Rhettoric, Dialogue, and Performance in Nelson Mandela’s “Televised Address on the Assassination of Chris Hani”

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After the assassination of the popular black militant Chris Hani, Nelson Mandela sought in his “Televised Address on the Assassination of Chris Hani” to move beyond identity politics and to redefine the murder into a moment of political and dialogic change. He praised Hani as a model of proper political engagement, uncovered the dynamics of dialogue between South Africans, and performed an alternative stance for the post-apartheid era. Mandela’s rhetoric reveals both the limitations and the possibilities of performative rhetoric during difficult transitions to democracy.

On April 10, 1993, a Polish immigrant linked to an extremist right-wing group opposed to black majority rule in South Africa killed Chris Hani, in Boksburg, near Johannesburg. The murder occurred during the Multi Party Negotiating Process (MPNP), a decisive period in South Africa’s transition to democracy. The talks had restarted only days before Hani’s death, after a ten-month hiatus. They brought together militant blacks, extremist whites, and moderates of all colors who had finally overcome enough of their mutual distrust to resume negotiations designed to lead South Africa to its first nonracial, democratic election. The assassination not only damaged this trust but had elites on all sides worried that protests and growing anger, especially among youthful black radicals, would bring the MPNP to an abrupt halt and precipitate violent reprisals against whites, if not an all-out civil war. Hani, a former member of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the African National Congress’s (ANC) armed wing, had only recently become the secretary general of the South African Communist Party (SACP). Feared and loathed by many whites, Hani nevertheless was an immensely popular leader among South African blacks and the one person most likely to keep the ANC’s young, militant, and undisciplined rank-in-file in check during the precarious negotiations. Had Hani not died, it is likely that he and not Thabo Mbeki would have replaced Nelson Mandela as president of the country in 1999. Only days before he was shot—the
same day Mandela, then president of the ANC, made a dramatic admission that the ANC had been “just as involved” in political violence as its rival, the Inkatha Party, and the government—Hani insisted that ANC members become “combatants for peace.”1 He also repudiated the Azanian People’s Liberation Army’s (APLA) clamoring for intensified, armed struggle, saying, “I don’t accept people calling for war.”2  

Hani’s murder created not only a moment of panic but a crisis of authority for Mandela and the ANC. As Anthony Sampson observed in *Mandela: The Authorized Biography*, the incident added to the growing perception among whites, and perhaps many blacks, that Mandela could not control escalating violence in South Africa and that “the ANC were incapable of government.”3 Therefore, in the days immediately following the assassination, the ANC did much to calm South Africans, ordering week-long mass rallies and demonstrations to “give people a means of expressing their frustration without resorting to violence.”4 Still, the task of working out the ramifications of Hani’s death in a manner that considered the interests of many competing parties, including the black militants and white conservatives, fell mainly onto Mandela’s shoulders in his “*Televised Address on the Assassination of Chris Hani*.” Even though Archbishop Desmond Tutu eulogized Hani at his funeral in Soweto, and F. W. de Klerk condemned the murder, calling for “maximum restraint,” de Klerk recorded later that “This was Mandela’s moment not mine.”5 As Sampson described Mandela’s “*Televised Address*,” his “statesmanlike speech, set against de Klerk’s silence, suggested that he was already the real leader, and the protector of peace.”6  

Mandela delivered his “*Televised Address*” on April 13 in Johannesburg. As it turned out, an initial outburst of rioting and looting in the Cape and Natal left 70 dead and hundreds more hurt. However, the massive killing that many predicted did not take place and the negotiations went on as the nation mourned. Eventually, by November 1993, an agreement was reached that pledged to institute a nonracial, unified, and democratic South Africa based on the principle of “one person, one vote.” By most accounts, Mandela’s speech helped to dissipate black frustration and anger across South Africa, thereby preempting a bloody catastrophe and paving the way for democratic change. As Archbishop Tutu observed afterward, if Mandela had “not gone on television and radio . . . our country would have gone up in flames . . . I would say now that it is highly unlikely that our country will be torn apart by really anything.”7 Although Mandela aroused the anger and suspicion of many militants in the ANC who saw their president in league with their enemies, his address seemed to slow the hostility of others. It “would have been the easiest thing just to release the dogs of war,” Tutu reported. “That is what maybe many of the younger Turks had wanted to see happen. Mercifully, [Mandela] was there and held them all at bay.”8  

Mandela’s “*Televised Address*” is important, though, not only because it helped to calm passions after Hani’s murder or to preserve the negotiations. His message,
I suggest, represents a significant political, dialogic, and performative effort to transform identity-based justifications for violence rooted in the past into certain kinds of ethical and political interaction that could be seen as an appropriate reaction to Hani’s killing. Recently, Erik Doxtader investigated a number of rhetorical documents produced during the transition from apartheid in South Africa. Focusing on the problem of reconciliation, he concluded that reconciliation was for Mandela and other South African spokespersons a multiple trope “of resistance, compromise, and deliberation.” It was as much a process of negotiation and dialogue that transformed the past as it was a future state of social-political organization and a modality of constitutional government. Reconciliation created “time for speech” by playing between past legacies of animosity and a future hope for peace,” and represented a form of “rhetorical history making” that attempted to convert the violence of the nation’s apartheid past “into a set of shared oppositions that can motivate and sustain dialogue.” In addition, both Doxtader and Philippe-Joseph Salazar point out that nation-building in South Africa was performative in nature. As Salazar notes in An African Athens: Rhetoric and the Shaping of Democracy in South Africa, Mandela’s first presidential address before the newly constituted South African Parliament lifted South Africa from the realm of imaginary democracy into a state of actual democratic practice and was a self-referential act of bringing opposing parties together. The speech was the first example of reconstruction and development after apartheid. “In words—and in words alone—his speech reconstitutes the nation,” Salazar observes.

While these scholars have tried to grapple with the complexity of rhetoric during the transition from apartheid, important questions persist, especially regarding the way in which Mandela spoke about Hani’s assassination. What precise rhetorical tactics did Mandela employ and how did they help him to play “between past legacies of animosity and a future of hope for peace”? What were the terms of “dialogue” in Mandela’s speech and how did he think this proposed dialogue might contribute to political change, if not to reconciliation? Finally, to what extent was Mandela’s “performance” itself a necessary part of a transformative politics that supplied an alternative vision for the development of new democratic practice? In this essay, I try to answer these questions. My argument proceeds in three parts.

First, without necessarily denying or bargaining away the past, Mandela suggested that preserving the negotiations and democratic change hinged on moving beyond the assassination and much of what it represented about the apartheid past, and acting in a manner that, for the moment anyway, constituted appropriate grieving and protest. He was not calling for pacification; he was, rather, asking for a transformation in the way in which South Africans thought and acted. Mandela used Hani as a model of someone whose ennobling character rose above the division of identity politics and armed struggle. The peaceful forms of protest, commemoration, and deliberation Mandela advocated amounted to a compelling
conception of the black militant’s separating himself, as Hani had separated himself, from the violent past so as to “soldier-for-peace” and democracy in the future. Politically, Mandela challenged white stereotypes and depicted the newly transformed radicals following liberal norms of deliberative democracy, which appeared consistent with the already existing principle of “nonracialism” established in the Freedom Charter of 1955, to which Mandela committed the ANC and which Hani himself seemed to embody.

Second, Mandela premised political change after Hani’s murder on establishing dialogue, some basic terms of which he articulated during the “Televised Address.” He invited blacks and whites to share grief, empathy, and understanding in a manner that not only praised Hani but also recognized the frailty and mortality of one another. Mandela encouraged this behavior during a crisis even though it might have exposed audiences to angry rejection or, worse, retribution. Mandela seemed to assume that a peaceful meeting of angry blacks and fearful whites, in the midst of violence and uncertainty, fostered the emotional proximity necessary for improved political relations between previously disparate groups. In short, he appeared to be outlining the dialogic parameters of a future democratic community in which preserving nationalist identity was less important than finding new ways of working through violent conflict.

