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ALEXANDRA, SOUTH AFRICA 1912-1985

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COMMUNITY, CULTURE AND RESISTANCE IN ALEXANDRIA, SOUTH
AFRICA, 1912-1985

By

Dawne Y. Curry

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

COMMUNITY, CULTURE, AND RESISTANCE IN ALEXANDRIA, SOUTH AFRICA, 1912-1985

By

Dawne Y. Curry

This dissertation traces the social, cultural, and political construction of space and resistance in Alexandria, South Africa, a Black and Coloured township community, from 1912 to 1985. It discusses Alexandra's formation as a freehold settlement until the partial State of Emergency enacted by President P. W. Botha in 1985. The work documents Alexandran responses to inadequate housing, increases in transport, and forced removals as means to analyze domination and resistance as it is mediated by space and gender. It uses oral testimonies and archival documents to analyze Alexandra's contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle. These testimonies include participants from various social and economic backgrounds and ages who provided extensive detail on Alexandra's early formation, establishment of churches and schools, everyday day life within the township, and the protests that consumed the area, their objectives and outcomes.

While accomplishing these goals, the dissertation traces the evolution of Alexandra's history and how its square mile became a space of inclusion and exclusion because of national governmental laws and because township residents enacted their own policies. Alexandra represented an important residential space as a freehold. There, Africans and Coloureds could own land in close proximity to Johannesburg. While

Alexandra possesses significance as a freehold area, the township also represented a contested terrain because the township lay near the epicenter of segregation. A swath of affluent white residential areas encircled the township. This enclosed space allowed township dwellers to use compulsory segregation to their advantage by creating informal networks of communication, and an established culture of resistance. The township's enclosed space also enabled residents to develop a close knit community based on a pattern of familiarity.

The work's overarching arguments are the following. The protests that Alexandrans waged depicted struggles between various members of the subordinate group as well as the national government. Alexandrans used these struggles to transform the township's space from a peaceful habitat to one where they engaged in calculated resistance. Resistance entailed boycotting buses, submitting memorandums, holding township gatherings or looting or burning down shops. Alexandrans also used development as a form of resistance when Reverend Sam Buti protested against the process of forced removals and the changing of Alexandra's status as a family dwelling area to a place for migrant laborers. Buti cleaned up the township and sought to model Alexandra on the white suburbs he observed. These strategies of resistance allowed Alexandrans to perpetuate or refine protest methods through several generations. It is these continuities and discontinuities that convey the story of the township's contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Verneta Veronica Cockrell, who taught me my first lessons on resistance.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABOA	Alexandra Bus Owners Association
ACA	Alexandra Coloured Association
ACC	Alexandra Commuters Committee
AHC	Alexandra Health Committee
ALC	Alexandra Liaison Committee
AME	African Methodist Episcopal Church
AMNB-ANC	African Minded National Bloc-African National Congress
ANC	African National Congress
APOATA	Alexandra Property Owners and Tenants Association
ARM	African Resistance Movement
ARMSTA	Alexandra Randburg Modderfontein Sandton Taxi Association
ASA	Alexandra Standowners Association
ASTA	Alexandra Standholders and Tenant Association
ATRIC	Alexandra Township Residents Interim Committee
AYCO	Alexandra Youth Congress
AZAPO	Azanian Peoples Organization
BPC	Black Parents Council
CAMP	Cooperative African Microfilm Project
COMWASO	Commuter Watchdog Association
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
DCS	Dark City Sisters
DOA	Daughters of Africa
DPC	Displaced Persons Committee
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
FRELIMO	Mozambique Liberation Front
LAC	Local Advisory Committee
MRC	Minerva Representative Council
NEUM	Non European Unity Movement
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PUAHB	Peri-Urban Areas Health Board
PUTCO	Public Utility Corporation
PVA	Protection and Vigilance Association
SABC	South African Broadcast Corporation
SASO	South African Students Organization
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SDU	Self Defense Units
SRC	Student Representative Council
STAP	Save the Alexandra Party
TANU	Tanganyika Afrika Union
UAPUAC	United Anti-Peri Urban Areas Action Committee
UDF	United Democratic Front

WB
WOP
WRAB

Women's Brigade
Women for Peace
West Rand Administration Board

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation traces the social, cultural, political, and spatial construction of African resistance in Alexandra, South Africa from 1912 to 1985. My analysis encompasses events beginning with Alexandra's creation as a Freehold settlement to the partial State of Emergency enacted by President P. W. Botha. Two themes weave this narrative together: resistance, and gender. I incorporate gender into the analysis of resistance which is very important for understanding how men and women created and preserved historical knowledge and how they responded to issues relating to transport, housing, education, and lack of citizenship in the urban areas.

My overriding argument is that history of resistance in Alexandra was based on political power struggles between and among Africans, the subordinate group as well as the state and its local apparatuses. Gender figures into this discussion in the following ways. Men and women established political organizations that rivaled or paralleled mainstream society. In addition to this distinction, men and women created different forms of masculinity and femininity based on the grievance waged at the time. These results show that men and women defined the terms and constraints of their oppression while also redefining the meanings of space, mourning, and resistance.

In Alexandra, resistance took covert and overt forms. For example, Alexandrans developed cultural forms of resistance because they used music and fashion to promote African heritage and ethnic identity. Music allowed Alexandrans to create distinct gendered spaces of expression because males and females had separate singing parts, and wore distinct clothes based on sex. The study of music and its impact on Alexandra

deserves further scrutiny and this dissertation opens that discussion by introducing several of the key vocalists and groups that emerged from Alexandra.

By analyzing both covert and overt forms of resistance, I show that death and the rituals associated with mourning provided the opportunity for Alexandrans to redefine notions of resistance by using therapy as a coping mechanism and as a means to acquire better mental health. Little known aspects of Alexandra's history such as the formation of the Thusong Youth Centre and its role in resurrecting the youth following the 1976 student uprising provides the opportunity to analyze another role between parents, the elders and children, which goes beyond the general division between them regarding what strategy was best employed during the 1976 student uprising. For instance, it examines how parents interpreted life and what it meant to be safe.

Four distinct periods defined Alexandra's history of resistance, which mirrored and differed from national trends. During the first period from 1912 to 1939, Alexandrans created a system of governance, built up their social and political infrastructure by constructing a clinic, roads, and schools, churches, and homes. Community building was also aided by the close proximity of the homes. Alexandra's layout was built upon the yard system where several families, many from different ethnicities, occupied one particular space. Township dwellers also established political organizations that represented various constituencies which included craftsmen, and traders, women, and ethnic factions, and they also participated in the African National Congress (ANC) as members of the Alexandra and Transvaal branches.

During the second period from 1940-1957, Alexandrans sought reform within an existing system of segregation and apartheid. During the first part of this historical

phase, during the forties, Alexandrans participated in four bus boycotts. With each bus **boycott** township dwellers restored the original fare structure and achieved two feats **before** the decade ended: the government formed a commission of enquiry to investigate **bus** operations and it enacted an Employer Travel Subsidy to help defray transport costs.

Most of the protests prior to the 1946 squatters' movement dealt with local township concerns, however, these struggles had broader implications nationally despite the fact that participants sought reform within an existing system of segregation and apartheid. Transport costs affected every South African as did housing and the pass laws which resulted in thousands of women storming the Union Grounds where Parliament stood and registered their grievances against the carrying of these identity documents in 1956. Although the pass protest was female-centered, it unified men and women because the pass laws did not discriminate because of gender differences instead; these insidious identity documents limited African's physical mobility and access to employment and economic enhancement for both sexes.

The Peri-Urban Board's assumption of duties on 1 February 1958 signified a change in residential status as Alexandra was no longer a freehold and property owners were coaxed into selling their homes to make way for the construction of dormitory single-sex hostels. This third historical period, which spanned from 1958 to 1975, showcased the problems that property owners encountered when the Peri-Urban Board notified them that they would be removed from the township and sent to live at pre-assigned locations. The Peri-Urban Board represented a form of internal colonialism as it monitored residents' activities and determined who had the right to live there, and who would receive deportation or banishment orders.

During the last period from 1976 to 1985, Alexandrans participated in larger national struggles before turning inward and focusing upon familiar bread and butter issues of transport, housing, and education. Some residents became involved in the 1976 student uprising which took the lives of thirty-nine local people while others participated in the underground movement that flourished in Alexandra from 1962 to 1977 as *Umkhonto weSizwe* (Spear of the Nation) members. Some people in Alexandra however, were state collaborators. These different forms of protest showed how Alexandrans were not monolithic in their interpretation of the struggle and the methods of protests that they waged.

Historiographical Review and Theoretical Framework

In their edited volume on *Rethinking Resistance*, Jon Abbink and Ineke van Kessel ask the all important question, “Resistance to what?” Contributors address the issue using different themes: social inequalities, colonial hierarchies, violence, ideology, and historical perspectives. Using case studies across Africa, they employ different methodologies to pose new questions to an old theoretical construct. For example, Stephen Ellis analyzed the conquest of Madagascar and the resistance that the Malagasy waged, while analyzing the internal divisions that defined Malagasy society.¹ While the authors’ subject matter and responses vary, they all agree that Africans resisted many agents of oppression, which included the state apparatus, capitalism, African elites, colonial systems, other ethnic groups, and patriarchal values. As these scholars have demonstrated, not everyone in African history actively resisted colonial oppression.

¹ Jon Abbink, Miriam de Bruijn, and Klaas van Walraven, *Rethinking Resistance: Revolt and Violence in African History*, (Leiden: Brill, 20030, p. 39.

Studies of accommodation and collaboration in both South African and wider African history amply show that the responses of Africans to colonialism were multifaceted.² However, Fran Buntman argues, in the case of Robben Island, that African political prisoners, though forced to accommodate to the strictures of prison power structures, nevertheless ingeniously developed a variety of ways, which she terms “categorical and strategic resistance,” to remake the political environment.³ Buntman documents prison history from 1962 to 1991. Using four major issues, Buntman examines: Robben Island’s transformation from hell-hole to a university, the effect of political incarceration upon political consciousness, tensions and collaboration between the prison revived outlawed political organizations, and the continuity between different generations and strategies of resistance. Buntman addresses these issues using oral testimonies, and archival documents, which allows her to theorize about resistance, and its shortcomings, she writes, “key examples in literature of resistance are discussed to show that the notion of resistance is inadequately specified or theorized.”⁴

I concur with Buntman’s interpretation because of her theory’s applicability to the Alexandran context. As “a black island in a white sea,” Alexandra represented a confined physical space because White suburbs buffeted the township. Besides the spatial limitations that Robben Island presented Buntman shows how resistance developed along generational lines. I also discuss these issues within the context of the 1976 student uprising by using the strained relations between parents, elders, and the

² David Robinson, *Paths of Accommodation: Muslim Societies and French Colonial Authorities in Senegal and Mauritania, 1880-1920*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000). Robinson shows how Muslims in France’s secular Third Republic patronized a wide variety of Muslim institutions to accommodate themselves to being ruled by non-Muslims.

³ Fran Lisa Buntman, *Robben Island and Political Prisoner Resistance to Apartheid*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁴ Ibid.

youth to explain the continuities and discontinuities of resistance from one generation to the next.

Interviews such as those granted by Tshediso Buti and Alinah Serote show the interrelationship between race and generation and its impact during the 1976 student uprising. Buti discusses his father's position as a pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church and how this created problems when he wanted to participate in the liberation struggle because people were suspicious of his convictions. Serote by contrast, participated in an interracial organization and her son failed to understand her need to cooperate with Whites. Each of these individuals had their integrity and allegiance to Africans questioned. A definition of race also surfaced from the manner in which Buti and Serote faced exclusion. Race, therefore, represented both a biological and social construction.

Because race developed as an issue in Alexandra and elsewhere in South Africa, this study examines intra-racial relations between and among Africans and to a certain extent Africans and Coloureds, while juxtaposing the dynamics between Africans and Whites. This shows the division within particular race groups rather than treating the subordinate group as monolithic as James C. Scott, portrays in his work, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. Scott's work is however, useful for understanding the historical study of power relations within a racial caste society such as South Africa. In this vibrant community, the dissident political culture constructed hidden transcripts of resistance behind closed doors and away from the observation of the South African power structure. As Scott argues hidden transcripts can take the form of short fiction, poetry, political posters, material culture (i. e. commemorative cloths), verbal communication, symbols,

humor, songs, performance (dances such as the militant toyi toyi) and other expressions of dissent.⁵

These hidden transcripts of resistance became overt during episodes of public protest against threats of land expropriation, mandatory identity passes, increases in transport and housing costs, influx control, evictions, housing shortage, inadequate township infrastructure, substandard education, and police brutality. As a term, hidden transcripts deserve further deconstruction to explain its applicability to Alexandra. I show that members of the subordinate group created a combination of public and hidden transcripts, which took place before different audiences and power structures. For example, the Mahotella Queens which Alexandran Ethel Germaine was a member, donned Zulu garb and wide-brimmed straw hats (*izicholo*), decorated with Zulu beads (*ubuhlalu*).⁶ The beadwork encoded messages of love, inspiration, reprimands, resistance, jealousy or warnings based on the variety, arrangement and colors that a person used. These fashions were both a public and hidden transcript because the encoded messages served as privy knowledge to those versed in understanding the meaning and arrangement of the colors, yet the Mahotella Queens assumed the public stage.

Some transcripts reveal a blatant act of defiance. In *Theatres of Struggle*, Belinda Bozzoli shows how township dwellers, the police, and the army used Alexandra's bound

⁵ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, (New Haven: Yale, 1990), p.

⁶ Interview with Ethel Germaine, Eighth Avenue, Alexandra Township, April 26, 2002. The original members of 'Mahlatini' and the Mahotella Queens included: Soweto's Windy Sibeko, Doris Molefe, Faith Magxola from Benoni on the East Rand, and Linda Tlohalala in Springs. Caroline Carpenter also performed with the group before joining the Dark City Sisters. Alexandran Ethel Germaine, who joined the group and stopped, touring in the late nineties, explained how the group got its name. "We took our name from the word hotel, zuluised it, and then added queens." The Mahotella Queens have influenced younger artists, in particular the Brothers of Peace, a duo Kwaito/Hip Hop ensemble, who sampled the group's tune "Melodi" and renamed it "Meropa."

or enclosed space to create several theaters of resistance and domination. Bozzoli explains how laws, memory, culture and racial identification defined the residents inhabiting Alexandra's square mile. Bozzoli does this by outlining the Alexandra rebellion, a bloody six day war in Alexandra, sparked by the controversial death of youth activist Michael Diradeng. She uses two major treason trials [involving Moses Mayekiso and Ashwell Zwane respectively] to tease out the complex nature of mobilization that developed in Alexandra during those conflict-ridden times. Bozzoli situates her study within social movement theory, which she couches within a highly textured narrative centered on the motif of theater.

Bozzoli uses trial and police records, interviews, periodicals, her own experience as a defendant and excerpts from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and a wide array of secondary sources, to prove this overarching argument that before the 1986 Alexandra Rebellion, the township experienced years of "normality" in which this event shattered. "From 15 February, the people of Alex began to revolt in a manner unprecedented in our history. . . it was a crucial period of awakening."⁷ While I tend to agree with Bozzoli that the 1986 Alexandra Rebellion changed the nature of resistance in Alexandra, I think that it is too all-encompassing to proclaim that Alexandra was normal before this revolt. When reviewing Alexandra's history, it is evident that this revolt was not the only one to change the nature in which Alexandrans responded to grievances waged against the state. The 1976 student uprising, for example also showed how residents challenged the state. This resistance struggle, I would argue, lifted the pall of quiescence that seemed to dominate the township and had characterized its politics during the major crackdown on governmental opposition that lasted from 1960s to the 1976

⁷ Belinda Bozzoli, *Theatres of Struggle and the End of Apartheid*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004).

student uprising. Oral testimonies also indicate that the 1976 revolt was worse than what occurred in 1986.⁸

While the objective here is not to refute Bozzoli's notion, it is important to make this distinction to encourage a comparative study between these two different and similarly related protest struggles. Space was prominent in both movements. In 1986, residents used yard, block, and street committees to fuel the liberation struggle, while in 1976 students, youth and other participants stormed Asian and White-owned stores, to engage in strategical resistance. For example, people robbed these places because they had overcharged Alexandrans and therefore, they sought to assert their authority and also seek a measure of revenge. Death also surfaced as an issue.

While Bozzoli transfixes the readers' attention to the grand stage by using witch burnings, necklacings, and funerals she leaves room for further interrogation and elaboration in the public and private domain. I argue that during the 1976 student uprising in Alexandra, residents used death as not only a cathartic tool but also as means to carve out an alternate space of liberation, mourning, and life. Death was defined in both scientific and subjective terms. The Cillie Commission Report provided a sanitized version of death because it just explained the cause without including personal accounts to humanize the deceased. I use the issue of death to discuss the coping mechanisms that the survivors used to deal with the trauma of stress, and living with the fear of being killed. How Alexandrans used coping mechanisms is just as important as understanding why the deceased died. Forming youth centers served as a form of resistance because the elders tried to prevent the youth from engaging in wayward activities while also

⁸ Godfrey Tshabalala, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 28 May 2002.

providing them with a venue to deal with problems associated with the loss of a friend or **family** member. This type of resistance is covert compared to the more overt forms.

Resistance, as Raymond Suttner shows in his work which theorizes underground **political** activity, was often concealed or camouflaged even though the actions had a **public** stage. Alexandrans experienced this “invisibility” when they became cell **operatives**. Underground political activity involved subterfuge, which Alexandrans from **various** persuasions employed to transport weaponry, disseminate intelligence, and other **valuable** material to comrades in neighboring countries or townships.

While Suttner discusses the myriad ways that cell operatives maintained an **illusion** of secrecy, I show how they became “visible” actors by participating as member of **Radio Freedom**, possessing contraband literature or office equipment, and when they **recruited** or delivered messages. Alexandrans used the boxed tops of cigarettes, cars, and **homes** in which they lived to disseminate intelligence and to store weaponry, and **chemicals**. These activities, I argue led to their disclosure. Disclosure involves the full **exposure** of cell operatives to another member or to the police which either, follow or **visit** the suspected insurgents, thereby exposing their identities. Because of the reliance **on** trying to explain how cell operatives maneuvered the system, scholars miss the **opportunity** to analyze how the evidence existed to reveal the cell insurgents’ identities. **Further** discussion on exiled members also creates a dearth in the scholarship when **explaining** how cell structures operated within respective townships. This study analyzes **a** cell structure that operated in Alexandra from 1962 to 1978. I use this example to show **how** gaps within the literature exist regarding the role of females, and how court

testimonies create a public transcript that paints an incomplete picture of their methods of **operation**.

Because of the emphasis on resistance, this study evokes contrasts while it also **teases** out intersecting patterns of spatial, locational, and situational resistance.

Intersecting patterns of resistance is a term that I coined to refer to those protest activities **that** occurred within the confines of separate male and female spheres but were united by **common** ideologies, social spaces, informal networks, and familial structures.

Intersection took place when residents interpreted and transmitted local indigenous **knowledge**. Codes often governed everyday forms of communication, and messages that **emerged** within the guise of body language, style of dress, musical notes, and lyrics, the **written** word, photography, cartoons, and through the use of symbols.

These *sightings of inscription* entail more than just understanding representations **such** as the black, green, and gold flag of the African National Congress or the Pan **Africanist** Congress but also understanding the not so obvious or apparent signs of **defiance** such as the traditional meaning of the white flag. *Sightings of inscription* is a **term** that I coined that captures the internal understanding of local indigenous knowledge **needed** for the comprehension of a song, newspaper, a person's clothing, gaits, or other **kinds** of texts that people within the community recognized as significant when **disguising**, converting or improvising space as a form of resistance.

In her examination of John L. Dube, church minister, newspaper, and school **founder** and first ANC President, Shula Marks argues that western-educated African **leaders** addressed two different audiences, the white power structure and their black **constituencies**. This apparent "double-consciousness" created different sets of public and

hidden transcripts of resistance and helps to explain why false consciousness is not a **legitimate** tool for understanding when and when people rebel. I will use oral testimony **and** archival resources to elaborate on Marks' thesis and contend that there were more **than** two audiences that leaders and activists in Alexandra addressed because resistance **bred** complexity. Alexandrans created multiple audiences not just between the white **minority** power structure, but also among the power holding elite of the subordinate **group**.

Methodology

I researched oral and archival sources to unearth the social, cultural, and political **history** of resistance in Alexandra. These sources, which compliment each other, provide **sufficient** detail on Alexandra's early development, its formation as a freehold, histories **of its** political organizations, the establishment of its churches and schools, and the **development** of its culture, music, and sports. Together, these sources portray a holistic **picture** of Alexandra from its inception as a whites-only area to a place inhabited by **Africans** and Coloureds.

Informants from different age groups, ethnic backgrounds, and socio-economic **strata**, interpret the historical events from their perspective. While having the option of **terminating** or taping at their discretion, informants engaged in structured, open-ended **interviews**. Four options were read for explaining the terms of confidentiality: full, **partial**, anonymity, and recognition. Most of the hundred participants save twelve **requested** anonymity while the rest wanted full disclosure. Persons requesting anonymity **received** a pseudonym. Interviews took place in the informants' homes, workplaces or a

site chosen by the interviewees, and lasted anywhere from an hour to three hours. During one three-hour interview, an informant who wanted me to understand Alexandra's history visually gave me a township-wide tour. This experience allowed me to analyze what the informant deemed relevant and also what he thought Alexandra's history represented. I obtained my first informant, John Mhlontlo, a former ballroom dancer, while walking Alexandra's streets. My friend and I noticed Mhlontlo, and both agreed that he was a potential informant because we believed that he possessed extensive knowledge about Alexandra. We stopped Mhlontlo, introduced ourselves, and then explained my project. He agreed to an interview, and I began to learn first hand about Alexandra and how ordinary people immortalized the township in their collective memory.

During the interview process, I began asking general questions concerning a person's background and then I allowed the informant to determine the trajectory of the conversation and interjected when necessary. I took this approach to avoid leading the informant. Several themes emerged during the process: no history of Alexandra had been written; Alexandra is significant for other reasons besides the Msomis and the Spoilers, two rival gangs, Alexandra is a place of vibrant and diverse culture, where big bands played, athletes rose to national stardom, and politicians learned interpersonal skills. Most importantly, Alexandra was home where until the era of forced removals, the late fifties to the 1979 reprieve when the government reinstated Alexandra as a family dwelling area, people could tell a person's family history by the house number and avenue from whence a person came. People still; even today yearn for that pattern of familiarity that had once distinguished Alexandra from other so-called "Black spots"

skirting Johannesburg. Themes such as these resonated throughout the interviews, and provided the basis for me to conduct my inquiry.

Numerous archives provided invaluable information. I am indebted to the librarians who excavated much-needed material, offered advice or pointed me in the right direction. For my research, I consulted the Historical Papers at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, the Bailey Historical Archives in Johannesburg, papers of the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) which are deposited at the University of the Witwatersrand, the Cooperative African Microfilm Project (CAMP) housed in Chicago, the Mayibuye Center at the University of the Western Cape in Bellville, South Africa, and the Campbell Library in Durban, South Africa. Although I consulted several different repositories, the Historical Papers section of the Cullen Library provided the most extensive information regarding Alexandra's history.

I assessed vernacular newspapers such as the *Bantu World*, *Inkululeko*, *Ilanga lase Natal*, *Umsebenzi*, the *Guardian*, and *World*. These newspapers provided an alternative discourse to what appeared in prominent White newspapers such as the *Rand Daily Mail* or the *Johannesburg Star*. *South Africa's Alternative Press* provides a collection of quantitative and qualitative studies which explore the emergence of newspapers that served as a platform for resistance against the apartheid regime. Switzer uses these "alternative presses" to show the different trends in African intellectual history of the black intelligentsia and working class elements.⁹ The most significant of these

⁹ Les Switzer, *South Africa's Alternative Press: Voices of Protest and Resistance, 18880s to 1960s*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Switzer published other works relating to newspapers, which include, *The Black Press in South Africa and Lesotho: A Descriptive and Bibliographic Guide to African, Coloured, and Indian newspapers, newsletters, and magazines, 1836-1976*, (Boston: Hall, 1979) and Les Switzer and Mohamed Adhikari (eds.), *South Africa's Resistance Press: Alternative Voices in the Last Generation under Apartheid*, (Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 2000).

mediums in terms of scope and coverage was the *Bantu World*, widely read African intelligentsia newspaper.

Bantu World featured articles which explained the causes of certain protest actions such as the bus boycotts or contained the minutes of meetings that township residents had. This newspaper contained a “Women’s Section” which highlighted the activities of the Daughters of Africa (DOA), a self-help political organization. This section as did the *Ilanga laseNatal* featured articles written by DOA founder Lillian Tshabalala. However, the paper rarely explained what transpired at meetings. Instead of producing a complete report of the minutes, a summary appeared. While readers learn of the enjoyable time that members had, the meetings’ political connotations remained undisclosed save for announcing that they discussed this or that particular issue. Readers are aware of the scope of these political organizations, and the many branches they had, however, much remains lost concerning how these organizations operated. Even oral sources or the township produced *Alexandra News Bulletin* failed to supply the missing information.

Established in 1959 by S. Solomon Modise, the *Alexandra News Bulletin* was a monthly periodical which detailed the township’s early history. It had special topics devoted to the formation of schools, churches, beer halls, youth movements, and it also acknowledged township wide and personal accomplishments. Births and deaths featured as a way to alert residents of newcomers and those that passed, and it honored township leaders such as Dr. A. B. Xuma, former Alexandra Medical Officer, with an entire page devoted to his achievements when he died. This bulletin also filled another vacuum within the historiography; for it detailed government measures, while also discussing

sports, and other leisure activities. Interviews also appeared in the newspaper. Similar to *Izwi laseBantu*, a paper created in the 1980s by the cultural group *Ditshwantsho tsa Rona*, (Our Images), interviews appearing in the *Alexandra News Bulletin*, captured the importance of preserving local history by recording the interpretations of informants who discussed Alexandra's origin and evolution.

