

LONG NIGHT'S JOURNEY INTO DAY

TRANSCRIPT

00:00:00

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TITLES

For over forty years, South Africa was governed by the most notorious system of racial domination since Nazi Germany.

When it finally collapsed, those who had enforced apartheid's rule wanted amnesty for their crimes.

As a political compromise, the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was formed.

Amnesty would be considered on a case by case basis,

in exchange for the truth.

Those already convicted came hoping for pardon.

Those whose crimes were still unknown came out of fear of being exposed.

Some came seeking redemption.

Over 22,000 victims told their stories to the TRC.

7,000 perpetrators, from all political parties, applied for amnesty.

These are four of their stories.

LONG NIGHT'S JOURNEY INTO DAY

Narration: In the final days of apartheid, violence escalated throughout South Africa. Thousands died, but one death made headlines around the world. Amy Biehl, a young American student, was killed in a black township by a mob chanting anti-white slogans. After spending three years in jail, her convicted killers were among the first to apply for amnesty from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

00:02:55

Radio Report: You're listening to AM Live 104 to 107. The high profile Amnesty Hearing into the 1993 murder of American Fullbright exchange student Amy Biehl begins in Cape Town today. Four convicted young men want amnesty for stoneing, stabbing and beating Biehl to death in Guguletu almost four years ago. The hearings can be heard live on radio 2000 between eleven o'clock this morning and one o'clock lunch time, and then again between 2 and 4...

00:03:39

AMNESTY HEARING

Mongezi Manqina affidavit: The car stopped and the driver, Amy Biehl, stumbled out of the car and started running towards the Caltex petrol station. We chased after her and I tripped her and she fell down... I asked one of the persons in the crowd for a knife. I got the knife and moved towards Amy Biehl as she was sitting down in front of the box facing us.

Peter Biehl: I was in the middle of a meeting. It was during the noon hour and my secretary came to the door and motioned to me. And I came out and she said, "you have a family emergency phone call."

AMNESTY HEARING

Mongezi Manqina affidavit: I took the knife and stabbed her once in front on her left-hand side. I heard the evidence that this blow was fatal. I accept that it must have been the wound which I inflicted.

Peter Biehl: I just couldn't believe it really. And uh the only thing that was left to me to do at that point was to sit on the airplane and write her a letter. Which I did. And it was the uh, it was the only way I could communicate with her at that point. And I told her that we were very proud of the fact that she would put herself in harm's way for others. I told her how proud I was just to listen to her when she would call from South Africa on Sunday mornings. And, in the end, I told her I thought she'd done a great job with her life. And that her mother and I and her family would try to do something, not up to her standards, but would try to honor her with some sort of action. That was it.

00:05:50

Neliswa Solatshu: To be honest, I didn't care much because aw, she's a White lady. She's White, she's White. How many Blacks have been died, aw, so. . .at first because, I didn't know that my cousin was also involved there. But even if he was, I would remain feel the same - She's a White woman, then what the, what the hell must I care about her?

AMNESTY HEARING

Mongezi affidavit: I stabbed Amy Biehl because I saw her as a target, a settler. I was highly politically motivated by the events of that day and by the climate prevailing in the township. Political tensions were further heightened after White policemen and some White passers-by had shot at us along Vanguard Drive.

Gcobisa Makana: People were fighting for liberation and all those things. So in the days of our lives then, it used to be politics, politics, daily, meetings, rallies, all those things.

Sizwe Makana: The problem was one, at that time, everyone can do anything to anyone because of the situation. That is why we are saying now, we cannot believe it, but we believe it. Because there were many people, even myself, I can do that thing at that time.

00:07:20

Mongezi Manqina affidavit: I deeply regret what I did. I apologize sincerely to Amy Biehl's parents, family and friends and I ask their forgiveness.

Mongezi Manqina (subtitles): Before it all happened, I was a person who loved sport. I was in Standard 6 at Guguletu Comprehensive, and after school I knew that come 5 o'clock I would be at the gym.

GUGULETU VISUALS

In the week that this thing happened,
a student died at Nyanga Junction.

His name was Shawbury.

Before my eyes, he was shot by a Boer (policeman) while we were singing freedom songs.

I felt terrible because he died in my arms.

Easy Nofemela (subtitles): Killing someone like her exposed both our anger and the conditions under which we lived. Because if we had been living reasonably we would not have killed her.

AMNESTY HEARING

00:09:00

TRC Lawyer: How did you possibly think that the killing of a single, unarmed, white young woman would bring about your objective?

Mongezi Manqina (translator): The government would get very angry during the times of Apartheid, if only one white person is killed. Therefore by killing Amy Biehl that was going to make us proud and force the government to attend to the demands of the black people.

Lawyer: You had no mercy in your heart that day?

Mongezi Manqina: No.

Linda Biehl: After the conviction the mother of the sort of ring leader said, you know, she felt sorry for me and there was remorse. And that was the first statement of that kind, you know, of remorse.

00:10:04

Evelyn Manqina video message: It's going for Christmas time. Each and every house is sitting with his family, around the table enjoying themselves. She's going to sit at the table, but when she's sitting and eating she's thinking that hmm, there's somebody short here.

Linda Biehl: She did it through a friend of ours who's in the press. She allowed her to film sort of a message to us.

Evelyn Manqina video message: She passed away without any sickness. You haven't been even to the doctor. Just like that. Without no reason. It's too much.

Linda Biehl: I have always thought it would be good to give this woman some support.

News story @ meeting: Nearly 4 years after their daughter was stabbed and beaten to death in a South African township, the parents of Amy Biehl met the mother of one of her killers, and told her they would not oppose his application to be freed from jail. Peter and Linda Biehl's arrival at the tiny concrete blockhouse, in the black township of Guguletu, was a moment packed with emotion.

