frame photograph, and you can’t fudge it around with explanations, ifs and buts, all that sort of thing. The ANC has been in power for the last seven years, I think it is now. They’ve had quite a lot of time to settle in, and now I’m finding it a bit easier again. I’m not saying it’s like old times.

John: But it’s easier with Mbeki?

Tony: Yes, easier with Mbeki. He has taken up certain positions which I find quite baffling, and I also find far more open to valid criticism, so as a cartoonist having had that interim, I’m back in business. The first thing in the morning is to comb through the news in the Cape Times, because I focus more on the Cape Times as that’s what the readers are familiar with. And decide on the events and the issues that need challenging or commenting about. And having decided on the issue or event, I then decide what I want to say about it. For example the Tony Yengeni thing, purchase of the cut-price Mercedes-Benz.

John: Yes, now, give me some examples of the sort of issues that you might pick up.

Tony: If I wanted to challenge Tony Yengeni and highlight this whole issue of the extraordinary cheap price that he got the Mercedes Benz, I could for example say, do I want to challenge his abuse of his parliamentary position? He being instrumental in actually deciding on of the process of arms procurement. That’s one issue. Or I could say comment on the peculiar fact that he purchased one whole page of the Sunday Times to put his point of view forward …. In fact, it wasn’t the Sunday Times, it was the other newspapers. The question I could possibly ask in the cartoon is where did the funds come from to finance this thing? I mean R250,000 is the sum that has been put forward. Or I could possibly … I mean it is rather a peculiar thing to do … He is responsible to Parliament, he’s the Chief Whip, he should be making his explanations to Parliament not coming out in the public arena and taking up ads in the papers. I mean, it’s all very well saying it pays to advertise, but is this the proper thing to do? Is it appropriate? The other thing of course in this process is to ask, do you focus on Yengeni himself or do you focus on
who made these bribes? … EADS. Should you actually frame the cartoon to ask, what’s
their purpose in issuing these bribes? So there are a number of dimensions to this thing.
That’s the second part of the process.
Then of course you’ve got to decide how to conceptualise the cartoon. Now that is what
you’re concerned with, isn’t it John?
John: And there you’re exploring different kinds of allegories, is that right?

Tony: Yes, there are certain techniques you can use, but this particular cartoon (Cartoon
1) over here is where you can link the issue to an event in the news. And here I’ve linked
this to the time of the Sleeping Giant. It took place just after the Soweto Riots, and here
you have this huge black giant, rousing himself … raising himself to his knees … huge
bulging muscles … I wanted to show respect so I’ve drawn this giant in classical lines …
and it’s a titanic, cataclysmic event. And in contrast you’ve got these rather comical little
Nationalist Government cabinet ministers being shaken about on the surface of the earth.
Now this coincides with the seismic event which took place – I think it was felt in the
Northern Cape. The political earthquake which was taking place is linked to the geological
earthquake which was in fact taking place. Linking these two, it highlights the event in the
minds of the readers because they know about the earthquake and then they see this, and
it’s the association which gives impetus and impact to the cartoon idea.
John: Do you remember how that actually came to you ... I mean it’s a long time ago?
Tony: It is a long time ago. Well, I just thought ... I was just aware of the huge moment when the whole apartheid apparatus was starting to get very, very shaky ... You remember at the time they were trying to adjust it ... with new constitutions and tri-cameral parliaments and all these sort of things. They were obviously trying to do something, which wasn’t working. And then of course because blacks weren’t getting a show-in you had this seismic event. We had two of them, one in 1976, and I think it was a worse one in 1984 when I think the self-confidence, the assurance, of the Nationalist Party who thought they had it all in place for all time, and that they could just keep the blacks suppressed for all time, and their confidence was severely shaken at the time. Contemplating the whole thing, I just saw it as a definitive event, and a seismic upheaval, and I think I just thought “earthquake ... earth-shattering” all these kind of things, and it just naturally fell into position.
There was another time when I used an earthquake as well. There had been an earthquake where the epicentre was as far away as Russia (or the USSR as it was then) which apparently caused the final vibration which caused the rock … the “Finger of God”, as it was called … to topple in Namibia. I had a reference to PW Botha (Cartoon 2), once again using the earth-shattering, earth-shaking events in, not only Soweto, but the Townships round South Africa. There he was, holding up his finger once again, admonishing everybody, but the tip of his finger had broken off, fallen onto the table, and I think somebody, one of his lackeys, or someone in the crowd, was saying that it was an earthquake in Soweto which had caused his finger to fall off. There are two news events here, the earthquake in Russia and this incredible thing of the Finger of God falling in Namibia. The Director of CAFDA said to me “How did you get away with that cartoon?” I said “What do you mean, what was so different about that cartoon that was more actionable than any other cartoons I’d done?” “Well” he said “the allusion was to the Finger of God, and that PW Botha thought that he was God”. It struck me as quite appropriate, though I didn’t think of it consciously, perhaps unconsciously … the thought might have occurred to me, that the Finger of God was how PW thought of himself.

