



## English: Personal Experiences

*Njabulo Ndebele*

### **Njabulo Ndebele :**

My home language is isiZulu. And, but in a family of educated people, my mother was a nurse and my father was a teacher, so we switched, learning from them, we switched languages quite frequently. But the base language was Zulu and with a lot of English thrown in. It was the language of colonialism but it was not, I did not have an awareness of it as a boy as it, as it being pushed down my throat.

And I guess it was. I guess if my parents, the converse leaf, my parents spoke to us in Afrikaans I probably would be speaking Afrikaans without worrying about it but they spoke in English.

It was the *lingua franca* among educated, South Africans, black South Africans, and it was important, it was a language of opportunity, you imbibed it without, without the consciousness as such of, of its dominance. And so, but it is, it is then a dominance that has, as the anti-colonial struggle developed was then began to be questioned.

I think my identity is made up of a whole host of things and not only language. I just think that writers appropriate, appropriate the tools that they find useful for their artistic purposes and if one of those tools is a language that you associate it with out of the specifics of the circumstances then it becomes yours, one of the tools that you use to deploy your, your artistic intentions.

The use of English in any circumstances is always a, a, fraught with tension because you are, you are aware of, of the problematics or the history of using it, but at the same time aware of the value of using it. Those two things go together all the time. Maybe it is the tension that gives it such energy that those that use it and express their deepest concerns may be, may be successful precisely because they leave in that tension and it generates energy for them.