

Paper Number: 4365

1st-person short stories from Mitochondrial Eve to Mandela — along the *Homo sapiens* Corridor

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Tswaing, a little way north of Pretoria, is dated at around 220,000 years ago. The asteroid causing that beautifully exposed crater may have had far greater significance than generally recognised. It was witnessed by our early Middle Stone Age ancestors. Might it have been the event that indirectly sparked the 6th Extinction? Might it have set alight the Anthropocene, the Age of Humanity? Might it have driven the genetic mutations leading through Mitochondrial Eve to *Homo sapiens sapiens* (wise wise human)? If the massive Chicxulub asteroid (Mexico) impacting the Earth 66 million years ago was – together with the Deccan flood basalts (India)– the direct cause of the 5th Extinction that brought the end of the dinosaurs and ammonites, might Tswaing prove to be the indirect cause of the 6th Extinction?

This is the start of our story. And we follow it with a selection of 20 1st-person short stories standing in the shoes of our ancestors at critical turning points in our 200,000 year human journey along the '*Homo sapiens* Corridor'. We craft a new narrative tracking our human story from Mitochondrial Eve to Mandela.

A possible selection of seven stories for reading (hopefully by the initial authors) and enacting in mime (CT drama students) during this symposium might be:

1. '*Mitochondrial Eve*' (200,000 BP) - somewhere in southern Africa, humanity's mutual great-great ... granny.
2. '*The moon & the deep blue sea*' (162,000 BP) - Pinnacle Point, our first fish dinner.
3. '*Eve's footprints*' (120,000 BP) - Langebaan, our earliest known human footprints.
4. '*The first necklace*' (75,000 BP) - Blombos, the first tangible love story.
5. '*From the MSA to the LSA*' (30,000 BP) - Boomplaas, taking a giant technological leap forward.
6. '*Tall ships*' (400 years ago) - Attakwaskloof, the earliest known sailing boat depicted in the rock art of the Cape.
7. '*Mandela walks to freedom*' (11 Feb 1990) - Cape Town, thinking of the children of 'tomorrow's world'.

Like the best historical novels, the set of 20 HSC stories aim to be as authentic as possible, based faithfully on current science. To write them, we've invited a spread of archaeologists/anthropologists directly involved in recent excavations, such as John Parkington (Diepkloof) and Sarah Wurz (Klasies); and ethnic leaders, such as Chief Margaret Coetzee of the Eastern Cape, and King Josiah Katz of the Northern Cape; to top poets and writers, such as Marie Heese and Dr Sindiwe Magona.

Some of these stories were first staged at the 'Little Theatre', UNISA, Pretoria (5 May 2016), together with the 'Institute for African Renaissance' and the 'SA Academy of English'.