John: Isn’t that precisely why the cartoon is so powerful, because you can’t prove in a Court of Law that you had that particular association in mind at the time?

Tony: No, I don’t think one could.

John: Some people will see it, some people will get it, and some won’t.

Tony: Yes, this is where I have an advantage over my colleagues, of the written word. It would be very difficult for them at that particular time to get up and say “PW Botha thinks he’s God”. Whereas the cartoon in its allusion can say the same thing. So I think at the time I used to get away with a lot more than my colleagues of the printed word. Gerald Shaw used to get quite fed up about it. I could present this simple thing which he took, you know, columns of type to say and then more people looked at that and caught the point.

John: That’s very relevant. I remember a copy of the Mail and Guardian where they printed everything and then blacked out the things that had to be blacked out under the terms of the regulations of censorship at the time, like names of detainees and so forth.

Tony: That’s right. That was quite impactful.
John: That was a way of expressing how powerful censorship of the written word was at the time. But you weren’t under that censorship in the same way.

Tony: Not as much as my fellow journalists certainly. The reason being that the emergency regulations governing the press at the time were so vaguely worded – there were so many grey areas – that it was very difficult for the editor to know where he was. I think I mentioned the metaphor that editing a South African newspaper was like walking blindfold through a minefield. You weren’t quite sure where you were at any time.

John: But also your work was making the links and associations in people’s minds, wasn’t it?

Tony: Oh yes.

John: In a much more subtle way than the written word could do.

Tony: I think so, it’s the allusion and the parody which people read into things. At the same time, I mentioned that I was much freer in commenting about the actions of government at the time. You remember that there were restrictions on taking photographs of the security forces, and I think there were also allusions to making images and things
like that which was quite a grey area. So that rather inhibited me from making drawings of the security forces in action. Parody is a very effective form of ridicule and criticism. At the time I found a very useful device in using that comic strip “The Wizard of Id” (cartoons 3 & 4). Do you remember that?

John: Yes, I do.

Tony: There were a whole range of characters which translated beautifully into the government’s whole theme of oppression, and the individual characters as well, translated very well because there was this jumped-up little autocratic king, a small figure. Now he was a perfect PW Botha (Prime Minister, then President), once I’d given him a big admonishing index finger. And there was that rather gormless stupid knight Sir Rodney, with the big nose. Now he was a perfect Louis Le Grange (Minister of Justice).
And then there were the soldiers themselves. Remember, they had those little conical iron hats with a piece of metal in that protected their noses. Then they had a quiver of arrows, but I replaced the quiver of arrow with a quiver of quirts as they used to call them, politely – remember those whips?

John: Yes I do. I was beaten with them.

Tony: I remember that. I remember you being photographed with the welts across your back. Now you mentioned to take cartoons into a court of law – it’s actually very difficult to prove the allusions that you’re making, because hopefully cartoons are fairly subtle. At least I hope that the cartoons that I devise can be read on these different levels. But the other thing about taking a cartoon into court is that you’re taking a joke into court, and I think the biggest danger you have is actually making a total fool of yourself. Because it’s one thing to logically mount an argument against a report, the lead story or the leading article or something like that, but to mount a logical argument against a parody or a ridiculous cartoon or something like that is another story. You can answer an argument with another argument but it’s difficult to answer a joke with another joke. So I think using that devise, a parody, linking the suppressive events that are taking place with the Wizard of Id cartoon, I got away with a great deal. The Wizard of Id cartoons were the series of cartoons I remember most proudly.

At this point of the interview we focused on a particular Cartoon (5) and the text of the interview is reflected in The Preliminary Study at 4.5.

The last part of the interview is captured below.
Tony: Here’s another one over here (Cartoon 6). Also arms purchases. Though it’s quite interesting, I didn’t pull these two out on purpose, but this also shows government priorities.