Finally, by bringing together thought and character in his themes, arguments, and explanations, Mandela identified in his “Televised Address” with the proposed ethos of his audience. Stated differently, he performed the behavior and political change he advocated. His calm, measured tone while speaking about Hani’s murder, and his firm resolve when talking about moving forward, despite the anger and grief, created an effective persona for a political leader who had already suffered at the hands of apartheid but was nevertheless determined to bring together divided groups. As John Hammerback and Richard Jensen point out in *The Rhetorical Career of Cesar Chavez*, speakers can frequently exert considerable influence on audiences when they merge their self-portraits with a substantive message. Mandela’s performance of an ethical ideal suggested that one could only create a civil society through the probity of one’s example.

To better understand Mandela’s rhetoric, I begin with a brief description of the situation surrounding Hani’s death. I then investigate the ways in which he redefined this situation, called for dialogue, and performed the (ethical-political) possibilities of a new community. Finally, I explore the implications of Mandela’s discourse during a moment of dramatic political change.

**THE POLITICS OF ASSASSINATION**

Official negotiations between the ANC and F. W. de Klerk’s ruling National Party (NP) began in December 1991, when the Convention for a Democratic South Africa
(CODESA I) was held in the World Trade Centre in Johannesburg. Eventually, CODESA II formed in May 1992, but the talks were interrupted in June when a band of Inkatha Freedom Party supporters, secretly armed by the NP’s security forces, attacked the Vaal township of Boipatong, killing 45 people. Afterward, following nearly a year of mass action, insurrection, and predictions from across the ideological spectrum that negotiations were never going to work, CODESA II was taken over by the MPNP, on April 5, 1993. The immediate goal of the MPNP was to create an interim constitution and the foundation for the Government of National Unity. Then, on April 10, Hani’s murder threatened to return the nation to a state of such chaos that politics proper, not to mention the ongoing MPNP, would be rendered nearly irrelevant.

The assassination provoked the African nationalists, including youthful radicals in the ANC, who had opposed Mandela and other moderate leaders in the ANC long before Hani’s death and would continue to do so long afterward. It undoubtedly reminded them of the terrible apartheid past. As R. W. Johnson reported in the *Times*, student activists raged at the news of Hani’s murder. “No peace without Hani!” they declared, and “To war, comrades, to war.” (Many black militants were also attracted to the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), a radical Africa-for-Africans organization whose political philosophy was summed up by its motto: “One Settler, One Bullet.” PAC’s armed wing, the APLA, had only recently attacked a country club near King William’s Town and was calling for intensified armed resistance.)

The young militants within the ANC had worshipped Hani. As Pattie Waldmeir wrote in the *Financial Times*, “among township youth, the unemployed, and the disaffected . . . Hani’s leadership was undisputed: No other ANC leader could so easily make compromises look like triumph, could argue for peace as a form of struggle . . . in short, could deliver the radical youth behind a negotiated settlement.” Although he often aligned himself with the militants, Hani could have served as a bridge between them and the ANC’s more moderate leadership. Now, since many of the militants were eager to use the pretext of Hani’s murder to continue the push for armed insurrection over negotiated revolution and compromise, to exact reparations for the past, and to impose their own nationalist agenda and ideology, Mandela had to try to channel their energies into talks, not war. For he realized, perhaps more than ever, that the ANC lacked the broad support for a mass uprising, something the radicals favored, and that its leadership needed the cooperation of the white establishment (and the radicals) in order to run the country.

Hani’s death must also have given the radicals further justification for questioning the ANC’s fundamental governing premise—the principle of nonracialism. As it was articulated in the Freedom Charter in 1955, this principle asserted that South Africa belonged “to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people.” The original framers of the Freedom Charter designed the principle to curtail the oppression of
one racial group by another. The meaning of the charter was debated for the next 35 years and drew especially intense criticism from militant black leaders who, according to Rodney Davenport and Christopher Saunders in *South Africa: A Modern History*, believed that “Africa was ‘for the Africans’ and non-Africans had to take a back seat until the alien element had learnt not to participate as overlords.”

For much of his political career, Mandela had hoped the principle of nonracialism would supply a framework for addressing the demands of what eventually would become a newly empowered black majority. Now that blacks were on the verge of gaining some of that power, he knew that Hani’s murder raised serious questions about how, while carrying out its commitment to government by the people, the ANC could simultaneously make sure that nothing was done by the black nationalists, particularly the youthful radicals, which could be seen as reverse racism or political violence against whites.

To complicate matters, the hostility brought white anxiety to near hysteria, forcing many white professionals to flee the country altogether. For those who stayed behind, especially liberals, whose support for both the MPNP and the ANC was vital, Mandela had to bolster their confidence in his ability to control the militants and to keep the negotiations going. He saw liberals as an elite class and remained suspicious of liberal views about revolutionary democracy, constitutional means, and universal suffrage. Mandela had been particularly bothered with the ways in which the traditional tenets of liberalism had been used to justify and practice colonization. For its part, the liberal tradition in South Africa had always been a diffuse one, lacking organizational focus for much of its existence. Yet, as Pierre L. van den Berghe claims in *The Liberal Dilemma in South Africa*, liberals of all backgrounds were committed to constitutional and negotiated political change, but also to the notion that every person made rational judgments, over and against mob rule.

The Liberal Party in South Africa, most members of which were white and staunch anti-Communists, sought to establish a free and democratic nonracial society in which people were free from excessive government control. They favored democratic practices while strongly opposing the oppressive aspects of nationalist rule, such as detention and banning without trial, and people being deprived of their property for ideological reasons. Members of the Liberal Party were appalled when apartheid regimes deprived individuals of land and houses. But they were equally wary of abuses from other nationalist-based organizations, including the ANC. Given their distaste for political violence and autocratic governments, it is likely white liberals feared that Hani’s murder would incite further bloodshed, particularly against other whites, or spur the ANC to exert authoritarian power. As Sarah Baxter noted in the *New Statesman & Society* about that point in the transition, “Even white liberals, who are determined to vote ANC, confess to feeling a shade apprehensive.”

Of additional concern to Mandela were conservatives in both the NP and the Conservative Party, many of whom stereotyped blacks as ignorant radicals or as
crazed and violent militants incapable of either governing or governance. Mandela had to remain mindful that conservatives might interpret the actions of the youthful radicals in such a way as to confirm the racial stereotypes. He must have known, too, that many conservatives desired to manipulate (through political assassination if necessary) the negotiations in order to bring about a political agreement that would effectively disarm the radicals, a settlement that was conducive mainly to white minority interests. Although some of the right-wing groups had offered public regrets, most members of these organizations hated and feared Hani, who had led the ANC’s armed wing and was responsible for isolated acts of terror against the apartheid regime throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Undoubtedly such animosity led them to react to the assassination as they responded to the death of black leaders during apartheid, when the incarceration or murder of black revolutionaries occurred regularly and were dismissed as political necessities. In fact, one of Hani’s killers, Clive Darby-Lewis, justified the murder afterward by claiming that as a Christian he had to fight communism, which he saw as “a bulwark of the antichrist.” He said that he and the other assassin, the Polish immigrant Janusz Walus, planned the murder “on behalf of” the right-wing Conservative Party, and conceded that they would have struck at other political targets if the plot to assassinate Hani had not succeeded or did not have “the desired effect” of plunging the country into chaos so that “the right wing could seize power.”