Unlike *Izwi laseBantu*, the *Alexandra News Bulletin* was not polemical nor did it assume a Marxist stance when interpreting the class divisions within Alexandran and South African society. Although the *Alexandra News Bulletin* provides extant information regarding the aforementioned topics, it only provides snapshots of history rather than fully explaining the history of the location or how Alexandrans perceived the township. Readers are made aware that Alexandra has an established culture with beauty shows, singing competitions, and football teams, but there are not interviews of contemporary residents, save Jesse Makhothe, to provide further insight on Alexandra's status as a freehold or the political position which the township held as a place situated near White residential areas. *Izwi laseBantu* by contrast, had several interviews, especially when discussing the housing situation in Alexandra and the development of different phases of residential living spaces.¹⁰

Government produced documents also provide information on the history of Alexandra. The 1937 Feetham Commission report provided the details of discussions regarding Alexandra's status as a township and its possible removal while the 1944 Beardmore Commission Report discussed bus operations in Pretoria, Vereeniging, and the Witwatersrand, and the impact that transport costs had on populations such as Alexandra. The 1979 Riekert report analyzed the problem of influx control and put

¹⁰ *Izwi laseBantu* (June/July, 1982), p. 1.

measures in place to recognize, for example, permanent Alexandran residents as opposed to temporary sojourners or laborers who toiled in Johannesburg during the day and returned to the townships by night.¹¹

In more recent years, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which was a court-like body set up by the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act No. 34 of 1995, heard the testimony of people who had committed acts of violence, and those people who were the victims of these acts. The TRC issued amnesty to those who committed inhumane atrocities during the height of apartheid and it gave those persons who lost loved ones the opportunity to confront the guilty parties and reconcile with them but also to find answers about missing persons or how their loved ones died. Witnesses gave testimony in their home language, and the Commission had several transcribers there to produce transcriptions, which appear on the internet. Aside from its therapeutic function, the TRC report provides extensive detail of what happened in Alexandra during the 1970s and 1990s. It serves as one of the largest bodies of primary evidence on Alexandra to date. These documents chronicle the 1976 student uprising, the 1986 Six Day's War, the 1990s ethnic violence allegedly between the Zulus and the Xhosas, and political organizations such as the UDF, the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), and the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO).¹² It also provides a forum from which to discuss issues of gender, and death.

¹¹ Union Government (UG). Report of the Johannesburg and Germiston Boundaries Commission Part Three. (Feetham Commission), Pretoria. Government Printer, 1937, and Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Operation of Bus Services for Non-Europeans on the Witwatersrand and in the Districts of Pretoria and Vereeniging, 1944. Pretoria: Government Printer, 1944; Riekert Commission

¹² Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Human Rights Violations,"
<http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/ale/mashigo.htm>.

Trial records provide extensive information on political organizations and clandestine cells. The Regina v Sobukwe Trial contained information regarding the Pan Africanist Congress, its quest to abolish passes and its adoption of Afrika Day, an annual event inaugurated by Kwame Nkrumah in 1958.¹³ This message of Pan African unity was further preached by members of the Alexandra branch of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), which used the organization's public speeches, and official documents to emphasize the importance of solidarity with the rest of Africa. This trial record differed from the one featuring Gabriel Sexwale and Eleven Others. Sexwale and Eleven Others detail an extensive underground cell network operating in Alexandra from 1962 to 1978. This trial plots the activities of eleven defendants who made homemade bombs, transported weaponry, disseminated intelligence, and educated potential freedom fighters about the politics and the country's history from an Africanist perspective. These records mainly chart the activities of the African National Congress (ANC) while the Regina v Sobukwe Trial captured the inner workings of the Pan Africanist Congress and their quest to abolish passes. These trial records provide the opportunity to analyze gender and its relationship to resistance. Because they contain the expressions and opinion of mostly men, these records silence women, and they also create the opportunity to discuss how these leaders used the public arena to forward their goals.

Some aspects of the history of Alexandra have received extensive scholarly coverage in articles, monographs, and chapters in books. Most of the scholarship about the township focuses on issues such as transport, socio-economic conditions, gangsterism, class formation, women's protest, health, state reform, civic organizations,

¹³ Regina v Sobukwe Trial and Afrika Day Collection, South African Political Trials, microfilm copy in Cooperative African Microfilm Project (CAMP).

and the 1986 Six Day's War.¹⁴ Yet, several areas remained understudied or unexplored.

These areas include: ANC and PAC branch organizational histories, other protest struggles, church history, music, culture, fashion, sports, the 1976 student uprising, clandestine political and military structures, and female organizations such as the Women for Peace (WOP).

Mapping out the Dissertation

To examine Alexandra's unique history this study is organized into five chapters.

The first chapter discusses Alexandra's early formation from its inception as a Whites only area to a place where Coloureds and Africans lived in a Freehold settlement. The chapter charts the township's trajectory using its demographic and settlement patterns to provide an overview of the township's history from 1912 to 1985. This chapter also shows the relationship of space to schools and churches, while also introducing how

¹⁴ Belinda Bozzoli, *Theatres of Struggle and the End of Apartheid*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), Mzwanele Mayekiso, *Township Politics: Civic Struggles for a New South Africa*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1996), Karen Jochelson, "Reform, Repression and Resistance in South Africa: A Case Study of Alexandra Township, 1979-1989," pp. 1-32, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 1, 16 (1990), pp. Justine Lucas, "Civic Organization in Alexandra during the 1990s: An Ethnographic Approach," Paper prepared for the Albert Einstein Institution Project on Civil Society, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1994, Charles Carter, "Community and Conflict: The Alexandra Rebellion of 1986," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 18, 1 (1991), pp. 323-340, Peter Tourikis, "The Political Economy of Alexandra Township, 1905-1958," BA Honours Dissertation, Sociology, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1981, Mike Sarakinsky, "From Freehold Township to Model Township: A Political History of Alexandra 1905-1983," unpublished honours dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand 1984, Charles E. Carter, "Comrades and Community: Politics and the Construction of Hegemony in Alexandra Township, South Africa 1984-7," unpublished PhD thesis, Oxford University, 1991, Joe Rogaly, "The Bus Boycott," *The Forum*, (March 1957): 11-15, and Alfred Stadler, *A Long Way to Walk: Bus Boycotts in Alexandra, 1940-1945*, in Phil Bonner (ed). *Working Papers in Southern African Studies*, (1981), pp. 228-257.

Alexandrans used the public squares. Squares were sites where Alexandrans engaged in recreational activity and where they held protest movements. The meaning and use of these spaces changed over time, which this chapter captures to show continuities and discontinuities between different historical periods.

The second chapter examines three key protest movements: the 1943 Alexandra bus boycott, the 1946 squatters' movement, and the 1957 nightsoil strike. Each of these events tells a story of how Alexandrans used subsistence politics to wage campaigns against the national government. The chapter also documents national history as it relates to Alexandra and shows how township residents gradually lost autonomy that they once had as a freehold. The protest movements further reveal inner tensions within the community between the township residents and its power structure such as the Alexandra Health Committee.

Chapter Three discusses the process of forced removals from 1958 to 1975. This chapter argues that Alexandrans related the loss of freehold status to wider societal issues such as the lack of citizenship, lost property rights, and colonialism on the continent. It shows how township residents opposed the takeover by the Peri-Urban Board as the township's administrative authority. Residents responded to the Peri-Urban Board using different strategies of protest; they formed political organizations or engaged in a clean up campaign to make Alexandra a model township. Personal vignettes help to explain how the residents viewed the process of forced removals and how they defined loss.

Chapter Four examines the period from the 1976 student uprising to 1985, focusing on its relationship to Alexandra to the partial State of Emergency. It shows how Alexandrans defined the meaning of death using the 1976 student uprising to analyze this



concept. Another important aspect of this chapter is the discussion centering on Alexandra's role in the underground movement. Alexandrans, as I argue, were visible actors in the underground movement for following reasons; cell operatives revealed their identities when they recruited, possessed banned literature, owned office equipment or revealed their identities while participating as a broadcaster on Radio Freedom.

Chapter Five plots out the direction for future research. It provides a comparative conclusion to show the interconnections between the protest struggles and also to document the loss of autonomy that Alexandrans endured. In accomplishing these goals, the chapter also weaves together the idea of inclusion and exclusion and what it meant during the apartheid regime and how residents and the state created the conditions under which segregation or discrimination occurred in Alexandra.

CHAPTER TWO: FROM A WHITES ONLY AREA TO A FREEHOLD, 1905-1942

Alexandra is a unique place in South Africa's history. It was a racially sequestered site surrounded by a swath of White residential areas.¹⁵ These neighboring areas lured Alexandra's inexpensive, domestic, and industrial labor pool into their capitalist nest.¹⁶ No matter how low the wages were, people flocked to Alexandra as the township offered several inducements. Attracted by the easy acquisition of identity passes, affordable homes, and close proximity to Johannesburg, Alexandra's population swelled within a short time period. In 1912, the population was a mere forty people. Eighteen years later the population had reached 41,000 people.

While Alexandra's size mushroomed, the township became a major voice of dissent. Alexandra's insulated geographical location aided township residents in catapulting the township into iconic lore as a site where protests such as bus boycotts, squatter movements, anti-pass campaigns, education boycotts, and campaigns against police brutality occurred. In examining Alexandra's history, this chapter discusses the township's early formation and settlement, demographic patterns and its built environment. I argue that Alexandrans structured and restructured the urban space to

¹⁵ Kew, Bramely, Marlboro, Sandton, Lombardy, Lyndhurst, Edenvale, Orange Grove, Wynberg, and Kempton Park were the neighboring areas. Not all employment or commercial opportunities lay outside Alexandra. Freehold status allowed Africans to labor without having to work for a White man and without having to get permission from municipal authorities. Alexandra was a site for self-determination, unlike Orlando, and other municipal location where it was mandatory to get permission from a superintendent to pursue any occupation.¹⁵ Alexandrans had the good fortune of being able to pursue trades such as auto mechanics, teachers, principals, ambulance drivers, educators, brewers, traditional healers, athletes, dry cleaners, tailors, hawkers, morticians, taxi drivers, and musicians. These positions enabled Alexandrans to afford and take advantage of the property market that existed within the township. All of these reasons made Alexandra attractive to prospective residents.

¹⁶ These outlying areas served as competitive labor markets for launderers, nurses, domestic servants, gardeners, factory workers, and carpenters among other unskilled positions.

both conform and challenge state authorities and other township residents. These changes within the township were the result of national and legislative measures and different implementations of strategies of resistance.

Background

In 1905, Dutch settler Herbert Papenfus, a wealthy dairy farm owner, purchased several farms around present-day Alexandra in northeastern Johannesburg, South Africa. One of the farms, Cynferfontein No. 2, eventually became the site of Alexandra Township. At the time of Alexandra's inception, the township formed part of the Transvaal, one of two Afrikaner republics until they unified with the British colonies of the Natal and the Cape Province in 1910 to form the Union of South Africa. According to legend, the township was named in honor of the wife of King Edward VI or the wife of Herbert Papenfus.¹⁷ While Alexandra's etymology remains uncertain, Papenfus' role in the township's creation and development is clear.

Papenfus and his family moved to Alexandra from Midrand, a suburb of Johannesburg, along with his African chef Nxele Mbanjwa, his wife Eva, and their daughter Annie in 1905. Not long after settling in Alexandra, Mbanjwa constructed a mud brick home on what would later become Second Avenue. Besides serving as a home, the site functioned as a refreshment station for carts carrying dairy products from Papenfus' farm in Midrand to Johannesburg. After the establishment of Alexandra, Papenfus managed a zinc cottage along Wynberg to First Avenue where tree-lined streets

¹⁷ Other sources explain things differently. Annie Mbanjwa Twala, a Papenfus employee, the township's first child and later beholden "Mother of the Township," attributes Alexandra's name to her family's suggestion. Reverend Sam Buti, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, The Reverend Sam Buti, pastor of the Unitarian Church, formerly the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) contends that the township's name honors Papenfus' daughter rather than his wife.

dangled with fruit. The real estate owner jealously guarded these fruit preserves.

Alexandran born Doreen Mashonte recalled, “Papenfus sat on the street there with a gun and salt to scare away naughty school children picking his fruits.”¹⁸ Papenfus operated his farm while also selling plots of land to prospective White buyers. By 1912, Papenfus owned 338 plots, two parks, a square, and a general dealer’s store, the latter of which he sold to E. P. Mart Zulu in 1913.¹⁹

Alexandra offered prospective home buyers a largely uninhabited square mile, a demarcated inner and outer boundary and recreational areas. Yet, despite Papenfus’ attempt to sell the land, the real estate venture yielded dismal results. Europeans refused to live eleven to twelve miles from Johannesburg. The township’s distance from Johannesburg compounded by Alexandra’s infertile, hilly and rocky terrain was another deterrent to prospective White buyers. No gold deposits lay buried under Alexandra’s porous surface, unlike Johannesburg where gold’s discovery in 1886, created a bustling mining town. Johannesburg gave Whites the opportunity to accumulate wealth, and to become employers of Africans.

Alexandra’s topography also depreciated the township’s value. Deep cavernous ravines (dongas) formed sloping hills that divided the territory into several carved out parts. Former dry cleaner Reginald Matthews explains:

Before we had these holes, right through Alexander, the whole of Alexander was full of holes, like the dongas, this donga was stretching from here until 22nd Avenue just where the river is, that’s how Alexandra was, but this was not the only place that had a donga we had another one

¹⁸ Doreen Mashonte, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 23 April 2002. All interviews conducted by Dawne Y. Curry unless otherwise noted.

¹⁹ E. P. Mart Zulu was also a founding member of the Alexandra Workers Union (AWU), which he helped to establish in 1936.



that side of London. That is why the Dutch sold that place because nobody wanted to buy this place because it was full of trees and dongas and all that nonsense you see and it was far from Johannesburg.²⁰

Because of the excessively low demand by White land speculators, Papenfus and his Alexandra Township Company Limited, a real estate body which he formed in 1912, targeted other African communities for settlement. He apparently hired Jessie Mahabuke Makhothe, a Basutoland (present day Lesotho) migrant, to serve as a property agent, who traveled all over South Africa to obtain residents. Before Papenfus sold all the land to Mrs. Lulus Campbell, he sought to recruit potential settlers by posting a sign with the same message in three different languages (English, Sesotho, and IsiZulu). The sign which announced the township's change in residential status from a Whites only area to Freehold, read: "Freehold Township for sale to Natives and Coloureds only, easy monthly payments. For terms apply to Herbert S. Papenfus."²¹

In 1912, Alexandra became a racially mixed freehold settlement for Blacks and Coloureds and was no longer considered an area for White occupation. Alexandra retained its freehold status as an urban area following the promulgation of the 1913 Natives Land Act. The 1913 Natives Land Act segregated Africans and Whites by demarcating areas reserved for each group. Africans could reside on 7% of the land, which was mostly infertile, while Whites inhabited 83% of the best arable land. Africans were not allowed to purchase land outside the designated reserves except the Cape Province.²² Provisions were also made to prevent Africans from gaining access to land

²⁰ Reginald Matthews, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 31 April 2002.

²¹ Baruch Hirson, *Yours for the Union: Class and Community Struggles in South Africa*

²² Aran S. MacKinnon, *The Making of South Africa: Culture and Politics*, (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004), p. 194. Africans refers to Blacks of various ethnicities which include Sotho, Tswana, Pedi, Zulu, Xhosa, and Shangaan among other ethnic groups. White refers to Europeans of various extractions, Coloured signify persons of Malay, African, Asian and European descent, while Asians refers to those people from China, Japan, India among other countries.

by squatting, leasing, share-cropping or tenancy.²³ Many rural Africans soon left the farms and migrated to Johannesburg to work in the industrialized economy of the mines, and in White suburban homes.

Although the 1913 Natives Land Act prohibited African property ownership in the nation's developing cities, Alexandra was exempt from its provisions because land had already been set aside for the occupation of Coloureds and Africans. Along with Sophiatown, Newclare, and Martindale, which similarly had substantial African and Coloured populations and were also freehold settlements, Alexandra remained one of the few areas where Africans could purchase property and live relatively close to Johannesburg.

In Alexandra, plots or stands measured 144 x 80 feet and were much larger than those found in Sophiatown, another freehold township, where plots measured 50 x 80 feet.²⁴ Although Papenfus and his company had sold the lots, the Health Committee, the township's administrative authority, which established taxation, provided refuse removal, and other social services, determined the price and size of stands. Some residents used the opportunity of this property market to become large scale property owners in Alexandra. In 1917, the same year that women boycotted the buses in Alexandra, Samuel and Topsie Piliso moved from the Eastern Cape's King Williams Town to purchase adjoining properties on Alexandra's Third Avenue. The Piliso properties comprised multiple rooms as did the double-storey home of a successful businessman R. G. Baloyi. Baloyi,

²³ A. J. Christopher, *The Atlas of Apartheid*, (Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand Press, 2001), p. 32.

²⁴ Luli Callinicos, *Gold and Workers: A People's History of South Africa*, Volume 1 (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985), p. 42.

who built his palatial home in 1939, operated the United Bus Service, a fleet of six buses known as “the Mighty Six,” from a garage behind his brick home for fifteen years.²⁵

Freehold settlement status also enabled Alexandra to run independently of municipal governance. Neither the Johannesburg City Council nor the national government administered Alexandra. Instead, the township was “Nobody’s Baby” according to a locally anointed name. Alexandra’s little administrative authority rested with township-run bodies. The Village Association was the first political body to administer township-run bodies. Information about this short-lived body comes from the township produced *Alexandra News Bulletin*, which S. Solomon Modise edited and founded in 1959. Alex Fortuin, who served as the Village Association’s founding chair, established the association in 1912, the same year in which the African National Congress began. Fortuin ran the Village Association with the assistance of Jesse Makhothe who served as secretary. Written documents and oral sources do not disclose the nature of the Village Association’s daily operations and overall objectives, but they provide the location of the headquarters; the Don on Second Avenue. The Don, which was a building located near a tree stand where residents paid license fees for dogs, and bicycles, served multiple purposes as an administrative center, a theater, and a place to hold weddings.²⁶ It served as the main administrative center until government authorities

²⁵ Alan Gregor Copley. *Class and Consciousness: The Black Petty Bourgeoisie in South Africa, 1924 to 1950*, (New York: Greenwood, Press, 1990), p. 222. Richard Baloyi was the Treasurer-General of the African National Congress from 1939 to 1948. In addition to his political capacity, he served as a member of the Natives Representatives Council from 1937 to 1942, as Chair of the Anti-Expropriation Commission during the 1940s, as a member of the Alexandra Health Committee; for one year in 1938 as Senior Vice-President of the Non-European United Front; and as President/Chair of the Johannesburg Bantu Sports Club. Finally, he was an active member of the Alexandra Emergency Transport Committee during the third and fourth bus boycotts from 1943 to 1944.

²⁶ Mashonte, interview.

intervened and dissolved the Village Association and decided to put in its place the Alexandra Health Committee in 1916.



Illustration 1

Alexandra Health Committee Photograph

Dawne Y. Curry

The Health Committee and its Role in Developing the Township's Infrastructure

Health Committee members represented their respective business and racial affiliations. Herbert Papenfus, Christian Frederick Wienand (The Alexandra Township Company), Ernest Powys Adams (Department of Native Affairs), Jesse Mahabuke Makhothe (Africans), and Canral Cachelhaus (Coloureds) were the Health Committee's

original members.²⁷ Papenfus served as the chair, and Lulus Campbell, business owner, and one of the township's first residents, served as secretary. Leaders debated and carried out township activities at a two-storey mud brick building on Second Avenue, which still stands today near the former home of Alexandra's R. G. Baloyi. Health Committee members met in June and December.

Members earned their positions by appointment (Europeans), nominations or votes (Africans and Coloureds). Europeans occupied the largest number of positions, followed by Africans and then Coloureds. African and Coloured males aged twenty-one and above voted if they met the qualifications as explained in Proclamation No. 23 of 1921: maintained residence in Alexandra for three consecutive months, or attained status as a registered owner of immovable property.²⁸ These individuals exercised this privilege within Alexandra; however they could not participate in the larger society's electoral process. Race precluded them nationally, but not locally in Alexandra, where the practice enhanced the township's attraction for potential inhabitants. The Alexandra Health Committee was as Nauright argues an experiment in native self-government and was consistent with the "imperatives of the emerging segregationist policies of the central government."²⁹ Thus, "if successful [in Alexandra], liberals arguing for gradual improvement of Africans within a segregated society, hoped that Africans would be

²⁷ John Nauright, "An Experiment in Native Self-Government: The Alexandra Health Committee, the State and Local Politics," *South African Historical Journal*, 43 (2001), p. 225.

²⁸ Memorandum for the City Boundaries Commission submitted by the Alexandra Coloured Associations representing the Coloured community of Alexandra Township, AD843/RJ Nal.2 File 2, Social Services: Health AHC Correspondence 1935-1937, p. 1. Membership increased from five to seven in 1917, and underwent another increase in 1922 from seven to eleven members. Membership had increased to eight by 1918. One of the new members was Coloured, while the other six were Zulu, Sotho, and Xhosa. Four Coloured members sat on the committee in 1921 because according to this document, township members preferred them over Africans. However, due to the large influx of Africans from 1930s onwards, not Coloured members held a position on the committee.

²⁹ John Nauright, "Alexandra Health Committee, p. 224.

granted similar self-governing rights in other urban areas.”³⁰ Nauright points out that from 1916 to the end of 1932 AHC members enjoyed interracial cooperation as there was sufficient trust between White and Black members.³¹

While the Health Committee lacked the statutory and financial power to make concrete changes such as creating a public transit corporation, the body did carry out specific functions. Health Committee officials established building regulations, provided sewage removal, purchased land for burial, issued passes (documents with the carriers’ occupation and residential history) and created a system of taxation.³² Health Committee officials imposed taxes on dog licenses, property holdings, business certificates, water, bicycles, ambulances, and sanitation removal. In 1934, taxes generated approximately £13,000 from which the body earned £500 from the two shillings it had charged for sanitation. With that money the Health Committee enclosed the cemetery, planted trees, and purchased a cart along with twenty oxen.³³ A road building program also absorbed the Health Committee’s revenue. Seven perpendicular streets and twenty-two avenues comprised Alexandra’s grid-iron pattern. Residents referred to the first seven avenues as the “upstairs” or the “top” and the remaining fifteen as the “downstairs” or the “bottom” because Alexandra rested on a steep gradient.³⁴ Streets, which honor European, and American leaders and explorers such as John Brandt, Hofmeyer, London, Rooth,

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Luli Callinicos, *Gold and Workers*, p. 42. Mrs. N. S. an Alexandran resident explained the process for obtaining passes. She stated, “When a youngster from our village wanted to work in Johannesburg, it was usual to find him going to Alexandra to get himself a pass. All we had to do was to take the boy to the Health Committee’s offices, produce rent receipt and with that receipt one was eligible for a pass.

³³ “The Origin and Development of Alexandra Township,” February 20, 1961, AD 2532 *Alexandra News Bulletin*, No. 20 February 1961.

³⁴ Peter Fox, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 12 May 2002.

Selbourne, Vasco da Gama, and Roosevelt still appear today on concrete slabs before each street.

Residential taxation also paid for the maintenance of a modest clinic constructed in 1937. The Health Committee had a skeleton support staff that included a part-time doctor, a full-time nurse, several ambulance drivers, and a resident Health Inspector. Other payroll employees that the Health Committee administered consisted of tippers, nightsoil workers, and other sanitation helpers. Although funds paid for these positions, they barely supported immunizations and building examinations by the country's first non-White Medical Officer, Dr. Alfred B. Xuma. Xuma concurrently served as the President-General of the African National Congress (1940-1949), and worked part-time in Alexandra from 1929-1958.³⁵

Xuma held the position of Medical Officer in both Alexandra and Sophiatown where he had a residence. During his tenure in Alexandra, he single-handedly trained many African medical practitioners. H. K. Thipe and E. L. Nyamende were Alexandra's first health assistants while Thomas Masekela, father of renowned musician Hugh Masekela, was the country's first nonwhite Chief Health Inspector. Xuma's other responsibilities included issuing an annual Medical Report, which brained-stormed

³⁵ Xuma also served as the Medical Officer for Sophiatown, a freehold bulldozed in 1955. He received his education at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Xuma married twice. His first wife, who bore him a son, originated from Liberia, while his second wife was an African American named Madie Hall. In 1940, Hall moved to South Africa and lived in the country until 1963. While in South Africa, she formed the Zenzele Self-Help Clubs, and helped to revive the dormant branch of the African National Congress's Women's Leagues. For further understanding of Hall's role as a political activist and her ideology see Iris Berger, "Madie Hall Xuma: Mother of the Nation," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, (March 2002), pp. 256-270.

fundraising initiatives, assessed Alexandra's infrastructure and inventoried the diseases that plagued the township.³⁶

Responsibility for social services did not rest entirely on the Health Committee's financially burdened shoulders. The Alexandra Bus Owners Association (ABOA) and the Standholders chipped in financially to support projects. These community patrons did not offer their services altruistically. The Alexandra Bus Owners Association, a conglomerate of companies formed in 1929, paved Selbourne Street to the Number 2 Squares where the bus terminus existed, and then charged passengers additional tariffs for the money they expended for this community service project.

Standholders (predominately African and Coloured males) helped with infrastructure improvements by adding to the water supply. Health Committee officials already supplied residents with cisterns and stand pipes for well-drawn water, but only a small minority enjoyed those services. Water became a politicized issue as residents had little access to this resource in the 1940s. Standholders contributed to the water supply by providing additional taps, but they controlled the ebb and flow of its distribution. Some tenants received up to eight gallons a day while others only obtained four gallons.³⁷

³⁶ Alexandra Medical Report, 1957, No. 80 (313), National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa, Sanitation File. "Health Week Draws Crowds at Alexandra," *Bantu World*, November 1, 1947. In a speech given to attendants at the opening of Alexandra's Health Week in 1947, Xuma stated that while the presence of other diseases had steadily declined in Alexandra tuberculosis had dramatically increased. Tuberculosis's presence in Alexandra prompted Xuma and Alexandra's Chief Health Inspector Rex Meintjes to establish the Alexandra Tuberculosis Association in 1949. Three full-time African welfare officers dealt with the financial, legal, and domestic problems that patients and their families potentially faced. "Izakhiwo Zokwelapha I-T.-B. *UmAfrica*, August 16, 1958. The Association first offered a soup kitchen to feed undernourished families before the founding of the Tuberculosis Settlement in 1952. "Alexandra Anti-TB Settlement," *UmAfrica*, October 12, 1963. The Tuberculosis Association, which lay near the Jukskei River provided testing and immunizations and regularly monitored the patients' constitution.

³⁷ African Tenants Association, letter dated 20/1/48, National Archives of South Africa (NASA), Pretoria, South Africa, ARB Strikes and Disputes. Alexandra was haven for airborne diseases. Smallpox, enteric, tuberculosis, cholera, and typhoid attacked unsuspecting residents. "Health Week Draws Crowds at Alexandra." In a speech given to attendants at the opening of Alexandra's Health Week in 1947, Xuma

Approximately four or five families or several individuals conglomerated in a yard and one tap served their needs.

Yards were not the traditional manicured green lawns typically seen in suburbia that concealed earthen soil. Instead, these private yet public spaces were concrete enclosures fronting main houses with adjoining rooms that served as family quarters or as rentals. Residents of different social and ethnic backgrounds coexisted side by side within the same space. These sites created what former exiled freedom fighter Inhlanhla Mgege described the concentration of people as a “mighty culture yard.”³⁸ Residents brewed beer, conversed, danced, played instruments, developed multilingual skills, and exchanged customs.