This is a cartoon reflecting the government’s priority when it comes to fighting AIDS. Once again I’ve concentrated on the arms deal. I’ve just been baffled by the readiness to invest this huge amount on pretty shaky grounds, I mean both on the perceived enemy and how much it’s going to do for the economy. This talk about guaranteed investments just seems to be pie in the sky.

John: Do you remember how this came to you? Do you remember the process?

Tony: This was done for The Independent, yes. I think it was after Mbeki’s AIDS panel had reported. But I think the two issues, the arms purchases and the AIDS issue (the AIDS issues is such an on-going, huge problem) came into sharp focus at the same time.

Shabalala made one of her usual puzzling statements that the government’s battle against AIDS was predicated on the assumption that HIV and AIDS are linked. You are asking
about the process here...that nightmarish figure is something that stays with me all the time, really, and every time I …

John:  The Grim Reaper …

Tony:  The Grim Reaper … that’s not something that necessarily comes from my unconscious. Everybody identifies with that. I can’t remember … I was just thinking again of the government’s priorities. But clearly a lot more has been spent on this arms purchase than this little catapult down here … the process, yes it’s quite difficult.

John:  It is a sharp contrast between the catapult and this huge gun. Almost a David and Goliath contest.

Tony:  Here the enemy’s AIDS, in this other cartoon I was just discussing now the enemy is poverty, and once again the priorities are highly questionable. Do you want to move on to some other cartoon?
Tony: I think we were talking about this whole question of the removal of the squatters, which took place last week (Cartoon 7). And I was quite preoccupied with the tragic irony of the ANC having to move their own supporters from this piece of desolate ground under the pylons and so on. So the whole question of ground … I am trying to think of the process here … ANC supporters … and the disillusion of these supporters when they realised that it was their own government, whom they had voted for, put into power, and who are now setting out to remove them and their pitiful belongings from this piece of ground (Cartoon 8). And I thought of how it must have struck those people, how disappointed they must have been, and as I was thinking about ground I was thinking about all these associations about ground, what do you do with ground, how do you reflect it … possession of ground … being removed from the ground, and just by a process of association, the idea of *worshipping the ground*. And I thought yes, worshipping the ground that you walk on … they must at one time have worshipped the ground which the ANC walked on. And then I thought, now is that an appropriate thing … does it actually gel as an idea? Does the ANC actually walk on that ground? And then I thought that walking on the ground means you have possession of the ground. And it was appropriate, because the ANC just happened to possess that piece of ground. Isn’t that right? I think it belongs to ESKOM or some quasi government structure. And if they walk on the ground it means that they walk like giants … the government walking over the ground like giants. I am just trying to describe the thoughts that went through my head. The ground that they walked on is the ground that they ruled. I was really thinking more universally than particularly about that patch of ground. So we worship the ground on which the government walks, which is the entire country … they ruled the country, and there you have this chap making a statement saying “I worship the ground the ANC government walked on, that’s until we tried to build a pondock on a little piece of it”. And to me it simply highlighted the whole tragedy of the situation. You know on the surface it’s quite fun, but hopefully it’s quite funny. The response to it was quite positive.
John: I think it catches the tragicomedy of the situation.

Tony: The government has this whole country, and here you’ve got these people wanting just a little piece of it. And I think it also emphasises the fact that all they want is that little piece of ground. They are not asking the government to build a house on it or anything. He’s building his own little house. He’s walking away with little remnants of the house, the piece of corrugated iron, but the government’s got a lot of ground, and once again as I said in that other cartoon they have been pretty tardy about deliverance of this ground. I tried to make the landscape as bleak and shattered as possible. Now I don’t know whether that helps you along a little of the way.

John: Yes, it does, yes indeed.

Tony: I have an advantage of working as a cartoonist in the English language, because the English language is so nuanced, so much ambiguity in it. It’s a language that is just made for punning. People say that punning is a feeble sense of humour, but it works incredibly well for cartoons, because you can make all sorts of allusions with the use of puns.
Like this one, for example. Here’s Helen Susman (iconic Opposition Member of Parliament) saying “what’s going on in Lebowa?”

Tony: And the response “That’s their funeral”. It’s just appropriate to this particular issue where people are being killed by the police and the Minister of Justice was not taking any notice at all – he’s just allowing people to bury their dead and not investigate how people died. And I’m sorry to say that “that’s their funeral” is an appropriate phrase in English to use.