Linda Biehl: Don't cry, don't cry.

Filmmaker: Have you been surprised how Amy's parents have reacted?

Neliswa Solatshu: Uh, wow! I don't know what to comment. I couldn't believe it when this lady phoned, saying they were coming on Saturday to meet us, the family. And I asked my aunt, "are you mad? You're going to meet the Biehls?!" She said, "No they say they're coming. We must meet them."

00:12:04

Linda Biehl: It started kind of funny actually because we were taken to the house next door. We knocked on the door. . .

Peter Biehl: These ladies come out.

Linda Biehl: These ladies came out they're smiling and greeting. . .

Peter Biehl: They embraced us. And they were the wrong ladies.

Linda and Peter Biehl: And the guy kept saying "Evelyn, Evelyn. . where's Evelyn?" "Oh next door." So by the time we got next door, we were half hysterical. Actually, that was probably a good thing ... a blessing. It was funny.

Linda Biehl: You have no concept, until something happens, what your attitude is going to be. Now if I lost a child in an automobile accident, if I lost a child to cancer, if I -- I don't know how I'd react, I have no idea how I would react. In this particular case, because of what Amy was doing, how she talked about it - this is how we're reacting.

00:13:02

AMNESTY HEARING

Peter Biehl: We wanted to honor the quality of Amy's life. And the best way for us to do that, we felt, was to go and to demonstrate our solidarity with the People of South Africa in their struggle.

Linda testimony: Because Amy was killed in South Africa, because our lives have now become forever linked to South Africa, we are here to share a little of Amy with you. Amy was a bright active child. She loved competitive sports, such as swimming, diving, gymnastics among others. Upon high school graduation she went on to Stanford University. Her love of Nelson Mandela as a symbol of what was happening in South Africa grew.

Mongezi Manqina (subtitles): It made my heart sore to hear how they described her. I didn't know who she was. I had seen her simply as another oppressor. I realized I had beaten someone who should not have been beaten. I hit the wrong person.

00:14:16

AMNESTY HEARING

Peter Biehl testimony: Just two months before she died, Amy wrote in a letter to the Cape Times editor, 'Racism in South Africa has been a painful experience for blacks and whites, and reconciliation may be equally painful. However, the most important vehicle toward reconciliation is open and honest dialogue.'

Mongezi (subtitles): It shocked me that Amy Biehls' parents didn't oppose amnesty for us. Because every mother has suffered the pain of childbirth, and to lose the child you love is very painful. It's a wound that does not heal. And it still comes as a shock to me that they were able to reconcile within themselves.

AMNESTY HEARING

Peter Biehl testimony: Amy would have embraced your Truth and Reconciliation process. We are present this morning to honor it and to offer our sincere friendship. We are all here, in a sense, to consider a committed human life which was taken without opportunity for dialogue. When this process is concluded we must link arms and move forward together.

00:15:56

RECREATION VISUALS

Glenda Wildschut: Our amnesty process has been quite unique in the world. We have conditional amnesty. We would not have had all of these revelations if we had just gone for a blanket amnesty and families would still have been deprived of the knowledge.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu: This process is not about pillaring anybody. It's not about prosecuting anybody. It's ultimately about getting the truth, so that we can help to heal and also so that we may know what to avoid in the future.

Glenda Wildschut: One can quote the German example over and over again, where there was no Truth Commission, twenty, thirty, x amount of years down the line people are still saying, you know, I need some resolution to this and I haven't had it.

00:17:31

URBAN & RURAL VISUALS

Narration: Being politically active in the rural areas during the years of Apartheid, was to be dangerously conspicuous. Teachers Matthew Goniwe and Fort Calata mobilized the youth and community of a small town called Cradock making it a focal point of anti-Apartheid resistance. They soon became targets of the security police. On June 27, 1985, on their way home from a political meeting, Matthew and Fort along with two colleagues, disappeared.

Nomonde Calata: That particular evening it was so quiet I couldn't believe it. It was quiet. I even went out and stand on on my stoop looking up and down the street with the hope that I will see the car coming, but there was no car coming. I started to lose hope then.

TITLE CARD: No one was ever been found responsible for the murders of the "Cradock 4."

00:19:32

Eastern Cape, April, 1996

Mr Smith: You realize, of course, that it is quite possible for persons to come forward and to actually admit to the killing of your husband and apply for amnesty. Would you want to know the identity of the person or persons who were responsible for your husband's death?

Nyameka Goniwe: We know that those people are within the security forces but who they were, we don't know. So I think we need to crack that, we need an inside person, we need a witness. And I would appeal to those people who are still out there and still concealing the truth, to come forward. Thank you.

00:20:33

DUTCH CHURCH

Eric Taylor: I joined the police force when I was 18 straight from school. I accepted that we are there to uphold the present government and Apartheid was part and parcel of the government at the time. There were a lot of values that I felt we had the responsibility to protect, and Christianity was, of course, one of those values. All the people that I worked with were Christians. You must remember that one of the elements of Communism is Atheism and that is the outstanding point, as far as I'm concerned, that actually justified the kind of work that we were doing.

00:21:44

CRADOCK VISUALS

Nomonde Calata: Everybody was aware that they were oppressed and people were standing together. People here in Cradock actually were very much united. And Fort was the President of the Youth Association. And and the youth was so disciplined. In Cradock -- you could go around at night at that time, nobody will harm you. You can let your clothes hang outside, your washing, nobody will take it. You know. They were just disciplined, young people in Cradock. Because of the efforts that they have put in the youth. You know sometimes I would be busy here washing dishes and you know working and keep on wondering - I wonder who was responsible for the murders of our husbands. We went to the TRC hearings, told our stories, and a year thereafter, one of the TRC members came to us and said there's a man who has applied for amnesty who would like to speak to us, who is responsible for the killings, who was involved actually in the killings And I was keen, I wanted to go. I wanted to see this man. And when we got there, it was. Eric Taylor.