Standholders lorded over yards as they decided who entered the premises. Not even the police apprehended or tracked down criminals without proper identification and a modus operandi. This unofficial sanctioned practice showed how much Standholders controlled the spaces in which they rented. These same property owners issued eviction orders, raised rents, and confiscated personal effects. Matters still did not improve when natural disasters occurred. Heavy rains swept up the Jukskei River, flooding and obliterating nearby houses, churches, and schools. Not all buildings within the river’s arch suffered from complete demolition, instead they contained structural damage.

stated that the presence of other diseases had steadily declined in Alexandra while tuberculosis had dramatically increased. Tuberculosis’s presence in Alexandra prompted Xuma and Alexandra’s Chief Health Inspector Rex Meintjes to establish the Alexandra Tuberculosis Association in 1949. Three full-time African welfare officers dealt with the financial, legal, and domestic problems that patients and their families potentially faced. “Izakhiwo Zokwelapha-I. T. B.” *UmAfrika*, August 16, 1958. The Association first offered a soup kitchen to feed undernourished families before the founding of the Tuberculosis Settlement in 1952. Residential taxes, membership fees plus philanthropic support from American and South African organizations funded this project. “Alexandra Anti-TB Settlement,” *UmAfrika*, October 12, 1963. This association, which lay near the Jukskei River, provided testing and immunization and regularly monitored the patients’ constitution.

³⁸ Inhlanhla Mgege, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 9 March 2002.

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Damp, musty conditions borne by leaks, created a cold and sickly susceptible habitat. Standholders consistently refused to make any improvements on their investment. Instead, they invoked the economic principle of supply and demand to explain their actions, almost boastfully proclaiming that they could replace families with other tenants.³⁹ These same property owners also made it virtually impossible for outsiders to negotiate the township. Because they needed revenue to offset exorbitant mortgage payments or to break even, Standholders often built additional rooms. Approximately thirty lean-tos or rooms adjoined to walls of homes existed in these yards.

Alexandra's Demographic Changes

With Standowners increasing the number of rooms per property, Alexandra soon became densely populated. Alexandra's population swelled as a result of the clearance of Johannesburg's slums, and the migrations of rural, urban, and Zimbabwean Africans. When Alexandra first became a freehold settlement only forty African and Coloured families first occupied the area. Then in 1912, the township posted the availability for 2,308 lots and one reserve after officials amended the general settlement plan. Papenfus had sold 167 lots by 1913. All lots came with stipulated contractual agreements.⁴⁰ Buyers put down a preliminary payment of £2 and then paid £1 per month.⁴¹ Papenfus and the Alexandra Township Company reserved the right to repossess stands when buyers defaulted on payments. Deeds were transferred only when individuals fully honored agreements. Within a matter of three years, Alexandra's population grew from

³⁹ M. Tshabalala (pseudonym), interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 2 July 2002.

⁴⁰ Noreen Kagan, "African Settlements in the Johannesburg Area, 1903-1923," M. A. Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1978, p. 15.

⁴¹ "Alexandra: Vigorous Action Urgently Needed!" *Libertas* (August 1942), p. 5.

the paltry forty people that had first lined its inner periphery to thousands of people. The table 1 charts the population counts.⁴²

Demographic Changes	
Population Count	Year
2,525	1916
2,640	1924
7,200	1929
16,763	1936

Demographic statistics do not distinguish between racial groups until the 1936 census by which time Papenfus had sold all the stands, which according to preliminary census figures read: 10 Europeans, 15,945 Africans, and 808 Coloured who resided in Alexandra. Africans were the largest population within the township followed by Coloureds. This disproportion was also represented on the Health Committee where Africans attained more seats than Coloureds. With the influx of new inhabitants, land in Alexandra reached premium levels in the 1940s compared to the White suburb of Kew.⁴³ An acre in Kew cost prospective land buyers £150 while in Alexandra speculators paid dearly and tendered £1000.⁴⁴

Despite the increase in the prices for homes, Alexandra's population swelled. By 1957 approximately 95,000 to 115,000 people inhabited the township. This population increase steadily climbed until the Peri-Urban Board, the authority administering Alexandra's affairs which assumed office in 1958 began changing the township's human and physical landscape. Peri-Urban Board issued eviction notices to long-term property owners and tenants. From 1963 to 1979 Alexandra underwent major changes as

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ "The Black Sash Transvaal Housing Committee's Preliminary Report on Alexandra," Delmas Trial AK 2117 56.3, Historical Papers, Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

⁴⁴ "Alexandra: Vigorous Action Needed," *Libertas*, p. 10.

approximately 44,700 people relocated to Meadowlands, and Diepkloof.⁴⁵ That figure does not include the other areas that former Alexandrans inhabited such as Tembisa, Katlehong, and Pimville nor does the figure breakdown subjects into categories such as men, women, and children. In 1979, Alexandra won a reprieve which allowed the township to reclaim its former status as a family dwelling area. By that time architects had built one hostel, with a second one following in 1981. Other changes occurred. Alexandra originally started as a small freehold settlement that emerged into a sprawling township with many subdivisions which included: the original settlement with twenty-two avenues, the East Bank, the Far East Bank, Tutsomani, and the River Park Project, all found in the seventies, eighties, and nineties.

Along with human and physical changes in the township came ideological ones. Alexandrans participated in overt protest movements using different philosophies such as resistance and accommodation, nonviolence civil disobedience, Black Consciousness, and 'ungovernability.' These methods of protest had spatial dimensions and demographic implications. For example, ungovernability was a plan called by Eastern Cape migrant Moses Mayekiso, which urged residents not to pay for electricity, water other services until the government ended apartheid. The intrusion of foreigners, both South African migrants and Africans from other parts of the continent showed the permeable boundaries that Alexandra had despite the fact that the government had mandated legislation to control the influx of people into the urban areas. Residents in Alexandra not only challenged the state but also other residents. Migrants created makeshift shanties of corrugated iron and squatted on open land and enclosed township

⁴⁵ Mike Sarakinsky, "From "freehold" to "Model" Township," A Political History of Alexandra, 1905-1983, Honours Dissertation, Dissertation Series No. 5, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, 1984, p. 27.

space. Cemeteries, the banks of the Jukskei River, sidewalks, and even the yards where people owned properties were places where these shanties mushroomed. This political strategy of 'ungovernability' challenged local township residents who paid taxes for stands that they occupied. This move also challenged the state because they seized land that township residents owned or rented as did the squatters who took over two public squares in 1946-1947. Both of these protests bring to question the nature of ownership and what it implies. Squatters and proponents of 'ungovernability' also deconstructed the notion of public and its relationship to privatization.

Mapping Out Alexandra's Built Environment: Churches, Schools and Squares

Most of the history of Alexandra's churches comes from the locally produced *Alexandra News Bulletin*. This resource documents the origin, and evolution of churches from when they developed from rooms in houses to proper sanctuaries with schools annexing the facilities. Other sources include a master's thesis by Samuel Ramagaga, which focuses on the Holy Cross Sisters and their attempt to skirt the provisions of the Bantu Education Act by using debates as a forum from which to discuss politics and to teach Africans students about history.⁴⁶ Alexandran L. M. Taunyane's work, *Methodists in Africa*, is another source. Taunyane's work documents the history of one particular church and its pastors. While Taunyane tracks the genealogy of the Methodists in Africa,

⁴⁶ Samuel Mabolle Ramagaga, "The Contributions of the Holy Cross Sisters to Black Schooling in Alexandra, Johannesburg, with Particular Reference to the Period 1950-1970," A Research Report submitted to the Faculty of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education, January 1988, pp. 62-65.

he also shows the interconnections between each generation of congregants.⁴⁷ More work, however, featuring churches is needed to explain their relationship to worship, women's prayer groups and resistance. While this section focuses on churches, it continues in the vein already established by Ramagaga and Taunyane, with one primary difference. This analysis shows the inextricable link between schools and churches.



Illustration 2 Wesleyan Methodist Church

Photograph Dawne Y. Curry

Alexandra's church history dates to the Wesleyan Methodist Mission and its founding in 1912. A Mr. Tladi from Benoni on the East Rand built the first church at

⁴⁷ L. M. Taunyane, *Methodists in Africa*, (Pietermaritzburg: Simon and Schuster, 2002).

Number 11 Third Avenue. Then, Alexandra had a population between 200 and 200 people from which the Wesleyan Methodist Mission attained fifty adherents.⁴⁸

Authorities of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission built the Carter Wesley School in 1912. Because congregants adorned the church's front lawn with a donkey that symbolized Jesus Christ when he entered Jerusalem, the people of Alexandra called the place, "the donkey church."⁴⁹

Adherents participated in the church's activities until the priest sought donations from the congregation allegedly to support poor people overseas. Churchgoers who believed that the priest pocketed raised funds to enrich his personal coffers said, "How can we be poor and send money overseas?"⁵⁰ The priest never responded to this question, and disgruntled worshippers abandoned the Wesleyan Methodist Mission and alternatively formed the Methodists in Africa. Other religious options included these denominations: Ethiopian, Dutch Reformed or N. G. Sending, Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) and the Christian Coptic among other possibilities.⁵¹ In order to ascertain an idea about race, class, and gender,

⁴⁸ "Origin and Development of Alexandra, 1912-1962: Early Churches and Schools." *Alexandra News Bulletin*, May 1962, p. 1.

⁴⁹ Martha Mokgatle, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 21 March 2002.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ *Alexandra News Bulletin*, No. 30, January 1962, p. 6. Over the years other churches emerged in Alexandra, which included: St. Wistling Apostolic Faith Mission, Bantu Omega Church, Bantu Christian United Cannan Church of Zion of South Africa, The Corner Stone Apostolic Church in Zion, Christian Catholic Apostolic Stone Church in Zion of South Africa, Church of God in Christ, Chief Corner Stone Church, Damascus Apostolic Church in Zion, Enoni Salema Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion of South Africa, Ethiopian Catholic Health Church in Africa, Emmanuel Church of God, The Full Swaziland of Holy God Church in Zion, The General Faith Assembly Church in Zion, Krystile the Church of God in Zion, Latter Rain Assemblies of South Africa, Old Emmanuel Church, Nazareth Mission Apostolic in Zion, United Apostolic Church, United Church in Africa, United Sabbath Christian Apostolic Church, United National Church, The New Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, New Congregation Presbyterian Church of God in Africa, Lion Apostolic African Church, Members in Christ Assemblies, and the Mountain Apostolic Zion Church of God.

the *Alexandra News Bulletin* does not discuss the percentage of people under each respective religion.

People attended different churches for reasons other than disillusionment with the pastor or rumors of alleged corruption. Coloureds who helped to build the African Methodist Episcopal Church attended that venue, while an ethnically mixed body attended St. Hubert's Catholic Church. Besides familial allegiance and customary habits, people in Alexandra attended certain churches because of their reputed healing powers and philanthropic activities. At the Christian Coptic Church on Number 64 Sixteenth Avenue, homeless people benefited from feeding schemes while students profited from the church's educational grants.⁵² Churches performed another function. These buildings served as important historical markers. The buildings commemorated achievements of community members. Corner stones represented the first people to lay down foundation. Herbert Papenfus and Mrs. E. Mtimkulu, wife of the Methodist Mission's first evangelist, undertook the church's ceremonial event. In another commemoration ceremony, AME congregants named its basement after the highly respected physician Dr. Xuma.

Different churches had similar trajectories of development within the township. These religious centers evolved from temporary structures to permanent buildings where a hierarchy comprising elders, congregants, and Catholic nuns helped respective leaders to administer official duties. Worshipping originally took place in private homes. In 1915, Lutheran Mission followers established a church at Hiskia Moatse's house at Number 68 Fourth Avenue while AME congregants worshiped in a Mr. Semenya's home

⁵² Minah Moche, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 19 June 2002.

at Number 49 Third Avenue.⁵³ When the number of adherents reached occupancies that these converted homes and smaller facilities could not hold, township dwellers donated money, time, and other resources to create larger sanctuaries. N. G. Sending congregants renovated and enlarged the church in 1926, after twelve years in the original building when elements destroyed its wood and iron church. Congregants also swelled the church's coffers by providing money to dig subterranean wells. Building materials consisted of bricks made from mud and water which women fetched from the Jukskei River. Construction involved water collection, brick masonry, and plastering to cover the iron frames.⁵⁴

Churches and schools were inextricably linked in Alexandra. Congregants at St. Hubert's Catholic Church built a school near the sanctuary as did other Alexandran churches. Founded in 1918, St. Hubert's Catholic Church resides between First and Second Avenues and the corner of Selbourne. This church stands as a distinctive landmark. Painted glass windows, and mammoth wooden doors adorn a golden mud brick finish with a white cross perched atop a wooden steeple.⁵⁵ St. Hubert's maintained the Holy Cross Mission School, which stood near the main sanctuary and parsonage. The Holy Cross Sisters, a London-based missionary group, ran the school and offered classes in kindergarten, primary, secondary, and high school education plus vocational training in domestic science and nursing.⁵⁶ While St. Hubert's offered classes in a separate annex,

⁵³ "Origin and Development," *Alexandra News Bulletin*, No. 34, p. 1. Other than acknowledging Moatse's role in establishing the Lutheran Church, the *Alexandra News Bulletin* provided no further detail on his personal life. The historical overview also excluded the numbers his home could hold, and the organization of service. William Maloka of Hermansburg Mission Church aided Moatse in establishing the church.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ This description captures my first impression of the church upon seeing it in 1998.

⁵⁶ "Holy Cross Industrial School, Alexandra Township---The Domestic Science Class," *Bantu World*, December 7, 1940. Women registered for a three year course of domestic science in cookery, housewifery, needlework, laundry and mothercraft. No explanation was given to describe mothercraft.

other churches, such as the Lutheran and the Wesleyan Methodist Mission originally doubled as a house of worship and a school. Congregants established the Alexandra Lutheran School around the same time they built the church in 1912. Its first leader, Reverend S. Makobe, offered courses from Sub A to Standard 6 in Pedi, which was the vernacular language used by the school. When pupils outnumbered teachers and building space, the Bapedi Lutheran Church, an offshoot established in 1925, absorbed the additional students at its facilities on Seventh Avenue.

The Bapedi Lutheran Church housed all Sub-Standard to Standard Two or Lower Primary classes while Standards Three, Four, Five, and Six were stationed at the Lutheran Church School on Third Avenue. The two schools worked in concert and had the same principal. In 1936, Mr. Naphawe succeeded Mr. Rabotho as principal, and held that position until Dr. Knak assumed the position in 1942 by which time Alexandra had thirty-seven churches and nine schools. Under Knak's direction, the school expanded to include four additional classrooms and a school hall. Because Dr. Knak showed great initiative in expanding the classroom facilities, the school committee at the Lutheran Church School renamed the school in his honor. The Lower Primary School also underwent a name change, as the school committee there wanted to bring together all Pedi groups, especially the Northern Sothos who attended other ethnic schools. The new school name was Iphutheng, which means bring together.⁵⁷

The Wesleyan Methodist Church established the Carter Wesleyan School, where Mr. Mqwa served as that institution's first principal. Mr. Mqwa was succeeded in 1918 by Mr. Modikwane, who was succeeded by A. B. Moletsi in 1922. Moletsi, who stepped down as principal in 1933, introduced Pathfinders, Wayfarers and Boy Scouts after

⁵⁷ Samuel Ramagaga, "The Contributions of the Holy Cross Sisters," p. 58.

school community oriented programs. Moletsi's successor was Mr. Makutle, who had a short tenure as principal from 1935 to 1936, was succeeded by Mr. D. W. S. Kambule. During Kabuli's tenure, the school organized its first choir competition at the Johannesburg festival. Besides, outreach programs, eight new classrooms were built during this period. The last headmaster to serve was Mr. J. D. Gamede. Gamede lost his post following the implementation of the 1955 Bantu Education Act, which outlawed missionary schools across the country and took control over all Alexandran schools.

Skeen Memorial School which was built on a stand sold to the Dutch Reformed Church by R. G. Baloyi in 1936, benefited from the Bantu Education Act. This double-storey school which was run by Afrikaners produced top quality students. Because of the position that the Dutch Reformed Church held, the schools received special favors such as a steady supply of equipment, books, and stationary. Schools became sites for politicization. When the ANC boycotted the Bantu Education Act in 1955 and began gutting schools, police protection was extended to the principal at Skeen Memorial by Sergeant Piet Badenhorst. The ANC staged daily boycotts besides holding alternative schools called culture clubs in yards where students learned arithmetic, African history, culture, and language using songs, stories, and games. Writing was prohibited because ANC sponsors did not want to leave evidence that they were running an illegal school. Police officials had already closed private institutions such as the Emperor Haile Selassie School, so using different strategies to educate Africans was paramount.⁵⁸ As a result of

⁵⁸ "Alexandra Teachers Arrested," *Bantu World*, December 3, 1955 and, "Police Raid School in Alexandra," *Bantu World*, December 10, 1955. Josias Madzunya taught at Alexandra's Emperor Haile Selassie School with ninety-nine other educators who taught African history and culture using vernacular languages, and through orality. On the day of the school's closing in 1953 following the Bantu Education Act, police officials stormed the building, confiscated books, and pieces of chalk, blackboards, and other school equipment while several chairs remained in the rooms along with a pupil's raincoat. Madzunya, who had taught at the school since its opening in 1948, was expelled and arrested along with three other colleagues

the continuous boycotts conducted by the ANC, many of Skeen's teachers left the township and relocated to Pietersburg where they took teaching posts. This change in residency shows that Alexandra had people constantly flowing in and out of its territory and that the human landscape underwent changes. Besides the emigration and immigration that occurred in Alexandra, new schools such as the Pholosho Community School sprung up when the government shut down other schools such as the Haile Selassie School, and the St. Michaels Anglican Mission⁵⁹

Indigenous churches also had their own schools near the sanctuaries. The Reverend Bishop Paulos Mabiletsa of the Christian Apostolic Church of South Africa gave the community two stands to build a church. Mabiletsa, who was the father of Alexandra's first advocate, Martin Mabiletsa, wanted the school to serve the needs of its flock, but he did accept participants from other denominations. When the African Methodist Episcopal Church merged with the Apostolic Church, the educational center became known as the Alexandra Amalgamated School in 1936. The institution offered classes from Sub-Standard A to Standard Six. Its first principal was Mr. Ngubeni, but Mr. E. Noge, who helped to establish a family name as educators spanning six generations, later succeeded him. In 1944, Noge left the school while his wife succeeded him at the Alexandra Amalgamated School. With the assistance of Reverend B. M.

while the police issued a summons for a fifth defendant. "School Boycott Spreads," *Golden City Post*, April 17, 1955, p. 3d, and "The Shut Down on African Education," *Drum*, June 1955, pp. 26-29. A nationwide education boycott occurred where by at least twenty-five schools with a total of 12,520 pupils had left state schools. The government issued a deadline for April 25th for them to return to school or else face the possibility of not receiving schooling. Parents kept their children home and the boycott mushroomed.

⁵⁹ "New Secondary School in Alexandra," *Alexandra News Bulletin*, March 1961 No. 21, p. 4. H. O. Phahle was the last principal of St. Michaels Mission School. "Alexandra Bantu Community and Private Schools: Statistical Return, December 1961," *Alexandra News Bulletin*, January 1962, No. 30, p. 8. Other public schools included: the Alexandra Secondary School, Bovet, Carter, Dr. Knak, Ekhukhanyisweni, Emfundisweni, Gordon, Ikage, Iputheng, Ithute, M. C. Weiler, Skeen, and Zenzeleni.

Sechaba of the AME, Noge established another institution called the Ithuthe Primary School which was divided into junior and senior sections.⁶⁰ Noge headed the school until his death in 1959, at which point, Mr. Ramaisa succeeded him.

Alexandra's churches sponsored or promoted denominational youth movements. Participating members included the Wesleyan Methodist, the Anglican, the Catholic and N. G. Sending.⁶¹ These religious centers provided indoor games, and lectures pertaining to religious firms followed by discussion, which the Health Centre and University Clinic under the Dr. Holman Youth Movement complimented. Youth had other recreational resources, the Entokozweni Family Centre where they played games, danced, appreciated music, performed in dramas, and received acting lessons.⁶² The Entokozweni hosted other events to raise money to support youth projects. In the 1960s beauty contests, arranged by the Alexandra Cultural Club, took place at the Entokozweni with admission by ticket only, and entries submitted on official forms for single women ranging from age eighteen to thirty.⁶³

Music competitions also featured as a revenue generator where local notables such as the Magnificent Trio, and Jika Twala's Disinherited Knights rendered song. Besides the age range for women in the beauty contests, the Alexandra News Bulletin did not provide the same for the youth. Instead, readers are left to ponder the age determinants. What did the definition of youth mean for those who sponsored programs for young adults? Without an age stipulation scholars can not analyze whether or not these youth represented vanguards, vandals, apocalyptic or liberatory youth or another

⁶⁰ Simon Noge, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 9 March 2002.

⁶¹ "Alexandra's Youth Movements," *Alexandra News Bulletin*, No. 38, 1962, p. 5.

⁶² "Youth Movements in Alexandra," *Alexandra News Bulletin*, No. 32, May 1962.

⁶³ "Alexandra Beauty Queen Contest," *Alexandra News Bulletin*, No. 22, 1961, p. 3.

category.⁶⁴ Sponsors of church events wanted the youth to have fun, rather than inherit the responsibility of the struggle as later generations had. This provides a distinction and a discontinuity that existed between the decades of the sixties, the seventies, and the eighties. It also shows the possible sliding definition of youth especially if youth represented people between the ages of six and twelve.⁶⁵ For example, Inhlanhla Mgege defined youth as people between twelve and thirty-five years of age.⁶⁶ His definition incorporated those people who participated in the liberation struggle.

With Mgege's definition of youth, the term changed from what the church sponsored events purported. Mgege's definition was incumbent upon the political maturity and awareness of those involved in the struggle. Youth therefore, was defined by political activism rather than by biology.⁶⁷ The term youth also seems to be synonymous with males rather than females. The historiography focuses principally on male youth, and leaves lingering questions regarding the identity of young girls.⁶⁸ This lacuna raises several questions; how does youth define the gender roles that young boys and girls inherited, and in what ways does the construction of gender create a situation whereby men are evaluated by their inherent femininity? By deconstructing these terms scholars will arrive at a more conclusive and inclusive definition of youth. Information

⁶⁴ Jon Abbink and Ineke Van Kessel (eds). *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth Politics, and Conflict in Africa*, (Leiden: Brill, 2005), and Jeremy Seekings, *Heroes or Villains? Youth Politics in the 1980s*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1993).

⁶⁵ Jok Maduk Jok, "War, Changing Ethics and the Position of Youth in South Sudan," in Jon Abbink and Ineke Van Kessel (eds). *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth Politics, and Conflict in Africa*, (Leiden: Brill, 2005), p. 145.

⁶⁶ Mgege, interview.

⁶⁷ Jon Abbink and Ineke Van Kessel (eds), *Vanguard or Vandals*, p.p. 5-20.

⁶⁸ See Monique Marks, *Young Warriors: Youth Politics and Violence in South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2001), Ari Sitas, "The Making of the 'Comrades' Movement in Natal, 1985-1991," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 18, 3 (1992), pp. 629-41, D. B. Cruise O'Brien, 'A Lost Generation: Youth Identity and State Decay in West Africa,' in R. Werbner and T. Ranger (eds). *Post-Colonial Identities in Africa*, (London: Zed Books, 1996), and D. Durham, "Youth and the Social Imagination in Africa: Introduction," *Anthropological Quarterly*, 73, 3 (2000), pp. 113-20.

regarding youth could be divided into separate spheres to explain the religious significance and how the church defined the term and how the sports culture offered its own definition. Thus, the spaces in which created and inculcated values onto the youth, are paramount for understanding the terms' construction and its ideological change over time.

Alexandra's Public Squares

Alexandra had three public squares. In the center of the township, these public squares were easily recognizable as their names reflected cardinal numbers. Squares measured different sizes with the largest, the Number 2 Square measuring 175 x 350 feet while the smaller Number 3 Square measures 150 x 350 feet. Squares lay between different avenues. The Number 2 Square extends from Twelfth to Fifteenth Avenues and borders the Number 3 Square which faces the township's southern portion near Twelfth and Thirteenth Avenues, while the Number 1 Square lies between First and Third Avenues.⁶⁹ Public Squares officially served as sites for conducting political meetings, church gatherings, and sporting events. Residents needed no permission to stage public events, however, admission fees applied for spectator sports such as football, tennis or basketball. These sites were spaces of representation because Alexandra's residents attached symbolic meanings to the squares. Residents also defined the terms of occupation.

Athletes or recreationists played tennis and football at the Number 1 Square with the courts situated on one side of the field and football goals on the other side. Alexandra

⁶⁹ Dan Mokonyane, *Lessons of Azikwelwa: The Bus Boycott in South Africa*, (London: Nakong Ya Rena, 1979), p. 21.

boasted numerous male and female athletes including Richard Mogai, who during the fifties and the sixties dominated the sport as the country's tennis champion. He won several titles which included the Transvaal men's singles title, and the national championship which capped off an undefeated year.⁷⁰ Football similarly had its top-notched athletes such as Isaac "Chain Puller" Chocho and Stanley "City Council" Mbanya, who played for the Alexandra Gunners and the Alexandra Real Fighters, which were formed in the 1930s and fell under the auspices of the Alexandra Football Association (AFA). The Alexandra Football Association was started in 1936 by R. G. Baloyi, who acted as its director. The association, which scheduled inter-township matches, officiated over eighty-six football teams in Alexandra by 1962.⁷¹

Football was a major attraction among residents, and newspaper reporters flocked to the township to give extensive coverage to these widely attended football matches. Reporters, for example, described the play-by-play action and even told readers of the nicknames that various athletes had. Often times, the news reporter failed to explain the derivation of these nicknames. An explanation of these nicknames, such as "Fish and Chips," "Indian woman," and "Buya Msuthu Buya Ndoda," would have helped to clarify the sports culture that developed among athletes in Alexandra and elsewhere.⁷² Instead

⁷⁰ "Mogoi's Seventh Title," *The World*, December 17, 1960. Alexandra also had a baseball team called the Alexandra Apaches. "Tshabalala to Fight at Alexandra," *The World*, October 2, 1968. Teams played their games at the Number 2 Square, the same site where boxers such as Philemon "Hurricane Hawk" Tshabalala among other athletes, had their matches. These examples show the extent of Alexandra township's involvement in sports. While football dominated the sporting activities, there were other ways for men to assert their masculinity.

⁷¹ Simon Selepe, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 11 April 2002. Football teams included: Young Fighters Alexandra, Rangers Alexandra, Braves United Alexandra, City Wanderers Alexandra, Moroka Lions, Black Pool, Transvaal B. Bucks, Draggons Alexandra, Moroka Stars Alexandra, S. A. P. Bramely, Pankop Wolves, Eland Brothers, Mamagale Darkies, Makapan Y. Zebras, A. B. C. Vultures, Leeds United, All Blacks, Jerico N. Boys, Koodoo Brothers, Bethanie H. Defenders, Durban Try Again, Moloto Jumpers, Ramblers, Standard Rainbows, Tensile Terrors, P. U. Rangers, and H. H. Brothers.

