

# Music of Politics and Religion Supporting Constitutional Values in South Africa

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## Abstract

The Constitution of South Africa has been taken as a model globally as it supports non-discrimination and human rights. The purpose of this study was to analyse the South African National Anthem and a secular political song to investigate how music supported the values enshrined in the Constitution, including religious freedom, during the transition from a history of apartheid towards 25 years of democracy. Politicians such as Nelson Mandela and religious leaders such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, black African spiritual practitioners, Muslim ecclesiastics, rabbis and others played a prominent role in a peaceful transition to democracy. Although there have been a few violent episodes like service delivery protests, farm murders, xenophobia and the tragedy of Marikana since 1994, in general South Africa has been peaceful, despite its history. This study concluded that the music of politics and liberation can be related to value systems and lack of conflict between ethnic and religious factions in South Africa since 1994.

**Keywords:** South African Constitution; South African Anthem; struggle songs; reconciliation

## Introduction and Literature Review

In 1994 South Africa transformed itself into a peaceful democracy without a civil war. Our neighbours—Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Angola—all went to war to achieve peace. South African Special Forces played a pivotal role in the South African Border War and were active alongside the Rhodesian Security forces during the Rhodesian Bush War (Scholtz 2013). Combat operations were also undertaken against FRELIMO militants in Mozambique (Harry 1996, 13-281). Perhaps this acceptance of a peaceful transition is reflected in some of the struggle songs and our National Anthem.

South Africa is a unique country with a unique history and a diversity of people not easily comparable to any other African country. The history of South Africa can be viewed as the history of black resistance to white conquest and white domination (Fatton 1986, 1), as well



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as black against black, for example, before 1652 it was black against black for black domination in many parts of the country. In 1910 the National Party (NP) government came to power in South Africa and in the 1950s, the regime became increasingly oppressive in the face of rising African nationalism and the drive for independence (Debeche 2013, 169). The South African struggle during this time was distinguished by opposition played out on two fronts, namely that against historical colonialism and another against the unjust apartheid system (Debeche 2013, 165). The ANC led the struggle within the context of a national liberation front composed of political and national movements that believed in the total eradication of apartheid by all means (Debeche 2013, 171). The victory over apartheid at the democratic elections held on 27 April 1994, won convincingly by the ANC, was widely celebrated (Debeche 2013, 192). The Constitution was written in 1994 to reflect the reconciliation between different cultural groups in South Africa.

Religious freedom is an important part of the South African Constitution. Religions in South Africa are as diverse as the cultures and languages. Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Jews as well as traditional African belief systems are found. Arguments or discrimination between religious groups are known to cause wars and unrest in other parts of the world. However, religions have in common the fact that they all support a set of moral values that benefit the people. The churches, particularly Christian churches and religious as well as spiritual leaders<sup>1</sup> have played an important and peaceful role in the lives of South Africans. One such example is the Anglican archbishop Desmond Tutu. He led the South African Council of Churches' opposition to apartheid and challenged the Christian community to get involved in the anti-apartheid movements.

Bishop Desmond Tutu, who chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, supported liberation theology and its ideas that apartheid<sup>2</sup> was a sin to be condemned and destroyed. In 1984, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. Before the country became a democracy, during apartheid, political<sup>3</sup> and church leaders were arrested for their beliefs and actions. Beyers Naudé, for instance, a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church who was active against apartheid, was put under house arrest to stop him from speaking out.

Religious freedom and tolerance are enshrined in our Constitution. Even the preamble asks for God's protection and blessing and Section 9 forbids religious discrimination, while Section 15 allows all citizens the right to freedom of religion and belief. Section 31 also

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1 Wolfram Kistner made a major contribution to the development of South African Council of Churches during the years of apartheid (Brandt 1988, 3).