Of course, no one realized at the time what role the NP had actually played in Hani’s death. By mid-afternoon on the day of the murder, a police spokesman said a preliminary investigation indicated that the suspect might have acted alone. Hani’s colleagues in the anti-apartheid movement quickly criticized the one-murderer conclusion as “premature.” At a news conference on the afternoon of the killing, representatives from the ANC and SACP claimed that the government security forces had been involved in previous political assassinations of anti-apartheid activists. They asked for international observers and independent local monitors to work alongside the State police on the investigation.

Mandela had to anticipate another troubling issue related to the security forces that came to the fore on April 15. Roelf Meyer, the South African minister for constitutional development, agreed with demands of the ANC that the process of constitutional negotiation should, in light of Hani’s murder, be speeded up. Meyer conceded that the security forces and the police could come under control of the transitional multiparty committees within weeks. However, the crucial question of how much power the committees should have over the security forces and police was still uncertain, especially since the government had ruled out any notion of submitting the State security forces to joint control. The assassination did not bear obvious hallmarks of the “hit-squad” killings carried out in the past by the security services, so there was no apparent evidence linking Hani’s assassin to these services. Still, few people in the townships were likely to believe in the government’s
noncomplicity, especially after officials within the ANC had claimed that the government played a role in the murder.

In what ways did Mandela’s rhetoric try to overcome racial stereotypes? How did he handle identity-based justifications for violence, preserving the past and building a bridge to the future while transforming the rage, resentment, and fear? What were the dialogic and performative manifestations of his speech?

**MOVING FROM THE PAST TO A DEMOCRATIC FUTURE**

In his “Televised Address,” Mandela redefined the Hani assassination in a way that praised the SACP leader and encouraged others to be like him. He also challenged the standard interpretations of whites, especially those fearing a larger war or who saw Hani’s death as a means to a political end. In the process, even as he tried to move audiences beyond the immediate moment, Mandela utilized Hani’s murder to raise the ugly specter of apartheid. For example, he opened his speech by claiming, “A white man, full of prejudice and hate, came to our country and committed a deed so foul that our whole nation now teeters on the brink of disaster.” He called the assassination a “national tragedy that has touched millions of people, across the political and colour divide,” and a “cold blooded murder.” The subsequent black hostility, Mandela said, was “legitimate anger” and “outrage.”

Mandela made it clear that Hani’s assassination was no mere happenstance of war, no justified political maneuver, and certainly not a deed perpetrated by unruly blacks, as many whites no doubt believed. He described the murder in stark terms, confronting whites with the damaging effects of their “prejudice and hate” and with the reality that not nearly enough had been done by whites to move the country away from apartheid. Interestingly, not long before, in late 1989, Mandela had argued in a prison letter to de Klerk that reconciliation was precisely the need to forget the offenses of the past. However, Mandela employed the fact that the murder was bringing the nation to the “brink of disaster” to dispel the wishful thinking of whites who expected, incorrectly, that Mandela would relieve black anger simply by sweeping Hani’s killing under the carpet or by utilizing it as a bargaining chip. Whereas before Mandela perhaps could bargain with the past in exchange for reconciliation and political change in the future, Hani’s death could not be forgotten or negotiated away, especially with rumors flying around about the NP’s alleged involvement, something that clearly linked the murder with the atrocities of the past. This is perhaps why Mandela referred to Hani’s assassination as a “foul” “deed” that “has touched millions of people, across the political and colour divide.” He seemed to be utilizing Hani’s death to sum up the entire history of apartheid, the terrible legacy of which could not be put aside.

Thus, Mandela illustrated that coping with Hani’s assassination entailed remembering the past, especially if in the process of coping South Africans hoped to clear
NELSON MANDELA’S “TELEVISED ADDRESS ON THE ASSASSINATION OF CHRIS HANI” 717

the way for better relations and political change in the future. He argued that the anger of blacks, which he tried to control, was completely justified even if the violent acts of rage were not. Anger was simply a part of the harsh inheritance of a past that was still present, a legacy that would forever change South Africa, and something that by this juncture in the democratic transition Mandela could not completely purge. Indeed, even as he attempted to redirect black anger, failing to acknowledge the emotions of blacks probably would have increased the doubts about Mandela’s ANC presidency and his ability to speak on behalf of the oppressed. It would have ignored, denigrated, or denied the subjectivity of blacks, their history of repression, and their desire to have their outrage expressed.

At the same time, Mandela tried to alleviate the existing hostility, frustration, and fear while promoting political change in the future by describing Hani’s death as a moment of opportunity to be won or lost. Mandela told listeners to remain alert to the dangers of vengeful emotions: Men “who worship war and who lust after blood precipitate actions that will plunge our country into another Angola.” Apparently, there would be no war for those who lusted “after blood.” Mandela was probably referring to the pro-war radicals within the ANC, to members of PAC and Inkatha, and to right-wingers seeking to ignite a larger conflagration. He wanted angry blacks in particular to comprehend the importance of Hani’s valiant efforts and the definitive possibility that “any lack of discipline [by hostile blacks] is trampling on the values that Chris Hani stood for. Those who commit such acts serve only the interests of the assassins, and desecrate his memory. . . . There must be no further loss of life at this tragic time.”

Mandela wove elements of traditional eulogies into his “Televised Address” by trying to rebuild a sense of community after Hani’s murder, elevating the survivors above the divisive partisan struggles in which they were engaged. He therefore reframed the assassination as a moment that could be gained once South Africans began thinking beyond the unsettling particulars of “murder,” “blood,” “lust,” “war,” and revenge. He interpreted Hani’s death in terms of larger democratic ideas and goals, around which he believed all races could rally. Simultaneously, he hoped this commitment to democracy would signal that significant progress toward political change was taking place. As he argued, the murder represented a “national tragedy” that “has touched millions of people, across the political and colour divide.” “Our decisions and actions,” Mandela explained, “will determine whether we use our pain, our grief and our outrage to move forward to what is the only lasting solution for our country—an elected government of the people, by the people and for the people.” He claimed, too, that “When we, as one people, act together decisively, with discipline and determination, nothing can stop us.”

Hani was a pivotal figure for driving this point home, and now that he was dead, it was imperative to celebrate the way in which he seemingly had progressed beyond racial and political divisions to engage in peaceful deliberations. Hani represented
an important model of how to behave during the transition from apartheid, as Mandela was defining it here. Mandela appealed to the audience to live as the deceased would have wished and to embody the values of the dead. He therefore urged all other South Africans to deliberate over the legacy of the past and to precipitate actions that enabled them to transcend anger, fear, and identity politics as well. As Mandela put it, “Now is the time for all South Africans to stand together against those who, from any quarter, wish to destroy what Chris Hani gave his life for—the freedom of all of us.”

Still, what, specifically, did Mandela think that blacks could do with their volatile emotions? For the time being, in lieu of the mass violence predicted, Mandela encouraged them to transform their grief and anger into peaceful displays of mourning and protest. Not only “must” the “funeral service and rallies be conducted with dignity,” he declared, but also “we will give disciplined expression to our emotions at our pickets, prayer meetings and gatherings, in our homes, our churches, our schools. We will not be provoked into any rash action” (my emphasis). According to Mandela, the nonviolent displays and the long-term transformations would jettison blacks into the future, where he believed that more substantial democratic reforms awaited.