⁷² "Alexandra Soccer Attracts Big Crowd," *Bantu World*, September 17, 1949. This article captured plays and allowed the reader to visualize what transpired and those in attendance to relive worthy scoring feats.

what appears are these types of snippets, “Joseph “Buick” Morapedi was in terrific form on Saturday. He pioneered his side to victory.”⁷³ The correspondents also inadequately described the space where contests occurred. Readers were made aware that the Number 1 Square was unenclosed, however, the correspondents failed to report how the space was used, in other words, where the bleachers were situated, where the spectators paid, and the surrounding landscape.

This information would contextualize the contests and place readers within the time period discussed. Other important information includes the participants’ ages. What age cohort played soccer and for how long were they allowed to assume positions on a team? In what ways, did athletes conform to the sporting guidelines? Answers to these questions will shed light on these issues: the formation of masculinity; the rituals associated with sporting events, crowd involvement, and if teams had mascots. Another important issue concerns preservation of sports history. Isaac Chocho granted an interview to the *Sowetan* in which he discussed his abilities on the field and the lack of documentation regarding athletes’ statistics. Chocho stated, “I was too fast and always at the right place at the right time. I would have won the top goal scorer award every year if there were such awards during our time.”⁷⁴ Other feats worth documenting are the teams’ winning percentages. The Alexandra Real Fighters accomplished an unparalleled feat. It won the championship three consecutive years from 1957 to 1959.⁷⁵

The unidentified correspondent also provided readers with a capsule of the culture that sports bred in Alexandra.

⁷³ “Fighters Sink Gunners,” *The World*, January 18, 1965.

⁷⁴ “Chocho Had Yen for Bagging Goals: Deadly Striker Wasted Few Opportunities,” *Sowetan*, April 11, 2002, p. 12.

⁷⁵ “Mashinini’s Men Put Alex on Map,” *Sowetan*, April 18, 2002, p. 12.

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Besides football, political meetings also occurred at the floodlit stadium of the Number 2 Square.⁷⁶ Known locally as ‘Freedom Square,’ the Number 2 Square served as a site for commerce, recreation, funerary services, and transport. Residents held a Saturday market on the square’s southwestern corner every Saturday from the early 1900s until today. Frequent marketers included the Daughters of Africa (DOA), a self-help organization founded in 1931 by Lillian Tshabalala in Durban, which announced its business venture in the *Alexandra News Bulletin* or in the *Bantu World*.⁷⁷ Tshabalala used her position as DOA founder to politicize social service. Politicizing means that the DOA used the public forum to advocate for changes within the lives of Africans and the nation as a whole. The DOA had a social contract with the community, meaning that the organization had a responsibility to helping the African nation.

This notion of nationhood weighed heavy on Tshabalala’s mind, and was even more urgent after she spent eighteen years on American soil, and she returned home to in 1930, to find “her people suffering like a nation which was drying up like a piece of corn that had cooked too long,” so she made a vow to “build the nation . . . from the bottom up and help those less fortunate and therefore in the process of making all segments of the black nation even stronger.”⁷⁸

With Tshabalala at the helm, the DOA served as modern-day missionaries as they encouraged the development of women as leaders, and activists who advocated for temperance, youth programs, and ethnic unity. DOA members held tea parties, and

⁷⁶ “Stadium Floodlights,” *Alexandra News Bulletin*, June-July 1962, No. 35. Floodlights were installed at the Alexandra Stadium on 2 August 1962 to allow for the playing of night games and also to allow for an extension of time to play matches.

⁷⁷ “Daughters of Africa Morning Market,” *Alexandra News Bulletin* February-March, No. 41. p. 2. Topsie Piliso chaired the Marketing Committee which consisted of five other members; Johannah Eland, Edith Masedi, Elizabeth Msimanga, Treasurer, Albina Salanyaneland, Julia Nzonza, Secretary. See Brandel-Syrier, “Daughters of Africa News,” *Ilanga laseNatal*, July 14, 1945.

⁷⁸ “The Daughters of Africa,” *Ilanga laseNatal*, March 30, 1940.

discussed important historical events such as the Second World War, and black women's organizations while promoting this motto, "All service ranks the same with God." Most of these issues Tshabalala addressed appeared in the *Bantu World's* Women's Section. Along with the market sales, and the newspaper editorials, the DOA raised money for the war funds, youth projects, regional and national conferences, and weekly meetings that mirrored the format of women's prayer groups.

While the Daughters engaged in commerce, the Communist Party (CPSA), the Pan Africanist Congress and the African National Congress held political meetings. For example, between 400 and 500 people attended a Sunday mass rally organized by the Communist Party in August 1943. Organizers strategically positioned loudspeakers around the Number 2 Square to facilitate audibility. T. Davis Peter chaired the meeting while Dr. Yusef Dadoo stressed the importance of unity within the township. African leaders such as Mrs. Florence Pasha (ANC Women's League activist), J. B. Marks (former ABOA bookkeeper, and ANC Transvaal President), and R. G. Baloyi also took the stage and added to the diversity and the camaraderie. Marks, whose words an unidentified *Guardian* correspondent immortalized declared, "The Communist Party was the only party which could unite the people and lead them to a better system of society."⁷⁹ The article did not elaborate any further on what type of society the Communist Party envisioned. Nor did the article explain why the Communist Party had the qualifications for leading people to this new system and if in fact the proposed system rested on the Communist Party's ideological beliefs. The Communist Party meeting took place in August 1943 at a time when Alexandrans had engaged in the township's fourth bus boycott, yet the correspondent does not mention if the meeting addressed the issue of

⁷⁹ "Unity Meeting at Alexandra," *Guardian*, August 5, 1943.

transport and how a better system to ferry Alexandrans related to the need for greater unity.

While it appeared that the unity meeting had an equal representation of races, the Communist Party still did not explain how this ensemble worked together beyond the scheduled event. In fact, the Communist Party never explained the term unity. Did unity mean different races or members within the organization? Women spoke before the crowd, yet the correspondent failed to capture their words so that readers can analyze what topics each sex deemed important and what strategies they proposed to achieve defined goals. How would the Communist Party reconcile the differences that existed between men and women? This question raises more issues than answers, however it is important to consider. The Pan Africanist Congress addressed the female question when it discussed the pass laws and its impact upon Africans as a whole, and the African National Congress had a Women's League, so there was an attempt by the major political organizations to include women and show their significance as more than mere figureheads.

As an offshoot of the African National Congress, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) which was founded in 1959, held meetings on the Number 2 Square's northern half, until the political body became an unlawful organization in 1960, following the Sharpeville Massacre. Days and weeks before the scheduled pass demonstration in Sharpeville which ended with the deaths of sixty-nine people, and injuries to others, the Pan Africanist Congress held open air meetings at the Number 2 Square. Different PAC leaders chaired Sunday meetings; one in particular was Josias Madzunya. Born in Venda in 1909, Madzunya arrived in Johannesburg in 1930, where he worked several jobs

selling Hessian and cardboard alongside the intersection of Troye and President Streets, where he held court as a street corner speaker.⁸⁰

Madzunya donned a well-groomed beard with a short coiffed Afro, which he accentuated with a cascading black trench coat. That trench coat became his signature trademark. Besides the street corner, Madzunya used Alexandra's Number 2 Square to put forth his ideas about domination, the passes, apartheid, and the ideological differences between the PAC and ANC. Madzunya stated, "We [PAC] say we do not want the milk we want the cow. Hence we do not want freedom but independence."⁸¹ PAC leaders used Alexandra's public areas to inform, educate, and to galvanize the masses.

The African National Congress similarly accomplished those goals. The African National Congress was founded in 1912; the exact date of the branch's establishment in Alexandra is unknown. Some residents such as Freddy Lekiso Kumalo, claim that the organization developed around the same time as Alexandra's establishment as a freehold. The Alexandra Branch often met around a "large pickle stone" on Twenty-Second Avenue, at the home of Topsie Piliso, and at the Number 2 Square.⁸² The ANC announced its Sunday mass gatherings with the usual hoisting of the organization's black, green and gold flag. With the flag flapping, various speakers took the podium and addressed a particular issue such as passes, and transport. Men traditionally presided over these meetings, but oftentimes women chaired the functions as they did one Sunday

⁸⁰ Benjamin Pogrand, "Report on Josias Madzunya's Banishment from Johannesburg," *African Affairs Reporter*, June 20, 1962, pp. 1-2.

⁸¹ Regina v Sobukwe and Eleven Others in the Magistrate's Court for the Regional Division of the South Transvaal, held at Johannesburg, Pan Africanist Congress of South Africa, South Africa: A Collection of Political Trials, Cooperative African Microfilm Project (CAMP).

⁸² Mashonte and Piliso, interviews.

in November 1955 to discuss the extension of the passes to women. Attendants agreed to march in protest, so after the meeting concluded, ANC Women's League activist Thoko Virginia Mngoma stated:

. . . we had a procession through Alexandra, shouting and telling everyone that tomorrow morning all women, please, must meet at the square, instead of going to work. Let's not go to work tomorrow. Let's go to the fort- Number 4, that's how we used to call it – because once we leave here to go to Fordsburg we are definitely going to be arrested. So let's make u our minds that tomorrow we are going to sleep at the Fort, Number Four.⁸³

These three examples show how political organizations used the space within the Number 2 Square to galvanize the masses. The Communist Party used the opportunity of the meeting to advocate for greater unity among Coloureds, Africans, and Whites, while the PAC put forth ideas about the organization's philosophy and the ANC discussed passes and their affect on women. Street politics educated the masses and provided the forum for them to discuss, sing, and deliberate over the issues at hand. Planning also occurred. The ANC planned a protest march and shifted the space from the Number 2 Square to greater Johannesburg. No longer was the ANC pass protest contained within Alexandra. Instead, it extended to consume a larger operating space from which to galvanize others. By the 1960s, these organizations operated underground after the government had banned them.

Besides promoting unity, residents used the Number 2 Square to conduct funerals. Funerals often occurred amid controversy. For example, in the 1950s, relatives of the twelve killed during the May Day labor protest in Alexandra, declined to have a political funeral. In the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, funerals became politicized. Government

⁸³ Suzanne Gordon, *A Talent for Tomorrow: Life Stories of South African Servants*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985), pp. 100-101.

officials forbade people from holding mourning services and even disrupted the funerary process by dispatching armed policemen who rode in hippos which they descended to fire teargas onto grieving attendants. In an interview granted to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1996, Daisy Mashigo discusses her travels from a comrade's funeral. While she paints a graphic picture of the police and their brutality, the interview offers no definitive time period to signify when and where the event occurred. The quote which follows shows how the police extended the funeral zones to the path that residents took afterwards. Residents were not even allowed to grieve beyond the funeral site. Mashigo proclaimed, "We were coming from the funeral. When we came out of the burial when we were in the double up, the police shot us with tear gas."⁸⁴

After the police released the tear gas, Mashigo immediately ran home to look for her children and found another mother named Anna doing the same. The two women talked briefly before a stone and bullets hit Mashigo and knocked her to the ground leaving her unconscious. Mashigo regained consciousness in the hospital, where she stayed for two or three months.⁸⁵ Although the hospital staff released Mashigo, she still has a bullet lodged in her body. Mashigo's testimony reveals some important information regarding funerals, and what can transpire afterwards, but she leaves some questions unanswered. Mashigo tells reader that the fallen victim had a political funeral because she refers to him/her as a comrade. A political funeral is an event whereby the funeral attendants honor the deceased by having coffins draped with the regalia of banned political organizations, and speakers discuss the significance of the person's death using the liberation struggle as a trope whereas a nonpolitical funeral represents the converse

⁸⁴Daisy Mashigo, "Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Human Rights Violations," October 29, 1996, <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/ale/mashigo.htm>.

⁸⁵Ibid.

and does not honor the dead with themes that politicize. Besides knowing that the fallen was a comrade, Mashigo provides few details regarding the deceased's particulars, including name, age, race or ethnicity, and the circumstances surrounding the death. Instead, readers learn more about her personal tragedy and the police repression. One statement that Mashigo makes provides a clue when this tragedy occurred. She states, "it was the time of the riots"⁸⁶ Mashigo alludes to either the 1976 student uprising or the nation-wide township revolts that consumed the country from 1984 to 1986.

Another example pinpoints the time of death in 1985, but it provides a different angle than discussed by Mashigo. Lesoro Hilda Mohlomi describes the circumstances surrounding her son Reuben's death. Reuben wanted to attend a funeral but his mother feared that because "he couldn't see clearly and if the police came they [would] shoot him because he couldn't see clearly . . . [to] run."⁸⁷ Reuben had poor vision because once during a police encounter, the police shot him squarely in the eye. To his mother's dismay, Reuben attended the funeral making him prey for the policemen's bullets. He was shot dead. Mohlomi went to the clinic to reclaim her son's body, but it would take five weeks, and relocation to the morgue before the family had the body and the funeral took place presumably at the Alexandra Stadium on the township's Number 2 Square.

Similar to Mashigo, funeral attendants faced problems after the public ceremony. Mohlomi stated, ". . . on the day of the funeral people who came to attend the funeral couldn't stay at home because they were not allowed. It was only the family members who were at the house." This example shows how police officials controlled the private space of the homes and disrupted the traditional burial rites that occurred after the

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Lesoro Hilda Mohlomi, "Human Rights Violation," Truth and Reconciliation Commission, October 29, 1996.

funeral. By differentiating between family members, friends, and well wishers police officials created a different version of apartheid. This segregation even extended to teachers. Mohlomi states, “Even when we were preparing for the funeral the white man used to come and disturb us. I remember one day the teachers came from his school came to our house and these white men came in and asked these teachers what were they doing there.”⁸⁸ Police officials even prohibited comrades from joining the private ceremony. The “ [comrades] used to come to sing and the police used to come in and chase these comrades out when they came in.”⁸⁹ Comrades were an extension of the immediate family, and because the police denied them the opportunity to grieve, they had negated the importance of the social bonds that the comrades had formed.

Within the churches, the schools, and the public squares, Alexandrans developed a community. In his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela describes the Alexandran community as a fusion of different ethnicities. Although Sotho, Zulu, Xhosa, Coloureds, Pedi, Shangaan among other ethnic and racial groups lived in Alexandra, they according to Mandela all identified as Alexandran.⁹⁰ The fact that Alexandra’s residents fostered such a cohesive social and political identity boded well for a township reputed for its crime, and squalor. Alexandrans achieved this goal partly because of its captive geographical location and also because of the close-knit homes with the public yards which encouraged interaction.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1994), p. 77.

Alexandra's built environment represented an alternative and parallel space from predominantly White Johannesburg proper.⁹¹ Residents established their own religious and educational institutions, had their own system of governance, newspaper, stores, transport system, health center, sewage system, theaters, and political organizations. Despite residency in a freehold, Alexandrans faced insurmountable obstacles as a community situated near White suburbs, but also outside the parameters of municipal governance. This apparent handicap did not deter residents from drawing national attention to the housing plight, increases in transport, substandard education, forced removals, and police brutality. As a "black island in a white sea" Alexandra emerged as one of the major centers of protest throughout the country.

Concluding Remarks

Alexandrans established their built environment to complement the gridiron pattern that defined the township's original boundaries. Alexandra extended to incorporate new subdivisions such as the East Bank, the Far East Bank, and the River Park Project, developments that dotted Alexandra in the 1980s and the 1990s. Before these new developments existed, Alexandra spread from Rooth Street and continued southerly before veering easterly to the Jukskei River. Alexandrans dotted the original landscape with homes, churches and schools. Churches and schools appeared side by side and provided the opportunity for residents to obtain religious and secular education on the same site.

⁹¹ This notion of an alternate and public space was inspired by Kim D. Butler's work, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won: Afro-Brazilians in Post Abolition Sao Paulo and Salvador*.

The location of these two institutions created a symbiotic spatial relationship. A symbiotic spatial relationship is one where one site is dependent upon another and functions in tandem. Within these institutions dwellers learned about African history and how it related to the apartheid regime. Simon Selepe attended St. Michael's Anglican School and commented on the curriculum. He stated, "We learned about our heroes."⁹² Alexandrans opposed major apartheid legislation such as the 1955 Bantu Education Act which eliminated mission and private schools and prohibited lectures that trained Africans to become lawyers, doctors, teachers, or to attain any other professional position. As members of the African National Congress some Alexandrans formed culture clubs as means to bypass the prohibition on alternative educational institutions. Culture clubs enabled teachers to explain African history, mathematics and geography using stones or oral transmissions. While Selepe's testimony and the evidence of the culture clubs provides information on what transpired within the schools, a dearth exists for what transpired in the churches.

Churches were historical sites of memory, therefore, it is important to analyze what the pastors preached and if in fact these holy figures served as puppets or opponents of the regime. Sermons document the contemporary state of life and serve as thematic structure from which to glean a deeper understanding of apartheid's effect. Musical selections provide another way of analyzing historical time periods because they document the tenor and temper of the people. Songs featured during church services as did protest ones countered the agony of apartheid and promoted the defiance of the people. For example, a ditty called "Azikwelwa," paid homage to the 1957 bus boycott. That song, which the South African Broadcasting Corporation banned, honored the Zulu

⁹² Simon Selepe, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 9 February 2002.

chant, “We won’t ride”.⁹³ That boycott lasted for three months and ended in restoration of the original fare structure.

These examples serve to show the importance of churches and schools within Alexandra and their relationship to politics. Squares were also another venue where street politics mushroomed. There at the Number 1, 2, and 3 Squares, Alexandrans used the unenclosed space to hold sporting events, political meetings, bus boycotts, and squatter movements. While this shows how township dwellers used space it also illustrates what these spaces represented and how the meaning changed over time. For example, Alexandra originated as a Whites only area, then it became a freehold, before becoming a family dwelling area, a place of forced removals, a hostel city, to a restored family community. Although its distinctions changed over time, there was one constant; Alexandra represented a racially sequestered site that skirted the periphery of White Johannesburg and for that reason among others, the township was a threat to the apartheid regime.

⁹³ David Coplan, *In Township Tonight!: South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre*, (London: Longman, 1985), p. 165.

CHAPTER THREE: ALEXANDRAN RESPONSES TO INCREASED TRANSPORT, HOUSING SHORTAGE AND INADEQUATE PAY 1912-1957

This chapter examines the issue of labor in three interrelated categories: transport, housing, and sanitation. It argues that positions of labor became an opportunity for Alexandrans to showcase how they intellectualized South African state of affairs. These movements provide a contemporary analysis of what transpired between employers and employees. These issues also show how each group manifested and wielded power. Alexandrans exercised power by refusing to patronize the buses, by taking over township land and squatting or by engaging in a work slow down. Reprisals comprised increased fares, establishment of an emergency camp or reluctance to increase wages. Different strategies demonstrate that the neither subordinate group nor the dominant one was monolithic in its execution of power.

Gender played an important role in this story. For example, men dominated as the labor pool in the 1957 nightsoil strike. Nightsoil laborers created an identity as hardworking underpaid men. Because they received inadequate pay they refused to work for twelve days, causing a further backlog of human excrement. This example, therefore reveals how a group of migrant men exercised power over the Alexandra Health Committee and the entire community because without their services Alexandrans faced the danger of contracting communicable diseases. Despite this reality, Alexandrans treated nightsoil workers as fourth class citizens and referred to them as “the shit men.”⁹⁴ This exaltation undermined the men’s masculinity because although the job was not

⁹⁴ Ramohanoe, interview.

glamorous, they worked hard and risked their own constitution to provide a social service to the community. Hard work, therefore, did not equate to respect.

Unlike the nightsoil workers who traveled throughout the township, washerwomen and other domestics had to use public transit to get to their places of employment. Buses ferried men, women, and children. Therefore, when residents boycotted the buses, leadership came from both sexes, as each group had its own method of protest. The buses were congested terrain, but unlike the American South, the issue that dominated the buses was not segregation since African and Coloureds shared the same public spaces, but how to accommodate passengers with finding a seat and space to place bundles of wash.⁹⁵ Issues such as these dominated the discussion among political organizations that waged a protest against tariff increases. In fact, two organizations, the Alexandra Women's League and the African National Congress, render an analytical discussion which foretold of problems between men and women. These vignettes create a different construction of masculinity and femininity which allow for convergence of the two sexes. Bus boycotts that dominated Alexandra showed how male and female residents exercised their consumer purchasing power and constructed an identity based on patriarchal values and proto-feminism. Proto-feminism refers to the early attempts by women to attain gender equality.

The Alexandra Bus Boycotts

An article featured in the *Bantu World* reported the news of a bus boycott occurring in Alexandra in 1940. The snippet appeared in the Society pages rather than

⁹⁵ Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*, (New York: Free Press, 1994), pp. 55-75.

the front page as headlined news. Gossip Columnist Walter Nhlapo observed the public spectacle and described the women as Amazons, as if to suggest that they possessed supernatural strength or were surprisingly brave to execute their chosen actions.⁹⁶

Nhlapo did not mention any names or described what the women wore; instead he focused principally on the fact that they had sent an ultimatum to the bus owners. While Nhlapo made us aware of this scarcely reported bus boycott, his brief article did not provide any historical background. Alexandrans had held two protests in the 1917 and 1918 against increases in transport and high prices for foodstuffs, which women spearheaded, yet Nhlapo overlooks this history.

While this omission exists, Nhlapo's piece raises some important questions about gender, leadership, and protest strategies. Absent from Nhlapo's synopsis was the contribution of men to the bus boycott, since they represented an important segment affected by the penny fare increase. These women, Nhlapo observes, protested with their feet and readers are left to ponder if the men responded similarly. Perhaps, the brevity of the bus boycott lent itself to only the women participating or the fact that of the approximately 12,000 people, women outnumbered men 10:1 as patrons.⁹⁷ A preponderance of male participants existed as members of the Alexandra Workers Union (AWU) yet Nhlapo chose to focus principally on women, and only on one form of resistance. While four bus boycotts dominated Alexandra during the 1940s, this section focuses on the one primarily occurring in 1943. That boycott is historically significant because it resulted in the national government deciding to establish for the first time a

⁹⁶ "Well Done Alexandra Township," *Bantu World*, August 28, 1940.

⁹⁷ Bus Commission Report, p. 20.

commission of enquiry to investigate bus operations in Pretoria, Vereeniging, and the Witwatersrand.

The 1943 Bus Boycott

“We shall walk.” That was the headline in an evening newspaper in Johannesburg which reported that an attempt had been made to boycott the buses because of a two penny increase in fares from 4d to 5d.⁹⁸ The Transportation Board had granted all bus owners the tariff increase, but members of the Standowners Committee held an emergency session to discuss the newly-mandated fare. That was the origin of a short story written by Modikwe Dikobe, a South African novelist, whose real name was Marks Rammitloa, was born in the Transvaal in 1913. His short story, “We Shall Walk,” reports a meeting that he had attended between the bus patrons and the owners.⁹⁹ His short story states:

On the eve of the increment on Sunday a stand-owners committee summoned a meeting in closed doors. The chief spokesman was a bus owner intimately known as “RG”. “Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I speak this morning as your representative in the Native Representatives Council as well being a bus-owner and a stand-owner.” Hear, hear!” A tumultuous response.

Mr. Baloyi[a bus owner] wiped his brow. He fidgeted. His fingers turning about a bunch of documents. You all know that I have for years pleaded to have a saying in running of your township, “Hear hear!” I have made possible for you to have representative in the Health Committee.” “Speak RG.”

“Point of interruption, Mr. Chairman.”

⁹⁸ Modikwe Dikobe, “We Shall Walk,” in Belinda Bozzoli (ed). *Labour, Townships and Protest: Studies in Social History of the Witwatersrand* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1979), p. 104.

⁹⁹ Dikobe was a pseudonym used by Marks Rammitloa, an ardent member of the Communist Party and leader of the 1946 Alexandra squatters’ movement.

“Sit down, sit down.” An uproar from the audience. A man who had asked for a point of interruption was a young man popularly called “Hlubi.” He was a tenant. Recently arrived in the township. He was a trade unionist. An organizer of the ICU (Industrial Commercial Union) . . . Gaur as other trade unionist addressed him was a fearless speaker, fiery and bombastic.

Gaur had infiltrated into the meeting. His supporters had waited outside the hall. To them, he was their delegate. “Mr. Chairman, I am not going to tolerate that young man interrupting me.” “Continue RG, he is only a pup.”

The increase in bus fare is from to-morrow. Starting at 9 o’clock.”

“So you want to trap us into paying increase fares?” Gaur interjected.¹⁰⁰

This short story provides a glimpse into what transpired at a meeting involving Standowners, bus owners, and bus patrons. It shows the divisions between and among the subordinate group as Gaur Radebe, a trade unionist and tenant, challenges R. G. Baloyi, a Standholder, and former bus owner. Tensions between the two men did not lie solely in class differentiations but also age as the chairman refers to Radebe as a pup and encourages the elder Baloyi to continue making his point. Dikobe’s recount of the meeting failed to include other leaders or organizations possibly represented, which a meeting held the Sunday before the protest, revealed.

At the township gathering, Communist Party leader Yusef Dadoo, who linked the issue of transport to the township’s expropriation, proclaimed, “We must walk for months to save the township.”¹⁰¹ Alfred E. P. Fish also embraced the supporters. Fish was a founding member of the Alexandra Tenants Association, and according to socialite and property owner J. P. Mngoma, “he was always in the thickest fight against enslavement

¹⁰⁰ Modikwe Dikobe, “We Shall Walk,” in Belinda Bozzoli (ed), p. 104.

¹⁰¹ “Victory for African Workers,” *Guardian*, August 12, 1943.

of his people.”¹⁰² Mngoma described Fish as an unselfish and undaunted leader, who in no uncertain terms, openly stated his opposition to increased fares, the inequity of the flat fare despite distances traveled while advocating for the replacement of White drivers by Africans.¹⁰³ Additionally Fish advocated for the bus conglomerate to transfer ownership over to the Health Committee, and gave the guarantee that the residents were prepared to pay a tax to cover the cost of buying out the operators.¹⁰⁴

Fish joined the masses that stopped traffic from Corlett Drive to Louis Botha Avenue. Fish’s outstretched arms embraced the ebb and flow of approximately 10,000 to 12,000 people that filed behind him. *Bantu World* photographers captured smartly dressed men and women donning an assorted array of suits, full-length dresses, wide-brimmed hats and head wraps that complimented Fish’s three piece vested suit and top hat. White lapel badges inscribed “We pay 4d” further embellished the fashion ensemble.¹⁰⁵ Walkers marched with other noticeable differences. Male participants armed themselves with knobkerries (canes) while females carried towel-strapped children on their backs or heavy bundles of wash on their heads. Knobkerries symbolized a fashion accessory but they also represented protection, and a form of masculinity. Female participants immortalized their roles as mothers and laborers, with their backs servicing as metaphorical wombs.

Alexandrans immortalized the 1943 bus boycott in other ways besides registering their complaints by refusing to patronize the buses. Residents wrote down their impressions while others such as Dr. Alfred B. Xuma maintained an archive of these

¹⁰² “Alexandra’s Loss,” *Inkululeko*, August 1946.

