

Prof Korr eloquently describes his work:

“My first time at UWC was in July/August, 1993. I gave a series of lectures and seminars for faculty and students in the department of kinesiology and assisted the department in establishing a program in sport history and sociology. A couple of days before I came home, a colleague (Andre Odendaal) took me into the Mayibuye Archives and showed me a collection of miscellaneous papers in boxes entitled “Robben Island – Sports” Two years later, I began the research dealing with how the political prisoners created a highly bureaucratized football (soccer) league and how they used that to take control of their lives and to train themselves for a role in a future democratic and free South Africa. Amongst the prisoners who were active in both playing and running the league were future cabinet ministers, a future deputy chief justice, and the current president of the Republic of South Africa.

My research was a combination of going through the hundreds of pages of minutes, correspondence and bureaucratic documents followed by more than thirty interviews that I conducted with former prisoners and prison officials. I donated the interview tapes to the UMSL archives and copies are held in the library at UMC and the Mayibuye archives at UWC

## RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

### Production of a film

I worked with Anant Singh, the leading film producer in South Africa to make the film, “More Than just a Game”. It is a ninety minute made for tv docudrama. I was credited as both an associate producer and history consultant. I had a significant role in writing the script and I conducted the on screen interviews that comprise about 40% of the film.

The President of FIFA asked to premier the film in Durban at the 2007 draw for the 2010 FIFA World Cup. The audience included more than fifty journalists from around the world. The reaction to the film was so favorable that the producer had it shown in 2008 for a two week run at cinemas in major cities around South Africa.

Sony Films International purchased the world wide distribution rights to the film. In 2010, the World Cup year, the film was shown on tv in more than forty five countries. As a result of the film, there were features articles about the important role of Robben Island football on the struggle against apartheid. Most of the articles dealt with both the subject and the importance of my research. The NY Times had a feature length article in 2010 and USA Today had similar articles in 2006 and 2008. The latter was written by a journalist who came to St. Louis to attend the American premier of the film at the St. Louis International Film Festival. The film was selected to be the opening film at the first annual Canadian International Sports Film Festival in 2009 and shown at numerous universities.

ESPN’s “Outside the Lines” has received a number of awards for journalistic excellence. In 2010, they devoted a complete program to a documentary about football on Robben Island. I arranged for the interviews that were the basis for the program and provided background material to the interviewers. Despite the fact that the film was only 19 minutes long, it was one of the five finalists for the Emmy for the best sports documentary in 2010.

The most interesting screening that I attended was at the House of Lords in London. It was organized for Members by the Speaker of the House and I did a Q&A after the film.

The book, *More Than Just a Game* with co-author, Marvin Close

The book was published in 2008 in London by Harper Collins, reprinted in paperback in 2010. It was published in the U. S. in 2010 by St. Martin's Press. It was published in Australia, Canada and South Africa under license to Harper Collins. It was published in translation in Italy, Netherlands, Japan, Korea, and the Czech Republic. It was distributed as a BBC audio book.

When the book was published and the film released, there were a number of feature stories (in additions to reviews) in major newspapers. These included publications in Denmark, Switzerland, Italy, Uruguay, Spain, Germany, Singapore, South Africa, Netherlands, France, and other countries. Many of the articles were based on interviews that I had in December, 2009 when FIFA hosted a media event on Robben Island for international journalists who were covering the final World Cup draw. I was one of the invited speakers and took groups of journalists around the island.

Articles about my research appeared in many England language newspapers and magazines. Amongst them were *Macleans* (Canada); *The Observer*, *Sunday Times*, *Independent*, *Financial Times*, *Metro*, *Sunday Herald*, *Daily Mail*, *Four Four Two*, and the *Guardian* (all in the UK); the *Irish Times*; *Times*, *Sunday Independent*, *Mail and Guardian*, *Cape Argus*, (all in South Africa); *l'Humanite* (France).

#### Personal Appearances/Public Lectures/ Impact

Following the release of my book and the film, I did television and radio interviews around the world. I also was invited to give presentations about my work at universities across the world. While this work was enormously important to me personally, there were other results that are more difficult to document, but I think are more important.

The film and the book gave public attention to the prisoners who were on in the communal section of Robben Island. They were the vast majority of the prison population. They received little attention from the public during their time on the Island and even less after the transformation of South Africa in the late 1980's. One description is that while Mandela, Kathrada, et. al. were the command figures in the struggle, the men I've written about were the foot soldiers who were essential to the final victory

As a result of my film and book, there was public recognition about how these former prisoners transformed their lives using football and how they trained themselves for an active role in the post-apartheid society they were convinced would happen during their lifetimes. The book and the film both honored the prisoners and provided South Africans (and others) with a completely new perspective on what happened on the Island. The prisoners who were virtually ignored now had public recognition for both their service to the struggle and their current role in society.

In addition, many of them were honored personally in ways ranging from an honor doctorate at an English University to appointments to provincial sporting bodies. Another unexpected (and very welcome) benefit was that many former prisoners restored contact with men whom they had not seen

for years. Aside from the personal benefit, many of the men have been willing to participate in interviews about life on the Island.

A few examples of the impact of “More Than Just a Game” will give a sense of how it affected the former prisoners.

- Mark Shiners (20 years on the Island and part of the commission that wrote the Constitution for South Africa) “Thank you for making our dreams live on.”
- Dikgang Moseneke (Chairman of the Makana FA, ten years on the Island and recently retired deputy chief justice of the Constitutional Court), “Thanks Chuck for allowing us to live it over again.”
- Tony Suze (fifteen years on the Island) “The society never knew how we took control of our lives and now everybody knows it.”

Each time one of the former prisoners were asked about football on the Island, it enabled them to remind people that the Island and its brutality was not able to crush the spirits of the prisoners.

To celebrate the 89th birthday of Nelson Mandela, FIFA organized a celebration on Robben Island. Members of the Makana FA were present at the event. For them, the memorable part of the day was the presentation to them of a plaque that designated their association as the first ever honorary member of FIFA. Throughout South Africa, there were men who felt they finally had achieved the recognition they had sought years ago – to be the international representative of football in South Africa.

At the 2009 FIFA event for the media on Robben Island, Tokyo Sexwale (a former prisoner (1976) and now a prominent businessman and the chair of the 2010 World Cup Committee told the assembled reporters that only recently had he learned how the previous generation of prisoners created circumstances that were passed on to his generation of prisoners. What he had taken for granted was achieved after years of struggle. He singled out those men in the audience who created the Makana FA and recognized my role in bringing that story to the attention of the public.

There is one episode that I think summarizes what I had hoped for the project. I was in Cape Town for the first two weeks of filming. The day, we flew home, the assistant director drove us to the airport. He was a young South African of Indian descent. He asked me, “Do you know why this film and its story is so important to the people working on it?” I asked him to explain and his answer was, “When I was in high school I had to learn all about the Dutch ships and governors and the war with the British. But we never were allowed to have a history of our own. This story will show people that we had a history of resistance and courage. Even on Robben Island, we found ways to take control of our lives.”