2 The roots of apartheid in fact go back 300 years to the earliest days of European settlement in the southernmost parts of Africa (later called South Africa), and many of its features were substantially entrenched long before the Afrikaner National Party (NP) came to power in 1948. However, apartheid was a cornerstone of NP policy, and it ruthlessly set about considerably extending, strengthening and refining the system (Lipton 1987, 35).

3 The imprisonment of Sobukwe alongside the bulk of the Pan African Congress's (PAC) leadership in March 1960 left the Africanist movement "in a virtual state of suspense" and without much direction for its reconstruction, either underground or externally (Lissoni 2013, 33).

protects the rights of believers to practise their religion and maintain churches and religious associations (Republic of South Africa Government 1996).

A group of people who attract a big popular following are artists and performers. These people inspire, enlighten and entertain others with their creative efforts. South Africa has many world famous artists. Local musicians have shared the traditional kinds of music styles and stirred the emotions of audiences across the world. Hugh Masekela, Miriam Makeba, Abdullah Ibrahim, Ladysmith Black Mambazo and many others used their music to raise support against apartheid and provide hope and joy to audiences. They also used their fame to speak out, for example, Miriam Makeba urged the United Nations more than once to act against apartheid.

The South African National Anthem is a song that reflects the ideals contained in the Constitution. It has a part in Xhosa and Zulu, a part in Sotho, a part in Afrikaans and a part in English. All 11 official languages in South Africa fit into one of these four language categories. The use of these four languages (Zulu/Xhosa, Sotho/Tswana, Afrikaans and English) in the new anthem of South Africa mirrored Nelson Mandela's call for a "Rainbow Nation" where everyone was equal. This equality was also entrenched in the legal system with the "Bill of Rights" included in the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa Government 1996).

### **Aims and Objectives**

The purpose of this study was twofold: a) to select a secular political song and assess it, as well as the South African National Anthem; and b) to investigate how they support the values enshrined in the South African Constitution, including religious freedom.

### **Assessment strategy**

The assessment strategy comprises an analysis of the form and language use, contexts, content and functions of the secular political song and the National Anthem. The theoretical procedures or frames are based on the grammatical and speculative procedures that form the theoretical framework of the entire study (Lebaka 2008, 15).

In the context of this study, the focus is on a structure to assess the secular political song and the South African National Anthem. The speculative procedure on the other hand addresses the meaning, significance and value of music of politics and religion and their performance. An integration of the two approaches is utilised in this investigation. The theoretical framework informs the conceptual framework. Grammatical aspects and the nature of the words reflecting emotions embedded in song texts are analysed.

Thematic motifs are revealed against the related contextual background (Lebaka 2008, 17). Similarly, the speculative analysis illuminates the meaning of concepts, their significance and functional values. At the conceptual level, it is observed that secular political songs are not static (Lebaka 2008, 17). There is a continuous interaction between values embedded in their

form, content and values associated with the social values. Lebaka (2008, 17) believes that within this interface, we assess these political songs, “they are emergent secular songs in the modern-traditional interface context” including reflections on socio-economic and political realities in a multicultural country. He further argues that “when examined through the theoretical framework of this study, the grammatical theory focuses on the text, context, form and political purpose.” On the other hand, the speculative theory according to him “illuminates meaning, significance, values and functions of music of politics and religion.” In this way, the “religious significance of both political and religious songs in South Africa during transition, is confirmed” (Lebaka 2008, 17).

### **Qualitative dimension**

The researcher is a South African. From this personal perspective the music and words of a selected struggle song and the South African National Anthem, are critically evaluated, to indicate how they link to politics and religion. This contextual approach has led to the achievement of the research objectives. Therefore, on the basis of the foregoing, this study adopted a qualitative approach in the collection and analysis of data (Lebaka 2008, 12; Mouton 2001, 108). The study is contextual as it considers the local context (South Africa) and the political and religious music, during the liberation struggle and transition from apartheid to democracy and civil rights.