¹⁰³ “Bus Service at Alexandra at Standstill: Natives Refuse to Pay Higher Fare,” *Star*, August 3, 1943.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ “Bus Service at Alexandra.”

extant documents. Featured in the Xuma Papers are twenty-two pages of deposition submitted to the Beardmore Commission of Enquiry.¹⁰⁶ Six panel members determined the reasonableness of the fares charged, the passengers' ability to afford bus services, and the public transport's suitability.¹⁰⁷ The all-White male body interviewed more than 192 witnesses from August 1943 to January 1944. The Alexandra Women's League (AWL), the African National Congress, the Johannesburg Section of the Fourth International (JSFI), and the Alexandra Health Committee were the respondents.

The Alexandra Women's League and the African National Congress provide extensive knowledge about the transport service, patrons' experiences, and proposed resolutions. The Alexandra Women's League highlighted issues that specifically addressed women, while also discussing generic problems such as the inability to pay fares. The African National Congress, by contrast, focused more on the fiscal profile of the bus company and its relationship to increased fares. The comparative analysis of these submissions sheds light on how political organizations having different foci produced history while Xuma maintained an archive for posterity.

Memorandums Sent to the Beardmore Commission: the Alexandra Women's League

On 4 July 1943 an unidentified correspondent from *Inkululeko*, a widely read Communist Party newspaper, while covering Alexandra's laborers, mentioned the Alexandra Women's League, group of factory workers, housewives, and domestics

¹⁰⁶ The Beardmore Commission was a six member panel charged by the government with the responsibility of investigating bus operations in Pretoria, Vereeniging, and the Witwatersrand. Members of the Beardmore Commission included those professionals: Chairman E. Beardmore; former Attorney General J. D. Rheinalt Jones; a Senator in the Orange Free State, A. P. Brugman; a chartered accountant, S. J. Bezuidenhout; a businessman, S. C. Quinlan, a public prosecutor and L. Meyer; Secretary; member of the Native Affairs Department.

¹⁰⁷ "Commission on Native Bus Services," *Rand Daily Mail*, August 19, 1943.

formed the Alexandra Women's League in the wake of the 1943 bus boycott. There is little extant information about this organization, besides these two sources; the *Inkululeko* article, which originally appeared in Sesotho and the League's three-page memorandum dated 7 August 1943. While these sources shed insight on history of the Alexandra Women's League it still leaves many questions unanswered. Informants and the *Inkululeko* correspondent said little about the organization's objectives or how the body may have intended to work with other existing political organizations such as the African National Congress or the Daughters of Africa.¹⁰⁸

In the Alexandra Women's League memorandum of 1943, the body immediately set the tone and temperament with its introductory paragraph. They presented their difficulties concerning transport services by underscoring the inferior position they held as women:

Usually women are considered less important than in nearly all spheres of life, but we are not sure that placing women . . . in this position is well . . . founded. We therefore herein present our difficulties in connection with the abovementioned transport services. . .¹⁰⁹

Four paragraphs introduced the diverse body and the constituency it represented. No individual names appeared in the document; instead the women chose to identify with their occupational category as factory workers, housekeepers, washerwomen and domestics. They wrote:

Many of us are employed at the factories. When we leave our homes to go to work we are just in a hurry to get there as anybody else. Under the present circumstances it is not uncommon to arrive late at work and

¹⁰⁸ "Basebetsi oa Alexandra (Workers of Alexandra), *Inkululeko* July 4, 1963.

¹⁰⁹ Alexandra Women's League, "Features of the Grievances Regarding the Passenger Transport Operating between Alexandra Township and the City of Johannesburg," compiled by the Alexandra Women's League especially presenting the Women's case, Xuma Papers ABX 430711c (date and suffix). Hereafter referred to as the Alexandra Women's League, Features of the Women's Grievances.

at the end of the week receive our pay less the time owing to the inadequacy of the bus service. It is indeed a sad position that while it is known that we need our few pennies so badly we should be deprived of earning them by the inadequacy of the bus services.¹¹⁰

To compensate for the insufficient service, housekeepers left for work early, and washerwomen often carried an additional five to ten pieces of laundry home.¹¹¹

Washerwomen earned monthly wages ranging between 5d and 2s 10d from which they deducted travel expenses plus the cost of supplies. Charwomen, launderers who washed on employers' premises, earned much less than washerwomen 3s and still incurred a monthly expense of at least 1s 6d for travel.¹¹² These figures do not take into account double trips. Residents often boarded buses headed to Johannesburg and remained seated only to pay an additional fare for travel to Alexandra. These women had to insure that they would obtain additional seats to bring home extra laundry that would allow them a living wage.

Inadequate bus services were reflected in dangerous boarding procedures. Passengers boarded buses while queue marshals failed to contain crowds. The Alexandra Women's League confessed, "some of us have already gotten injured limbs and ribs trying to run for the buses and squeezing in with the men."¹¹³ This life and death struggle created a situation whereby the fastest and the strongest member enjoyed the privilege of conveyance. After describing the chaotic situation, the Alexandra Women's League lamented, "Imagine then the position of a woman."¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 2.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Bus Commission Report, p. 2.

¹¹³ Alexandra Women's League, "Feature of the Grievances," p. 2.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

Men often overpowered women, children, and the elderly to forge their way to the front of the line. Insufficient speed and strength often caused these women to miss the sporadically appearing buses. Max, a South African White whose family name is lost to history, served as a bus conductor for ten years and a dispatcher for another five. He corroborated the description given by the Alexandra Women's League. Terminal service was so disorderly Max recalled that many patrons jumped on moving buses, with a large number dying or injuring themselves from unsuccessful attempts to squeeze through the windows.¹¹⁵

Despite their official status as company employees, bus drivers tried to reverse business and cultural trends. A minority of sympathetic drivers consciously drove past male commuters to allow women and back strapped or walking children hassle-free boarding. While females acknowledged and appreciated this unofficial practice their memorandum reveals that they also understood the perils involved to the bus operators, who ran the risk of losing their jobs if they repeatedly continued their practice.¹¹⁶ Whatever reason guided the bus drivers' actions, the courtesy extended to women discriminated against male passengers, whose alleged aggressiveness represented their only voice. Even when the Alexandra Women's League offered a resolution they did not include men. Instead they wrote:

It is not a difficult thing of putting, especially at peak hours, many buses . . . [reserved for] . . . women only (a number estimated to cope with the women's demand). [We request these buses even] if the men must be left to break their limbs. . . struggling [to] . . . occup[y] . . . space[s] in each given bus. One finds a queue of buses at the rank all empty except the first one. . . They prevent people from occupying them because the first one has not yet loaded and left the rank. What

¹¹⁵ Statement of Evidence of Max, a Bus Conductor of Ten Years Standing and a Bus Dispatcher for Five Years, Xuma Papers ABX 430711b.

¹¹⁶ Alexandra Women's League, "Features of the Grievances," p. 2.

evil would come if [they allowed the people] to occupy at the sametime [sic] all the buses at the rank at any given time?¹¹⁷

This proposal is important for understanding how women viewed the boarding process and how they found it necessary to request a women's only bus. Although Africans and Coloureds rode the buses together, the Alexandra' Women's League saw it necessary to enforce a policy of gender segregation. Women League members explained how inadequate bus services affected their livelihoods and incomes. This proposal and the memorandum shows that Alexandra's diverse female populace, offered suggestions for long term improvements, therefore riding the buses meant more than an means to attain transport for employment, it also encompassed health issues and passenger safety. Unlike the Women's Brigade, a group of churchwomen and beer brewers, which wanted (or so it seemed) to change company policy.

The importance of showing these different strategies is to illustrate that Alexandra's female populace was not monolithic in their ideology or how they intellectualized resistance. The Alexandra's Women's League played an important role in registering grievances specifically related to women, which Xuma acknowledges, but the female bus patrons was not his primary concern. Xuma used his opportunity as ANC President-General to bring attention to the economic disparities that existed between Africans and Whites. His treatise unlike the Alexandra Women's League focused on the inability of passengers to pay the extra penny and the bus company's capitalization of an economically vulnerable clientele. Although Xuma failed to appear before a public gathering at the Number 2 Square on behalf of the bus boycott, and other organizations

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 3.

assumed the leadership role, it is evident from his personal papers that he privately endorsed the bus boycott.¹¹⁸

The African National Congress

Xuma used a large portion of his seven-page treatise as if he was trying a case before a court of law. He used the opportunity to lay out lucidly articulated argument in the court of public opinion which had indicted the Bus Owners, the defendants, on charges of extortion. Alexandra's vulnerable commuting populace represented the plaintiffs and Xuma their prosecuting attorney. Each page of the memorandum exposed the company's spending practices, and evidence of a steady and consistent flow of commuters. Xuma's argument was simple: increases in transport costs were unwarranted.¹¹⁹ Former bus company employee, J. B. Marks corroborated Xuma's argument, when he stood before a Noord Street audience and declared that during the five years that he kept the company's financial records, all routes showed a surplus in profits except one.¹²⁰

Apparently, the monopoly was making a profit from the fare structure, but how much was impossible to tell with any accuracy. Residents reduced to relying on circumstantial evidence observed the monopoly's pre bus boycott acquisitions and drew the obvious conclusion. Eight new bus inspectors hired by the Alexandra Bus Owners Association joined an existing staff of fifteen. Bus inspectors insured that conductors maintained accurate and consistent waybills or documents that bus drivers used to record

¹¹⁸ President-General African National Congress Memorandum to the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Operation of Bus Services for Non-Europeans on the Witwatersrand and in the Districts of Pretoria and Vereeniging, Xuma Papers ABX 43071 Id, p. 2. Hereafter referred to as the President-General African National Congress Memorandum.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Alfred Stadler, "A Long Way to Walk: Bus Boycotts in Alexandra, 1940-1945," in Phil Bonner (ed). *Working Papers in Southern African Studies*, (1981), pp. 233-234.

passenger counts. These new employees drew yearly uniform allowances in addition to weekly salaries. Weekly salaries ranged from £5.15.0d (\$28.75) to £6.11.0d (\$31.32).¹²¹ Xuma questioned the monopoly's decision to hire new employees; "Is it conceivable that a losing business would embark on such an expensive luxury in extra employees?"¹²² The Alexandra Women's League echoed Xuma's sentiment, "We find it difficult to believe. These are hard-headed [sic] business men who have taken up the service for profit. It is incredible that they should incur this extra expense for the fun of it. They must be making some profit."¹²³

Table 2
Employees' Yearly Salaries

	Wages in Pounds	Wages in Dollars
Eight Inspectors	£2,933.12s.0d	\$14,658.00
Four Inspectors	£1,310. 8s.0d	\$ 6,566.00
2 Office Assistants	£ 240. 0s.0d	\$ 1,200.00
Uniforms	£ 150.0s.0d	\$ 600.00
Controller's Salary	£ 600.0s.0d	\$ 3,000.00
Seven Despatchers [sic]	£1,118.0s.0d	\$ 5,590.00

The African National Congress leader also noted other signs of company affluence. The cartel moved their Alexandra headquarters to a plush suite of offices in neighboring Wynberg, where monthly rental incurred an expense of \$25.¹²⁴ An influx of new passengers during the Second World War generated additional revenue as women assumed positions in war industries and factories, and bicyclists increasingly resorted to

¹²¹ President-General African National Congress Memorandum, p. 4.

¹²² Ibid, appendix, 8-10.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p. 6.

using the buses when tires became too scarce and expensive.¹²⁵ With no competing transit (private taxis or other buses) or a railway line, the Alexandra Bus Owners Association became the sole beneficiary of increased commuters. Cartel members now had a steady and reliable clientele that helped them to offset expenditures. Despite these increases in passenger numbers, Xuma cited eighty-seven instances of bus operator's overloading. Over a four day period, his observations included jotting down bus numbers, license plates, tabulation of trips made and passengers per bus. The chart shows how the bus drivers exceeded the regulated capacity limit by twenty-one, thirteen and fifteen people.¹²⁶

Table 3

Samples of Xuma's Notations			
Bus No.	Date	Total Trips	People Per Trip Avg.
T. J. 25777	26 th August 1943	56 (all buses)	77
T. J. 53652	26 th August 1943	56 (all buses)	70
T. J. 25777	26 th August 1943	56 (all buses)	72

Further evidence came from the Alexandra Emergency Transport Committee (AETC) which accused bus drivers of maintaining inaccurate waybills. Bus inspectors divided waybills into two sections entitled "On" and "Off," and analyzed the waybills by cross-checking written figures with the numbers given verbally by bus drivers. Inspectors then initialed the official papers and recorded the passenger counts in their own notebooks.¹²⁷ Tallying was done so sporadically that conductors repeatedly exceeded the capacity of fifty-two people seated with another three people standing. Five people often occupied seats originally constructed to hold three comfortably. Violations

¹²⁵ Memorandum Representing the Residents of Alexandra Township, pp. 2-3.

¹²⁶ ANC President-General Memorandum, appendix.

¹²⁷ No author specified. "Method of Check Number of Passengers on Buses," Xuma Papers, undated.

occurred without being officially recorded, and the bus company failed to deter this illegal practice of “doubling up” passengers.

The Alexandra Women’s League and the African National Congress presented resolutions that sought long term improvements for the welfare of the black nation. In an article submitted to *Bantu World*, Lillian Tshabalala, founder of the Daughters of Africa, shared her views on what the Black nation represented. Tshabalala’s nation comprised offspring who wandered in the streets, unrecognizable because of the poverty and squalor that enveloped them.¹²⁸ The only solution to remedying this problem, Tshabalala maintained, was to build the nation from the bottom up.

Women, Tshabalala argued, had the capacity to either build or destroy the nation as cultural bearers, but males also had the power to sabotage. Male ideology was essentially patriarchal. While Xuma observed Christian rites, and aspired to modernity, his ideologies contained contradictions.¹²⁹ He supported traditional values, men as breadwinners, and women as homemakers with the reality that women had to work to support their families. Despite vacillating between male chauvinism and equality, his memorandum showed evidence of gender neutral ideas.

Instead of focusing upon women, Xuma made an attempt to include both sexes and to chart out a plan that encouraged the development of both men and women. For example, he proposed resolutions such as a national minimum wage that sought to enhance the economic well-being of Africans. He also advocated for a staged fare structure or tariff reduction or maintenance of the existing fares. Information gathered by the Alexandra Health Committee supports Xuma’s suggestion. In Orlando, a

¹²⁸ “What is a Nation?” *Bantu World*, February 3, 1940.

¹²⁹ Natasha Erlank, “Gender and Masculinity in South African Nationalist Discourse, 1912-1950,” *Feminist Studies*, 29, 3 (Fall 2003), pp. 654-656.

southwestern Johannesburg township, residents paid less in bus tariffs despite the fact that Alexandra and Orlando were equidistant from the municipality of Johannesburg. Orlandans purchased tickets at the price of 1.1s.9d (\$5.43) for a three-month period, which saved them at least \$1.81 on the Alexandran rate.¹³⁰ Purchasing coupon books gave Orlandans the option of saving by paying a one-time fee for several rides, rather than surrendering payment on a daily basis for two rides (or sometimes more if laborers retraced their steps to secure seats on overcrowded buses). Given that Alexandra lacked a coupon system equivalent to the Orlando system, it is understandable why Xuma proposed staged tariffs to curb travel costs. Moreover, passengers could save money if they disembarked at bus stops in Orange Grove or Bramley, places neighboring Alexandra, rather than continuing a much longer distance to Johannesburg's city center.

Most important Xuma argued that transport should be affordable or commensurate to the wages earned. To solve this problem, Xuma proposed that the government create a standard minimum wage whereby all unskilled workers regardless of sex earn a weekly salary of 2. 10s. 0d (\$11.50). Minimum wages would prevent employers from randomly imposing employees' salaries and would also guarantee a salary commensurate with the services rendered. Xuma further elaborated his argument for economic empowerment when he discussed the lack of positions offered to Africans in the transport industry. Xuma proposed the hiring of Africans as attendants, inspectors, and drivers. The employment of Africans in this section was so scarce that

¹³⁰ Memo of Evidence Presented by the Alexandra Health Committee, Notice NO. 1535, Xuma Papers, ABX 430711c.

one resident Peter Fox, only remembered four African bus drivers and one queue marshal, Lillian Tshabalala, during the early 1940s.¹³¹

While the ideas of the political organization differed, a common thread wove them together. Alexandra's dwellers shouldered the costs of residential segregation and yet, government officials did nothing to subsidize transport. Instead, private monopolies operated to generate profits and its economically vulnerable clientele sank deeper into a financial abyss. Xuma, and the Alexandra Women's League asserted that transferring existing services over to the township's Health Committee or to a public utility association would do one of two things. The government would absorb the costs that a private transit enterprise ran the risk of incurring and transferring over to its clientele; additionally money could be generated and recycled to improve the community's infrastructure or to provide residents with jobs. At least their proposals did not fall on deaf ears.

Following the conclusion of the 1944 bus strike, conglomerate members transferred ownership to a public utility corporation. The three-month affair resulted in fare restoration, and the installation of turnstiles which improved conditions at the Noord Street terminal.¹³² Changes within the transport system occurred because of the memorandums that organizations such as the Alexandra Women's League and the African National Congress drafted. These two bodies engaged in a dialectical conversation about the state of the African economy when they linked local issues to a national agenda that typically overlooked the welfare of Africans. Nation building only applied to Europeans and not the populace they subjected, but Xuma and the Alexandra

¹³¹ Peter Fox, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, May 12, 2002.

¹³² "Turnstiles at Noord Street Terminus," *Bantu World*, November 4, 1944.

Women's League made the issue their concern. Xuma and the Alexandra Women's League deconstructed the notion of nation using the economy, and personal safety to make their argument.

Because Xuma advocated on behalf of the black nation his proposals were not gender specific. Instead he focuses on issues that affected Africans as a whole. Lack of standardized wages, inequity in the transport industry, and increased fares inhibited the growth of the black nation because Africans did not possess the needed currency to elevate themselves from poverty. Xuma, therefore wanted to create a solvent community not one bankrupted from working. The Alexandra Women's League, by contrast, crossed permeable gender boundaries to put forth female-centered politics and pre-feminist ideas but also sentiments of proto-nationalism. By focusing on women and the problems that they encountered while riding the buses, the Alexandra Women League immortalized the experiences of African women and public transport. In discussing the ferocious scramble at the bus terminals, the Alexandra Women's League painted a graphic picture of bus riding conditions. Men appeared in the document as aggressors and women as their unwilling victims. Each sex transferred their private domestic roles to the public sphere. For example, males asserted their dominance through manhandling. Robert Morrell explains the significance of this transference, he writes:

in particular moments and settings . . . men may experience exclusion, but for much of their lives, they will live under the umbrella of hegemonic masculinity by exerting their physical and institutional powers in the workplace, the family and in dealings with men.¹³³

¹³³ Robert Morrell, "Of Boys and Men: Masculinity and Gender in Southern African Studies," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24, 4 (December 1988), pp. 610.

Male and female bus patrons tried to transform the public sphere into the private one where they dominated. Aside from using the memorandum to express their grievances the Alexandra Women's League, used gender to advocate for special privileges. Requesting a separate bus for women suggests that members of the Alexandra Women's League were proto-feminists. These women advocated for gender equality during the height of patriarchy or male dominance. Women called for resolutions that sought to protect them as mothers and laborers. Within the realm of transportation, men and women found a new terrain from which to assert their authority and influence and to challenge each other.

The 1946-1947 Alexandra Squatters' Movement

Background

A population explosion of unemployed, homeless, and poorly paid migrants converged upon the Rand towards the end of and following the Second World War. From 1944 to 1947 approximately 63,000 to 92,000 people flooded into Johannesburg from the Eastern Cape, the Northwest Province, the Natal Province, and the Transvaal.¹³⁴ They found vacant land and squatted. Squatters littered land with tents, cinder block homes, and scraps of corrugated iron, Hessian, and cardboard. These makeshift settlements appeared most visibly in Soweto, Benoni, Alberton, and Alexandra, areas situated to the southwest, east and north of the metropolis.

While Philip Bonner and Alfred Stadler provide a macroscopic examination of the six squatters' movements in 1940s Johannesburg, their studies focus on Orlando, and

¹³⁴ Alfred Stadler, "Birds in the Cornfield: Squatter Movements in Johannesburg, 1944-1947," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 6, 1 (1979), p. 93.

Benoni with other townships such as townships such as Alexandra treated as tangential.¹³⁵ Alexandra was a significant spoke in the wheel of land dispossession and excessive poverty, yet the township's contribution to this movement remains fully unexplored. Like Soweto's squatters' movement, Alexandra's contribution to the housing struggle offers the opportunity to explore the issue of space, power, and gender dynamics within a confined area.

Before these urban migrants temporarily settled in Alexandra, they wandered from place to place. They shifted spaces setting up "homes" in white suburbia, in freehold Alexandra, in municipally controlled Orlando, and then back to almost administrative free Alexandra. Unlike previous evictions, the Johannesburg City Council intervened when Schreiner Baduza, a burglar shop owner and President of the Bantu Tenants Association, and his entourage settled in Soweto and unilaterally decided that these squatters who represented gardeners, domestics, factory workers, and unemployed people, should occupy Alexandra's three public squares. Squatter leader Baduza organized the squatters' movement with the assistance of Marks Rammitloa, Lucas Bokaba, and Abner Kunene, who respectively served as camp secretary, treasurer, and magistrate. Together the quartet commanded approximately 10,000 to 30,000 people who comprised single individuals and families.¹³⁶

The squatters' movement represented spatially defined resistance for the following reasons. Leader Schreiner Baduza used the public squares to create a territory within a territory. The squatters reversed power relations with Alexandra. Alexandra

¹³⁵ Philip Bonner, "The Politics of Black Squatter Movements on the Rand, 1944-1952," *Radical History Review*, 46/7 (1990), p. 94, and Stadler, "Birds in the Cornfield," pp. 93-95.

¹³⁶ Olive Schreiner, *The People Overflow: The Story of the Johannesburg Shanty Towns*, pamphlet, 1947, p. 46.

initially represented a liminal space surrounded by affluent white residential areas. However, the spatial configurations changed when Alexandra assumed dominance over the illegal squatter settlement. Alexandra boasted 64,000 people while at their crescendo the squatter camps peaked at 30,000 people.

Alexandra's squatters' movement began in November 1946 and ended in June 1947, when the government established an emergency camp twenty miles away in Moroka, a southwestern Johannesburg township. The presence of the squatters within Alexandra reversed traditional power relations. Alexandra originally represented a liminal space as a "black island in a white sea," however; power was inverted when Baduza used the squares to create a territory within a territory. Alexandra became the dominant space and the squares the subordinate areas.

Squatters received anything but a hero's welcome. Opposition came from official circles and ordinary citizens. An AHC representative stated, "they dumped the squatters on the township's doorstep."¹³⁷ Two women's organizations registered their complaints. The Alexandra Township Council of Women (ATCW) threatened to occupy sports fields in Johannesburg until the squatters left while the Alexandra Women's League greeted the Native Affairs Commission with chants and jeers when they left the Health Committee's offices following a January 1947 meeting to discuss the squatters.¹³⁸ Other organizations such as the Alexandra General Council (AGC), the Alexandra Standholder's Protection and Vigilance Association, and the Alexandra Coloured Associated Association (ACAA) chose to submit a formal written complaint which read:

¹³⁷ J. Dunston, Alexandra Liaison Committee, *Alexandra, I Love You: A Record of Seventy Years*, (Johannesburg: Alexandra Liaison Committee, 1984), p. 21.

¹³⁸ "First Family Moved to New Emergency Camp for Natives," *Star*, April 25, 1947, and "Threaten to Squat on Sports Fields," *Daily Dispatch*, January 1, 1947.

Since the Alexandra Township does not fall under the jurisdiction of the local authority of Johannesburg, and it is not within the power of the City Council to invoke the recently-promulgated emergency regulations in respect of the squatters in Alexandra, and Alexandra squatters were not prepared to avail themselves of the facilities offered. We therefore there should be no further negotiation on consultations with people who have usurped the law, taking illegal possession of our two public squares.¹³⁹

This formal complaint addresses the jurisdiction of power between the Johannesburg City Council and the Alexandra Health Committee. It discusses the unilateral decision by the Johannesburg City Council to allow the squatters the opportunity to squat on Alexandra's two public squares. While these groups broached other topics, they also raised the issue of legality and its undermining. Such an action challenged the notion of public and its meaning. For example, the squares belonged to all who inhabited Alexandra, yet this changed when the squatters erected makeshift shanties, and declared the area a separate territory within Alexandra. The area then became a private space, meaning that only the squatter leader allowed group members to participate in activities held in the public squares.

The Creation of a Territory within a Territory

Rather than curry the favor of his squatters and encourage investment through a cooperative as James Mpanza did in Soweto, Baduza ran his encampment with an iron gauntlet. Baduza created a territory within a territory when he demarcated the squares' space, and set up a system of governance, policing, and established a social

¹³⁹ "Deputation from Alexandra Standholders Associations, Re Alexandra Township Squatters Emergency Regulations, File No 6750/313 Sanitation Files, National Archives of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.

infrastructure.¹⁴⁰ He posted civil guards, which Kunene supervised to staff the corrugated iron-fenced entrances. These guards patrolled the camps daily and nightly. Squatter erected shelters also formed a barrier along each side of the street that divided the Number 2 Square.

Squatters prevented non-members, who often faced molestation, and threats from traveling in this area especially during the evenings.¹⁴¹ Even camp residents required outside interference before Baduza allowed them to reenter the squatter territory. Caiphus Mkumise and Isaac Mosumaki left the Number 2 Square in May 1947 after citing alleged extortion, and assault against Baduza, Kunene, and Bokaba.¹⁴² While the three squatter leaders awaited trial for said charges, the two complainants, Mkumise and Mosumaki had K. D. Morgan, the Native Commissioner, make arrangements for their readmission, which was granted.¹⁴³

Baduza did other things besides staff and fence the encampment. He established official meeting times, and decided who had access to the squatters. Government officials came at times set by Baduza, and when they did not, and the meeting had failed as it had in April 1947 when the Native Commissioner K. D. Morgan came at 2 pm instead of 6 pm, the squatter leader alluded to the poor turnout. He stated, “whom did he

¹⁴⁰ Robert David Sacks, *Conceptions of Space in Social Thought: A Geographic Perspective* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1980), pp. 167-168. According to Sacks, territoriality is an attempt by an individual or group to influence or control objects, people, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area.

¹⁴¹ Letter to the Chief Native Commissioner from the Alexandra Standholders and Residents General Council, 31 March 1947. Letter to the District Commandant from Acting Native Commissioner re Alexandra Squatters, 650/313 Sanitation, National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.

¹⁴² “Squatters’ Leaders on Trial,” *Inkululeko* May 1947. The trio was remanded on fourteen counts. The prosecution dropped four counts of extortion and entered alternative counts of ‘meddling in native affairs’ and assault. While charges swarmed around camp leaders, they were ultimately acquitted.