Much of what Mandela said in his “Televised Address” was directed at the radical youth, to whom he referred near the end of his speech as “the youth of South Africa.” His call to “disciplined expression” was important for them as well. Mandela exhorted the young rebels to act responsibly, despite having “lost a great hero.” He labeled them “the leaders of tomorrow. Your country, your people, your organization needs you to act with wisdom. A particular responsibility rests on your shoulders.” Although Hani had “lived with death most of [his] life.” . . . [and] made the supreme sacrifice,” Mandela did not want young blacks martyring themselves, something he recognized they were eager to do. “You have repeatedly shown that your love of freedom is greater than that most precious gift, life itself.” Such sacrifices, he knew, only foreclosed the future and worried white liberals and conservatives alike. The youth were, after all, “the leaders of tomorrow.” Mandela therefore desired them to reconsider their decisions in terms of the kind of “leadership,” “wisdom,” and “responsibility” that Hani himself had exercised. He redefined the old warrior ethos that had characterized years of armed insurrection during apartheid, illustrating the ensuing self-transformation required of all blacks, if not of South Africans in general. In short, while the youthful radicals were calling for violence and everything that additional armed struggle had come to represent, expressions like “leadership,” “wisdom,” and “responsibility” opened up alternative ways for South Africans to relate to one another after Hani’s brutal death.

When Mandela tried to persuade the young militants and those whites who feared them, his references to Hani as a “soldier for peace” became especially important in light of Hani’s role as a revolutionary and soldier for the ANC. Thus, when
Mandela described Hani as a "soldier" who "believed in iron discipline," "carried out instructions to the letter," and "practiced what he preached," he once again bestowed upon Hani (and those who followed him) certain heroic qualities. Eulogizing Hani in this manner did not so much reject the old Hani as it praised the new Hani who had transformed his martial virtues into virtues for peace. Furthermore, in order to "honor this soldier for peace in a fitting manner," blacks had to "rededicate ourselves to bringing about the democracy [Hani] fought for . . . democracy that will bring real, tangible changes in the lives of the working people, the poor, and jobless, the landless." Mandela praised Hani, the revolutionary democrat and champion of social justice. Such oblique references to Hani's Communist background may not have pleased members of the Liberal Party or conservatives like de Klerk, even though the point of Mandela's discourse was to avoid political squabbling by rallying the divided nation around higher moral and political goals. Yet, since he invited the young militants to follow Hani's example, Mandela also, as Salazar might put it, turned the praise of a single leader "into the praise of a community." Through its "rededication," the community of radicals struggled to move beyond Hani's death while it also "adumbrat[ed] the cohesion of a future nation." As Mandela himself said, "We pay tribute to all our people for the courage and restraint they have shown in the face of extreme provocation. We are sure that the same indomitable spirit will carry us forward in the difficult days ahead."

As noted earlier, for the transition to democracy to proceed smoothly, it was also critical that the State police, most one-time apartheid supporters, rethink their relationship with black militants as well. As Mandela stressed in the "Televisioned Address," this change might be facilitated if the police acted "with sensitivity and restraint" and were "real community policemen and women who serve[d] the population as a whole." Apparently, Mandela was attempting to change but not reverse the tradition of State-sponsored violence by altering police attitudes and behavior. In the process, he probably hoped to bring the police under the wing of the MPNP and to reestablish trust in law enforcement. In a larger sense, though, he appeared to be redefining the parameters of better relations between estranged groups. The State police, once a symbol of repression and fear and a consistent source of frustration leading to rage, were now responsible for not provoking violent outbursts, for exhibiting "restraint," and for displaying "sensitivity." Mandela was not talking to the State police alone. He was also addressing blacks in the local townships who, following the National Peace Accord of 1991, were charged with keeping the peace because the State police would not. As Mandela delineated the situation, restraint and sensitivity represented some of the constitutive virtues of a process that facilitated not only better relations but the political transition as well, inasmuch as the racially mixed constabulary would play a vital role in the movement away from apartheid. Such movement occurred when the officers acted as "real community" police; when they remained "sensitive" to the protestors, protecting blacks as well as
whites; and when they showed responsibility to the “population as a whole,” a term for Mandela's vision of a multiracial South Africa edging toward change. Reprisals by security forces or black gangs, denial, the simple paternalism of many white South African Christian churches, armed revolution—none of these was a viable response by either whites or blacks if the negotiations were to go on and democracy to emerge after Hani's death.

**Dialogue with the Other**

When Mandela said that blacks and whites should “act together” or “stand together,” he most likely did not desire South Africans merely to appease one another, to agree on every point, or to exist in some ideal, harmonious state of relationship in order for the negotiations to continue or for reconciliation and democracy to take shape. He seemed to think that before any sphere of reason, law, and justice could exist—the very underpinnings of a peaceful and democratic society, as we generally think of it—there had to be dialogue between the main antagonists. For him, at this most challenging moment, any significant political change and any notion of reconciliation entailed a commitment to fundamental dialogic acts, such as empathy, understanding, and shared grief, since these acts revealed the possibility for new relationships and political community. Mandela's “Televised Address,” then, invited South Africans to dialogue or to speak with each other as a prelude to more substantial action in the future. As Doxtader suggests, reconciliation represents a moment “when the 'miraculous' power of speech forges human relationships that sustain collective action. Put differently, the time of South African reconciliation is an example of how speech invents the potential for politics.”

Certainly, many previous South African works examined the idea of better relations, including the Freedom Charter, the religious discourse of Archbishop Tutu, and the *Kairos Document* of 1985. Mandela's “Televised Address” recaptured the urgency of the *Kairos Document* and the overall concern with moving forward and building relations with other humans. All of Mandela's talk about grief and understanding, for example, implied that the relationship between South Africans, now more than ever, involved working through their relationships, stage by stage, quite literally painful detail by painful detail. As put by Mandela, “Now is the time for our white compatriots, from whom messages of condolence continue to pour in, to reach out with an understanding of the grievous loss to our nation, to join in the memorial services and the funeral commemorations.”

Comments like this suggested that blacks who were furious over Hani's murder had to put aside their anger, recognizing the call of certain whites—that is, the “messages of condolence”—even though these gestures may in some cases have been disingenuous or driven by self-interest. Of course, Mandela desired that whites—not to mention disaffected Zulus and black radicals—join in the pursuit of
democracy and other reforms. He even insisted on material changes (for example, reforms in police behavior and economic policies, fixing the election date, structuring the bargaining process) in the “Televised Address” and in other public statements before and after Hani’s murder. Yet, in a sense, these demands appeared to be meant more for hostile black auditors than for whites. For in reality, while many whites were willing to do as much as they possibly could to facilitate the transition, many others applauded Hani’s killers and openly refused economic compensation. Moreover, when later in April 1993 the ANC tried to press the advantage they had gained after the assassination, insisting on setting a date for the election, de Klerk stalled. Even in June, after most of the negotiating parties agreed to hold South Africa’s first fully democratic elections on April 27, 1994, the Conservative Party, mostly Afrikaners, and Chief Buthelezi’s Inkatha Freedom Party were kept out of the negotiations.

