

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: A FUNDAMENTAL TRANSFORMATION:
THE MANAGEMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA'S
HERITAGE FOR NATION BUILDING IN THE
POST-APARTHEID ERA

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Drawing on compelling examples of South Africa's heritage sector transformation after the end of apartheid, this thesis considers the use of heritage resources in nation building and its potential for supporting the transition to democracy in places with difficult and painful pasts. Three South African heritage sites are analyzed: Constitution Hill in Johannesburg, a notorious twentieth century former prison incorporated into the new Constitutional Court complex; Prestwich Place in Cape Town, a pre-1830s informal burial ground, the management of which has spurred contentious debates; and the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria, an ostentatious symbol of the former regime built in 1949 that is struggling to maintain its relevance. The analysis of these three sites is

prefaced by an overview of the place of heritage in nation building and in places of atrocity and pain, and by a summary of South Africa's century-long history of heritage management. The thesis concludes with recommendations for other sites in South Africa that have yet to transform and for other nations transitioning to democracy and/or dealing with difficult heritage. South Africa's commitment to democratic heritage transformation has permitted a rewriting of the nation's history, has exposed the challenges and rewards from the involvement of everyone in the identification and management of heritage, and has resulted in an atypical decision to leave some of the more difficult pasts in place to permit debate to persist, all lessons that are important for managing difficult heritage in nation building in South Africa and elsewhere in the world.