### **Results and Discussion**

The findings are presented under two headings. *Firstly*, a selected struggle song is analysed to show how religion and culture influenced the song and how this was linked to the struggle to end apartheid. *Secondly*, the new South African Anthem is analysed to show how it reflects the basic tenets of the South African Constitution.

#### **Analysis of a selected struggle song**

Liberation Song (*Ga e boe Afrika*)

##### *Form*

Lebaka (2008, 145) observes that “Liberation Songs are not unique to a particular country or century.” He is supported by Gray (1998, 30) who asserts that “as long as inequity between people exists, those who feel oppressed will find strength and inspiration in these kinds of songs.” He further comments that:

The tactics and situations of liberation singers throughout the world change over the ages, but the goals remain the same: better working and living conditions without discrimination against ordinary people. In the South African context, the black liberation struggle was paramount. (Gray 1998, 75)

About the tactics and situations of liberation singers, the above views are supported by (Lebaka 2008, 145) who observes that during the struggle in South Africa “one of the transforming forces was the extensive use of liberation or protest songs.”

### *Historical background*

*Ga e boe Afrika* is a liberation song (Lebaka 2008, 146). Lebaka (2008, 146) observes that “this song is a ‘*chant*’ and draws the oppressors’ attention to the inequality of wages.” He adds that “it is said to be ‘*logo-centric*,’ which means the focus of the song is on the words rather than on the rhythm or melody lines.” According to him, “the song is communicating the social solidarity among the people, while solving common political and social problems.” He contends that “such music becomes instrumental for mutual support and confidence as well as for the rallying point for the people in South Africa” (Lebaka 2008, 146). The above view is supported by Mindoti and Agak (2004, 156) who assert that colonial governments feared that traditional African music might foster political solidarity in indigenous populations and it was actively discouraged.

It is necessary to briefly review the history of colonialism and apartheid to understand the evolution of struggle songs. “During the period 1840 to 1880 the major force affecting South Africa was British imperialism. Britain was the most powerful industrial and commercial nation of the period. Its leaders and businessmen wished to maintain their dominance and this was frequently reflected in colonial policy” (Machin and Morrel 1999, 189). After the Second World War, the Nationalist Party became dominant and most apartheid laws were written between 1948 and 1960. In 1961 South Africa left the British colonial structure to become a Republic. Although the British colonial system had introduced protectorates, where African culture, language and tribalism were a feature, it was under apartheid that people were forced to carry passes (the “*dompas*”) and moved to the “homelands.” Frustrations, stresses and unhappiness resulting from pass laws and their separation of families and homelands, fell most heavily on black women. “Even African ‘*customary*’ law has been hardened against them” (Lonsdale 1988, 9). From the time pass laws were first introduced, black communities protested, often using existing political organisations to challenge the restrictions (Wells 1991, 16).

In Africa, traditional songs and music have often been used to enhance the importance of socio-political structures (Levine 2005, 189). Lebaka (2008, 146) has a similar view about the role of music in Africa—South Africa in particular. He observes that in South Africa “the medium of song plays a significant role in expressing personal and communal views on how life affects the country.” His observation is supported by Eyre and Barlow (1995, 11) who state that “Ironically, many South African sounds that have achieved recognition in the outside world are generally considered ‘*passe*’ back home. Musical taste in South Africa has often followed political events” (Lebaka 2008, 146). Similarly, MacLeod and Harvey (2000, 30) agree with the above observations when they state that “music and song liberate listeners to express emotions without a need to disclose their inner thoughts.” Based on the above observations, it appears that this may be the reason for the National Party banning certain struggle songs prior to 1994 (Lebaka 2008, 146). One of the banned records in 1992 by a South African artist was the album “*Chant of the Marching*” by Sipho Mabuse. Ray Phiri is another South African artist and a very distinguished musician who struggled for many years in his homeland. It took Paul Simon’s *Graceland* to make him world famous but those who