¹⁴³ Letter to the Director of Native Labour from the Native Commissioner, April 1947, 650/313 Sanitation. National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria.

expect to address at that time-the women?"¹⁴⁴ The reason for the poor turnout as squatter resident Samuel Tshangana argued had more to do with the squatters' practice of coming out when they heard a signal sounded; whistles typically announced meetings.¹⁴⁵ Reporters were considered approved visitors, but only because Baduza and his lieutenants milked them for publicity, as he did in January 1947 when squatter camp leaders held a conference in downtown Johannesburg. Baduza used the newspapers to present the squatters' case and to explain why they chose to occupy public land. While the sources describe the unsanitary conditions that festered within the encampments and the problems the squatters' presence caused, they failed to disclose how the squatters attained food, and where those who had jobs worked.

Land within the squares was allocated by Baduza and his lieutenants by determining the squares' spatial ability.¹⁴⁶ The first makeshift structure to dot the landscape was the leaders' headquarters. The headquarters were a suite of offices strewn together by Hessian, corrugated iron, and cardboard, tied to poles constructed from wattle. The building was easily recognizable. A white banner fluttered on a sinking rooftop with blue lettering that read: "We Want Land to Build Our Homes." That seven-word phrase summed up the Bantu Tenants' Association's mantra. Baduza and his accomplices used the offices to administer social services, collect revenue, issue membership cards, and assign stands. Membership cards cost 5s per squatter resident

¹⁴⁴ "Squatters' Conference," *Bantu World*, April 26, 1947.

¹⁴⁵ "Squatters Oppose Government Scheme of Registration," *Bantu World*, April 26, 1947 and "Squatters Conference."

¹⁴⁶ Labelle Prussin, *African Nomadic Architecture: Space, Place, and Gender*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), p. 32. Spatial ability refers to how people take knowledge about space and use that information to organize and represent that knowledge about space.

plus they paid an additional weekly subscription surcharge of 1s.¹⁴⁷ Prospective square dwellers tendered payment before the leadership distributed land or numbered plates. Numbered plates identified tents and shacks situated on equal 50 x 50 feet areas.¹⁴⁸

Square settlements followed this pattern. Tents and shacks resembled staircases stacked on top of each other and stood more than a yard apart. Corners represented the most coveted locations. Their diagonal angles lent themselves to greater levels of privacy, if not the allusion of that security and maneuvering room. Most structures contained sufficient room for cooking equipment, beds or perhaps a chair, and a bucket or two. Squatters randomly placed furniture in these shacks rather than following cultural or religious beliefs that defined the position of certain household goods. Nor did these structures contain separate entrances and exits for men and women. Everyone filed in through one central weather-paned or uncovered door, and one chiseled window provided ventilation, and sunlight, which corrugated or sackcloth blinds nightly covered.

Entertainment and cultural exchange varied. Children played or formed study groups while women often sat around drinking *mareu* (a liquid milk drink) out of jam jars, while conversing.¹⁴⁹ Men sang as this *Star* reporter stated:

From inside the first shack . . . came a terrific volume of music in the vigorous rhythm of the African kraal. Men were singing as though their own voices had the power to carry them out of the desolation of Alexandra into the clean veld [sic]. Further on, but almost in competition, another group were singing songs straight out of Hollywood with the same abandon.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Correspondence between Native Commissioner and the Department of Labour, Sanitation Files, National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa, April 1947, N2/10/3 Squatters camp KJB-424.

¹⁴⁸ Primary documents do not reveal the rational squatter leaders used for configuring the measurement of land that they dispensed. The allotments differed from and were smaller than those granted in Alexandra.

¹⁴⁹ I could not find evidence of women forming squatter political or prayer groups as Bonner did with his case study of Daveyton on the East Rand. An examination of women in this capacity, would have shed greater light on the intra-gender relations that developed within the camp.

¹⁵⁰ "Squatters at Alexandra Cluster in Squalor: 7,000 Families Now Inhabit City of Sacks," *Star*, February 24, 1947.

Conversations were predominantly in Sesotho and IsiZulu, two languages that Baduza had approved as official forms of communication within the encampments.

Residents adorned their shacks with other identity markers besides the official numbered plates. Many squatter dwellers inscribed slogans or draped their Hessian and cardboard coverings over their makeshift structures. A few used paint for decoration. Squatter residents also adorned makeshift structures with signs such as “Again and Again: Butchery: Fresh Meat Everyday,” “Eat More Fish for Less,” or “Quick Service Boots and Shoes Repairs,” which advertised cottage industries while other signs such as “Beware of a Lion,” falsely announced danger. A tawny dog lurking in the cluster of shacks, whose hair stood straight up, appeared as a silhouette of a roaring lion.¹⁵¹

To accommodate squatter tenants, camp leaders appointed various people to dig extensive trench systems for the community’s use as earthen bathrooms. Both squares originally contained two pit latrines, all covered by Hessian.¹⁵² Population saturation forced diggers to excavate the earth daily to compensate for shallow subterranean spaces that filled rapidly, and the fact that they did not have access to Alexandra’s primitive sanitation system.¹⁵³ The operation consisted of nightsoil workers going around the township picking up human feces before dumping the excrement into buckets and finally into the depositing site at the graveyard, the township’s makeshift septic tank.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Mary Ramohano, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 2 February 2002.

Relations Between Alexandra Residents and the Squatters

Baduza failed to cultivate the sympathy of Alexandra residents. Squatters exacerbated strains on a dense population already scavenging for scarce resources. Water taps existed, but as the Alexandra Standholders Association pointed out the Health Committee shouldered the expense instead of the squatters. The table below shows the water usage, and its peaks and valleys over a five month period.¹⁵⁴

Table 4		
Water Usage by Squatters		
Account Number	Date	Usage
4081	January, 1947	£79.18.3d
4083	February, 1947	£88. 1. 0d
4085	March, 1947	£97.16.9d
4086	April, 1947	£88.10.9d
4089	May 1947	£95. 0.9d

From January to March squatters increased their monthly water supply. This change in usage reflected the inclusion of a larger population within the encampment. Usage tapered off between March and April only to ascend again in May, the month before the government decided to create an emergency camp in Moroka, Soweto. Water was as valuable a resource as the taps which served hundreds of people in Alexandra, yet, we do not know how squatter leaders rationed off the resource. It is also unknown whether or not squatters incurred a charge even though the Alexandra Health Committee shouldered the financial burden. In other words, how was water used as a political tool to mobilize or punish residents? Furthermore, was the water used by the squatter residents taking

¹⁵⁴ Letter to Magistrate from Secretary Treasurer; re: Water Account Squatters Camps Nos 2 and 3 Squares, Alexandra Township, undated, 650/313 Sanitation, National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.

away from other Alexandrans? If that was in fact the case, it partially explains the animosity that Alexandrans harbored against the squatters.

Property owners also opposed squatter leaders who kept township rooms while living in the Shantytown and refusing to pay rent. Revenue loss similarly affected the Health Committee and stallholders. Stallholders rented space at the Saturday Markets where they sold goods, but because the squatters occupied the Number 2 Square, the commercial activity ceased, so reducing the Health Committee's revenue and the entrepreneurs' incomes.¹⁵⁵

Financial losses paled in comparison to the presence of disease that loomed over this shanty town. An unidentified medical doctor working in the "foul" and "ripe" squatter camps discussed exposure but limited the range of diseases to enteric, typhoid, and smallpox.¹⁵⁶ Inspections occurred routinely, with evaluators noting overflowing rubbish, stench filled air, and massive overpopulation in a small densely packed area. Physicians immunized residents but not all consented to receive vaccinations.

On some occasions during their medical rounds, squatter leaders attacked physicians and prevented them from carrying out their duties. J. M. Ntintle, Chairman of the Alexandra General Council, admitted to the police that he knew of other cases where Alexandra residents had endured assault and battery at the hands of squatters.¹⁵⁷ Confirmed reports of attacks committed by squatter police included: attacking a car,

¹⁵⁵ Letter from Native Commissioner K. D. Morgan to Secretary of Labour, 27 June 1946, 650/313 Sanitation, National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.

¹⁵⁶ Mike Sarakinsky, "From 'freehold' to 'model' Township, p. 4.

¹⁵⁷ Letter to the Director of Native Labour from K. D. Morgan, Native Commissioner, March 31, 1947. Alexandra Township Lawlessness Amongst Squatters, File No. 353/13, Sanitation, Alexandra Township, National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa. The document which included the information made no citations except, J. P. Mngoma, a local socialite and leader but that rumor was never substantiated.

harassing a man for his pass and money, brandishing sjamboks, and stoning people.¹⁵⁸

Tensions mounted so much so that the government ultimately had to make emergency plans, and form a temporary camp twenty miles from Alexandra. Relocation of squatters was an orderly process that began on 24 June 1947.

Formation of an Emergency Camp, June 1947

Relocation meant that squatters adhered to specific guidelines. Health officials screened prospective tenants before allocating a tract of land in Moroka. Membership in the emergency camp had its privileges. Entry fees cost 15s plus another 20s for monthly rent.¹⁵⁹ Squatters refused to accept the City Council's plan and failed to cooperate initially with the exception of four families who left. Baduza chimed in with an explanation for the small turnout:

The squatters cannot accept the Nazi Plan which has been hatched by the city Council. They have not been asked for their opinion. They are expressing their rejection of it by the only means open to them- by refraining from co-operation to implement it.¹⁶⁰

A caricature of the emergency camp appeared in the pages of the CPSA's *Inkululeko*. Figure shows a caption which reads: "Squatters reject Nazi Rules," which refers to the repressive national government and the problems and controversies borne by Hitler's Nazi Germany during the Second World War and the manner in which the South African government administered the country. The cartoon shows a main building where possibly prospective tenants tendered their fees, along with two signs advertising plots for sale with a wooden fence barricading the area. Displayed signs foretell prohibitive

¹⁵⁸ The Assistant Health Officer to Secretary of Health, undated, File No. 353/13, Sanitation, Alexandra Township.

¹⁵⁹ "Important Statement on Johannesburg Housing," *Bantu World*, April 26, 1947.

¹⁶⁰ "Squatters Reject Nazi Rules," *Inkululeko*, May 1947.

warnings such as “No Trespassing,” “No Houses,” “No Dogs,” “No Agitators,” “No Hawkers,” “No Democracy,” and “No Bachelors.” From the signage it appeared that the government encouraged family dwelling and discouraged permanent housing structures, political resistance, and street peddling. Two diametrical opposite posts stood almost symmetrically apart, one read “Keep In”, the other “Keep Out.” To insure that only residents lived within the compound, guards checked permits upon each entry and exit. Permits were required of residents as visitation was prohibited.¹⁶¹ The rules of this encampment mirrored that of Baduza’s territory within a territory because each place segregated residents. Some differences did exist between the two spaces. Baduza did not prohibit squatter members from owning pets nor did he discourage settlement by single occupants or family members unlike the Moroka camp which only sought to include families rather than single individuals.

Segregation meant more than race, it also connoted marital status, age and employed status. Officials divided tenants into groups of unemployed residents, established Johannesburg workers, people employed in Alexandra and the elderly. Four sites served as places for relocation’ Elandsdoorn, Moroka, Hammanskraal, and Klipspruit.¹⁶² Native Commissioner K. D. Morgan ordered that elderly community members move to Elandsdoorn, but he cited no reason for the selection of this site in his Report, although there were distinctions based on age, and employment status. Some squatters returned to Alexandra, while those that moved to Moroka inherited four-room match box houses, which stretched 20 x 20 feet from the nearest neighbor.¹⁶³ Moroka residents had main roads that stretched 100 feet wide, secondary streets 50 feet wide, and

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² A temporary emergency camp was set aside in Klipspruit to accommodate 20,000 families.

¹⁶³ “New Laws Will End All Uncontrolled Squatting,” *Umteteli wa Bantu*, March 15, 1947.

rows of houses situated within lanes of ten feet.¹⁶⁴ The 225 squatter families that were sent to Klipspruit occupied a former farm site, and were provided as were Moroka's residents, with standpipes for water and sanitary facilities.¹⁶⁵

Morgan kept tabulated figures of squatters:¹⁶⁶

Table 5 Pattern of Dispersal Among Squatters	
(a) Accepted by Municipality	4
(b) Returned to Alexandra Township	47
(c) Removed to Hammanskraal	55
(d) Repatriated	3
(e) Absconded	17
(f) Balance in Transit Camp	85
Total:	211

Repatriation possibly referred to dwellers whose district of origin was not Johannesburg. Fifty-five Defence Department vehicles transported the squatters for a total of 99,912 miles at an average of 3,300.4 miles per truck at a cost of £623.15.11.¹⁶⁷ From mid June to mid July, the government had moved 1,788 squatter families, of which the municipality accepted 1,499 and moved to the transit camp, with three subordinate squatter leaders receiving accommodation in Orlando.¹⁶⁸ A remaining 279 squatter families stayed in Alexandra until government officials decided where to place them. Baduza reluctantly moved to Hammanskraal and submitted a written complaint in English to the *Star* which consumed an entire column. Baduza discussed the fact that leaders sought relocation before the squatters. Another problem Baduza mentioned was

¹⁶⁴ "Better than Squatting at Alexandra," *Umteteli wa Bantu*, June 14, 1947.

¹⁶⁵ Squatting in Urban Areas, Letter to the Director of Native Labour from K. D. Morgan, File No. 80/313S, May 22, 1947, National Archives Repository, Pretoria.

¹⁶⁶ Letter from K. D. Morgan, Native Commissioner to the Director of Native Labour, Sanitation File. August 25, 1947.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Letter to Director of Natives Labour from K. D. Morgan, Native Affairs Commissioner, July 30, 1947, File No. 650/313 Sanitation Files.

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his relocation to Hammanskraal, something that he considered a breach of faith by the Johannesburg City Council because he applied for residency in Moroka.¹⁶⁹ Other squatters registered a complaint. Relocated squatters living in Moroka waged a protest against the monthly rental fees.¹⁷⁰ Little is known about the squatters that had rooms in Alexandra or what happened to Baduza other than he passed away in 1978.

The Alexandra squatters' movement showed how ordinary citizens without the assistance of the African National Congress brought the attention of the housing problem to national circles. Baduza and his entourage challenged the state, and created a separate territory replete with its own governance, police force, and official languages. The squares in which the squatters inhabited mirrored Alexandra yet Baduza in the interest of his constituency engaged in a policy of segregation and containment. Because Baduza used Alexandra's two public squares to create a territory within a territory, the sequestration provided the opportunity to discuss physical space differently than previously analyzed.

Instead of the split being between Africans and Whites, Baduza fomented tensions between and among Africans and Coloureds. This inter-racial tension created a different power structure, which inverted Alexandra's status as a marginal site to a place of dominance, with the squares serving as the subordinate or liminal spaces within the township. Squatters rivaled residents in Alexandra because they created an alternate and parallel space while using the public arena to bring national attention to the plight of the homeless, and the economically burdened tenant. This protest similarly brought attention to the problems plaguing Alexandra. Lack of housing, sewage, and water were the

¹⁶⁹ "Task of Clearing Second Squatters' Camp at Alexandra Begun," *Star* June 30, 1947.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

primary concerns besetting the township. In short, the Alexandra squatters' movement highlighted the interface between two subordinate groups that vied for power within a confined area. These groups interacted within a racially segregated township that was inextricably linked to the cities and also divided from them.

While newspaper accounts documented Alexandra's squatters' movement, film played a role in preserving the township's physical and cultural landscape. Film producer Donald Swanson featured Alexandra in "The Magic Garden" which he produced in 1951. This musical comedy showcased the penny whistling talents of Williard Cele. In Alexandra, penny whistling traces its roots to the Alexandra Scots (which later became the Alexandra Highlanders), a group formed in the 1940s which Cele was a member before he opted for a solo career. Cele's decision was based on the fact that he "wanted to play something hotter, jazzier."¹⁷¹ "The Magic Garden" provided that opportunity. While traveling in Alexandra, Swanson heard Cele play and immediately stopped his car to greet the artist, whom he granted a co-starring role.¹⁷² In the film, Cele is seen gallivanting all around the township while playing his penny whistle. While this film focuses upon stolen money which ends up in several hands, the cinematographic feat historicizes the township. It depicts Alexandra in its natural state with sloping hills, and earthen streets. Swanson shows township life with Sunday church services, a wedding, a

¹⁷¹ Nathaniel Nakasa, "Penny Whistle is Big Time Now," *Drum Magazine*, May 1958: April 1956, p. 26. David Coplan, *In Township Tonight!*, p. 156. Coplan traces the origin of penny whistling to the 19th century observer account written in 1812 by W. J. Burchell who while exploring the Western Transvaal, witnessed Tswana playing reed pipes or *lithaka*. The Zulus had their own flageolet called the *umtshingo* which young herd boys carried to call their cattle to signal other boys. Because *umtshingo* lacked holes, users opened and stopped the end of the tube with a finger. Then they varied the wind pressure to create partials of four or twelve of a harmonic series. These early instruments were later superseded in urban areas by penny whistles. In the cities, the low cost 6 to 8 shillings, durability and expanded technical possibilities of the six-hole penny whistle made it a natural successor to the *umtshingo*.

¹⁷² Nathaniel Nakasa, "Penny Whistle is Big Time Now," p. 26.

funeral, and business transactions between a store owner and his customers, and also with a money lender and a borrower.

Although Swanson paints a picture of Alexandra within the 1950s, this film does not portray or explain the historical time period in which this movie was made nor does it discuss the impact of apartheid and the Nationalist Party which came to power in 1948 and how that influenced what transpired in Alexandra. Instead, viewers wonder what role Cele had besides serving as a musical narrator. Cele used his penny whistle to speak to the audience rather than his own voice, which shows the significance of an instrument to the development of the story line, but it does not explain the instrument's relationship to the plot or its history.¹⁷³

Swanson shows township unity when a thief commits several crimes and dwellers chase him in hopes of retrieving the stolen item. While Swanson shows crime within the township he does not explore its full potential. Instead, the film discounts the importance of history and the fact that two opposing gangs, the Spoilers and the Msomis, dominated township life. Perhaps, the purpose of Swanson's movie was to convey a narrative with a simple plot line without entwining it with other pertinent issues.

Even with these shortcomings, Swanson's work is important because it propelled penny whistling to a higher professional plane, and it documented the landscape. The landscape had its own narrative, for it represented Alexandra in its virgin state. Scenes also reflected how Alexandrans used the landscape, for instance, gardens appeared on almost every stand while cattle roamed the streets. In showing an extension of rural life

¹⁷³ Other penny whistlers in Alexandra included: Lemmy "Special" Mabaso, who had formed the Alexandra Junior Bright Boys, Aaron "Big Voice" Jack Lerole, who established the Alexandra Shamba Boys and the Black Mambazo and also soloist Barney Rachabane were among the penny whistlers that began playing in Alexandra.

in the urban areas, Swanson paints a picture of yesteryear and in so doing; he provides one of the few visual examples of Alexandra during the 1950s. This extant source captures the formation of Alexandra in its early stages, and at a time when the population had swelled to 97,000 people. Viewers do get a sense of Alexandra's expanse as the film shows its steep gradient from one end to another.

Although, Swanson portrays everyday life in Alexandra, the work is neither polemical nor reflective. Viewers ponder certain issues about Alexandra which include: an ethnographical explanation for understanding penny whistling as an art form, the fashions that the actors wore, and lastly, the logistics of township life, for instance, how did Alexandrans dispose of human waste? The film takes viewers on a journey, and portrays a glimpse of Alexandran life, yet, the main attributes of the township such as it being a "Dark City" or one without indoor plumbing leaves room for further elaboration.¹⁷⁴

Nightsoil workers played a vital role within the township, yet with the exception of the opening credits, an analysis of occupations within Alexandra is not addressed. For example, Joseph "Badman" Sibisi, a Spoiler member, pretended to be a nightsoil worker to avoid the Msomi Gang which sought to kill him.¹⁷⁵ The fact that Sibisi dressed up as a nightsoil worker provides another opportunity which the film misses to discuss the formation of masculinity and its relationship to resistance. In other words, how did township residents create an identity using occupations such as nightsoil disposal as means to foster unity or development within Alexandra? The answer to this question lies in the 1957 nightsoil strike which raises issues of labor, identity, and power.

¹⁷⁴ "The Magic Garden," Produced and directed by Donald Swanson. 63 min, Swan Films. Videocassette.

¹⁷⁵ "My Fight Against the Msomi Gang," *Drum Magazine*, May 1960, p. 37.

Marauders of the Night: Nightsoil Workers and the 1957 Labor Strike

Nightsoil, which was a term used to describe human feces left alongside the road of each stand in Alexandra, was removed bi-weekly. In 1957, the Alexandra Health Committee employed seventy-one workers to assist with sanitation. Twenty-seven sidesmen, seventeen loaders, six tippers, three watchmen, nine pail cleaners, three foremen, one pail inspector, and five drivers comprised the ensemble of laborers. Nightsoil workers were known throughout the township as *sampunganes*, Masekela wrote:

the streets were lined with buckets of feces mixed with urine in front of every home (whose backyard sported countless rented rooms and shacks), waiting for the migrant night-soil collectors who were infamously known as *sampunganes*. This was a name they detested enough to empty the contents of urine-filled buckets on the front porches of the homes of mischievous children who dared to shout *Sampungane!* at them.¹⁷⁶

Nightsoil workers, as the quotation attests, earned little respect. Migrant males from Lesotho occupied these positions, and the fact that mostly migrants, performed in these capacities, also says something about how Alexandrans viewed the position. Despite the fact that this occupation figured less important, the work performed was of the highest significance. Without the assistance of nightsoil workers, Alexandra's environment suffered. Stenches filled the air and communicable diseases festered.

These male employees operated Alexandra's dual pail system which consisted of clean buckets replacing fully packed pails which tippers later dumped and nightsoil workers scrubbed with hot soapy water. After the pails dried, workers dipped them into a disinfectant and stacked them until the next usage. Following that activity, loaders

¹⁷⁶ Hugh Masekela and D. Michael Cheers, *Still Grazing: The Musical Journey of Hugh Masekela*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 2004), p. 28.

placed the nightsoil into awaiting sanitary carts and tractors with attached trailers, which they then took to the compost site near the Jukskei River. The compost site lay near residential areas, and presented a health hazard for residents, and threatened the purity of the Jukskei River. To compound matters, six other compost pits, out of a remaining forty-two, faced closure after the decision by local authorities to construct a road. Another problem was that pails were often damaged or badly worn from normal wear and tear. In 1957 alone, the Health Committee with its limited discretionary fund, replaced 126 pails, and had used 6,503 buckets by December that year.¹⁷⁷

While the Health Committee stressed the importance of and need for a water-borne sewerage system, the bucket system prevailed in Alexandra well into the 1980s. Workers remained under constant duress, and with their low pay, and lack of benefits, nightsoil laborers organized a strike in October 1957. Largely missing from this analysis is the voice of the nightsoil workers. Documents explain their rationale for initiating and carrying out a protest, however, their voices lay only in the transmission created by the official transcript.

Beginning on 5 October 1957, the Secretary of the Labour Committee, documented the refusal of a section of unidentified sanitary workers to complete their assigned tasks. The laborers alleged that a marauding gang of Russians (the name given to the Basotho) had threatened them, and consequently they could not perform their assigned task. Gang members eventually left the compound and apologized while informing the supervisor that they were mistaken and that they sought some *tsotsis* (thugs) that they failed to identify during the conversation, were responsible for the

¹⁷⁷ "Alexandra Medical Officer's Report," 353/13 E Sanitation, Alexandra Township, 1957, National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria.

threats. With the matter resolved at least so the supervisor thought, he informed his subordinates that they could now make up the back log that awaited them. The assignment date for completion of duties was 7 October 1957, but certain sections and people failed to comply. Enoch Tshatshu, Jackson Jana, and Tisile Jozela, refused to work without the guarantee of overtime pay, and were dismissed. Remaining employees in solidarity with other colleagues, lackadaisically performed their duties, and created another unwanted backlog.¹⁷⁸

Following this action, on 9 October 1957, the disgruntled employees sent the Health Committee its demand for higher weekly wages of 6/-, commensurate with other municipalities. As far back as a year ago in October 1956, Thomas Masekela, the Health Inspector and father of renowned musician, Hugh Masekela, had promised raises. How he had the authority to offer such a guarantee the sources fail to disclose. Masekela, according to the official Labour Department document, had assured laborers that he was the only person who could provide remuneration for them. After all, Masekela proclaimed, he was African and could relate to the workers. When the labor unrest started, the Health Committee placed the blame on Masekela's shoulders, since he had made unfulfilled promises and failed to inform his superiors of his actions. When the superiors were finally formed, nightsoil employees repeatedly heard the same response: "the demand will be dealt with at the next meeting."¹⁷⁹ Tabling the discussion for the next meeting was problematic because the Health Committee only met during the months

¹⁷⁸ Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act, 1953. Alexandra Health Committee: Alexandra, Strikes and Disputes, Department of Labour, Leer No. 102121/93/1957, October 19, 1957, National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

of June and December which meant that employees faced a two-month delay before their case was addressed.¹⁸⁰

December rolled around and the workers had not received any salary increases. Consequently, fifty-one employees out of a total of sixty-four registered their dissatisfaction by not reporting to work on Sunday 13 October 1957. With employees missing and backlogs substantially piling up, the Sanitary Overseer immediately informed the Secretary of Labour about the impromptu strike. The Sanitary Overseer also forwarded another summons, this time with a more detailed report which listed employees' names, reasons for dereliction of duty, and the dates when the insubordination occurred:

the named labourers are herewith recommended for dismissal from Sanitary service.

Isaac Semembe for absenting himself from work for 3 days (Friday to Monday-11th to 14th October).

(Nelson and Jim Msabalala) leaders of the gang that left their duty on Saturday 5th October, 1957.¹⁸¹

While these three faced dismissal for excessive absences, the remaining employees informed the supervisor that if their colleagues were not reinstated, they would not resume their duties. The waste backlog, which continued to pile up, created an unsavory smell, to the chagrin of the laborers and township residents. Alexandra's Medical Officer, Dr. Xuma, whom the Health Committee employed and paid, intervened in the matter but only to admonish the laborers for violating the law while also imposing a

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

deadline of 19 October 1957 for resumption of duties. Dismissed employees returned but no one received an increase in salary or overtime pay owed them.

Nightsoil workers performed an important function within the township. These poverty level wage earners were responsible for maintaining sufficient supplies of pails to dump human excrement. Nightsoil workers possessed power because without the continuation of their duties, township residents ran the risk of contracting communicable diseases. Although nightsoil workers wore rubber aprons and knee-length boots, they similarly faced this peril probably at a much greater risk, but the Health Committee failed to acknowledge the danger within its written reports, instead the records cast a silence over the health hazard that the positions bred. This omission detracts from understanding the full impact of the nightsoil workers' complaints.