John, I’m quite prepared to have another meeting if you would like to think about what we have discussed.

John: Well, that’s very generous of you, thank you.

Tony: Because you might not be getting quite what you are wanting … I sense.
John: I think we’ve done some extremely valuable and useful stuff. And I think it’s provided a marvellous sort of framework. The thing that I would still like to focus on a bit more is the details of the lived experience of insight.

Tony: Yes, what happens. That’s what I’m worrying about, I’m not quite articulating that. I don’t know whether I’m identifying it.

John: Well, I think it’s very difficult. But maybe over the next few weeks you could become aware of the process.

Tony: You see, I’m not consciously thinking of doing this now. Perhaps I should take a few notes!

John: I don’t know whether you’d be prepared to do that – it might complicate the whole thing for you. But if you would be prepared to think about what’s the actual experience, that would be very exciting for me!

Tony: Yeah. I think that might be the route to go.

John: The word which the existentialists use so much is “lived experience” – the details of the lived experience.

Tony: That’s what you want to put your finger on.

John: I think it’s very difficult to re-capture that, because one doesn’t always remember that as you’re going along. So perhaps that’s something that you would be willing to consider over the next couple of weeks.

Tony: Sure.

John: That’d be very helpful … it would be very exciting. Because the closer we can get to that, the more it’s going to help the particular way that I’m working.

Tony: Sure, sure. Does the framework that I’ve hopefully managed to convey … does that help?

John: Yes absolutely. And you’ve produced some excellent examples. And I would like to reproduce these cartoons and include the Finger of God too, because that’s a lovely example.

Tony: Perhaps I could go through some of the cartoons and maybe I could find ones where – you’d be particularly interested in the cartoon where something just came like that.
John: Yes, I would. Because you described this process, which is quite deliberate, and you’ve described that in good detail. If there was something that came like that, and how it came, or perhaps a part of it came like that and then you had to work on it.

Tony: Also sometimes you think of an idea … which you think will be quite funny … and sometimes even force the framework of the issue into the idea. The concept that you’ve arrived in the process of pondering any particular issue … it sounds quite funny but it doesn’t actually fit the mould, so to speak. And then you start manipulating the whole thing and changing this and that thing … and then eventually it starts to gel. When I start thinking of things I might be able to give you a better specific example.

John: Well, that’d be great. I really appreciate your being so open. It’s also very stimulating for me.

Tony: Well, it’s interesting for me as well, because you just do these things, and you dream away, but it’s really quite interesting to get your analysis, and see what you make of the whole process. I think it’s very valuable to have another pair of eyes and you can probably identify what goes on, better than the person experiencing it.

John: Well, your experience is very important. It’s the primary data. But sometimes sharing it can help us appreciate it more ourselves. I had a very interesting experience of being listened to, and then appreciating and valuing my own experience, as a result of being interviewed by somebody writing a book on the TRC experience. It was after I had given evidence to the TRC about the burning of Crossroads and KTC in May and June 1986. This person drew out some of the implications of what I’d been saying, and had experienced. I found it surprisingly helpful in terms of integrating those powerful experiences in my life although it was painful and puzzling as well as exciting to relive them as I talked about them.

So I hope that sharing your process and experiences of insight may help you appreciate, value and integrate your gifts and hard work too.
Desmond Tutu’s Letter to the Prime Minister: the Result of his Experience of Insight

The Hon. Prime Minister Mr John Vorster
House of Assembly
Cape Town 8000

Dear Mr Prime Minister

This will be my second letter ever to you. In 1972 after I had been refused a passport to take up a post as Associate Director of the Theological Education Fund, I appealed to you to intervene on my behalf with the appropriate authorities. Your intervention was successful because, soon thereafter, the then Minister of the Interior changed his mind and granted me and my family our passports. I am writing, therefore, optimistically in the hope that this letter will have similar happy results for all of us.