knew his music and his group, *Stimela*, before that, knew that we here had a star of world fame. One of his songs called “*Where did we go Wrong?*” which he sang with a white lady called Kathy Pannington, was banned as well. Other banned songs include: a) “*Ndodemnyama we Verwoerd*” (Beware, Verwoerd) which was written in the 1950s by the iconic Vuyisile Mini, a singer and ANC member who wrote some of the most influential resistance songs in the early years of apartheid; b) “*Meadowlands*” written by Strike Vilakazi in 1956; c) “*Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika*” which was originally composed as a hymn in 1897 by Enoch Sontonga; and d) “*Mannenber*g” which was regarded as a classic Cape jazz song, composed by famous South African jazz pianist, Abdullah Ibrahim and first recorded in 1974.

*Text and translation*

**Table 1:** Protest Song: *Ga e boe Afrika*

Sepedi	English
1. Ga e boe.	1. Bring back.
2. Ga e boe Afrika.	2. Bring back Africa.
3. Go fediswe dipasa le melao e boima.	3. Abolish the pass laws and unbearable laws.
4. Re tsoma ponto,	4. We want a pound,
5. Re tsoma ponto,	5. We want a pound,
6. Re tsoma ponto ka letsatsi,	6. We want a pound a day,
7. Re tsoma ponto ka letsatsi.	7. We want a pound a day.
	8.

Recorded by the author at Jane Furse, *Sekhukhune* area in Limpopo Province in September 2004 during the National heritage day celebration.

*Language (structural elements and characteristics)*

It appears from literature (Lebaka 2008, 147) that “liberation songs are not only historical records of popular memories shared by the people,” but reflect deteriorating socio-economic conditions. According to Lebaka, liberation songs in apartheid South Africa often contained a powerful critique of apartheid during the liberation struggle (Lebaka 2008, 147). In consonant with the above observation, Euba (1982, 232) pointed out that “kings and important chiefs in Africa usually had personal musicians whose duties include image making.” In this vein, McDaniel (1998, 42-43) describes musicians as “particularly gifted in the subtle use of praise texts designed to enhance the prestige of their clients while castigating the clients’ opponents.”

Lebaka (2008, 147) examines the characteristics of liberation songs. He observes that they are antiphonal, repetitive and cyclic in nature.<sup>4</sup> As he puts it, “their improvisational character and their rhythmic patterns invite bodily movement.” However, Biko (1978, 60) asserts:

The singing of liberation songs leads to a culture of defiance, self-assertion, group pride and solidarity. This is a culture that emanates from a situation of common experience of oppression and is responsible for the restoration of our faith in ourselves and offers a hope in the direction we are taking from here. (Lebaka 2008, 147)

In Lebaka’s discussion of the characteristics of liberation songs, he further states that “rhythms of liberation songs are both regular and irregular and are characterised by the chanters’ stamps, which relate to the drum pattern” (Lebaka 2008, 147). According to him the “leader’s part in these songs may be sung with slight variation according to individual expression.” Steve Biko (1978, 60), the black South African activist who died in detention, corroborates this statement:

To the African, music and rhythm are not luxuries but part and parcel of their way of communication. Any suffering we experienced was made more real by song and rhythm.

Concerning the relationship between music, rhythm and communication, Lebaka opines that “music and rhythm are indeed influential for effective communication, because it is inspiring, unifying, arousing and unlocking an exhilaration in one’s soul. As powerful vehicle music expresses universal truths as well as individual emotions” (Lebaka 2008, 148).