In the aftermath of the assassination, then, perhaps Mandela was calling for displays of shared grief and simple “understanding” because—the legal, political, and economic compensation notwithstanding—asking for anything more would have been asking for too much. I am not arguing that Mandela was in his “Televised Address” articulating a definitive concept of reconciliation, a concept that for him changed over time when viewed from the 1950s to the end of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings in 2001. In fact, Mandela’s definition of reconciliation did not always equate with peacemaking or with the political change represented by constitutional negotiations. Neither am I suggesting that Hani’s murder represented, for Mandela, a critical point of reconciliation, if by reconciliation one means the exchange of forgiveness for negotiations, for disclosures of wrongdoing, or for material compensations. Again, such reconciliation was probably not possible at this point. Nor did Mandela ever use the word “reconciliation” in this speech. However, something like a gesture toward reconciliation may have been operating here. By recognizing the right of South African blacks to mourn and by welcoming the sympathy of whites, Mandela identified the grounds for a kind of primordial reconciliation between the conflicted races, at least immediately after Hani’s murder. The details of a more encompassing reconciliation were to be worked out in the future. Mandela appeared to sense that this form of dialogue was perhaps one of the only acts of coming together of which angry blacks and many anxious but sympathetic whites were capable at that moment, but which also might lay the seeds for future trust, disclosure, and forgiveness. Whatever the design and outcome, by using the apparent willingness of particular whites to mourn with blacks as a trope of dialogue, Mandela tried to open up an alternative way for South Africans to encounter each other in a post-apartheid world still characterized by violent outbursts and political uncertainty. He was establishing, as moral leaders should, the appropriate transformative response to these outbursts and to the inevitable deaths they caused.
Paradoxically, though, even as he tried to replace the murder and mayhem of the apartheid era with shared sorrow and empathy, Mandela exposed black dissenters to further sacrifice, to misinterpretation and abandonment, and possibly even to death. For already apartheid had ruined the grounds of communication, distorting experience and suppressing voice. What black South African could trust whites to dialogue empathetically now? More poignantly, right-wing whites had killed Hani despite or even because of his offer of dialogue and the larger political change it portended. Whites of all ideological leanings were vulnerable, too, as when Mandela pointed in the “Televised Address” to the “white woman, of Afrikaner origin,” who “risked her life so that we may know, and bring to justice, the assassin.” He was referring to an Afrikaner who witnessed the slaying and wrote down the license-plate number of the car used by the fleeing assailant. She immediately reported the number to the police, and 15 minutes later they stopped the car, driven by Janusz Walus, who still had the smoking gun with him. During one of the bloodiest periods in South Africa’s history, whites like her were powerless to predict how hostile blacks (or for that matter, white right-wing groups) might respond to displays of concern or acts of justice. Could they really trust blacks in general to reciprocate or would blacks, filled by “prejudice and hate” of their own, precipitate race riots and abort these rudimentary dialogic acts, not to mention the larger political negotiations?

Mandela appeared to believe that by making South Africans of all racial and ethnic backgrounds responsible but susceptible actors, a community of otherwise deeply divided people might emerge from their meeting. This community probably would not be—and indeed was not—immediately forthcoming. Still, if Hani’s call for peace and the displays of grief from whites were any indication, it was a community in which the previous damages inflicted upon speech were partially repaired. It was a community where the members who ultimately endured learned to trust and to treat one another, and the deceased, with dignity and respect. From here, the prospects of the closer-knit, multiracial, “democratic” community about which he spoke seemed at the very least plausible. As the philosopher Alphonso Lingis argues about relations between the oppressed and their oppressors in *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common*, “Community forms in a movement by which one exposes oneself to the other, to forces and powers outside oneself, to death and to the others who die.”

**The Performance of Character**

If something like laying a framework for future reconciliation was on Mandela’s mind in the “Televised Address,” he must have known that it would be extremely hard for listeners to begin the process. For one thing, in light of apartheid, even the most reasonable person would have found it difficult to meditate prudently over
Hani’s murder in such a way that encouraged openness, forgiveness, or whatever else Mandela thought of as reconciliation. Nonetheless, he appeared to use his speech to illustrate what reaching out might look like and the internal struggle it entailed. Once again, Mandela was not so much performing what it meant to reconcile or to be reconciled as he was establishing minimal conditions for any sort of reconciliation and corresponding political change to occur at all. In other words, Mandela’s speech was, in an important respect, performative because it enacted the subjectivity and obligations of the ethical/political dialogue, what Doxtader calls an *ethos* of reconciliation—“an outpouring of self for the Other.” Mandela rhetorically enacted the bringing together of a divided community that would survive Hani’s murder; he embodied the minimal conditions necessary for sympathetic dialogue among the survivors.

Mandela suggested as much when he said, “I am reaching out to every single South African, black and white.” More than claiming that South Africans needed to “reach out” to one another or describing the specific behaviors through which reaching out might take place, the anguished admission of this point, at this critical juncture in time, performed the very act. Just as he encouraged South Africans to draw nearer in either their grief or their recognition of grief, he was drawing close by expressing his own suffering and welcoming the lamentations of others. “Our grief and anger is tearing us apart,” he admitted. He did not want listeners to overlook the intensity of his own reaction or the struggle to overcome it. For his personal act of transformation, of “reaching out” and “moving forward,” required “pulling” from “the very depths” of his “being,” while his admission shared “grief and anger” and his emotions “tore” him “apart,” just as they tormented his audience. Nonetheless, even as Mandela identified with the suffering of his audiences, he overcame his anger, as his mere presence in Johannesburg indicated. His own “restrained” tone, moreover, suggested that he was moving away from the violence of the past and “moving forward,” reaching “out to every single South African.” He seemed to put aside whatever “pain,” “grief,” or “outrage” that had developed through his experiences with apartheid and the negotiations to calm the nation. Mandela was both like his audience and above them, while using his transformed moral authority to raise them up as well. He projected onto his audiences by way of his own strenuous performance a manner of thoughtful deliberation and recollection, something that reflected the spirit of Hani and once again oriented viewers to future time. He was asking them to give “disciplined expression” to their emotions, to act upon the “particular responsibility resting on your shoulders,” even as such actions exposed them, as it exposed Hani, “the woman of Afrikaner origin,” and Mandela himself, to retribution, imprisonment, or political murder.

It is important to emphasize the performative significance of Mandela’s renunciation of violence in the “Televized Address.” For not long before, in his February 11, 1990, “Address to [a] Rally in Cape Town on His Release from Prison,” Mandela
supported armed struggle for “defensive” purposes, just as he had earlier in his political career. Written by members of the ANC who composed the Reception Committee and at points fiery in tone, this speech seemed to equate reconciliation with negotiations and an end to armed resistance—but it did not renounce black violence completely. Even though he expressed anger on many other occasions, the tenor of Mandela’s public comments on armed resistance had generally cooled since his release from jail. However, as previously mentioned, the suspected involvement of the government’s security agency in Hani’s assassination made the endorsement of violence understandable. Indeed, during apartheid, and certainly immediately after Mandela’s release from prison, political violence would most likely have been the normal way of responding to Hani’s murder, and Mandela might well have endorsed some version of it. Yet, he framed Hani’s killing as yet another pivotal instance in the moral transformation of the nation, what he called “a watershed moment for all of us.” Simultaneously, he actually spoke in a measured, restrained manner that respected the urgency of the moment. Thus he appeared to embody the virtues (of restraint, courage, understanding, deliberation, wisdom) required to lift South Africa from its apartheid past to its peaceful future. As Archbishop Tutu has said, Mandela helped South Africans “to move away from what would have been the normal reactions and responses that are destructive and move them in a direction where those forces are transmuted, and they become forces for good.”