I am writing to you, Sir, in all deep humility and courtesy in my capacity as Anglican Dean of Johannesburg and, therefore, as leader of several thousand Christians of all races in the Diocese of Johannesburg. I am writing to you as one who has come to be accepted by some Blacks (i.e. Africans, Indians and Coloureds) as one of their spokesmen articulating their deepest aspirations, as one who shares them with equal steadfastness. I am writing to you, Sir, because I know you to be a loving and caring father and husband, a doting grandfather who has experienced the joys and anguish of family life, its laughter and gaiety, its sorrows and pangs. I am writing to you, Sir, as one who is passionately devoted to a happy and stable family life as the indispensable foundation of a sound and healthy society. You have flung out your arms to embrace and hug your children and your grandchildren, to smother them with your kisses, you have loved, you have wept, you have watched by the bed of a sick one whom you loved, you have watched by the deathbed of a beloved relative, you have been a proud father at the wedding of your children, you have shed tears by the graveside of one for whom your heart has been broken. In short, I am writing to you as one human person to another human person, gloriously created in the image of the selfsame God, redeemed by the selfsame Son of God who for all our sakes died on the Cross and rose triumphant from the dead and reigns in glory now at the right hand of the Father; sanctified by the selfsame Holy Spirit who works inwardly in all of us to change our hearts of
stone into hearts of flesh. I am, therefore, writing to you, Sir, as one Christian to another, for through our common baptism we have been made members of and are united in the Body of our dear Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. This Jesus Christ, whatever we may have done, has broken down all that separates us irrelevantly - such as race, sex, culture, status, etc. In this Jesus Christ we are forever bound together as one redeemed humanity, Black and White together.

I am writing to you, Sir, as one who is a member of a race that has known what it has meant in frustrations and hurts, in agony and humiliation, to be a subject people. The history of your own race speaks eloquently of how utterly impossible it is, when once the desire for freedom and self-determination is awakened in a people, for it to be quenched or to be satisfied with anything less than freedom and that self determination. Your people against tremendous odds braved the unknown and faced up to daunting challenges and countless dangers rather than be held down as a subjugated people. And in the end they emerged victorious. Your people more than any other section of the White community must surely know in the very core of their beings, if they were [not] unaware of the lessons of history both ancient and modern, that absolutely nothing will stop a people from attaining their freedom to be a people who can hold their heads high, whose dignity to be human persons is respected, who can assume the responsibilities and obligations that are the necessary concomitants of the freedom they yearn for with all their being. For most Blacks this can never be in the homelands because they believe they have contributed substantially to the prosperity of an undivided South Africa. Blacks find it hard to understand why the Whites are said to form one nation when they are made up of Greeks, Italians, Portuguese, Afrikaners, French, Germans, English etc., etc.; and then by some tour de force Blacks are said to form several nations - Xhosas, Zulus, Tswanas etc. The Xhosas and the Zulus, for example, are much closer to one another ethnically than, say, the Italians and the Germans in the White community. We all, Black and White together, belong to South Africa against a visiting Argentinian side. The South African team won hands down and perhaps for the first time in our sporting history South Africans of all races found themselves supporting vociferously the same side against a common adversary. The heavens did not fall down. Is it fanciful to see this as a parable of what will happen when all South Africans together are given a stake in their country so that they will be ready to defend it against a common foe and struggle for its prosperity vigorously and enthusiastically?

I write to you, Sir, because our Ambassador to the United Nations, Mr Botha, declared that
South Africa was moving away from discrimination based on race. This declaration excited not only us but the world at large. I am afraid that very little of this movement has been in evidence so far. It is not to move substantially from discrimination when some signs are removed from park benches. These are only superficial changes which do not fundamentally affect the lives of Blacks. Husbands and fathers are still separated from their loved ones as a result of the pernicious system of migratory labour which a D.R.C. Synod once castigated as a cancer in South African society, one which had deleterious consequences on Black family life, thus undermining the stability of society which I referred to earlier. We don't see this much longed-for movement when we look at the overcrowded schools in Black townships, at the inadequate housing and woefully inadequate system of transport etc.

I write to you, Sir, to give you all the credit due to you for your efforts at promoting detente and dialogue. In these efforts many of us here wanted to support you eagerly, but we feel we cannot in honesty do this, when external detente is not paralleled by equally vigorous efforts at internal detente. Blacks are grateful for all that has been done for them, but now they claim an inalienable right to do things for themselves, in co-operation with their fellow South Africans of all races.

