

The Symbol of Liberation in South African Public Life: A  
Black Theological Perspective

By

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

*Philosophiae Doctor*

In the

Faculty of Theology  
University of Pretoria

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April 2007

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation/thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree *Philosophiae Doctor* at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at another university.

Signed :.....

(Vuyani Vellem)

Date :.....

Place : University of Pretoria.



## Acknowledgements

Let me first express my gratitude to my parents, who raised me a Christian child. Little did they realize that I was going to take this faith quite seriously! My curiosity led to my journey to Fedsem, the Federal Theological Seminary, Fort Hare, Cape Town and now, the University of Pretoria. Each time I think that I have come to the end of the journey, I am surprised to discover that there is no end in this journey, but only new beginnings. Indeed at this new beginning I have even attained a fresher way of expressing my gratitude to my parents and siblings.

In this journey, I encountered wonderful people and razor sharp scholars whose list is endless. I would like to mention Prof. Lizo Jafta, Dr. Simon Gqubule, Dr. Khoza Mgojo, Revs. J Wing, B. Mgomezulu and L. Bhengu who are now departed. I include Fr. Michael Worsnip and Fr. V. Mkhize in the list as wonderful teachers who initiated me into the theological world in my Fedsem journey. At Fort Hare Dr Gideon Khabela and Prof G. Thom were my mentors and I am grateful that I had the opportunity to work with them in my theological journey. Prof Jim Cochrane at the University of Cape Town will continue to be an enduring star for me both personally and academically. To all these wonderful people I would like to say thanks a million times!

I have also been inspired and supported by people who became close to me. My life long friend Tshediso Noha, Revs. T. Nkayi, L. Magula and L. Mpetsheni. In different ways they were like a resounding sound of courage to me in difficult times. Thank you very much.

I have been extremely blessed to meet Prof E. D. De Villiers at the University of Pretoria. He has been exceptionally good in playing the role of supervisor for this work. I have been deeply touched by his sense of humility which adds extraordinary marvel to his

incisive mind as a well-read scholar. I hope that I will be able to emulate him and exonerate him for any of the pitfalls that might be found in this work.

Prof, it has been wonderful to work with you, I thank you immensely and I will never be able to measure your contribution to my life.

My wife Pumeza has hitherto been with me at a huge sacrifice. She has been there, always willing to unselfishly give priority to the things I love and cherish. This work virtually belongs to her together with our daughters, Pilisa and Nomvuyo. I thank God Almighty for having blessed with Pumeza, Pilisa and Nomvuyo, pillars of my life!

*Masimanga, OSongo, ONonkosi, Abatwa, Ndiabonga!*

May God's name be magnified and glorified.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my late sister, Abigail Nontobeko Vellem, our last born at home.

To my wife Pumeza and our dearest daughters Pilisa and Nomvuyo may this work be a life-giving instantiation each time you recall the sacrifice you made for its accomplishment.

## Abstract

This dissertation examines the meaning of the symbol of liberation in public life within the new context of democracy in South Africa from a Black Theological perspective. It is broadly shaped by the following two main questions:

- (a) Is the symbol of “liberation” still the most appropriate one in designating the major goal of Black Theology in the present South African public life?
- (b) Is it possible to redefine “liberation” as a major goal of Black Theology in such a way that it would still be applicable in the present South African public life?

To appropriate the meaning of the symbol of liberation and its possible redefinition, the architectonic content of the dissertation can be described as soteriological and ecclesiological. This means that in the first place, the soteriological architecture of liberation in shaping and mediating black experience and expectation provides an angle from which the classic tenets of Black Theology of liberation are illuminated and appropriated for our new context. In classic Black Theological understanding, salvation in Jesus Christ is evoked through the symbol of liberation. To liberate is to give life comprehensively in history, albeit not exclusively political, but comprehensive life as an affirmation of God’s own eschatological future beyond history. Liberation is still an appropriate, analectic root paradigm or organizing symbol that galvanizes the norms and principles of Black Theology for participation in public life.

In second instance, the dissertation, alert to the unprecedented cultural consciousness since the 1990s, harnesses African ecclesio-political symbols of *ikhaya* and *ubuhlanti* to develop a Black Public Theology of liberation. This is executed in dialogue with the currency of the notions of reconstruction and development. The dissertation maintains that reconstruction and development in the main do not alter the essence of Black Theology of liberation, but provide its redefinition as a constructively impatient and insurgent discourse in a less-embittered mode in the present South African public life. The heuristic device of *ubuhlanti* (kraal) from which notions of *amandla* (power), *ukudla* (food), and *inkundla* (open assembly) are derived is employed to signify the re-establishment and anamnetic praxis of protological life-giving foundations upon which *ipso facto* publicity and democracy are founded from a Black Theological perspective.

