

Eras Journal - Burns, M. Abstract

Abstract of Burns, M. A Completion of Memory? Commemorating a decade of freedom in South Africa : 1994-2004.

South Africa celebrated its tenth anniversary as a democratic nation in 2004, marking a decade of freedom since the final dismantling of apartheid rule. Commonly referred to as the 'new' South Africa, this decade has seen the country engage in a radical process of transformation, a contested search for a new national identity and new models of identification for a culturally diverse society.

The 1994 inauguration of Nelson Mandela as State President heralded the official beginning of this new order, and marked the beginning of a search for new commemorative projects to represent the new national ideals of freedom, unity in diversity, and reconciliation. This search inevitably looked back to South Africa 's turbulent past as a source from which to derive meaning and base the new nation's identity.

Memory has been selectively invoked through new commemorations and memorial projects to create a revisionist history and reinforce a sense of a shared national identity. This article focuses on a number of South Africa 's official monuments and memorials that have appeared during the last decade, as concerted attempts to redress the bias of the past regime's monuments and memorials.

I will explore the ways in which these memorials are being used to reconstruct South Africa, both successfully and problematically. In particular, these memorials reveal that the relatively recent struggle for the liberation from apartheid has become the foundation myth for the new South Africa.