I write to you, Sir, because like you, I am deeply committed to real reconciliation with justice for all, and to peaceful change to a more just and open South African society in which the wonderful riches and wealth of our country will be shared more equitably. I write to you, Sir, to say with all the eloquence I can command that the security of our country ultimately depends not on military strength and a Security Police being given more and more draconian power to do virtually as they please without being accountable to the courts of our land, courts which have a splendid reputation throughout the world for fairness and justice. That is why we have called and continue to call for the release of all detainees or that they be brought before the courts where they should be punished if they have been found guilty of indictable offences. There is much disquiet in our land that people can be held for such long periods in detention and then often either released without being charged or, when charged, usually acquitted; but this does not free them from police harassment. Though often declared innocent by the courts, they are often punished by being banned or placed under house arrest or immediately re-detained. How long can a people, do you think, bear such blatant injustice and suffering? Much of the White community by and large, with all its prosperity, its privilege, its beautiful homes, its servants, its
leisure, is hag-ridden by a fear and a sense of insecurity. And this will continue to be the case until South Africans of all races are free. Freedom, Sir, is indivisible. The Whites in this land will not be free until all sections of our community are genuinely free. Then we will have a security that does not require such astronomical sums to maintain it, huge funds which could have been used in far more creative and profitable ways for the good of our whole community, which would take its rightful place as a leader in Africa and elsewhere, demonstrating as it will that people of different races can live amicably together. We need one another and Blacks have tried to assure Whites that they don't want to drive them into the sea. How long can they go on giving these assurances and have them thrown back in their faces with contempt? They say even the worm will turn.

I am writing to you, Sir, because I have a growing nightmarish fear that unless something drastic is done very soon then bloodshed and violence are going to happen in South Africa almost inevitably. A people can take only so much and no more. The history of your own people which I referred to earlier demonstrated this, Vietnam has shown this, the struggle against Portugal has shown this. I wish to God that I am wrong and that I have misread history and the situation in my beloved homeland, my mother country South Africa. A people made desperate by despair, injustice and oppression will use desperate means. I am frightened, dreadfully frightened, that we may soon reach a point of no return, when events will generate a momentum of their own, when nothing will stop their reaching a bloody denouement which is "too ghastly to contemplate", to quote your words, Sir.

I am frightened because I have some experience of the awfulness of violence. My wife and I with our two youngest children stayed for two months in Jerusalem in 1966 and we saw the escalating violence and the mounting tensions between Jew and Arab which preceded the Six day War. I was in Addis Ababa when there was rioting in the streets, a prelude to the overthrow of the dynasty of Haile Selassie. I was in Uganda just before the expulsion of the Asians from that country and have returned there since and experienced the fear and the evil of things there. I have visited the Sudan, admittedly after the end of the seventeen years of civil strife, but I could see what this internecine war had done to people and their property. I have visited Nigeria and the former Biafra and have seen there the awful ravages of that ghastly civil war on property and on the souls of the defeated Biafrans. Last year I was privileged to address the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in Belfast - and what I saw shook me to the core of my
being. We saw daily on television in Britain horrific pictures of the pillage and destruction being perpetrated in Vietnam: children screaming from the excruciating agony of burns caused by napalm bombing, a people rushing helter-skelter, looking so forlorn and bewildered that one wanted to cry out, 'But is there no God who cares in heaven'. No, I know violence and bloodshed and I and many of our people don't want that at all.

But we Blacks are exceedingly patient and peace-loving. We are aware that politics is the art of the possible. We cannot expect you to move so far in advance of your voters that you alienate their support. We are ready to accept some meaningful signs which would demonstrate that you and your Government and all Whites really mean business when you say you want peaceful change.

First, accept the urban Black as a permanent inhabitant of what is wrongly called White South Africa, with consequent freehold property rights. He will have a stake in the land and would not easily join those who wish to destroy his country. Indeed, he would be willing to die to defend his mother country and his birthright.

Secondly and also as a matter of urgency, repeal the pass laws which demonstrate to Blacks more clearly than anything else that they are third rate citizens in their beloved country.

Thirdly, it is imperative, Sir, that you call a National Convention made up of the genuine leaders (i.e. leaders recognized as such by their section of the community,) to try to work out an orderly evolution of South Africa into a nonracial, open and just society I believe firmly that your leadership is quite unassailable and that you have been given virtually a blank cheque by the White electorate and that you have little to fear from a so-called right wing backlash. For if the things which I suggest are not done soon, and a rapidly deteriorating situation arrested, then there will be no right wing to fear - there will be nothing.

I am writing this letter to you, Sir, during a three day clergy retreat in Johannesburg, when in the atmosphere of deep silence, worship and adoration and daily services of the Lord's Supper we seek to draw close to our Lord and try to discover what is the will of God for us and what are the promptings and inspirations of God's Holy Spirit. It is during this time that God seemed to move me to write this letter.