00:23:47

Eric Taylor: I saw a film, I think it was about in '89, 1990, *Mississippi Burning*, which was also about Apartheid,

Mississippi Burning: "Shit it is a cop"

Eric Taylor: It made quite an impression on me, especially the involvement of the Police in the assassination of activists. I started realizing that that's actually not what policing is all about, it should rather be about protection than assassination.

Mississippi Burning: Oh shit, we into it now boys, laughs...MISSISSIPPI 1964

Eric Taylor: After that, I read Nelson Mandela's autobiography, and it changed my whole perspective.

00:24:42

Nyameka Goniwe: He wanted to just talk to the family because this has become heavy on his soul. And immediately I said "no this is not possible for me because I do not want to see him."

Nomonde Calata: I told him that "ah Mr. Taylor, it is going to be very difficult for me to say that I forgive you, for what you did to me. Because you have caused so much pain to me and my family. You actually robbed my children from their father love. Because Fort loves his children very much. He was my husband, but he was a friend also, he was everything to me.

Nyameka Goniwe: I'm not going to absolve him, I mean, if he wants, you know, to feel lighter, I'm not the person who's going to do that. I refuse to do that. Umm, he can use, I mean, the TRC for that.

00:25:55

AMNESTY HEARING

Translator: Mr. Taylor, do you swear that the evidence that you will be giving, the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help me God. So help me God.

TITLE CARD: Eric Taylor is one of five applying for amnesty for the "Cradock 4" murders.

TITLE CARD: He killed Fort Calata.

TITLE CARD: The "Cradock 4" widows are opposing amnesty.

Johan van Zyl: There was only one way in which to try and stabilize these areas and that was by means of the elimination of Mr. Matthew Goniwe and his closest colleagues.

Hermanus du Plessis: Through their actions, they were combating the government of the day and the machinery of the government and they were succeeding in toppling the government.

00:27:10

Nicolaas van Rensburg: And I believed that by doing this, this violent revolutionary onslaught against the state could be stopped.

Johan van Zyl: At approximately eleven o'clock that night we saw the vehicle passing on the way to Cradock.

Gerhardus Lotz: I took one of the people from the vehicle. I let him walk in front of me and then I hit him with this uh iron object over the head.

Gerhardus Lotz: I hit as hard as I possibly could.

Eric Taylor: I hit Mr. Calata from behind with this heavy iron object approximately where the head joins the neck. He fell to the ground. I cut the petrol pipe from the Honda to pour over Mr. Goniwe's and Calata's bodies. And I set both these bodies alight.

00:29:25

IMAGES OF BURNT CAR

Nomonde Calata: You know what have hurt me the most is to hear that he was killed and after he was killed, his body were burned. You know that hurts me a lot. (crying) And, even now, I can't even make -- I can't make peace with that.

00:29:35

Jann Turner: A healthy normal reaction to that, to facing the killer of your.. your beloved husband, is that.. I mean that you should want to go and just hit them, hurt them, get revenge. I mean, I don't have that reaction and I know a lot of women don't. I've talked to Jillian Slovo, whose mother was killed in, uh by parcel bomb, Ruth First. Jillian and I talk quite a lot and we've talked about why don't we have that reaction. Why is it that we just want to face that person and say, can you explain to me why you did that? Why don't we want to do what Mario Scurn wants to do about the killers of his wife, is face that person once and only once and that's through the sights of an AK47. Which is really kind of healthy, in a weird way. I dunno what it is but it seems more normal than wanting to sit down and face them in this extraordinary Kafkaesque Truth Commission, where we sit and listen and go in the breaks and have cups of tea.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu: We make the mistake of conflating all justice into retributive justice. Whereas there is something called "a restorative justice." And this is the option that we have chosen. But there is justice. The perpetrators don't get off scott-free. They have to confess publicly in the full glare of television lights that they did those ghastly things. And that's pretty, pretty tough.

SPECIAL REPORT OPENING

Jann Turner reporting: The big question facing the Amnesty committee this week is whether or not the applicants have disclosed fully. Full disclosure and a political motive are the requirements for amnesty. The

three men targeted by Port Elizabeth security police, were Matthew Goniwe, Sparrow Mhonto, and Fort Calata. But the fourth victim that night was Mhlauli. If Mhlauli was killed for no political objective, his killers could be denied amnesty.

00:31:58

AMNESTY HEARING

BIZOS: If anyone were to suggest that Mr. Mhlawuli was unknown to the security police in Port Elizabeth, what would you say to that?

Taylor: I would have differed.

BIZOS: Now Mr Taylor, it is my sad duty to tell you that you are deliberately committing perjury. I ask for leave to hand in, Mr Chairman, a report made by the South African police in Port Elizabeth, as Exhibit GG. Mr Taylor. Have a look at paragraph 4: "Sicelo Mhlawuli, unknown." If this is true, a pack of lies has been told to this Committee.

00:32:50

Eric Taylor: Terrible. I expected it to be different from a normal court case, it was actually worse than a normal court case. I mean we're talking about reconciliation here, it's..it's part of the process and I think it... it was like a war out there.

George Bizos: You can't reconcile with a person whom your clients and you yourself, don't believe. So yes, it is confrontational.

AMNESTY HEARING

MR BIZOS: Do you agree Sir, that if this document speaks the truth, your applications in relation to Mr Mhlawuli contain a big pack of lies?

MR TAYLOR: If the question of this unknown is so, then it would appear as such.