Over time, under the colonial influence, many Africans have turned from subsistence cultivation to cash-cropping<sup>5</sup> (Machin and Morrel 1999, 195). As conditions for black South Africans deteriorated due to apartheid, the style of the songs originally written to celebrate the new style of farming, gradually became political, to reflect the mood of the people (Lebaka 2008, 148-149). As McDaniel (1998, 69) puts it:

Any interpretation of dance, aesthetics, music, and literature of the African diaspora should begin with the assumption that religious practice, political struggle, and the search for social mediation and justice share similar metaphors in the thinking of oppressed people. (McDaniel quoted in Lebaka 2008, 149)

### *Content and context*

According to Lebaka (2008, 149), the “liberation song *Ga e boe Afrika* can be divided as follows: It begins with a) a prayer (lines 1-2); b) dissatisfaction and instruction (lines 3); and the song closes with c) a demand (lines 4-7).” Lebaka (2008, 149) states that in this song “a concern is raised by the chanters and three issues are addressed: *Firstly*, chanters want Africa back in their own hands (lines 1-2).” *Secondly*, this song focuses on the hated “*dompas*” and

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4 Songs in this category feature cyclical melodic statements in responsorial form. The tempo is determined by the mood of the singers. Quite often though, they are presented in fast tempo. The presentation form is determined by the contingencies of given contexts. The atmosphere of such performances is usually charged. According to Stone “new songs are sometimes introduced in the context of a performance. Singers with the ability to project voices that can be heard by all usually lead the performances of the songs” (Stone 1998, 7).

5 Cash-cropping refers to a crop grown by a farmer primarily for sale to others rather than for his or her own use or any crop that is considered easily marketable.

singers “are not satisfied with the pass laws (line 3). Pass laws were laws that restricted free movements and choice with regard to place of living, for example, separate residential areas and curfews”<sup>6</sup> (Lebaka 2008, 149). As a result, “South Africans were not happy with unbearable pass laws (line 3). Black people were not permitted to shop in the same places as whites or allowed to travel abroad or get passports” (Adeogun 2005, 66).

*Thirdly*, the demand in the song is that “they want at least one pound per day for labour” (lines 4-7). The South African currency was “a pound in the 1950s because it was still a British colony, with British currency” (Laplough 1999, 189). Mminele Letladi Phillip<sup>7</sup> explained his view on the value of a pound on 21 May 2004. He confirmed that “his grandparents and parents were earning five pounds per month at the time the song was written. Demanding one pound per working day would earn them 22 pounds (forty-four rands) per month” (Lebaka 2008, 149-150). At the time, a monthly income of R44.00 would have been a reasonable salary, however, Africans were paid much less (in this case R10.00 per month) than a white person who was doing the same job. Lines 4-7 in this song humbly plead for equality and parity, with no words of hate and aggression (Lebaka 2008, 150).

#### *Function*

According to Bascom (1970, 50) liberation songs called for political freedom, and referred to difficulties faced by Africans under apartheid. Lebaka affirms that “some liberation songs praise political leaders and describe the struggle for a new society” (Lebaka 2008, 150).

Previously traditional songs were sung in praise of chiefs, but these songs changed from praise to criticism against apartheid (Bascom 1970, 50). The same view is upheld by Lebaka (2008, 150-151) who writes that “Liberation songs were used to accelerate change.” (Kaemmer 1993, 154) concurs with these views by stating that the use of music is unlikely “to solve political problems, but has a positive effect on the performers and reflects the mood of the society” (Kaemmer 1993, 154).

South African liberation songs such as *Ga e boe Afrika* are further used as a medium for seeking equality and peace as interlocking aims in the country (Lebaka 2008, 151). According to Lebaka, “they are used politically not only by the ruling class in a society to praise political leaders and describe the struggle for a new society, but also by the powerless classes” (Kaemmer 1993, 162; Lebaka 2008, 151). Lebaka (2008, 151) asserts that “through liberation songs and dance, people were able to share their burdens, triumph, sadness and gladness of heart. Song and music bound people together and united them behind one common aim.”

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6 Curfews refer to “certain times that black people had to leave white residential areas. Country-wide tours by black performance groups were unusual, as curfew regulations restricting concerts and passes required by blacks travelling outside their own provinces were major obstacles to ventures of this nature” (Gray 1998, 34).

7 Mminele Letladi Phillip is one of the research subjects, and who resides at Phaahla Mmakadikwe village, Nebo area in Limpopo Province.