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62 John Allen, the author of the authorised biography of Desmond Tutu, explained the apparent contradiction between the “three day” retreat here in the letter, and the “five day” retreat in the text of the interview in these terms: “The retreat took place from late Monday afternoon and finished on Friday midday. So Desmond is only counting the full days when he describes it in his letter as a three day clergy retreat” (in private communication).
I hope to hear from you, Sir, as soon as you can conveniently respond, because I want to make this correspondence available to the Press, preferably with your concurrence, so that all our people, both Black and White, will know that from our side we have done all that is humanly possible to do, to appeal, not only to the rank and file of Whites, but to the highest political figure in the land, and to have issued the grave warning contained in my letter. This flows from a deep love and anguish for my country. I shall soon become Bishop of Lesotho, when I must reside in my new diocese. But I am quite clear in my own mind, and my wife supports me in this resolve, that we should retain our South African citizenship no matter how long we have to remain in Lesotho.

Please may God inspire you to hear us before it is too late, and may He bless you and your Government now and always.

Should you think it might serve any useful purpose, I am more than willing to meet with you to discuss the issues I raise here as you say in Afrikaans, onder vier oë.

Since coming to this Cathedral last year, we have had a regular service, praying for Justice and Reconciliation in this country every Friday. And at all services in the Cathedral we pray:

*God bless Africa*

*Guard her children*

*Guide her rulers and*

*Give her peace,*

*For Jesus Christ’s sake.*

And:

*O Lord, make us instruments of Thy peace: where there is hatred, let us sow love, where there is injury, pardon; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.*

*O divine Master, grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

*Amen.*

And we mean it.

Yours respectfully,

Desmond Tutu.
Dear Archbishop Desmond

We did so appreciate your Christmas card. Those words express so much of who you are … so thank you for living it out as well as expressing it verbally.

I do hope that you and Leah were able to be with family over Christmas, and are both well. You must be looking forward to going to the States again – any chance of taking life at a slightly different pace now, or is that a vain hope?

Jilly continues to do really well after her three massive brain operations to remove the tumour. Day by day, we really thank God. God’s grace and healing power have been quite wonderful.

I am greatly enjoying ministry as both priest and psychotherapist, and am doing doctoral research on the experience of “Insight”. I’m wondering whether you would be willing to help me? I am interviewing a few carefully chosen people about their actual experience of Insight, whether sudden or gradual, in the course of their life and work.

I’d be particularly interested to ask you in detail about your experience of Insight during the 3-day Clergy Retreat in Johannesburg in May 1976, which culminated in your Open Letter to John Vorster. Would you be willing and able to talk about that experience and your “growing and nightmarish fear that unless something drastic is done very soon, then bloodshed and violence are going to happen in South Africa almost inevitably”, just five or six weeks before the Soweto uprising of June 16th?
There might be other experiences of Insight, perhaps more recent, that you would prefer to talk about. It is a rich and detailed description of just one lived experience that I am needing. I am making bold to ask because I know you’d be a rich and articulate mine of personal experience of Insight. Would you be prepared to consider being interviewed before you go to the States again? The recorded qualitative research interview would take about an hour.

I’d be very happy to respond to any questions you may have as well as to explain more about the aims, methods and safeguards of the research. You would of course get a copy of the transcribed interview to check or change before I started incorporating it into my research.

In one sentence, the research is to gather rich and detailed descriptions of people’s experiences of Insight, occurring in a variety of contexts, in order to discover and describe, as accurately as possible, the essential structure of the phenomenon of Insight and to explore ways in which that structure may help us understand the meaning and significance of these experiences of Insight across different contexts, traditions, cultures and disciplines (phew!)

I do hope you’d be willing to participate or at least to explore it a bit further.

With our very best wishes,

Yours ever

John Freeth.
Dear Father,

Thank you very much indeed for being so generous with your time, your memories, your experiences of insight/intuition, and above all for the sharing of yourself in the tape recorded research interview last Friday.

Jilly and I have transcribed the tape recording, doing just the minimum of editing and adding the odd date or detail supplied by Bishop Peter Lee in the Sebokeng story. The interview comes to about 8 pages in all, and I am enclosing it with this letter, so that you have the opportunity to see if you are happy with it. If there is anything that you want to change, delete, or add at this stage, please do. If not, I’ll take this as my working document for analysis.