MR BIZOS: Yes.

George Bizos: The audience actually plays the role of a chorus in an ancient tragic play. Here we are, the actors on the stage - it's unusual to have a judicial proceeding on a stage, but here we are on a stage and an audience, and when they see them squirm, it's part of the.. it's part of the cathartic process. Here you were, the all powerful that would come and arrest us in the middle of the night and not give account to anyone, you "white masters," and now you are not the super humans you thought that you were. You are subjected to cross-examination by a person who's on our side. I think that that is an important aspect of the TRC's work.

00:34:42

GRAVEYARD

Nomonde Calata: It was quite a big funeral. All the streets were full. That street there was full of people, you see that street. People were moving there out of the graveyard, this street here was full, you name it, every where was full of people. It was as if, the ground was moving.

CRADOCK4 FUNERAL

July 1985

Nomonde Calata: Imagine, Communist Party flag flying very high in Cradock. Small places like this. And the ANC flag, of course.

Nyameka Goniwe: It was just in defiance, a statement which was being conveyed to the government that there's nothing you're going to be able to control anymore. I can't even explain that kind of spirit. It was a funeral but, it felt like it was a liberation day for many. I think that is what lifted me that day.

FUNERAL SPEECH: When you kill you create more enemies. When you kill me, my family is becoming your enemy, and my friends become your enemy, and my friends' friends become your enemy. And today, the oppressed people of this country are enemies against the state.

Nyameka Goniwe: And for once, I felt if Matthew could sort of wake up today and just uh, you know, open his eyes and just see this, what?.. Meeting of people, various people, coming to pay their last respects to him, I mean, he would be a happy man.

FUNERAL SPEECH: Viva! Long live, Comrade Goniwe spirit, Long Live..Long Live Comrade Goniwe's ideas. Mathew Goniwe is a gallant martyr of our people

00:36:51

AMNESTY HEARING

BIZOS: Your motive for killing was to restore peace.

TAYLOR: That is correct Mr Chairperson.

BIZOS: Was peace restored?

TAYLOR: No, Mr. Chairman.

BIZOS: And one of the fruits that you reaped was a declaration of a state of emergency in July 1985.

TAYLOR: That was not my consideration. My only consideration was to ensure that I would not be arrested subsequently. In other words, to commit the murders and to get away with it.

00:38:29

CRADOCK CHURCH

Nomonde Calata: You'll sometimes go sit down with your friends and talk something else, and all of a sudden you just become quiet. I will keep on asking myself, Why did he allow himself to be used, if he was used by somebody else, to kill our husband? Did they have wives and children then or were they just unmarried men or I don't know. Maybe they didn't have wives and children.

DUTCH REFORM CHURCH, girls dance

Eric Taylor: 2 sons, 1 daughter. The eldest one is now 20 and then the younger one, the only daughter is only 4 now. In the end, I'll have to tell her about it. She's been asking me why I'm appearing on television, so, but it's fortunate at this stage she doesn't know what it's all about.

CRADOCK CHURCH

Eric Taylor: You can't live with this all your life. I just want to get it behind me and then, most important, is the fact that I would still like the families to one day forgive me.

Nomonde Calata: I mean I'm a human being. I'm just a person like him. I will also want to overcome this thing. I don't want to live with it my whole life.

00:41:01

MARKET VISUALS

Radio Report: It's now 18 minutes past seven. South Africans are weeping, the raw pain and deep emotion at the Truth Commission hearings have brought tears to many eyes, black and white alike. Victims of Apartheid...

Glenda Wildschut: The decision to make this a public process, meant that the horrors of the past and the possibilities for nation building in the future, can not be ignored by any South African.

Jann Turner: Because of my own story, because my dad was killed here in 1978, I feel that the Truth Commission and the covering the events that are the subject of the Truth Commission is a personal mission of mine. I mean that's what it's about that's what this process is about, Truth Commission. It's about facing it, and it's bloody sore, it's opening up wounds, it entails a hell of a lot of energy, more so than I think many people realized, to come back to it ... But in the course of doing that, in the course of facing the past, you get ...you do get healing. There's Maya Angelou wrote that poem, what did she write? History despite it's wrenching pain cannot be un-lived but if faced with courage, need not be lived again. And that plays out in so many ways, in such a personal sense for me, facing it, I don't have to live through all that painful stuff anymore and it's obviously crucial in the much more, you know, big rhetorical political sense. We have to face this because we can't let it happen again.

00:43:02

MK FOOTAGE

Narration: After years of non-violent resistance to apartheid, ANC leaders including Nelson Mandela, established a military wing. Thousands of youths left the country to join what became known as MK - the Spear of the Nation.

Robert McBride: By 1985, I was already in the armed wing of the ANC. It was the most logical thing to do. There was no way non-violent protest would work. I was 22 years old. And all my life I'd been categorized in racial terms, either Black or Colored or even worse "non-White." But when I joined the ANC I became a South African. No one referred to me by any racial categorization. I was a South African and South African freedom fighter. Joining the MK, ANC the moralizing takes place then, before you enter. You're given a week to think about it. That you might kill people and the fact that you will probably get killed yourself. So there was no turning back. I was prepared to give my life for the struggle.

BOTSWANA NEWS STORY: South African government forces carried out another cross border raid today, attacking 10 houses they say were centers for ANC guerillas. If so, many doubled as family homes. Women and children were among the casualties.

Robert McBride: None of the people killed during that raid were ANC military people. That forced the ANC then to take a decision. We should not show the same restraint we have shown in the past. We should go

after security force personnel, wherever they may be. Whether they are on duty or off-duty, armed or unarmed. There was a need for a change of tactics and there was a need to hit back.