While their grievances focused on pay, and long hours, nightsoil workers highlighted the problems that African laborers faced in South Africa. There was no union to speak on the workers' behalf or a minimum wage as Xuma noted. Instead, the Alexandra Health Committee had no mechanism for determining the value of African labor. On top of that there were also no stipulations for the numbers of hours worked daily. Official letters relay that the laborers operated under a backlog that had piled up for weeks, which reveals that nightsoil workers had no set hours, instead the number of pails they accumulated and the rapidity in which they emptied and cleaned them determined the hours worked. Health Committee officials supervised seventy-two employees, yet that body provided no benefits or explained how these employees worked in concert, and if in fact they represented different grades based on the proficiency and skill of their respective jobs. All South African laborers faced these issues, so the

nightsoil strike was not an isolated protest because its outcome had ramifications for other professions or movements such as the 1957 bus boycott known as “Azikwelwa,” which resulted in fare restoration after three months of protesting.

Concluding Remarks

In Alexandra culture developed along several lines. For example, Alexandrans built their resistance on a history of tradition. The culture of protest was one whereby residents wore specific garb to express defiance, style or a particular position within the township. Nightsoil workers donned knee-length boots, gloves, and aprons to protect them from the impurities that they collected bi-weekly. Yet, while nightsoil workers wore this protective gear, they were not respected in the community. Their nickname *sampunganes* detracted from their masculinity while those who labored in Johannesburg as garden boys or domestics, as well as those who owned township property retained the veneer of respectability, even though they held subservient positions. Standowners as John Nauright argues based their respectability on Christian beliefs, ownership of property, and a positive attitude towards whites.¹⁸² Nightsoil workers, by contrast based their respectability using work ethics and principles the incorporated the collective good. For example, their protests showed how they resisted in solidarity with dismissed colleagues.

In analyzing masculinity several categories exist to reflect heterogeneity. Dominant, complicit, submissive and oppositional are the adjectives used to describe

¹⁸² John Nauright, “I am With You as Never Before”: Women in Urban Protest Movements in Alexandra Township, South Africa, 1912-1945, in Kathleen Sheldon (ed.), *Courtyards, Markets, City Streets: Urban Women in Africa*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), p. 262.

masculine behavior.¹⁸³ Nightsoil workers fell under the categories of dominant and oppositional for the following reasons. Power within the township resided with the nightsoil workers because they controlled the ebb and flow of waste disposal. Residents were at their mercy. Despite this power dynamic, nightsoil workers exercised little authority when it came to salary increases as the Health Committee denied their request. Although this power discrepancy existed, nightsoil workers challenged the status quo and the manner in which the Alexandra Health Committee viewed its employees.

The same could be said of the bus patrons, and the squatters. Bus patrons fell under the complicit category because they undermined masculinity by creating the impression that men were only aggressive and that no gentlemen existed among them. Also, men did not have an opportunity to create a counter-narrative to challenge the one created by the Alexandra Women's League or the bus drivers that passed men by. Men spoke through their alleged aggressiveness rather than their intellectual channels. Thus, the image of masculinity portrayed was one that placed men in a subordinate and dominant position. While they exercised physical power over the women, they did not exhibit complete control or showcased any leadership talent. With the exception of their aggressiveness, male bus patrons were silent actors.

Schreiner Baduza used his position to elevate the squatter campaign and also his own image as a man. Unlike his counterpart James "Sofasonke" Mpanza, the leader of the Orlando squatters' movement, Baduza donned a suit and a tie, and a wide-brimmed hat which he accentuated with a curved black pipe rather than the leopard skins, helmet, and scarlet plumes that Mpanza wore while straddled on a horse. Baduza adopted western culture, while Mpanza chose to embrace African culture. These images were

¹⁸³ Robert Morrell, "Of Boys and Men," p. 609.

polar opposites, but they possess an interconnection. Baduza and Mpanza created different forms of masculinity. For example, Mpanza embraced his rural roots, while Baduza exhibited his middle class aspirations. These two forms of identity reflect the tension that existed in Alexandra between modernity and tradition. In short, fashion played a role in expressing what it meant to be African.

For Baduza, being African meant wearing trendy western style clothing and having no trace of any ethnic roots as Mpanza, who was a Zulu, personified. Strangely enough, Baduza did honor culture and tradition by imposing two official languages for the encampment that of IsiZulu and Sesotho. While he relinquished his ethnic heritage to don popular fashion, he did want to preserve the languages of his people. Thus, when examining Alexandra and its protest movements it is important to deconstruct how forms of masculinity lead to different interpretations of resistance.

CHAPTER FOUR: ALEXANDRAN RESPONSES TO PROPERTY LOSS AND PERI-URBAN, 1958-1975

In this chapter, I examine the process of forced removals in Alexandra. I argue that Peri-Urban Board's takeover of Alexandra's administrative affairs infringed upon the dwellers ability to govern the community. Alexandrans viewed Peri-Urban Board's takeover as an infringement upon the township's status as relatively administrative exempt freehold. This illegal occupation, as dissidents regarded the takeover, deprived Alexandrans of self-governance, and local authority. Township dwellers related the loss of freehold status to wider societal issues. Lack of citizenship, property rights, and physical mobility ranked high on the list of limited or nonexistent freedoms. While the National Party determined what people had residency rights in Alexandra, township dwellers defined what strategies they employed to save Alexandra. The goal was to prevent Alexandra from becoming a 'hostel city.'

Under the leadership of the Reverend Sam Buti, Alexandrans beautified the township by planting trees, and flowers which replaced mounds of debris. Buti used development as a tool from which to redefine Alexandra not only as a model township but also as a financially stratified place. Class distinctions were determinants for attaining certain types of accommodation. For example, teachers, and civil servants occupied newer homes while the economically deprived settled in flats. And with distinctions based on salaries, Alexandrans participated in its own incorporation and endorsement plan which rivaled that of the Peri-Urban Board. People were not removed from the township; instead they stayed there while living under arrangements defined by social status.

Background

Alexandra's transformation did not occur over night nor did the ideas surrounding the removal, for they had a long sustained history dating back to 1938 when the White North Eastern Districts Protection League sought Alexandra's expropriation for various reasons. Situated between Pretoria and Johannesburg and along a major road where White suburbs had spread within a mile, Alexandra's location posed a problem for White communities that needed to expand.¹⁸⁴ Besides expansion, White critics opposed Alexandra's presence because of the unsanitary conditions that festered nearby. Litter lay strewn on the ground, communicable diseases ran rampant, infested dongas polluted the township, and a dense population mushroomed. Health Committee officials failed to enforce any sanitation measures or population controls. Instead, twenty-two people occupied one plot with an average of three people living in the same room where they all ate, cooked, and slept.¹⁸⁵ This quotation best encapsulates the living conditions:

This is a serious state when it is considered that the township is badly controlled, has an inadequate health service, the people occupying the rooms are of all ages and sexes, the sanitary service is mostly inadequate, the water drawn from wells subject to contamination. . . .¹⁸⁶

Alexandra's reputation as a crime haven also did not bode well with occupants of neighboring white suburbs. "In the early roaring 'forties Alexandra was already notorious all over the reef for its brazen show of violence and killings. . . ."¹⁸⁷ These attacks went unnoticed by official sources because gangsters such as the Spoilers and the Msomis paid police officers to ignore their crimes plus Alexandra had no police station and only

¹⁸⁴ "Kuhlosweni NgeAlexandra Township? *Inkundla ya Bantu*, April 28, 1948.

¹⁸⁵ Mike Sarakinsky, "From "freehold" to "Model" Township," p. 3.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 10.

fifteen policemen from Wynberg patrolled the township. While Village Guards or resident neighborhood watch groups had existed in Alexandra since 1941, their numbers and lack of weaponry paled in comparison to Alexandra's gangs. The Msomi Gang originally formed in the 1950s to protect township dwellers from the Spoilers, a gang that had operated in Alexandra since the 1940s, and perfected the protection ring, one of three racketeering rings governing Alexandra's illegal operations.¹⁸⁸

Dubbed as the self-proclaimed "Kings of Alexandra," the Msomi Gang proved more ruthless than its fiercest rival. Under Shaddrack Matthews, the Msomi Gang extorted money, abducted women, set victims on fire,¹⁸⁹ garnished wages, and committed murders. Crime was so rampant that the Alexandra Shamba Boys, an Mbaqanga group which formed in 1957, the year of the famous "Azikwelwa" bus boycott, brandished tomahawks to defend themselves.¹⁹⁰ Alexandra could not shirk its reputation, or the nicknames that best captured what loomed in the township. Names such as "Hell's

¹⁸⁸ The Spoilers, who originally started as a football club, earned their name because they gate-crashed parties. Peter Tourikis, "The Political Economy of Alexandra, 1905-1958," unpublished honours dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1981, pp. 19-21. Tourikis' work provides a class analysis that observes economic relations between what he calls the African petty bourgeoisie and the working class. Tourikis argues that both class groups experienced a similar form of 'political oppression' and 'cultural domination' that took form because governmental legislation excluded them from the state's structures. Three types of racketeering systems developed in Alexandra: European money lenders, Standholders, and the petty bourgeoisie. Racketeering followed a pecking order that affected all components, for instance, European money lenders exploited Standholders and the corruption continued spiraling downward.

¹⁸⁹ Martha Mmusi, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 3 May 2002.

¹⁹⁰ "Return of Big Voice Jack," *Mail and Guardian*, June 19, 1998. The record company misspelled the name and labeled the single as "Tom Hark." Record for EMI, "Tom Hark" proved so popular that a British TV series, "The Killing Stones," used it as theme music. Led by Aaron "Big Voice Jack" Lerole, the Alexandra Shamba Boys formed in 1952. That same year the group signed with Troubador Records. The band, which fronted Lerole's brother Elias, assumed other names such as Black Mambazo, and Elias and the Zig Zag Flutes. David Coplan, *In Township Tonight!: South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre*, (London and New York: Longman, 1985), pp. Colloquially, Mbaqanga means "dumpling" or African maize or bread. The musical style grew out of earlier musical genres—penny whistling, kwela, township sax jive, gospel-inspired African chord music, and Marabi. Laden with bass, Mbaqanga drew heavily from American Rock N' Roll, but also blended indigenous African sounds within the musical compilation. Mbaqanga's first hit song, 'Baby Come Duze' was produced by the all-male Alexandra All-Star Band.

Kitchen,” “Little Chicago,” “Slagpaal,” and “Terror Township,” catapulted Alexandra into iconic lore.

Despite these complaints and the township’s notorious reputation, Alexandra staved off abolition several times in 1939, 1943, and 1950 unlike other townships such as Dukathole, District Six and Umkhumbane which faced destruction. Alexandra’s fortune changed in 1963. Then, the government following the recommendation of the 1952 Mentz Commission, decided to convert Alexandra from a family dwelling area to a place for migrant laborers.¹⁹¹ In Alexandra, the forced removal process lasted for sixteen years from 1963 to 1979. 1979 marked the year when Alexandra won a reprieve and was reinstated as a family housing area. Despite the problems of having a township with only hostels, a ‘hostel city’ was better than an abolished township. After all, expropriation sought to obliterate the township’s physical existence while forced removals changed Alexandra’s human and physical landscape.

Both scenarios relied on the residents’ memories to explain what Alexandra represented. For example, Caroline Nkosi, sister of the renowned saxophonist Zakes Nkosi, put it best when discussing the impact of the forced removals on everyday living in Alexandra. She stated, “We in Alexander use to know one another. I knew what family a person came from just from their address.”¹⁹² Alexandra fit neatly into the apartheid scheme of territorial restructuring. Such a policy of redevelopment and reorganization remade the political environment. Forced removals incorporated people from Randburg and endorsed out others from Alexandra to live in other townships. Patterns of ownership also changed from a stand holding community to a rental/lease one.

¹⁹¹ Karen Jochelson, Reform, Repression, and Rebellion in South Africa: A Case Study of Alexandra Township, 1979-1989, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 16, 1 (March 1990), p.

¹⁹² Caroline Nkosi, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 9 December 2001.

What these changes suggest is that Alexandra underwent a reconfiguration of its urban space. The township, would according to government stipulations, become a labor reservoir. Single individuals were set to replace entire families. These proposed living arrangements sought to create conditions which promoted sexual improprieties rather than the monogamous relationships that families theoretically promoted. This decision to convert family dwelling Alexandra to a “hostel city” required the expropriation of residents, the demolition of their homes, the purchasing of property, the cooperation of neighboring townships, and also the planning of government officials.

Peri-Urban Board’s Takeover of Alexandra, 1958-1973

Peri-Urban Board officially assumed duties on 1 February 1958. Its administration ushered in a new form of governance for Alexandrans. The difference between the Health Committee and its successor, the Peri-Urban Board was that a capital government loan supported the latter’s initiatives rather than residential taxes. The Health Committee comprised a chair person, and several members, while the Peri-Urban Board had several official titled positions. One Superintendent, one Clerk Assistant, two White Peace Officers, two Black Welfare Officers, three Black Sergeants, and thirty-six Black constables administered Alexandra’s affairs.¹⁹³ The body had specific objectives that went beyond the original scope of the Health Committee. Peri-Urban Board polled Alexandra’s population, reduced its numbers, incorporated people who worked in neighboring Randburg, cleaned up the township, and provided basic infrastructure such as street lighting, proper waste receptacles, and adequate sewage removal. Another

¹⁹³ “If Better Control Must be instituted, which Personnel would be Required for this and How Much would it Cost to Appoint the Necessary Personnel,” File No. 80 (313) xiii, pp. 10, National Archives, Pretoria, South Africa.

responsibility included ending the Msomi Gang's reign, which the Peri-Urban Board achieved.¹⁹⁴

Alexandra languished far behind other residential areas that possessed modern amenities. Yet, while the government had appraised Alexandra's state before the dissolution of the Health Committee, Peri-Urban Board repeated history and offered no substantive changes. Instead, as the United Anti-Peri Urban Areas Action Committee (UAPUAAC) under the leadership of Reverend A. A. Tanci, proclaimed, "They made extravagant promises of great benefit to the people and over a half a million pounds was offered as a so-called free gifts for lights, water, roads, sanitation, etc."¹⁹⁵

Contemporaries, who witnessed Peri-Urban Board harass residents and renege on its numerous promises, support this assertion. Mark Mathabane echoed this sentiment in his novel *Kaffir Boy* and during a Cable News Network (CNN) interview in which he recounted the time when the Peri-Urban Board humiliate his father and carted him off to jail.¹⁹⁶ A chorus of informants proclaimed, "Hey man, Peri-Urban did nothing for the township except imprison the Msomi Gang. They fixed one road and constantly harassed us night and day."¹⁹⁷ Besides condemning Peri-Urban Board for its failure to produce results, the United Anti-Peri-Urban Areas Action Committee acknowledged some changes within the township. The Committee acknowledged the possible burden that

¹⁹⁴ Peri-Urban Board successfully captured the Msomi Gang using the undercover talents of Sergeant Gilbert Sibeko. Thomas Sipho Piliso, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township. Sibeko posed as a mentally challenged vagabond who ate orange peels strewn on the ground. Msomi boss Shadrack Matthews felt sorry for the man and offered him a janitorial position. Sibeko spied on the Msomi Gang and when he had garnered sufficient evidence staged a raid at the gang's headquarters on Twelfth Avenue.

¹⁹⁵ "Alexandra in Danger: Unite Against Peri-Urban," Issued by the United Anti-Peri-Urban Areas Action Committee, Putuma Printers, 103rd Avenue, Alexandra, Johannesburg, File No. 80 (313), National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.

¹⁹⁶ Mark Mathabane, CNN Interview, television, New York, 5 June 2005.

¹⁹⁷ Thomas Sipho Piliso, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 3 March 2002.

residents shouldered if Peri-Urban had carried out its duties and honored its commitment and made improvements as this excerpt reads:

So far the marvelous deeds have been the provision of two little ambulances and some shiny dusty bins. These “improvements” as the body argued, “and obviously the bigger concessions (if they ever come) will have to be paid for out of the people’s own pockets through higher rates, taxation and the services levy.”¹⁹⁸

Despite the capital loan that Peri-Urban Board had received to clean up Alexandra, the gentrification of a run-down unsanitary township rested primarily on its economically deprived populace. This caused a problem, as did Peri-Urban Board’s legal impositions.

Peri-Urban Board’s “occupation” affected every Alexandran, no matter social or class status. Ministers of religion had to obtain permission to preach, and therefore had to sign affidavits from Peri-Urban Board so that they could continue to minister spiritually. Traders faced changes in the informal sector. Peri-Urban Board made these hawkers submit a monthly application to ply their formal trade. When one disgruntled resident A. M. Lukele penned a grievance letter, Peri-Urban Board simply referred Lukele to two legal measures, the 1930 Traders and Hawkers Ordinance, and the 1925 Licenses Consolidation Act. According to these measures, the bylines prevented peddlers and hawkers from conducting general dealers businesses in places not cited as a municipality, and one mile from an area of a person possessing a license. Alexandra fell outside municipal boundaries, which made the embargo against trading by peddlers and hawkers applicable.¹⁹⁹ Standholders disapproved of the Peri-Urban Board’s goal of

¹⁹⁸ “Alexandra in Danger: Unite Against Peri-Urban.”

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

reducing the rent paying population because they benefited from the overcrowded conditions.²⁰⁰

All township dwellers living within Alexandra had to produce rent receipts dating from 1952, and present them before Peri-Urban Board to determine eligibility for residency. "Who would have known," the Anti-Peri Urban Areas Committee wrote,

That these receipts would be required in 1958? We must see nakedly and clearly the purpose, of it all. These measures are intended to reduce drastically the population of Alexandra Township from 120,000 to 30,000.²⁰¹

Although the United Peri-Urban Areas Action Committee tallied the count at 120,000, the census reported the figure to be a little less at 87,000 people.²⁰² Out of that total, 9,000 were Coloureds, and Asians, 25,599 were men while 5,653 were single.²⁰³ To ferret out and incorporate residents who worked in Randburg, Edenvale, Kempton Park, Boksburg, Germiston, Benoni and Bedford view, Peri Urban Board developed a system of classification.²⁰⁴ Residency in Alexandra was based on birthplace, length of habitation in Alexandra, the years worked in Johannesburg, and the status of parents. The table describes the stipulation for residency rights:

Table 6
Residency Rights in Alexandra during the 1950s to 1980s

Section 10.1 (a) rights, persons who born in Alexandra and lived there for all their lives

Section 10.1 (b) rights applied to persons who did not qualify for 10, 1 (a) but had lived in Alexandra for fifteen years or had worked for one

²⁰⁰ "Report from T van Heerde, Intelligence Officer, Department of Native Affairs to Head Intelligence Officer, File No. 1/30, 12 December 1957,

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Mike Sarakinsky, "From "freehold" to "model" Township," p. 24.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

employer for ten consecutive years or with different employers for fifteen years.

Section 10.1 (c) persons not qualified to live in Alexandra

Applicants attaining 10.1 (c) rights could work in a white area, but they could not buy a house or rent one, however, they could seek accommodation in a single hostel. To qualify for rights under this section, applicants had to prove that a parent had Section 10.1 (a) or (b) privileges.²⁰⁵ These legal impositions meant that women and children woke up at 3 a. m. to get the required permits for husbands and fathers who labored in neighboring white suburbs. Anti-Peri-Urban Board committee members acknowledged this hardship, and wrote, “in terms of the laws of the country, what happens to the men who are forced to go to work “illegally” for white Johannesburg, without their otherwise valid Reference Books?”²⁰⁶

In analyzing the issue of masculinity as alluded to by the Anti-Peri Urban Board Committee, we understand that men suffered abuse and potential arrest for entering the urban areas without a pass. Having a pass defined the terms of masculinity and legality. Yet, the urban public space was not the only place where men endured abused. Within the homes, the private sanctuary of families, men faced harassment. Mark Mathabane’s

²⁰⁵ “Who Qualifies for Alex?” *Izwi laseBantu* (June/July, 1982), p. 10. Section 10.1 (c) represented persons who did not qualify for a 10.1 (a) or 10.1 (b) right and met these criteria; had a husband with an (a) or (b) right; an underage man living with his parents who had (a) or (b) rights or a single woman of any age, who lived with a parent who had an (a) or (b) rights, then a person qualified for (c) right.

²⁰⁶ Letter from Peri-Urban Health Areas Board to Head Bantu Commissar, N79/2/150, 22 September 1959, p. 312, National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa. Reference Books were identity documents that contained the person’s employment history and residence, which they carried at all times. The Pan Africanist Congress opposed the pass for the following reasons: the inability of young men to work, people lost their lives, women had to carry them, repeated arrests, dehumanization, and what the documents symbolized. Passes symbolized the oppression of a majority Black population constrained by the coercive and legislative measures enforced by a White minority. Regina v Sobukwe Trial., “What Makes Him Tick So Loud?” *Drum Magazine*, April 1959, p. 27, and Thomas Karis and Gwendolen M. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*. Josias Madzunya, an Alexandran activist who sold Hessian and cardboard alongside the intersection of Troye and President Streets, where he held court as a street speaker, stated, “we say we do not want the milk we want the cow. Hence we do not want freedom but independence.” Independence entailed obliterating the pass laws that allowed government officials to monitor and prohibit the physical mobility of Africans.

father became emasculated when he paraded nude with a bowed head before Peri-Urban during a dawn raid. Mathabane's father assumed a subservient position quite different from the strong male image typically projected in the household. Women were also affected by this imposition. Mathabane's mother hid within a dresser drawer, and a ditch. The latter action left Mark and his siblings alone in the house.²⁰⁷ Mark therefore, assumed an adult position as head of the household, and as the elder male. Although, the Mathabanes had lived in Alexandra for years, they inhabited the area illegally because they had no passes.

Passes curtailed mobility and disrupted family life, and family identity. Parents not meeting the qualification for Section 10 rights faced banishment, or these types of scenarios: one parent living in Alexandra while the other inhabited the area illegally or sometimes both parents faced deportation and instead of leaving, illegally lived in Alexandra. Illegality meant that people such as the Mathabane's inhabited Alexandra without proper authorization, but it also meant that certain Alexandrans dissembled. Dissemblance in this case does not refer to the concealment of secret identities or a personal tragedy such as a rape, but one where the people try to hide the fact that they did not possess passes, so until a Peri-Urban raid they acted as upstanding law-abiding people.²⁰⁸

Failure to possess passes meant that Alexandrans such as the Mathabanes faced difficulty in attaining jobs. Section 10 rights allowed Peri-Urban to determine residency

²⁰⁷ Mark Mathabane, *Kaffir Boy: The True Story of A Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa* (New York: Free Press, 1986), p. 267.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance," *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society*, 14, (Summer 1989): 912-20.

and empowered that body with banishment orders, which the Reverend A. A. Tanci and Dan Mokonyane, two of the leaders of the United Anti-Peri-Urban Action Areas Committee and the 1957 bus boycott, received in 1960. Banished residents returned to their original rural homes or lived elsewhere within South Africa. Alexandrans, as Mike Sarakinsky shows, were not against removal or Peri-Urban Board, but it was the manner in which they carried out their duties:

above all, Alexandra residents began to resent the removal methods, which no longer remained a voluntary choice. Residents were arbitrarily stopped in the street or a bus stops by officials of the Peri Urban Board and the Resettlement Board who demanded to see their reference books. These were then impounded and endorsed and removal documents were issued. Allegations were also made that officials did not bother to establish the marital status of people, and married people were being endorsed out to single sex hostels in Meadowlands.²⁰⁹

Peri-Urban Board treated Alexandrans as alien residents not only of South Africa but also the township.

As a result, Alexandrans saw parallels between subjugation under South African apartheid and European colonial rule. Johannes Phashe, an Alexandran laborer, and member of the Alexandran branch of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) proclaimed, “slaves of Africa I say let us not leave our tradition. Rhodesia is to get freedom and self-Government with their tradition. What about ourselves?”²¹⁰ Ghana also represented a bastion of freedom, and its status as the first African nation to gain independence from colonial rule on 30 March 1957, was not lost on Alexandrans. Alinah Serote, former nurse, property owner, and mother of renowned novelist and poet Mongane Wally Serote, recalled Ghana’s independence and used imagery to explain its importance. “Ghana,”

²⁰⁹ Mike Sarakinsky, “From “freehold” to “model” Township,” p. 25.

²¹⁰ Regina v Sobukwe and Eleven Others in the Magistrate’s Court for the Regional Division of the South Transvaal, held at Johannesburg, Pan Africanist Congress of South Africa, South Africa: A Collection of Political Trials, Cooperative African Microfilm Project (CAMP).

she stated, “was Africa’s giant foot, and we here in Alexander was one of its interconnected toes.”²¹¹

Besides linking South Africa’s struggle with Ghana and other African nations, South Africans participated in Kwame Nkrumah’s international Afrika Day held on 15 April 1958, and held a week-long event to commemorate the holiday.²¹² Just as Africans from other parts of the continent opposed colonial rule, Alexandrans sought to remove the Peri-Urban Board and its hegemonic arm. The Peri-Urban Health Board represented a foreign body as did the British in Ghana or the former Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Alexandrans used petitions, flyers, and held meetings in an attempt to end the internal colonialism that pervaded throughout the township and elsewhere in South Africa.²¹³ For

²¹¹ Alinah Serote, interview, tape recording, 9 February 2002.

²¹² “Afrika Day” flyers in South Africa: A Collection of Political Materials, 1902-1963. Alexandrans participated in Afrika Day. Afrika Day was the intellectual brain child of Kwame Nkrumah, a graduate of the historically Black Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, and Ghana’s inaugural President. Nkrumah seized the moment and capitalized on Ghana’s newly liberated state. He used two international conferences to earmark his brand of continental Pan Africanism. Hosted in Ghana’s capital of Accra, these conferences welcomed delegates from the emerging African nations of Libya, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Liberia among other polities, respectively on 15 April 1958 and again in December. Participants pledged to offer sister nations continental and regional support to fight collectively against imperialism and tyranny. With its apartheid policy, South Africa was considered the continent’s most infamous pariah. Participating nations agreed to boycott any South African produced goods. Besides reconfirming solidarity and agreeing to use different strategies of resistance to end colonialism and apartheid, participants wanted to build upon the momentum gained. They decided to observe 15 April as international Afrika Day and launched the commemoration the following year in 1959. In observance of the 1959 Afrika Day, mass demonstrations took place in Ghana, the United States in several South African cities and townships which included Durban and Alexandra. Alexandra’s dwellers commemorated the day by having a week long event extending from 12 April to 19 April 1959. Flyers were distributed equally throughout the township. One flyer visually displayed the outline of the African continent with the thumbs up Mayibuye sign featured in the left-hand corner. Another announcement, which detailed the week-long events, emphasized the importance of wearing Afrika Day badges to show symbolism and solidarity. These badges acknowledged the plight of South Africans inhabiting other poverty-stricken townships. Alexandra’s Afrika Day organizers scheduled an event every day except Wednesday. On those other days, township residents held house and factory meetings on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, while organizers planned a Sunday mass gathering. Sunday’s mass rally at the Number 3 Square represented the week’s denouement. A separate flyer carried this announcement: “Come and Celebrate Afrika Day,” with an asterisk emphasizing, “Prominent speakers will address you!” One of those speakers Julius Nyerere, then President of the Tanganyika Afrika Union (TANU) addressed a crowd at 9:30 a. m. Approximately 15,000 multi-hued people assembled at the Square, where they honored the speaker and the day by wearing traditional African garb.