According to Lebaka (2008, 151-152), “musical systems of African societies should therefore be understood, not as static structures but dynamic ones.” In support of this view, Gray (1998, 36) observes that in the past, liberation songs have “asserted cultural unity and assisted in societal integration in South Africa.” Furthermore, he argues that “liberation songs were responses to particular experiences. Changes in the style of songs, mirrored the changes and evolution of the black liberation struggle in South Africa” (Gray 1998, 31). In his view, they “played a vital role in the rise of Black Nationalism and the establishment of a new South African society after 1994” (Lebaka 2008, 151-152).

## Analysis of South African National Anthem

### *Text and translation*

There is no official four-part version of the National Anthem. The version presented in this demonstration/study is based on the official piano accompaniment of “*Nkosi*” and the four-part arrangement of “*Die Stem*” by Dirkie de Villiers, son of the original composer (see Table 2 below).

**Table 2:** South African National Anthem

Xhosa and Zulu	English
1. Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika	1. <i>Father, bless our country, Africa</i>
2. Maluphakanyiswu pondolwayo	2. <i>Let her honour thunder to the sky;</i>
3. Yizwa imithandazo yethu	3. <i>In Your love and kindness, hear our prayer,</i>
4. Nkosi, sikelela	4. <i>Father, bless us we pray,</i>
5. thina lu sapholwayo	5. <i>your children</i>
Sotho	English
6. Morena boloka Sechaba sa heso	6. <i>Lord take care of our nation</i>
7. O fedise dintwa le matshwenyeho	7. <i>stop the struggle and frustrations</i>
8. O se boloke, O se boloke	8. <i>save (protect) us, save us.</i>
9. Sechaba sa heso	9. <i>our nation</i>
10. Sechaba sa South Afrika,	10. <i>our nation South Africa</i>
11. South Afrika ...	11. <i>South Africa ...</i>
Afrikaans	English
12. Uit die blou van onse hemel	12. <i>From the blue of our heaven,</i>
13. Uit die diepte van ons see,	13. <i>From the depths of our sea,</i>
14. Oor ons ewige gebergtes waar die kranse antwoord gee,	14. <i>across our eternal mountains where the cliffs resound.</i>
English	
15. Sounds the call to come together,	
16. And united we shall stand	
17. Let us live and strive for freedom	
18. In South Africa, our land	

### *Form*

“National Anthems are salient representations of nation states used to define social and personal boundaries” (Folkestad 2002). The South African National Anthem expresses the singers’ trust in God. In addition to the language of faith, the singers use many metaphors and expressions to represent their sense of trusting, like “*Father, bless our country, Africa*” (line 1); “*Father, bless us we pray*” (line 4); “*Lord take care of our nation*” (line 6); and “*Save our nation*” (lines 8 & 9). The declaration of trust is the first and most important component of

the South African National Anthem. The second element in the National Anthem is the invitation to trust and to unite, addressed to the community (South Africans). This invitation does occur in lines 7 “*Stop the struggle and frustrations*”; line 15 “*Sounds the call to come together*”; line 16 “*And united we shall stand*”; line 17 “*Let us live and strive for freedom*”; and line 18 “*In South Africa, our land.*” The third element of the National Anthem is the basis for trust; namely God. Apart from the problems encountered during the apartheid era, the singers had discovered the basis of faith. The fourth element in the National Anthem is petition. The singers, for example, know that God is a God of mercy, and that he can show mercy: line 2 “*Let her honour thunder to the sky*”; and line 3 “*In Your love and kindness, hear our prayer.*”

In at least two instances a fifth element is evident in the National Anthem. The singers plead with God to bless them, line 4 “*Father, bless us we pray.*” The plea arises out of the depths of their faith that God will hear their cry and come to their rescue: line 12 “*From the blue of our heaven*”; line 13 “*From the depths of our sea*”; and line 14 “*Across our eternal mountains where the cliffs resound.*” The sixth element, and next to the declaration of trust, the most frequent component of the liberation songs, is the interior lament. It is not a lament as such, but the remnant of one: line 7 “*Stop the struggle and frustrations*”; and line 9 “*Save our nation.*” The declaration of trust and the interior lament are consistently recurring elements.