00:45:22

DURBAN JUNE 1985

TRC Hearing, DURBAN, MAY 1996

Helen Kerney: We had the usual Saturday night crowd, very full and very busy and at about ten past ten, this is when all hell broke loose. What I remember is seeing flashing lights, of all colors red, blue, green and a horrendous noise that went right down into your body. But there was like a vacuum after that, there was silence. And then all of a sudden there was this shhhhh swooshing sound and everything just went bizerk. Then we saw it, it was a massive blood bath. With flesh and blood drooping from the walls. One minute they were enjoying a beer and laughing to the music and the next minute there was this chaos.

Robert McBride: The enormity of what we had done, really only hit us the next day. When we saw the newspapers. And from that moment, the morning after, I regretted it. And I still regret that I have caused pain and suffering to fellow human beings, fellow South Africans.

Sharon Welgemoed: We never felt, until my sister was killed, any..any sort of fear living in this country whatsoever. We lived in this little coco-coon, because we lived in a Whites only neighborhood. Where everything was supposedly..all right and the whole world went by and nobody took any notice of it. People were suddenly confronted with maybe what other people had been facing for some time already, but suddenly everybody was faced with this because it was now a reality, it had happened. So I think, yeah, maybe it was a bit of an eye-opener for people.

00:47:40

Robert McBride: I became more and more depressed and morose. But I also became more anxious to step up operations. Because I reasoned that Apartheid is the cause of all this tragedy. And therefore, the more I do against Apartheid, to end Apartheid, the quicker these kinds of things would stop. The result was that in the next few weeks before I arrested, I carried out operations almost twice a week. I was acting sort of under compulsion.

OTHER BOMBINGS NEWS STORY: In Natal, three minor bomb explosions were reported. In the first explosion, an explosive device thought to be a mini-limpit mine exploded in a refuse bin. The second explosion occurred....

Robert McBride: In my own simplistic way of analyzing, I'd be able to contribute significantly to ending this, apartheid. I was then arrested, charged and sentenced to death.

News Report of Release: Six years ago he was sentenced to death. Today Robert McBride walks free, his release part of negotiations between the liberation movements and the Apartheid government. Some resent his freedom and right-wingers are threatening revenge for the three white women he killed in a car-bomb attack on a bar in Durban. The ANC say McBride was a prisoner of war who had killed in the struggle against Apartheid.

00:49:05

TRC Hearing

Sharon Welgemoed: He is seen in some circles as being seen as some sort of liberation activist, people's hero, but in our opinion all he did was contribute to the violence, hatred, and segregation that we all wanted to disappear.

Sharon Welgemoed: We decided that we were going to testify at the TRC because we felt that it was something we had to do in my sister's memory.

TRC Hearing

Sharon Welgemoed: Mr. McBride is a cold blooded murderer who can never wipe away the pain, sorrow and anguish and destruction he caused.

Mary Burton: I remember when the commission was first appointed, I remember saying to somebody I knew in the cabinet, I just hope that Robert McBride applies for amnesty. Because although he had, you know, been released from prison and he had no need to apply for amnesty, I felt that it would give a wonderful symbol to the commission and that it would encourage others to do so.

Robert McBride: There's a problem we have from the side of the ANC with this even-handed approach. The obsession that the Truth Commission has with it. I mean there's no person or soldier from the Second World War, who would like, of the allies, who would like to be associated or even compared to Nazis. Nevertheless, I think it's part of the process of healing and, in a sense I need to humble myself and go before the committee. Because, with all its faults, the Truth Commission is really the only institutional vehicle that addresses the issue of reconciliation.

TITLE CARDS: Although Apartheid was upheld and enforced by whites, 80% of those applying for amnesty are black.

TITLE CARDS: Robert McBride's Amnesty Hearing, October, 1999 Durban

ENTERING AMNESTY HEARING -

Sharon Welgemoed: Has he been searched by the police? Mr Robert McBride. I want to know why he is the only exception to the rule here and he doesn't get searched and everybody else here must be searched. I've got no objection to being searched, but he must come outside here and be searched by these SAP the same as everybody else. He is not a celebrity. He's been searched, I said he's been searched. He's arrived a long time ago maam. Well I just think he's not a hero he's the same as everybody else. He should be searched by the SAP

00:52:12

Robert McBride Amnesty Statement: Before I read out my statement, I wish to state that I have already served a sentence considerably longer than any Apartheid minister. I was born in a ghetto, a product of Apartheid. My rights as a citizen were denied to me for the benefit of a small minority.

Sharon Welgemoed: The very first day I came, I didn't quite know how I was going to react. When I saw him, I was extremely angry. I think he came across as very arrogant.

Robert McBride X-exam

Lawyer: What persuaded you to start assisting the movement?

Robert McBride : Sir , (laughs) I mean, I think all of us here in this place know what persuaded us to fight against oppression. I mean one doesn't have to be a rocket scientist, excuse my language. I explained to you that I was an oppressed person and that is the reason that I wanted to help the movement.

00:53:21

Robert McBride statement: The Why Not bar was frequented by large numbers of police and military personnel. The intention was to give enough devastation to Why Not Bar so that enemy personnel inside can be injured or killed. Three persons died and it was reported that 69 were injured in the operation.

Sharon Welgemoed: My sister and the other two young ladies that were killed, they're the heroes here because they died to further everybody else's cause, so that this country could be free. Not by choice, I admit, but they did die for their freedom.

Robert McBride Statement: I particularly want to speak to the families of the people who's deaths I caused. I am truly sorry for causing the deaths of your loved ones. I had nothing personal against them . It was in a quest for my own freedom and in a quest to unshackle myself from the Apartheid system, that I brought about the death of your loved ones. For this I am sorry. Thank you.