All of these performative gestures must have weighed heavily on the identity of black nationalists, especially the youthful radicals in the ANC. Mandela knew that from its beginnings, the ANC asserted the right of African people as the indigenous owners of the country, entitled to determine its direction and destiny. Most of Mandela’s moderate supporters within the ANC rejected the claims of the European settlers to domination. They largely accepted the principle of nonracialism and its notion that all those who had their home in the country of the Africans were welcome, provided only that they accepted full and consistent equality and freedom for all. And yet, as Andrew Kenny has claimed, while white militants were proud of their past and sure of their identity, and moderate blacks seemed willing to compromise certain aspects of nationalism, the black militants were “ashamed of their past and confused about their identity.” If Kenny is correct, even though Mandela made no explicit reference to the principle in any of his public speeches on the assassination, his “Televised Address” may have exemplified a revision or clarification of African nationalist identity in accordance with it. This was a conception of South African identity probably aimed at the ANC’s angry youth, which hinged on democracy and nonviolence. The commitment to nonviolence and the subsequent transfer of power to “the people” suggested that nowhere in the post-Hani milieu could black nationalists of any particular ideological leaning or background deny the basic humanity of fellow white South Africans. According to Mandela, Hani would have refrained from
such denials, just as Mandela was refraining in his speech. Blacks could seek justice and a complete accounting of what had transpired, as well as full political representation and the preservation of their cultural heritages, but not at the expense of trampling on the dignity of whites, as a disingenuous principle of nonracialism might do. They must find a way to treat whites with dignity and respect. After all, many whites appeared to be respecting the loss of Hani with their “messages of condolence.” Furthermore, some black nationalists, such as Robert Sobukwe and Steve Biko, the one-time leaders of PAC and Black Consciousness, respectively, had once formed enduring relationships with white people on the basis of mutual respect, and not because of an artificial nonracialism. Accordingly, the authentic response to Hani’s murder, as Mandela embodied it, did not necessarily signal an overwhelming political agreement on the nature of African nationalism. However, it did reveal a common decency that might encourage democratic practice. This was a civil agreement, enacted in Mandela’s own response to Hani’s death, which contrasted starkly with the alternative of civil strife. When Mandela spoke about the “supreme sacrifice” by the “youth of South Africa” and their revolutionary leaders to obtain “freedom,” and referred to the “iron discipline” and “determination” that he and Hani displayed, he preserved a narrative of nationalist struggle about which black nationalists could still be proud while he also hinted at the democratic fruits of this conflict.

Equally important, Mandela probably hoped skeptical whites would construe the relatively peaceful response of blacks and his own calm manner, as he revealed them to be unfolding during the funeral services and demonstrations, as an unequivocal endorsement of the principle of nonracialism. This must have made it seem as if the principle, once put into action under the severest of circumstances, actually protected whites and did nothing to demean the dignity of blacks. Thus, Mandela’s transformed soldiers-for-peace indicated that political change, like the principle of nonracialism, was more than a theoretical concept, and that a larger political community—a community also grounded in the principle of nonracialism—was forming.

So, when Mandela argued about winning “freedom for all our people” and “democracy that will bring real, tangible changes,” he was displaying, at that crucial time, how the principle of nonracialism was playing itself out in a peaceful way. His public remarks, in which he claimed to be discoursing “freely,” constituted what it meant to be achieving this “freedom.” His discourse embodied some of the “real, tangible changes” that had already unfolded (in his own character, in the lamentations of some whites, and in the predisposition of Hani, if nowhere else), and were therefore self-referential. These advancements might bring other South Africans closer together, including the radical members of South Africa’s many competing ethnic and racial groups.
As suggested earlier, serious obstacles to peace and democratic government nevertheless remained after Mandela’s “Televised Address.” Even as the election deadline spurred on the talks to settle the constitution, many Afrikaners objected that de Klerk was giving the country away, while Chief Buthelezi’s Zulu Inkatha Freedom Party continued to threaten Mandela with regional autonomy and possible secession. In June 1993, Afrikaners crashed the negotiations in Johannesburg, and in July the APLA murdered 11 worshipers during a church service in Cape Town. In KwaZulu-Natal, the Zulu gangs were still killing, causing bloody reprisals from ANC supporters. Later still, once Mandela retired from the State presidency, critics charged his government with everything from white favoritism to ignoring black suffering, from discrediting liberal white political organizations to fomenting such deep divisions among blacks and whites that the entire new government would topple. Severe economic and health problems, social inequalities, and crime lingered and in many cases worsened. The real meaning of the principle of nonracialism, a contentious issue before Hani’s death, remained controversial. Perhaps the most serious indictment came from many South African blacks who argued that neither Mandela’s government nor the TRC served the goals of true justice.34

What, then, does Mandela's “Televised Address” teach us about the role of rhetoric during a particularly difficult transition to democracy? Mainly, it reveals the difficulties attending any attempt to reframe relations of power within an ambiguous context in such a way that calms the passions and addresses the nationalist identities of various political groups, especially in the presence of a powerful historical legacy such as apartheid and of escalating violence. Probably no amount of political argument or display, for example, could have satisfied right-wingers, members of the APLA, or even separatists in Inkatha, who continued to oppose Mandela’s agenda. Still, Mandela’s speech may well have countered extremists hoping to induce a larger civil war or those holding to stereotypes of blacks as mindless or too driven by emotions to become effective political leaders. Indeed, as Richard Stengel points out, after Mandela spoke, right-wingers appeared to have much less to fear than they once imagined: “Their cohesion, even their reason for being, was undermined by Mandela’s restraint and his democratic treatment of them.”35 As Mandela said and his own actions validated, he was as much (if not more) devoted to “an elected government of the people, by the people and for the people” after the murder as he was before. Here, the “people” presumably included the conservatives and reactionaries. However, he also stressed that successful political change would only work if the various political parties committed themselves to compromise and a peaceful democracy, whatever the details of that democracy might look like in the future. This claim underscored the tenuous, reciprocal nature of the general public commitment, as Mandela defined it with calls for “messages of condolence” and the like.
Mandela’s “Televised Address” may also have appeased conservatives like de Klerk, for the moment anyway and at a cost to the aims of the radicals. The call to peaceful deliberations suggested that Hani’s murder would not be utilized to prompt an angry rebellion in the ANC’s ranks, or to put pressure on the ANC leadership to take a less compromising role in the negotiations. Neither would it spark a desertion toward the parties of the black militant left. On the one hand, by recognizing the terrible fear of whites, along with his call to grieve together, Mandela may have empathized with the Afrikaners’ own past suffering under their British oppressors. The shared memory of oppression and loss represented an effort to bring the two races together and to reach out, where moving beyond the Hani incident depended on identifying with the generalized fear of persecution and the corresponding concern for a peaceful resolution to the crisis. On the other hand, in order to persuade conservatives of this possibility, Mandela seemed compelled to cede to the minority view when he acknowledged that the real threat to the MPNP—and therefore to democracy and the equitable redistribution of power—was not the murder of Hani, allegedly perpetrated by whites. Instead, the danger lay in the vengeful response of blacks and the anti-apartheid organizations using the killing to seize control of government or to give expression to their own nationalist goals. At least in the “Televised Address,” this concession illustrated to blacks that the ANC would need the cooperation of the white establishment in order to govern the country. In a perhaps subtler and unwitting way, it also indicated that black hostility rooted in perceived threats to identity was at the moment a major part of the problem.

For apprehensive liberals, Mandela implied that angry blacks could overcome their nationalist ideology, their rage, and their historical condition to work toward a peaceful, multiracial democracy and transfer of power. That blacks were going to lead the way after Hani’s murder was important for two reasons. First, it addressed earlier charges by black leaders on the left like Steve Biko, who had accused white liberals of assuming they held a monopoly on intelligence and moral development, and of regarding themselves as trustees of black interests. As unfair as this claim might have been, Mandela’s speech sent clear notice to liberals that blacks were able to conduct themselves in morally appropriate ways, despite the ugly circumstances surrounding the assassination. Second, apartheid had itself long functioned from identitarian premises, and the transition, not to mention Hani’s savage killing, raised the question of whether and how South Africans could undertake to define and perform certain kinds of identity. Mandela’s “Televised Address” offered some answers that white liberals in particular might find promising, however incomplete. By linking the negotiations, the mass demonstrations, and the principle of nonracialism, Mandela tried to show that he could resist if not defuse the dangerous influences of identity politics while at the same time respect the rights of ethnic and racial groups to celebrate certain nationalistic aspirations and cultural icons. In the process, a government committed to the rule of law and the protection of human
rights could be created. Even as blacks were taking to the streets to express their rage, Mandela used his own performance and the image of a restrained band of South Africans as a compelling sign of how the hostility could be redirected and of where the political transformation was headed. The political virtues Mandela identified as constituting an appropriate democratic response to Hani’s murder—restraint, courage, moving forward, deliberation, wisdom, and dignity—suggested a new kind or moderated version of South African identity through which blacks could become virtuous and worthy citizens.