The dissertation points to an alternative of a life-giving democracy, in essence a communication of efficacy, i.e. an instantiation of life in between the bonds of differentiated publics. It locates the instantiation of life in publicity in *imvuselelo*, a spirituality of solidarity in a *politike koinonia* of a subaltern culture in trenches of poverty, suffering and social death. *Imvuselelo* provides a well out of which Black Public Theology of liberation must drink for critical engagement with the state, economy, moral regeneration, HIV/AIDS, poverty, wealth, women and child abuse in public life. This architecture of Black Public Theology of liberation is in subaltern counter-publics which are the fireplace (*iziko*) of sanity, governance and harmony in circumstances of social death and the fragmentation of life by spheres that command beyond their “trusts,” “bonds,” and covenants in public life, *ikhaya*.

## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AACC</b>	All Africa Conference of Churches
<b>AIC</b>	African Initiated Churches.
<b>ANC</b>	African National Congress.
<b>BCM</b>	Black Consciousness Movement.
<b>BEE</b>	Black Economic Empowerment
<b>CATI</b>	Conference of African Theological Institutions.
<b>EATWOT</b>	Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians
<b>GNU</b>	Government of National Unity
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>JTSA</b>	Journal of Theology in Southern Africa
<b>NGK</b>	<i>Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk</i> ( Dutch Reformed Church
<b>OAIC</b>	The Organization of African Instituted Churches
<b>PAC</b>	Pan Africanist Congress
<b>RSA</b>	Republic of South Africa
<b>SASO</b>	South African Student's Organization
<b>THE CIRCLE</b>	The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians
<b>USA</b>	United States of America
<b>WCC</b>	World Council of Churches
<b>WCED</b>	World Commission on Environment and Development
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organization
<b>TRC</b>	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
<b>USSR</b>	Union of Soviet States of Russia
<b>ZCC</b>	The Zion Christian Church

## Glossary of Terms

- *Amakhaya* Homes
- *Amandla ngawethu* Power belongs to us
- *Amatolo* A clan name
- *Bafanabafana* The name for the South African National Soccer Team
- *Intlanti* Cattle enclosures (kraals)
- *Ikhaya* Home/household/*oikos*
- *Imvuselelo* Revival/renewal
- *Indlala* Starvation/famine
- *Indlu encinci* Small House
- *Indlu enkulu* Great House
- *Inkundla* Court/open court
- *Isidima* Dignity
- *Isiko* Tradition
- *Isithunzi* Dignity/shade
- *Iziko* Fireplace/hearth
- *Iiziko lo sasazo* Broadcasting (fire)place
- *Kgoro* Sepedi for open court
- *Mabhokbhoko* The name for the South African National Rugby Team formerly called Springboks
- *Morena ke morena ka batho!* A monarch is a monarch by People
- *Mzee* As in “sir,” a word used to express respect for the elderly and respectable in Kenya

- *O dlangamandla* An expression of praise associated with the clan of Amatolo translated as the ones who (feast) eat through power
- *oDlamini* A clan name translated as the ones who feast (eat) during the day
- *Politike koinonia* Political Community
- *Imizi* As in *poloi*, for *polis*, i.e. city, another word for home
- *Tswelopele* or *ingqubela* Sesotho and isiXhosa respectively for civilization
- *Ubomi* Life
- *Ubuhlanti (IsiXhosa), kgoro (Sesotho),* The kraal.
- *Uhlanga* Lit. reed but used to translate the word race
- *Ujamaa)* Household/family
- *Ukudla* Food
- *Ukudliwa* To be charged
- *Umanyano* Unity
- *umanyano ngamandla” (kopano ke matla)* Unity is strength
- *Umoya* Spirit
- *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* I am because we are
- *Umzi* Home
- *umzi-mveliso* A factory
- *Zoe* Life
- *Zoon politikon* Political being



## A List of Key Terms

<b>Liberation</b>	A root paradigm of theology that galvanizes the vision and norms of liberation theologies including Black Theology of liberation.
<i>Gestell</i>	En-framing. The use of technological and technical knowledge that does not reveal the whole.
<b>Public</b>	The sphere in which participation is reasoned without coercive power for common life.
<b>Reconstruction</b>	A term signifying a mode of doing theology for rebuilding in public life.
<b>Development</b>	A technical concept designating the quest for building freedoms
<i>Amandla</i>	Power
<i>Ukudla</i>	Food
<i>Ikhaya</i>	Home (Household) or <i>oikos</i>
<i>Ubuhlanti</i>	Kraal
<i>Imvuselelo</i>	Revival or renewal