Robert McBride: No one has apologized to me yet for either oppressing me directly or indirectly or happily benefitting from my oppression.

Sharon Welgemoed: Just because we happen to have a white color skin we can't be held accountable for all the atrocities and the horrors that Apartheid brought with it. We didn't even support it.

00:55:05

Mary Burton: It is very painful to have to recognize guilt and perhaps not active guilt, but the fact that white people benefited so much from the Apartheid system, and are now realizing what price had to be paid for the Apartheid. But I don't think that the success or failure of the commission is to be measured in the feelings of people at the moment. I think that those feelings are bound to be very strong.

NEIGHBORHOOD VISUALS

Glenda Wildschut : We all have come through a horrible past. We have all come through a situation where we felt that we needed to do something in a particular way. Whether we were supporters of Apartheid or not. And that we engaged in activities which we might not have engaged in had circumstance been different.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu: Reconciliation is a national project. All of us are meant to be involved in it. The TRC is going to make a contribution. The act says, the promotion of national unity and reconciliation. It doesn't say the achievement.

00:57:21

NARRATION: Eight years before Amy Biehl was killed, another deadly incident took place in the same township. In the early hours of March 3rd, 1986, a group of young men left home for the day. Two hours later they were dead. The truth of why they died for years eluded the mothers of those who became known as the "Guguletu 7." They did not believe the official police version being carried by most of the media at the time.

News Broadcast: Seven Terrorists die in a shootout with police, and Britons shiver through the coldest night in half a century. Good evening. Police have killed seven terrorists in an early morning gun battle in Cape Town's Guguletu township. The shooting started after police foiled ANC plans to ambush a patrol. We'd like to

point out that some of the visuals we're about to screen may be disturbing to sensitive viewers. This footage was shot by the police video unit at 20 past 7 this morning, minutes after the skirmish occurred. Information was received that the ANC was planning an attack on a police vehicle in Cape Town. A vehicle with Black occupants was stopped near the Guguletu police station. A hand grenade was held at the police. Four of the terrorists were shot dead in the immediate vicinity of their vehicle. Three other terrorists were shot in the dense bush around 200 meters...

00:58:52

Tony Weaver: A lot of journalists claim that they were apolitical, that they were just doing their job, just being reporters reporting what is happening. And, you know, that's just nonsense. There is no way, unless you're reporting, even if you're reporting sport or theater. I guess you could get away with writing a cookery column without being political.

(tv report - the terrorists were heavily armed ...)

Within the anti-apartheid media, you automatically distrusted the police version. I wrote a story in which I quoted one of the mothers as saying that 'my son was not a guerilla, he had never left the country' and I said to her so how do you account for the fact that there were weapons found on him. And she said 'It's is my belief that the police planted those weapons.'

GUGULETU VISUALS

01:00:12

TITLE CARD: An official inquest looked into the "Guguletu 7" incident in 1986.

Cynthia Ngewu (SUBTITLES):

The time we went to the Wynberg court for our children's case, the magistrate said nobody was to blame, because the police were defending themselves. The whole time we were there in court, they spoke Afrikaans and they never translated for us. They enjoyed themselves, laughing at us when they saw us.

TITLE CARD: The inquest found that the "Guguletu 7" were killed during a "legitimate anti-terrorist operation."

Cape Town November 1996

Mary Burton: Three of the mother's came to see me very early on in the process of the Commission. One of the things that astonished me was how alone they seemed. I asked them, how have you coped all of these years, has your church been there for you, you know, if your community helped you and they said no. We have maintained contact with one another, but that's all. The interesting thing really is whether all the kind of support and intervention of the Commission has made things better for them or has made things worse for them, in a way, I think one sometimes asks oneself that.

TRC HEARING

MARY BURTON: Good morning Ms Mxinwa. It is me talking to you here. can you see me? Here. How are you?

IRENE MXINWA: I am well.

MARY BURTON: Good. I wonder whether you would like to tell us what is on your heart today.

Irene Mxinwa: On that day I was at work. I did not hear anything on that particular day. I just knew that my child had been lost.

01:02:53

Cynthia Ngewu: I heard the people saying that there were people who were shot, but I just ignored that. The news bulletin would be on at six o'clock those days. I switched on the tv. As I was still watching the news I saw Christopher. He was being pulled with the rope that was tied around his waist. He was being pulled.

Eunice Miya: I saw my child on TV and nobody had come to tell me that Jabulani had passed away.

PUMLA: This is very difficult. Is the question of (What is most difficult,) bringing you here to talk about your pain and having to watch you re-experience the pain that you felt when you had to deal with the tragedy of your loss.

ARCHBISHOP TUTU: These are the stories that we want our children to remember. We want them to remember that we paid a price in order for us to be free today. We say that we hope that the Lord will support and comfort you and strengthen you, because we don't have any more words to comfort you.

TONY WEAVER: It was very, very emotional, it was very traumatic. But it was also very cathartic. I found it very cathartic to be able to talk about it in public.

TRC HEARING

TONY WEAVER: The funeral of the so called "Guguletu 7" was one of the biggest funerals seen in the townships of Cape Town. In my coverage of the funeral I estimated the crowd and so did other journalists - at between 30 and 40 thousand. The police issued a statement saying that according to their aerial photographs of the crowd, there were only 5 thousand people there and that I was deliberately distorting the size of the crowd in order to bolster the image of the dead men.

"GUGULETU 7" FUNERAL FOOTAGE

01:06:24

Mrs. Mjobo (subtitles)

We buried him that week. The next day there was a police vehicle outside my door, and I was arrested. They took my husband at his work and locked us both up. They wanted to know who was at the funeral, who were the speakers. They kept asking us these things and beating us. I was weeping for my child and I never looked at who was speaking, my heart was too sore.