#### *Historical background*

In the time of British Colonialism until 1961, South Africa had already been colonised previously by Holland. However the British anthems were sung by South Africans of all colours, prior to 1960. “God save the Queen” during the reign of Victoria, was supplanted by “God save the King” until the reign of Elizabeth II started in 1952, when “God save the Queen” once again became the National Anthem of South Africa and all other British colonies. This anthem is set to martial music.

In contrast, the South African Anthem, “*Nkosi*,” represents a fusion of white and black African cultures, having been composed as a hymn in the syncretic tradition. The first stanza, in Zulu, was written by Enoch Sontonga in 1897. Sontonga was born at Lovedale into the Tembu tribe. He eventually became a teacher at a Methodist mission school and lived in Nancefield, near Johannesburg. An avowed Christian, he constantly wrote songs and hymns for his pupils in tonic *sol-fa* notation.

The first public performance of “*Nkosi*” occurred at the ordination of a Shangaan Methodist minister in 1899. By the turn of the century, the hymn was being sung throughout the country in churches, schools and choir performances. The poet, Samuel Mqhayi, later added seven stanzas in Xhosa.

In 1925, the leaders of the African National Congress adopted “*Nkosi*” as a closing anthem for its meetings. This soon became customary for black organisations in other provinces. The hymn was first published in 1927, and again in 1929, with music, in the Presbyterian Xhosa

Hymn Book. The Xhosa-speaking people of the Transkei adopted “*Nkosi*” as their National Anthem in 1963. Today the melody of our National Anthem is also used by Zambia and Tanzania. The words of the hymn have become part of South Africa’s oral poetry, with many differing versions in different languages in circulation. No Standard English translation exists as yet and the version presented here has been adapted from various sources.

Die “*Stem van Suid-Afrika*” (The Call of South Africa) was originally a poem written in 1918 and set to a melody with piano accompaniment by Cornelis Jacob Langenhoven. Based on a public request, he later added a fourth stanza to the original three. In response to the author’s call for a new setting of the text, Marthinus Lourens de Villiers set “*Die Stem*” to music in 1919.

Born in the Paarl in 1885, M. L. de Villiers became a teacher and then a minister, but felt to promote an own, national music. In 1931, he resigned as minister to become a freelance musician. Identifying himself largely with the Afrikaner cause, he became a well-known and often respected music personality under the Afrikaners. In 1932, the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Organisations decided to write out a competition for suitable texts for a national anthem. As they were unable to recommend any of the texts received, they proceeded to write out a competition for the best setting of “*Die Stem*.” De Villiers’s setting was selected unanimously from 40 settings submitted and subsequently recommended by the National Culture Council as the National Anthem. In 1957, the government proclaimed “*Die Stem van Suid-Afrika*” as the National Anthem of the Union of South Africa. Within three years, South Africa freed itself from British Colonialism and became a Republic. This pattern repeated itself, with music signalling a political change, in 1994, with “*Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika*” being declared the National Anthem of the New South Africa.

#### *Language (structural elements and characteristics)*

After the elections in 1994, “*Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika*”; “*Die Stem*”; and “*The Call of South Africa*” were used jointly as National Anthem of the Republic of South Africa. The official 1997 National Anthem consists of the original first stanza of “*Nkosi*” together with a section from an unknown source added at a later stage. The shortened hymn leads directly into the first lines of “*Die Stem van Suid Afrika*” while the last part is taken from “*The Call of South Africa*.”

On 19 September 1997, President Nelson Mandela proclaimed a combined version of “*Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika*”; “*The Call of South Africa*”; and “*Die Stem van Suid-Afrika*” as the National Anthem of the Republic of South Africa. This was a significant act of national reconciliation, in view of the fact that “*Die Stem*” was the official National Anthem of pre-democratic South Africa, while “*Nkosi*” had been used widely by black organisations as an alternative.