My sense is that you have given me some very valuable material for which I’m extremely grateful. I hope I can do it justice.

Jilly and I are off to England on 17th July for 3 weeks to be with and nurse our Mums. It’s an annual pilgrimage at this stage of their lives.

By the way the person our son Timo is getting married to in Soweto on December 13th is Lindy Mavuso, who has been doing PR work for your Education Fund until recently. He was also involved in your Awards Ceremony a few weeks ago.

I hope Leah’s 70th Birthday party plans and preparations are coming on well. What a wonderful celebration it will be for you both.

With many thanks

Love and prayers,

John.
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I,……………………………….hereby give consent to voluntarily participate in the research study by John Freeth entitled “An Existential-phenomenological Study of Insight”.

It has been explained to me that the thesis is in partial fulfilment of a PhD in psychotherapy in the Department of Psychology at the University of Pretoria, under the supervision of Dr Assie Gildenhuys.

I understand that the data collection procedures include an in-depth interview in order to gather as rich and detailed description as possible of my personal experience of insight, in order to discover and describe as accurately as possible the essential structure of the phenomenon of insight.

I also understand that I have the right to withdraw from participating in the research study at any time without redress.

The researcher has assured me that when the tape recorded interview is transcribed using only the confidential secretarial services of his wife, I will be given the opportunity to see, comment on, verify or change the written transcription of my oral statements, and that when I am satisfied the tape recording will be deleted.

I have further been assured that at this point of verification of the transcription I will also have the freedom to indicate any personal details or private data which might identify me, and that it is my decision whether to adopt a pseudonym and have any other details changed, disguised or
deleted in order to safeguard my right to ensure that my identity will be kept anonymous at all times.

But since much of this material is in the public domain already, I am quite prepared for my name and other identifying details to be included along with other relevant supporting published documentation. This applies both to the thesis itself and to any further scientific or lay articles, publications or conferences.

The researcher has also made me aware that personal reflection can touch on issues and emotions that no-one anticipated at the beginning and has invited me to contact him if after the interview I have any uncertainty.

The researcher has indicated his commitment to the ideal of openness and negotiation of research process, interpretations and products with me so that there may be, in so far as is possible, a mutual shaping of the final research results. To this end he is willing to give me a copy of his interpretation of my particular experience of insight, so that I may comment upon it and interact with him over it, if I so desire.

John Freeth has assured me that my position, integrity and experience of insight will at all times be regarded and treated with the utmost respect by him as researcher, priest and psychotherapist.
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

1. I understand that John Freeth wants to interview me to gather as rich and detailed descriptions as possible of my personal experience of insight in order to discover and describe as accurately as possible the essential structure of the phenomenon of insight.

2. He has assured me that when the tape recorded interview is transcribed, using only the confidential secretarial services of his wife, I will be given the opportunity to see, comment on, verify or change the written transcription of my oral statements.

3. I am also assured that at this point I will also have the freedom to indicate any personal details or private data which might identify me and that I will have the opportunity to decide whether to have them changed, disguised, deleted or let them remain.

4. I do not need to remain anonymous. I am prepared for my name and other identifying characteristics to be retained in the text and attach my signature at this point to confirm my permission.

5. John has indicated his commitment to the ideal of openness and negotiation of research processes, interpretations and products with me so that there may be, in so far as is possible, a mutual shaping of the final research results. To this end he has promised to give me a copy of his interpretation of my particular experience of insight so that I may comment upon it and interact with him over it.

6. I also understand that a further aspect of the research is to explore ways in which the structure of Insight may help us to understand the meaning and significance of these experiences of insight across different contexts, traditions, cultures and disciplines. I would be open to the possibility of exploring those aspects as they relate to my experience in a second and subsequent interview if it was mutually agreed that it might be helpful and productive.

7. I am prepared for the information obtained in this research to be written up in John Freeth’s Doctoral Thesis on Insight and to be used in any further scientific or lay articles, publications or conferences.

8. John has shared his own recent positive experience of being listened to in a research interview and his hope that there should be a reciprocity in what I give and receive from participation in this study. To that end he has committed himself to the highest possible quality of listening, analysis, verification and final written thesis. In response I am willing to participate and cooperate as fully as possible and trust his integrity as a Priest, psychotherapist and researcher.

Signed by Researcher ..............................................

Signed by Participant ..............................................

Signed by Witness ..............................................

Signed by Supervisor at Pretoria University ..............................................

Date ..............................................