TITLE CARD: 9 members of the local police have been subpoenaed as witnesses to the "Guguletu 7" incident.

TITLE CARD: They will view a police video made at the time of the killings.

01:07:27

NTSEBEZA: I will call for the video to be shown.

WATCHING THE VIDEO

Subtitles

Another one of the Black men by the vehicle in which they were riding.

This black man has been taken around the corner.

A revolver is still lying there next to the Black.

MOTHERS LEAVE UPSET

MARY BURTON: We were much criticized, for having allowed the mothers to be there. But at the end of that day when I saw one of them in the building as she was leaving, she looked very bouncy and cheerful and I said, are you feeling better.. and she said, oh yes, very much better, because now I know so much more. And that for me was one of the illustrations that knowing more can help, even if it is painful, and traumatic.

01:10:46

PUMLA: It is surprising that the police took their own video footage. Now you wonder why. The point is, all of this was done for promotion. Each of the security regions, had to be seen to be doing their work. You know, very often they would be pestered by those in charge. "What are you doing? There's a lot of trouble in such and such place, when are you guys going to act?"

ZENZELI XOOISAN: It was shown to senior politicians who then, on the strength of that video bumped up the budget.

01:11:28

Police video (Subtitles)

"We are standing near Sergeant Bellingan, who was also involved in the operation. Sergeant, can you tell us what happened please?"

Bellingan- "I was in the Datsun police vehicle and I was climbing out of it, when a bullet from the enemy's weapon hit my weapon and I was hit in the face. Then we immediately took action."

AMNESTY HEARING

November 1997

Mr. Bellingan, Why did you shoot this man?

MR BELLINGAN: At that stage I thought my life was in danger. I was already injured, there was fighting and shooting going on and I wanted to prevent any other incidents. My life was in danger.

TITLE CARD: Of the more than 25 police involved in the "Guguletu 7" incident, only two applied for amnesty. Sergeant Bellingan & Constable Mbelo
They tell very different stories.

01:12:28

AMNESTY HEARING

MR P WILLIAMS: Mr. Mbelo what were your instructions?

MBELO: The words that were used is that they should be eliminated.

BELLINGAN: That is not correct. I believe that if we knew where they lived and we wanted to kill them or eliminate them, because the word "eliminate" means kill, we would have done so at their homes, at their addresses.

MBELO: A man approached us raising his arms

CHAIRPERSON: Could you please show us how he raised his arms? The applicant stood up holding his arms raised in the manner traditionally assumed when wishing to surrender.

01:13:21

MR P WILLIAMS: And is it correct that this person who approached you at no time attempted to shoot you?

MR MBELO: He never tried to shoot us or even to reach for his firearm. I shot him whilst he was lying on his back, I shot him in the head.

MBELO: I applied for amnesty because I wanted to bring this thing out. Because, actually this "Guguletu 7". It's not the first time there was a commission on this Guguletu thing. There was the Weaver trial, and there was the inquest, of which we all lied. All those people who took part there, especially we people from Vlakplaas.

TITLE CARD: Mbelo & Bellingan were not local police.
They were sent from Vlakplaas, a secret government death squad training center.
Mbelo was one of 3 black operatives who infiltrated a group of angry youth.

Glenda Wildschut: This was a very well planned operation where these young men would be lured into a trap, as it were.

01:14:56

PUMLA: When you have people from the security being planted into a community, training that community, bringing arms from Vlakplaas to help train those activists, and you can understand that in those circumstance the activists were also very charged very highly charge. They wanted to do something.

Jann Turner: We find out just how callous these police were in that they, you know, identified a bunch of untrained people who were angry about Apartheid, trained them, armed them and then killed them basically.

AMNESTY HEARING

MR B WILLIAMS: Can you tell the Committee what was the purpose of infiltrating this group? Did you see any weapons in their house or on their persons?

MR MBELO: (translator) I never saw any arms in their possession or in their house.

01:15:52

MOTHERS MEET (subtitles):

Cynthia: Whatever he's been saying, it's just eating me up inside. He was the cause of this whole thing. He's like a wolf wearing sheep's clothing. The informer was meeting with them and milking them for information. The children poured everything out because they wanted to get the job done. Every time they say something, the informer goes and reports it to the authorities. It makes me so bitter and angry. Why entrap children like that?

MBELO: We didn't have feelings. It felt just like a day's work had been done. Going back to your place, you're happy you're finished, you have been longing for people, you long to go back. Because I remember, I even drove back to Pretoria. So when ..., you felt nothing. The only time when you think something is going to bother you, the nearest place or the nearest thing to do was take booze. Then you stay drunk you remember nothing.

01:17:42

MARY BURTON: His own situation exemplifies that of so many black police personnel who really were caught in a very very difficult situation. They needed the jobs. Many of them also went originally in the police force with high ideals thinking it was a good career and a way to serving the community and then became drawn further and further into being used as the government used the security forces in general to keep down the resistance of the people.

AMNESTY HEARING

MR B WILLIAMS: If you are found to have committed a delit or an offense, if I understand your documents correctly, then you are applying for amnesty. Am I correct? That is what you say.

MR BELLINGAN: That is correct.

MR B WILLIAMS: Yes, but, Captain Bellingan, that, with the greatest of respect to you, that seems to be hedging your bets, hardly appropriate here.

MR B WILLIAMS: You seem to be hedging your bets. In other words, you are not admitting specifically that you did anything wrong, but you are maintaining that if you have done something wrong, then you are applying for amnesty. That remains your position?

01:18:59

MR BELLINGAN: But I do make it clear in my amnesty application, if, I say I am sorry that I took a life and I am asking for amnesty for it, where I did take a life. It has happened and it is past and I think one should just try and prevent this kind of thing happening again.