The current National Anthem is unique as it incorporates four languages. The first stanza is in Zulu, the second in Sotho, the third in Afrikaans and the fourth in English. This represents the

major language groupings in South Africa; although there are 11 official languages, each falls into one of these four categories.

### *Context and content*

As with many struggle songs, the words and the music of the South African National Anthem take the form of a hymn, rather than a victorious marching song. The context is reconciliation. The words reflect a longing for peace, reconciliation and service to the ideals of the country.

The South African National Anthem expresses a deep confidence in God and his goodness. Such expressions are numerous and can be found in line 3 “*In Your love and kindness, hear our prayer.*” However, the sentiment of trust dominates and singles the expressions as special expressions of confidence in God.

The theology of the National Anthem arises out of the practice of life, the transition from the apartheid era into a peaceful democracy. Confidence and hope are articulated, especially in line 6 “*Lord, take care of our nation*” and line 9 “*Save our nation.*” The National Anthem aims at confirming the communal relationship with God, especially within a prayer of petition for the sufferers who were persecuted or ostracised. Nowhere in the anthem are the words calling for our country to conquer other people or other countries, or requesting victory in battles—the anthem is a prayer for freedom and everyone in South Africa working together for reconciliation and unity.

The National Anthem can be approached from two perspectives. *Firstly*, it has a motif of the communal lament and the avowal of trust. *Secondly*, the whole anthem belongs to the motif of avowal of trust. The National Anthem depicts God’s loving kindness under two images, those of the shepherd and the gracious host. Faith and trust form the gravitational centre of the National Anthem. The National Anthem is about the singers who have a thirst for God.

### *Function*

The function of our National Anthem is to bring people together, by singing a patriotic song in the languages of different cultures in South Africa we are taking the first step in understanding, reconciling and coming together to move forward. The government insists that the whole anthem is always sung on major occasions, at schools and in local, national and international sporting competitions throughout the world, to promote and maintain unity and loyalty.

The National Anthem carries a tone of deep faith in God and his providence. It arises “out of some crisis” in the singer’s or South African’s life, a crisis whose hardship and testing shaped the singer’s faith. It does not give evidence that the crisis has passed, but exhibits the faith that can see the individual and the nation through the crisis. It does not only strengthen, comfort and encourage South Africans or the individual, but more importantly, it awakens in

South Africans a need or thirst for God as the comforter. The purpose of the South African National Anthem is to give a faithful witness to the singer's trust in God.

## Conclusion

Looking at the peaceful transition between radically different systems such as apartheid (which denied human rights to a majority of the peoples in South Africa) and democracy (which focused mainly on human rights), it is astonishing that this transition occurred so peacefully and without a major civil war. The anthem under British Colonialism was "God Save the Queen" where the words "*send her victorious*" and the martial music reflected a transition which was characterised by the "Anglo Boer War" in South Africa and other wars, where there was great deal of conflict, concentration camps and high mortalities on both sides.

Although there have been a few violent episodes like service delivery protests, since 1994, in general, South Africa has been peaceful, despite its history. It was concluded that the music of politics and religion can be related to the struggle songs and our National Anthem. This music reflects and endorses value systems and this has contributed to the lack of conflict between ethnic and religious factions in South Africa since 1994. The National Anthem and the struggle song investigated in this study reflect a yearning for freedom and reconciliation. That yearning and the religious tone of political songs and music, is possibly why we have had 25 years of peace. However, there are also struggle songs that were provocative such as *Aw dubul'ibhunu* (Shoot the Boer).

Any suffering South Africans have experienced was made much more real by song and rhythm. During the liberation struggle, songs reassured those who were scared; highlighted the determination of the oppressed to accomplish their mission. In suffering, they derived sustenance out of a feeling of togetherness.

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