For all of these groups and even for the angry youth, the performative dimension of Mandela’s “Televised Address” may have helped to illustrate his arguments because it made him seem to embody the achievement of an elected (he had been elected president of the ANC) black man dialoguing with whites, on (relatively) equal terms at the pivotal “moment” in South African history, despite his own suffering and the threats to his life. He appeared to represent an example of coming together and of subsequent nation-building that other disenfranchised blacks could achieve as well, through deliberation, negotiation, and nonviolence. As the South African writer Andre Brink summarized Mandela’s leadership, “what seemed unthinkable in the most recent past—that black and white societies divided by centuries of colonial devastation and the inhumanities of apartheid could demonstrate the will to move towards each other—is already beginning to happen. Mandela himself is setting the example.”37 No South African leader could, at the time of Hani’s death, talk about the presence of a formal, democratic “state of the nation.” Nevertheless, a democratic state looked to be in the process of organizing insofar as such states must try (but do not always succeed) to overcome events such as political assassinations, which exacerbate political differences. And they must attempt to overcome them in relatively peaceful ways, becoming stronger in the process. Salazar might explain Mandela’s performance of nation-building in this way: A new nation as the conciliation of differences was in the process of being born through the performance of nation-building.38

Of course, the fact that large numbers of blacks and whites were receptive to Mandela’s appeals suggests that he did not merely assume a certain kind of persona he thought essential for the future—he also adapted to a general stance already taken by many members of his audience. That is, by making himself appear incapable of doing anything as monologic as placing a single person’s or a particular group’s authoritative stamp on government or society, Mandela reacted to the growing anti-authoritarianism and the existing pluralism of many South Africans. Perhaps they heard what Mandela said, particularly about shared grieving, understanding, restraint, and deliberation as an acknowledgment of pluralism or as a resolution against authoritarian rule, or simply as the need to dialogue.

Yet, all of this begged the question of how far Mandela was really willing to go in the presence of future assassinations or political retrenchment by white political
parties or the ineffectiveness of his own attempts at bringing opposing factions together. If in the end the entrenched white regime only responded to credible threats, which only gained credibility through escalating violence—something both liberals and Mandela in this speech appeared in principle to reject—what hope was there for future peaceful resolutions of the sort hinted at in the “Televised Address”? Indeed, despite Mandela’s efforts to redefine the apartheid past and other atrocities or to transform them through dialogue, his rather idealistic descriptions of a peaceful (or even “liberal democratic”) South Africa after Hani’s death likely set up expectations that could not be fulfilled. Over time, this and similarly optimistic projections probably exhausted his supporters and nonsupporters alike when his rhetoric mentioned but failed to alleviate appreciably the debilitating and deteriorating economic and social inequalities—some of the very things for which militants like Hani had died. The millions of disgruntled blacks still living in squatter camps undoubtedly expected more blame as well, particularly when whites refused to relinquish social and economic privileges. It would have been hard for many of them to transform their anger, as Mandela seemingly did. Moreover, by differentiating the ANC from radical organizations and by speaking for or redefining the radical voice, Mandela may in fact have de-radicalized the ways in which discontented blacks could express blame, something many came to resent.39

Mandela’s rhetoric, in other words, tried to be “constitutive” by instituting, through its own performance, ritualized forms of interaction necessary for achieving a transformation toward a national, democratic identity, one based in peaceful displays of disapproval. As Maurice Charland writes, “constitutive rhetoric is fundamental to collectivization and to the emergence of nations. . . . [it] simultaneously presumes and asserts a fundamental collective identity for its audience, offers a narrative that demonstrates that identity, and issues a call to act to affirm that identity.”40 However, Mandela’s performance rested upon a paradox. As Charland explains, constitutive rhetors “must presume an audience that is already consubstantial with the very identity they seek to prove.”41 While Mandela was certainly aware of the difficulties attending the “collectivization” of identity in South Africa, and while he adapted to many of his audience’s concerns, the transformation he called for seemed to entail that the oppressed subject could in fact give up a great deal before it betrayed itself. It was never certain during the Hani incident, for example, whether the payoff for black radicals of dialoguing with whites was really worth the cost of compromising their nationalistic aspirations, their anger, or their other aspects of self-identity insofar as these were tied to political goals. As we saw, neither was anyone sure if most whites, as a result of grieving with or understanding blacks, would make social and economic concessions as compensation for Hani’s murder. All indications were that they would not.

Although he intended in the “Televised Address” for black radicals to take the lead, Mandela’s vision of South Africa after Hani’s death applied to every South
African, regardless of race, ethnicity, or political disposition. However, critics might charge that dialogic or constitutive models like the one upon which his vision was based gloss over the partisan conflict, the interest brokering, and the identity politics so endemic to fledgling democracies like South Africa. As John Durham Peters writes in Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication, dialogic models, in particular, frequently fail to account for the detrimental effects of material conditions on social and political practice. Such models also presume, incorrectly, that individuals seek to understand other human beings or that they will acknowledge the ethical worth of doing so.42

Still, the goal of Mandela’s “Televised Address” was not merely to exchange one sort of behavior on the part of youthful radicals or other disenchanted blacks for economic or political gain. Nor should it have been. He disclosed possible new ways of relating in the post-apartheid world, one that did not necessarily exclude but was not premised upon identity politics. He asked South Africans to think beyond their color or heritage or special interests, to imagine a world where they could dialogue together without recourse to exclusionary principles. As Hammerback and Jensen explain, embodied rhetoric creates more than it persuades—it “liberates audiences to think and act more creatively, intelligently, and humanely.”43 Over the long term, urged on by Mandela’s example, the pursuit of political, legal, and economic affairs that collectively make up democratic conduct in a multicultural society did get underway, without great loss of life. Mandela illustrated that such speaking could be politically decisive (in that it averted civil war) and morally transformative.

Notes

5. Quoted in Sampson, Mandela, 461.
7. Tutu’s comments appeared in a PBS Frontline documentary on Nelson Mandela, which can be found online at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/mandela/interviews/tutu.html. The immediate impact of Mandela’s “Televised Address” was uncertain because, on April 14, seven South Africans were killed and hundreds injured in riots across the country. Police who fired into a crowd killed three protesters. As a writer for the New York Times concluded, this only added “more fuel to the rage of young blacks that is illustrating the inability of the ANC’s older, moderate, and compromise-minded leadership to control the unruly young men of the townships as well as the gap between the two generations.” More deaths were to occur in coming days. However, the relative lack of organized and sustained violence led Pattie Waldmeir to opine that all of the predictions about civil war and incompetent leadership were premature. That blacks “have contained their rage


17. Sarah Baxter, “The Mouse That Roared,” New Statesman & Society, April 15, 1994, 24. Even before the assassination, white liberals complained about being excluded from the ranks of the ANC and that the white members were all Communists. Equally disturbing, as ethnic and racial fighting slowed the transition from apartheid, liberals began to see history itself as driven by a logic that made future black violence against whites unavoidable. Here was a frightening picture of blacks as the Other and of the future as fixed and inhospitable. Blacks were beyond reason, pushed and pulled by historical forces that neither they nor anyone else could control. This notion revealed a subtle white racism that imagined blacks as historically determined criminals, as capable of nothing more than vengeance. For analysis of this “racist” liberal view in the novels of the South African
writer J. M. Coetzee, see James Wood, “Parables and Prizes,” The New Republic, December 20, 1999, 42. Like many South Africans unsettled by the Hani incident, liberals seem to have preferred what J. Daniel O’Flaherty, writing in Foreign Affairs, called the development of a “political center” in which liberal norms of rational, political deliberation would be practiced. According to O’Flaherty, “Polarization is the most serious threat to South Africa’s transition. The success of the transition depends on the persistence of a political center that can resist powerful centrifugal forces and prevent the initiative from passing to violent elements on both the left and the right.” See J. Daniel O’Flaherty, “Holding Together South Africa,” Foreign Affairs 72 (1993): 132.