PUMLA: The challenge for me now is that I'm a member of the commission. And whatever the findings of the commission are I'm supposed to embrace them. But really, at a personal level, I wouldn't appreciate it if Bellingan was granted amnesty. It's that element of humanity, isn't it? You want to see that they're not monsters after all. Then once they show in a genuine way that they truly look back and regret and they're full of remorse and then you feel that at least there is hope with humanity. But when you don't see that, it pulls your heart just so low that you really get worried about these people being granted amnesty.

MBELO: Bellingan is a White man. I'm a Black man. For me, it's more because I had to face my Black brothers and sisters. And that's a daily thing. So Bellingan's story is another one. Every day, maybe out of this when the commission goes off, when they knock off, he is going to the bar with his White friends. I have to go to my Black brothers and sisters. So we are not on par.

01:20:40

TITLE: Mbelo has requested a meeting with the families.

Mothers meet : (SUBTITLES)

PUMLA: This is the first time you will meet the person who killed your children. The point is that it is your opportunity to simply say whatever you are wanting to say or to ask, with our support.

MRS. MXINWA: Saying sorry is not going to help. It won't bring our children back. We must simply prepare ourselves to ask what we need to know, that's all.

Cynthia Ngewu: Whatever he feels about what he did is his business. What he has done he has done. My child is dead. Whatever he says will not alter that.

PUMLA: It's easy to talk about it, but it's not easy when you look that person in the eye. It changes totally. So I want to say you must expect it's not going to be easy.

01:21:57

Mbelo & Mothers Meet: (subtitles)

MBELO: My name is Thapelo Mbelo. I am ashamed to look you in the face. I know that it is painful for you to be faced with a person who has done you wrong and to talk to him. I know some of you may forgive me. Others may never forgive me. I know that I have done wrong, that I have done evil things here on earth. And I want to say to you as the parents of those children who were there that day, I ask your forgiveness from the bottom of my heart. Forgive me, my parents.

MRS. MJOBO: Those bodies lying in a heap, trampled. And when that child raised his hands and said he was surrendering, you shot him while he was in the act of surrendering! You shot that child. So how do you feel? And the day when you saw it on that video, how did you feel?

MBELO: I feel bad.

01:23:10

MRS. MJOBO: Oh, you feel bad? How much worse do you think the parents of those children feel? Do you see what size I am today? Wait, let me stand up, do you see how thin I am? I used to be fat. Do you see how I look? I used to be fat. It's clear to me that you have food, because you're getting money for selling out your own blood. How do you feel about selling out your own blood instead of defending it? And to think you did it just for the money! Selling your blood for money. I'll stop there.

MBELO: I was forced to do what I did. It was a situation where I didn't know whether I was coming or going because I was under a microscope by the whites. I had to take orders. I was told, I didn't do the telling.

Cynthia: But as far as I'm concerned, it doesn't alter the fact that they were your own people, and this would put them in terrible trouble. I mean, when you hear this, how do you feel? When you look at that day, what does your conscience say to you? When you really look at it, my son?

MBELO: Mama, I don't know what to say. We have hurt you.

01:24:44

Cynthia: It is so painful for me. No matter what he had done, my child was thrown away like a dog. The whites wanted to diminish him, to drag him through the dirt with that rope, to kill my child. They dragged him with that rope, they dragged him! I just cannot bear this thought. And his child who is left fatherless, who must feed him? Who must pay for his education? The ones responsible don't feel our pain. They don't even want to

give me a pension! We mothers are just sitting here. We don't have work, we don't have anything. That is our pain.

Mrs Konile: Your face is something I will never forget. I have no forgiveness for you. My child was working for me and he saved himself and his comrades, because he was working for freedom. But you were only working for the Boers, and your parents and your children.

Cynthia: Just a minute, my son. Doesn't the name Thapelo mean "prayer"? I see what your name means, and I don't know whether you follow it or not. Speaking as Christopher's mother, I forgive you, my child. Because you and Christopher are the same age. I forgive you my child, and the reason I say I forgive you is that my child will never wake up again. And it's pointless for me to hold this wound against you. God will be the judge. We must forgive those who sin against us, even as we wish to be forgiven. So I forgive you, Thapelo. I want you to go home knowing the mothers are forgiving the evil you have done, and we feel compassion for you. There is no place for throwing stones at you, even though you did those things. So Jesus told us when he was on the cross, forgive those who sin against you. Because we want to get rid of this burden we are carrying inside, so that we too can feel at peace. So for my part, I forgive you, my child. Yes, I forgive you. Go well my child.

01:27:28

STILLS OF SONS

MBELO HUGS THE FAMILY

SUNSET

EPILOGUE

01:28:47

Radio Report

Newscaster: Amnesty has been granted to the killers of American Fulbright scholar Amy Biehl. The Truth Commissions Amnesty Committee unanimously found that the four young men had made a full disclosure of all the relevant facts during their public hearing in Cape Town last year.

Newscaster: In reaction to the news Amy's parents, Peter and Linda Biehl, asked that the four men receive the support of their families and communities so that they could live productive lives in a non-violent atmosphere. They hoped that Amy's spirit would be a force in their new lives.

Peter Biehl: Even though I was completely prepared for the outcome and expecting it, I found I really missed Amy a lot that day.

Evelyn Manqina: (Subtitles)

Oh, I don't know. I don't feel good, I'm just in between. I just think of the other mother. Now, I'm going to get Mongezi. What about that poor woman? She's not going to get her child anymore. That is my reason.

01:30:00

TITLE CARDS: There are one thousand amnesty decisions still to be made by the TRC. The "Cradock 4", Robert McBride, and "Guguletu 7" cases are among them.

END CREDITS (02:43)

01:33:34