19. Quoted in “S. African Murder Called a Religious Act,” 11. Similar remarks were made by other members of the far right. As a leader of the reactionary Boerestaat Party declared, “We cannot restore this country to Boer [Afrikaner] rule unless there is complete chaos” on the order of Yugoslavia-style ethnic war. Quoted in Eric Randsell, “South Africa on the Brink,” U.S. News & World Report, April 16, 1993, 43.


21. Taylor, “Apartheid Foe Slain,” A01. As Waldmeir wrote, “So many South Africans have been murdered by the police and military over long years of struggle that blacks acknowledge only one salient fact: that a white man has killed the man who was probably South Africa’s greatest liberation fighter.” Waldmeir, “Signs of Resilience,” 14.


24. Traditionally, as Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson point out, eulogies have served this community-building function. See their “Form and Genre in Rhetorical Criticism: An Introduction,” in Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action (Falls Church, Va.: The Speech Communication Association, 1978), 20–21.


NELSON MANDELA’S "TELEVISED ADDRESS ON THE ASSASSINATION OF CHRIS HANI"  


27. According to Salazar, the roots of a more conciliatory and democratic South Africa were set forth in Archbishop Tutu’s vision of a religious community that emphasized unity and the meeting of spirits. For analysis of Archbishop’s Tutu’s rhetoric, see Salazar, *An African Athens*. Written by a small group of theologians, the *Kairos Document* was directed to government and church leaders, activists, and members of the public, and criticized both apartheid and anti-apartheid opposition with prudent argument about the occasion and potential for reconciliation. According to Doxtader, the *Kairos Document* presented the time of its release as a “period of urgency and opportunity” standing “in opposition to both the past and future.” It required a kind of *ethos* or “an outpouring of self for the Other” that also formed “the basis for effective opposition to apartheid.” See Doxtader, “Making Rhetorical History,” 237.

28. Earlier, in prison, Mandela learned that forms of empathy like this were indeed possible. As Anthony Sampson has said, Mandela possessed an ability to overcome the insecurities of his white guards. He was able to understand “where they came from, to empathize with the Afrikaner predicament and suffering,” and was rather “surprised by the warmth and the ability of some of the Afrikaners to come around.” Sampson’s comments appeared in the PBS *Frontline* documentary on Nelson Mandela and can be found online at [http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/mandela/interviws/sampson.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/mandela/interviws/sampson.html).

29. Alphonso Lingis, *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 12. Derek Attridge has argued that this situation required a great deal of trust, which, “like pure decision, is born of uncertainty and uncertainty alone. It fully emerges only in the case of someone who . . . cannot be trusted even to carry out the most trivial of tasks. The very triviality of the task makes this a supreme act of trust, upon which the entire judgment of the future rests. . . . Another way of putting this is that there is only one kind of trust that truly deserves the name: trust in the other.” See Derek Attridge, “Trusting the Other: Ethics and Politics in J. M. Coetzee’s *Age of Iron*,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 93 (1994): 65.


31. See Tutu’s comments on *Frontline*. Despite what Mandela promised during the “Television Address,” undoubtedly many whites still feared he would inevitably pander to militant black groups while turning his back on whites. To counter this anxiety, Mandela demonstrated time and again in his public speeches as president of the country that he could be trusted to be evenhanded and that he would reprimand blacks as much as he would praise them.


33. The observation about Sobukwe and Biko is taken from Xolela Mangcu’s commentary on African nationalism in a special *Sunday Times* supplement on the history and future prospects of the ANC. See [http://www.suntimes.co.za/2002/01/06/anc/anc06.asp](http://www.suntimes.co.za/2002/01/06/anc/anc06.asp).


37. Brink, “Mandela,” 7. According to Archbishop Tutu, Mandela’s own history of suffering enhanced his credibility. Without it, Mandela “would have been less able to be as compassionate, and as magnanimous, as he turned out to be. And that suffering on behalf of others gave him an authority and credibility that can be provided by nothing else in quite the same way.” See Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 39. Archbishop Tutu’s description of Mandela’s appearance at the 1995 World Cup soccer match, during which he donned the Springbok jersey so despised by blacks—in front of whites in the stands, some of whom believed he was a terrorist—also reveals something of the power of Mandela’s performance to reconfigure relationships. According to Tutu, this courageous symbolic gesture turned around “our country” by exemplifying the “incredible transformation” that was taking place throughout the nation. Mandela’s performance demonstrated that “it was actually possible for us to become one nation.” See Tutu’s comments on *Frontline*.

38. Salazar, *An African Athens*, 91. By the same token, linking the past to the present in a certain way played a role here as well. Mandela attempted to turn those who were angry or fearful about Hani’s assassination into what Salazar refers to as “citizens toward-the-future.” He asked them to look—as both he and Hani had looked—at their old selves from the outside and to take a removed view of how they behaved under apartheid in their public and personal lives. Mandela was not encouraging whites and blacks to be without emotion or to forget the past. He was arguing that once the assassin killed Hani, South Africans could no longer be their old selves, ruled by fear and aggression. “As democratic subjects,” Salazar explains, “the new South African citizens have entered into a contract that precludes them from thinking from the standpoint of” the past. See Salazar, *An African Athens*, 91.

39. For other examples of eulogistic rhetoric that do not account for issues of social justice, see John M. Murphy “‘A Time of Shame and Sorrow’: Robert F. Kennedy and the American Jeremiad,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (1990): 401-14. Mandela’s rhetoric tried to convince South Africans of the value of what scholars call “restorative” justice, the effort to reestablish and affirm the human and civil dignity of victims. Although Mandela made brief mention of bringing Hani’s assassin to justice in the “Televised Address,” and spoke more directly to the issue in a similar speech a few days later in Soweto, his was mainly a “restorative” vision for dealing with the murder. Lacking here was any discussion of “retributive” justice, the compensatory measures traditionally handed out by legal institutions, such as prison terms for offenders or material payment to victims. This deficiency is unsettling when one considers the actual TRC proceedings, in which perpetrators exchanged full disclosure for amnesty. Nevertheless, many offenders remained unrepentant. Moreover, the wrongdoing admitted was frequently so heinous that it is hard to see how any amount of disclosure or contrition could possibly have equated with restorative justice. Still, for Mandela, forgiveness seemed to be a form of restorative justice, a necessary alternative to the potentially explosive emotion of revenge. In the end, while Mandela’s rhetoric articulated the rough outlines of restorative justice, he may well have failed to elucidate the ways in which retributive measures could “restore” the country as well. See Elizabeth Kiss, “Retributive Justice and Restorative Justice,” in *Truth v. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg and Dennis Thompson (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 110 and 112. See also Soyinka, *The Burden of Memory*, 34.


NELSON MANDELA’S “TELEVISED ADDRESS ON THE ASSASSINATION OF CHRIS HANI” 735