²¹³ Several competing political bodies formed, factions developed, and one defined leader emerged in 1958. At the time of the protest, Reverend A. A. Tanci, was a seventy-two year old African Methodist Episcopal

example, they engaged in a legal battle when they employed the law firm of Lewis and Lazar. Residents also resolved at a township meeting to do the following, “from 2 February we will conduct meetings to discuss this issue and fight it. Marches of men as well as women will be organised to assist us in this case.”²¹⁴ Tanci, a seventy-two year old Reverend, who formed the United Peri-Urban Areas Action Committee and the Alexandra Property Owners and Tenants Association in 1958, circulated a petition that garnered 117 signatures. Residents asserted their position, as the petition’s conclusion reveals:

We hereby record our dissatisfaction with said board and appeal to Honorable Minister of Native Affairs to take steps to remove Alexandra Township from jurisdiction of Peri Urban Areas Health Board and to establish a Health Committee as recommended by a Commission of

(AME) Church minister, who held services in a large room within his cottage. Back in the late 1920s, Tanci served as the ANC branch Secretary at Dorrecht, Cape. “Alex, Spotlight on Veteran and Law Student: Fighting ‘Get Out’ Threat,” *The World*, February 27, 1960. Although his membership lapsed, Tanci proclaimed, “I struggled on for the rights of the people.” Tanci participated in several organizations which included the Alexandra Standowners and Tenants Association (ASTA), the Alexandra Property Owners and Tenants Association (APOATA) and the United Peri-Urban Anti-Action Urban Committee all during the 1950s. Ideological problems developed because of distinct class interests. Standowners disapproved of Peri-Urban Board’s goal to reduce the rent paying population. African Tenants Association, Grievance Letter dated 20/1/48, Strikes and Disputes, National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa. Heavily mortgaged bonds paralyzed Standholders who needed additional tenants to meet these payments, so they often maintained yards comprising at least fifteen rooms which earned them £3 to £4. Peri-Urban Board appealed to rent-paying tenants because historically Standholders had overstepped their boundaries or failed to make building improvements or repairs. Rent payers had no recourse as far the Standowners were concerned save to say and not complain. Not all residents chose this path. Many renters consulted the African Tenants Association or Communist Party members, who in turn organized mass township gatherings at the Number 2 Square, where they resolved to forward the grievances to the national Renters Board. Neither the Renters Board nor the Standholders made any substantive changes. Instead, renters remained at the mercy of these property owners, and their run down buildings that posed as poorly constructed and ill-maintained human habitats. Based on their experiences and the uncertainty surrounding the takeover, tenants welcomed the possibility of attaining better housing. Two scheduled meetings arranged by the Alexandra Standowners Association and the Alexandra Standowners and Tenants Association, occurring respectively in early December 1957 and January 1958 married the class differences that divided resident and property owner. Similar agendas governed both meetings, although their scopes differed. An undisclosed number of residents attended the first meeting, and resolved to consult professionally trained attorneys. The second meeting bore similar results. This time government documents noted precise particulars such as the presiding chairperson, secretary and selected speakers. S. Modieri chaired the meeting; R. D. Sisbi recorded the minutes, and C. S. Ramohanoe and Dan B. W. Gumede, rendered speeches. All were long term property owners. The 900 attendants resolved the following, “We, the Standowners of Alexandra, fight against the take over on legal and political grounds.”²¹⁴ “Alexandra Bantu Town-Remonstrations by “Alexandra Property Owners and Tenants Association,” File No. 80/313 (1) Memorandum of the Department of Native Affairs, 23 July 1959.

Enquiry in their report dated 30th October 1940.²¹⁵

Despite these efforts, Peri-Urban remained in the township and continued to change its social, cultural, and political fiber. One way that the Peri-Urban accomplished that goal was to endorse people out of the township. The goal was to reduce the population and build eight hostels to house 20,000 single African laborers from Randburg and the northern suburbs. According to the *Alexandra News Bulletin* the total number removed was 44,706 people. This figure differs from what Mike Sarakinsky presents, which calculated the count at 44,196, leaving a difference of 510 people whom the bulletin counted. Table 7 below shows the number of families, persons resettled by month along with the number of people occupying the hostel, and the percentage of the population those numbers represented.²¹⁶

	Table 7 Population Dispersal			
	Families Resettled	Persons	Hostel	%
To October 1962	8,432	40,826	3,370	90.4
November 1962	51	283	22	96.4
December 1962	38	200	5	51.9
	8,521	41,309	3,397	
On Family basis	41,309			
On Single basis	3,397			
Total Resettled				
	44,706			

Eight thousand five hundred and twenty-one families underwent resettlement, while the total was much higher for individuals which reached 41,309 people. Not included in this chart is the breakdown of Alexandrans and the people incorporated from

²¹⁵ Petition from the Alexandra Property Owners and Tenants Association, Department of Native Affairs, File No. 80 (313) undated.

²¹⁶ "Resettlement," *Alexandra News Bulletin*, AD2532, Historical Papers, Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

Randburg. This chart also does not distinguish on the basis of gender, age, race, or ethnicity. Instead, its distinguishing feature lays more with single individuals, entire families, and hostel dwellers. Hostel dwellers were those persons who worked in the northern suburbs and Randburg. Besides these categories, no names existed so that readers could plot the trajectory of the removals and understand the spatial relationship between the hostels erected, the homes destroyed or the stands purchased by the Peri-Urban Board. Peri-Urban Board had purchased 337 stands by 1962 at a cost of R935, 879.²¹⁷

While statistics chart the trajectory of affected individuals and families, these numbers create the impression that all removed persons represented variables rather than names with stories attached. While these numbers describe masses of faceless individuals these statistics produce a story. The numbers of removed people and the calculated percentages declined as the months lapsed. October was the month having the heaviest movement of people while December was the lowest. From October to December 1962, figures plummeted as this tally shows a difference of 8,394 families. Even with these steady declining numbers, the Peri-Urban Board had reduced the population to 52,000 people by March 1963.²¹⁸

The Physical Process of Forced Removals and the Impact on Dispossessed Alexandrans

The National Party decided to abolish Alexandra in 1963. This move did not occur in a vacuum, several national events and major legislative measures played a role

²¹⁷ Mike Sarakinsky, "From 'freehold' to 'model' Township," p. 27.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

in determining Alexandra's fate. Sharpeville's aftermath gave the government fodder to continue its policy of separate development.²¹⁹ Two months after Sharpeville, Prime Minister Verwoerd, who spoke before Parliament on 20 May 1960, advocated separate development and sought the creation of Bantu homelands to resolve these issues: curb the race problem, reduce overpopulation, and tighten influx control.²²⁰ This nexus of control applied to Alexandra and other townships, where permits determined eligibility. In response to rising African militancy, the government passed the Better Administration of Designated Areas Act in 1964, which called for continued separate development, Alexandra's abolition and the resettlement of new families in that township to Diepkloof, Meadowlands, and Pimville. The East Rand also allocated spots in Tembisa, Klipspruit, and Katlehong.²²¹

Evicted tenants received as "consolation prizes" a tin of fish, house plus gardens. For these "inducements" Alexandrans lost informal networks, property rights, religious affiliations and social ties, centrally located convenience shops, Johannesburg's proximity, and privately-owned businesses. Loss, as this section shows, represented more than the exchange of physical property to another owner but also the severing of spiritual connections which linked the home owners or renters to the property. Residents "died" when they became uprooted by the government's policy or faced the threat of losing their homes.

²¹⁹ Robert Sobukwe, President of the Pan Africanist Congress led a peaceful anti-pass campaign at Sharpeville on 21 March 1960 that erupted into violence. When marchers reached Sharpeville's police station, they found a heavy contingent sitting in armored cars, awaiting their arrival. The police fired upon the marchers injuring at least 100 people and killing sixty-nine. Most of the wounded and the deceased fell from shots fired onto their backs. Newspaper coverage extensively reported the carnage of the fallen victims. After the Sharpeville Massacre, Mandela and other ANC leaders publicly burnt their passes, and encouraged others to follow suit. These demonstrations continued throughout the country, forcing the government to declare a State of Emergency.

²²⁰ Mike Sarakinsky, "From "freehold" to "model" Township," pp. 34-36, and 38.

²²¹ Ibid, p. 36.

According to the Surplus Peoples Project, forced removal processes occur in stages: first there is a rumor mill, followed by official notices, and then officials place numbers on houses.²²² A rumor mill did emerge in Alexandra, but there was also clamor among government echelons. Government officials used correspondence to iron out what methods and strategies they would employ to reconfigure and redefine Alexandra as a place to procure labor.²²³ In Alexandra, talks ensued about the township's change in residential status. Political organizations such as the United Anti-Peri-Urban Action Committee circulated petitions, held meetings, and protested. Yet, despite this opposition, the government carried on with its plan to reduce Alexandra's population from 120,000 people to 30,000.

Applications for housing in Diepkloof absorbed some of the overpopulation. Volunteers also stepped forward. Residents, such as Andries Malaka, Chairman of the Protection and Vigilance Association (PVA), who grew tired of the dawn raids and Peri-Urban Board's financial stipulation, opted to leave Alexandra. As a Standholder, he paid 75c for his property, while other dwellers such as shopkeepers, and tenants paid R2 and R1 a month respectively.²²⁴ The *World* reported "a heavy stream of refugees" leaving Alexandra voluntarily, and for the first time rooms were reported as vacant."²²⁵ Another example comments on the conditions of the new homes and the location where the volunteers now lived:

a Mr. W.D. Nkhahle, a father of 3 who used to pay £5 a month for 1 backyard room for his whole family in Alexandra. He volunteered to

²²² Laurine Platzky and Cherryl Walker, *Surplus People's Project*, pp. 131-135.

²²³ Detlev Krige, a friend and colleague at the University of the Witwatersrand Institute for Social Science and Economic Research (WISER), translated the correspondence from Afrikaans into English.

²²⁴ "Alex Push to Get Out and Live in Diepkloof," *The World*, May 4, 1965.

²²⁵ Mike Sarakinsky, "Alexandra: From "freehold" to "model" Township, 1984, p. 23.

move to Diepkloof where he then had a house with 4 rooms and a garden (front and back), “I like this place he said, “I’m quite happy.”²²⁶

Reports confirmed that sixty-six percent of the population or 60,000 people would be removed from Alexandra. Meadowlands would absorb 17,500 people and put them in houses out of the 6,000-8,000 homes that the Native Resettlement Board proposed to build.²²⁷

Families and individuals not seeking voluntary removal received mailed notices or Peri-Urban Board dispatched agents to homes where they placed numbers on them to notify them of their impending removal. Stephen Mphahlele was one of these people. Mphahlele hailed from Pietersburg in the northern Transvaal. He moved to Alexandra when Peri-Urban Board hired him as a police officer in 1958. Mphahlele’s position was not an enviable one as many residents viewed Peri-Urban officials as state collaborators. His job was to arrest people for pass violations.

During his three-year tenure with the Peri-Urban Board, Mphahlele moonlighted as a supervisor in a bottle store, one of three in the township. He also sold European liquor in cartons normally reserved for homemade African concoctions. By his account, he made a substantial fortune. The very office where he checked arrest records and issued removal orders also sent him an eviction letter in 1974. The letter, which he still possesses, apprised the family of the date and time of the removal. Peri-Urban destroyed Mphahlele’s home by bulldozers.²²⁸ Cranes plastered other homes earmarked for removal by leaving holes near the buildings’ roofs to render them inhabitable.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid, p. 24.

²²⁸ Stephen Mphahlele, interview, tape recording, Pimville, Johannesburg, 9 December 2001.

Former residents did return to Alexandra for Sunday family outings or to maintain businesses. One former resident, Todd Lethata, was four years old when his family left Alexandra. Lethata's parents migrated to Alexandra after the demolition of Sophiatown in 1955. In Alexandra, Lethata's father supported the family by driving trucks for companies during the Second World War. Then, Lethata's father started his own taxi business while also having a fruit shop and grocery store on Eighteenth Avenue. When Peri-Urban Board issued the removal orders in 1962, the Lethatas packed up their belongings and reluctantly moved to Diepkloof Zone 4. Lethata stated, "People didn't know their destiny, the place where they were going to be dumped. They didn't know how it looked, you know. They were also worried about transport."²²⁹

Because of Alexandra's geographical location, "some people could walk to surrounding industries. Now all of a sudden they have to be pushed to a place, which is far away from their resources."²³⁰ In linking the issue of geography to labor, Lethata alludes to a symbiotic relationship that existed between factory owners and Alexandran laborers. This relationship faced termination with the impending removals. With this change came a loss of financial freedom, mobility, accessibility and the right to dream. Lethata's reference to destiny symbolizes the importance of understanding the plane in which Alexandra represented. Lethata implies that Alexandrans knew what the future held for them as long as they remained in the township. For the Lethata family that destiny entailed operating a family owned business. Continued operation of the business depended on Lethata's father commuting from Soweto to Alexandra. This shift from one 'black' spot to another shows the townships' inextricable links. It also shows how

²²⁹ Todd Lethata, interview, tape recording, Melville, Johannesburg, 20 January 2002.

²³⁰ Ibid.

families held onto their memories from Alexandra and how those ties were important for development and maintenance of the Lethata family history.

Sipho Piliso's mother, Topsie, felt heartbroken after the Peri-Urban Board took away her property. The family had owned property in Alexandra since 1917. It served as family home but also as a meeting place for political organizations such as the Daughters of Africa and the African National Congress. Piliso, who worked for the Alexandra Health Committee for thirty-seven years, recounted how the Peri-Urban Board acquired the family's double property. Peri-Urban Board employees sent the Pilisos two notices, one in 1972, and another in 1975 informing them of the impending expropriation. At the time, Piliso's mother lived alone as his father had passed away in 1944, so there was no man in the house to help thwart Peri-Urban Board's activities.

For their properties, the Pilisos received a total of R10, 000, a small fraction of their market value. Piliso remarked, "We were told to sell our properties and that they shouldn't be any standhold, our properties should be sold to the government."²³¹ His statement is important for several reasons. Piliso refers to standhold. A standhold meant that Africans owned the property and could choose to rent out rooms. This type of arrangement enabled Africans to have control over the properties that they purchased. Peri-Urban Board's proposal of expropriation not only evicted residents but also deprived them of autonomy.

Heads of households loss rights to use the property as they saw fit. Piliso's mother, for example, had used her home to host political meetings and to entertain. She had lost the right to entertain. And although, Piliso's mother was a political activist, she opted to live in the Eastern Cape following the expropriation rather than staying in the

²³¹ Thomas Piliso, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 22 February 2002.

township and fighting the political issue of forced removals. She lived out her remaining days in King Williams Town, where she died heartbroken in 1976. Her son, however, never gave up the idea of the property returning back to the family. Piliso reacquired the property in 1988. Re-ownership opens up another conversation regarding the terms of acquisition, the amount paid, and the agreement of occupation. Prior to Piliso moving back into the family home, he evicted people who had occupied the front portion of the house. Piliso confessed, "It was dangerous. They were staying in this sitting room and the back bedroom here. They even made a shack out front. You couldn't see the house or the veranda."²³² The property also changed, it became two separate pieces of land rather than one. Piliso's story relays the significance of loss, but also gain. He regained his family's property for R9, 000; however, he had to refurbish the home.²³³

Not all residents succumbed to removal orders. Doreen Mashonte whose mother moved from Cape Town and her father from Zimbabwe attended an all Coloured school in Alexandra. Mashonte's father was a mechanic while her mother was the township's first Coloured teacher. Her mother also participated in the Helping Hand Society, a mutual aid organization which visited clinics, held baked good bazaars and singing concerts for impoverished children. Mrs. Lulus Campbell sold the Mashontes two adjoining plots that the Peri-Urban Board came to repossess in 1972. According to Mashonte, the day that the Peri-Urban Board came to expropriate her family's properties, they broke items and were rude to her mother. The event caused her mother so much grief that she died three days later on 7 June 1972. Her younger brother also died of a heart attack. Mashonte assumed the role as head of household. She recalled:

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

So when my mother died there were three other Peri-Urban chaps that used to threaten me. I said I am not going anywhere, yabona, and I am still here. And today some of them they greet us. I take it now that that is the past. I must forget when they greet me. I must greet them.²³⁴

Mashonte's statement shows the importance of reconciliation. She did not forget what the Peri-Urban Board had done to her family, yet she felt the need to extend politeness. Peri-Urban Board tried to confiscate her family's property in 1970, 1976, and 1977.

These vignettes reveal important information concerning removal: the Peri-Urban Board's lack of professionalism when evicting residents, and the emotional impact that this event had upon individual families. Through their testimonies, we learn that residents lamented the loss of familiarity, and of property. Property, in this case, was defined as the family's habitat not only the physical space that encompassed the houses' confines, but also the space surrounding its boundaries. While residents considered these territories as their properties, the government deemed them otherwise, and revoked ownership privileges and also the right to purchase property on mortgaged bonds.

Loss represented the physical space but also emotional and financial repercussions. Two of the informants described their mothers as heartbroken when they lost their homes or faced the threat of losing their properties. This reaction suggests a possible connection between physical possession and emotional state. Each of the mothers went on to experience death or broken hearts in different places. Mashonte's mother continued to reside in the same premises until her death, while Piliso's mother voluntarily went into "exile" in the Eastern Cape where she was born. The women's offspring endured different living experiences. Piliso moved to Diepkloof and Mashonte stayed in Alexandra at the same site. Mashonte's refusal to leave not only shows her

²³⁴ Mashonte, interview.

commitment to the family but also to the memories that they created within the space they called home.

As Lethatha pointed out, moving meant that people did not know their destiny, so as long as Mashonte lived in the same place, the family took control of what lay ahead, even if the future seemed uncertain. The important point is that the Mashonte family did not uproot themselves unlike Piliso who seemingly had no other alternative but to move. This shift between two designated black areas also reveals an important point about relocation and administration. For example, Soweto operated under a different administrative structure than Alexandra, and the township consisted of several sprawling areas as opposed to one confined physical space. So, besides the loss that Piliso endured regarding the family property, he also inherited the right to mourn. Mourn, in this case meant the grief that Piliso and other family members endured from their physical detachment of a place they had called home.

While people such as the Pilisos and the Mashontes fought individually to keep family properties, the Reverend Sam Buti led a collective effort to save the township from becoming a place where only single sex hostels existed. Until the removal process, Buti had secretly participated in the struggle because of his position as a Dutch Reformed Minister. Buti's church was one of the movement's safe houses where activists met to disseminate intelligence, and to discuss counter maneuvers. The minister announced those meetings using official church stationery but pretended the event had a holy purpose rather than a revolutionary one. However, despite his clandestine activities, insurgents bombed his sanctuary in 1962²³⁵

²³⁵ Reverend Sam Buti, interview.

Reverend Sam Buti and the Alexandra Liaison Committee

Born in Brandfort, the bastion of Afrikanerdom in the Free State, this third generation minister moved to Alexandra at the age of twenty-five. Buti chose to use his professional status to lead a dualistic life style. During Sunday morning pulpit sermons he executed stately and religious duties preaching the apartheid ideology of separate development, but outside and sometimes within the confines of the sanctuary, he pursued anti-apartheid activism. Buti wanted to participate in the community as an apartheid activist; however, he had to convince other residents of his sincerity. His task was no easy feat considering his religious affiliation. In the township produced work, *Alexandra, I Love You*; Buti explained how he earned the community's trust:

I bumped into Mr. Khoza on the way to the shops on 7th Avenue. We spoke about the threat of removals that had hung over us for so long and now looked like becoming a reality. He, like many other people in Alexandra, treated me with some reserve and perhaps a little distrust. I was after all a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church.²³⁶

Township residents needed this voice especially during 1974 and 1975 when there was a public outcry over expropriation and the manner in which Peri-Urban carried out its officially mandated business. In 1974 Buti formed together with Lepile Taunyane, Lucas Khoza, and Roger Sishi, the Save the Alexandra Party in 1974. The committee first operated under the aegis of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika, the principal body of the Dutch Reformed Church, of which Buti was the General Secretary.²³⁷ From 1974 to 1976 the group held regularly scheduled meetings with the West Rand Administration Board (WRAB) at Buti's home.

²³⁶ J. Dunston, Alexandra Liaison Committee, *Alexandra, I Love You*, p. 39.

²³⁷ Alexandra Liaison Committee, Jochelson Papers A2269A1-A4, Historical Papers Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Discussions over urban development, housing, and self rule ensued with Buti confirming the township's ability to address its own affairs. He stated, "We believe we should be allowed to run our own affairs, particularly as some people here not only own houses, but the ground too."²³⁸ Buti's statement is important for several reasons. Buti provided a definition of property not yet considered. His idea of ownership meant not only the buildings that lay upon the site but also the earth that sustained them. Land signified wealth. What Buti fails to include in his definition is the significance of Alexandra's geographical location. As a former freehold Alexandrans had the opportunity to purchase land within the urban areas. With the exception of Newclare, Martindale, and Sophiatown, Alexandra was one of the few places where Africans could own land within the city center. This advantage was not lost on government officials or Alexandrans. Part of the reason for forming the Save the Alexandra Party rested with the township's loss of status and how this affected Alexandrans. Collectively Africans owned a prime geographical site that lay between Johannesburg and Pretoria and for that reason Alexandrans fought to save their township.

Save the Alexandra Party members functioned voluntarily and had no administrative staff or office equipment. These disadvantages did not limit the group, which wrote letters to the West Rand Administration Board, the Department of Bantu Administration and Development and even approached successive administrators of the Department without much success. Buti stated, "we preached resistance tactics first through the church and then at the schools. We were trying to get residents to believe that they shouldn't go, that they should stay and fight."²³⁹ Added to those tasks, the Save

²³⁸ "Reprieve, No Council, Removals End," *Rand Daily Mail*, May 25, 1979.

²³⁹ J. Dunston, *Alexandra, I Love You*, p. 34.

the Alexandra Party initiated clean up campaigns and petitioned Piet Koornhof, Minister of Co-operation and Development, to convert Alexandra into a municipality. Buti, who had a long established friendship with Koornhof dating back to their formative school years, appealed to his sympathies when he stated originally in Dutch an allusion to the importance of “inheriting land of their fathers” and their failure to understand why it should be taken from them, struck a chord with Dr. Koornhof.”²⁴⁰

All the efforts yielded success. In 1979, Alexandra won a reprieve and was restored to a family dwelling area. Everyone welcomed the reinstatement and the Reverend Sam Buti received a hero’s commendation. He went on to lead a new political body called the Alexandra Liaison Committee (ALC) which assumed administration over the township’s affairs as part of the reprieve’s stipulations. With Sam Buti at the ALC’s helm, his auxiliary support comprised: Lepile Taunyane, Harry Makubire, S. J. Mathebula, and Martin Sasa. There were critical differences between the Save the Alexandra Party and its replacement, the Alexandra Liaison Committee. The Save the Alexandra Party was a political body with clear national goals but acted on the local level while the Alexandra Liaison Committee had policing authority, which aimed, “. . . to provide security, physical health and comfort of proper housing for all people legitimately entitled to stay in Alex.”²⁴¹

These township servants used their newspaper, the *Alexandra Chronicle*, which first appeared in 1980 and published by the West Rand Administration Board, to announce its plans and also the body’s accomplishments. The Alexandra Liaison Committee worked towards establishing freehold rights equivalent to whites. It formed

²⁴⁰ Lucille Davie, “Why Alexandra Survived Apartheid”
http://www.alexandra.co.za/2003_updates/media_031027_sainfo.htm

²⁴¹ “Illegals, and ALC’s Self Perceptions,” *Sowetan*, July 29, 1981.

an information center to gather and house intelligence on justice and injustices, established a municipality not bound by community council status (yet Alexandra did become the first town council under the Black Local Authorities Act in November 1983), increase support against homeland policy and attain citizenship and civil rights for all South Africans.²⁴² The body therefore, unlike its predecessor, the Save the Alexandra Party, had broader defined goals. Those goals dealt with the problems that Africans experienced generally in South Africa such as not having citizenship in the land of their birthright. The Alexandra Liaison Committee dealt with national issues rather than a singular concern facing the township. Thus, the Alexandra Liaison Committee served as vehicle for national change. One way the Alexandra Liaison Committee sought change was through redevelopment.

The Importance of Redevelopment in Alexandra

Buti envisaged a model city with paved streets lined with trees, curved roads, flats lining the sky, flowered parks, gardens, and green grass along the shores of the dribbling Jukskei River. The plan, which was announced by the government in 1980, called for the division of Alexandra into seven sections, and for Alexandra to fall under a ninety-nine year leasehold.²⁴³ Veli Mahopa, founding member of the Alexandra Residents Association (ARA), a body that advocated for tenants' rights, and adequate housing, which was formed on 13 January 1985, explained what the development entailed and how it impacted the average Alexandran:

You build a small number of matchboxes but build mostly expensive houses, which most people didn't afford. The rentals too, I mean they

²⁴² The town council collapsed in April 1986.

²⁴³ "Alexandra Never Was a Community," *Izwi laseBantu*, 1982, p. 15.

were set at a level that the majority of people couldn't afford, that was to get rid of the rest of the people and retain a small number within.

Mahopa's testimony singles out the problems that the redevelopment bred. Although the Alexandra Liaison Committee approved the plans for new housing, the plan discriminated against lower income people and sought to create a black middle class. The Alexandra Liaison Committee reversed the process that the government had previously endorsed. Instead of advocating for single sex accommodations, the Alexandra Liaison Committee encouraged family dwelling, but only of a particular class. The goal was to create a township modeled on white suburbs.

Another comparison between the government and the Alexandra Liaison Committee resides with their methods of approach. National Party officials destroyed the township by establishing hostels, the first of which appeared in 1981, while the Alexandra Liaison Committee sought to beautify Alexandra with its proposal for parks, trees, and curved roads. Each plan however, depended on the removal of people. The only difference was that the government created laws to achieve its objective of a reduced population and the Alexandra Liaison Committee used class and financial status to attain the same goal.

While Mahopa painted a broad overview of the problems that the resettlement plan bred, such as distinctions by class, another unidentified township dweller provides a more subjective personal account as one of the plan's immediate victims. The unidentified informant stated:

Before I was moved into this shack, I resided at 93 6th Avenue where our houses were demolished to make way for the installation of a sewerage system. Comparing our former place to these buses and shacks, I think the conditions were better there; even though our former landlord used to

push us around, demanding high rentals; which stopped when Peri-Urban Board took over in 1979 by buying his property, I still think those houses were not as bad as this shack; which is so cold during the night, in fact it is just like staying outside.²⁴⁴

This informant discusses the current living conditions while also making a comparison to the previous accommodations. Shacks and buses replaced the homes that this person rented. Homes suggest stability and permanence whereas shacks, and buses, suggest nomadic living. With the shacks, the people owned the materials for production, such as the Hessian, zinc, and cardboard, but not the land. This form of ownership is what the government wanted. After all, Alexandra was a freehold settlement but with the deal that Buti brokered residents obtained the land under a ninety-nine year leasehold. A lease policy meant that residents would not own the property but would be perpetual tenants. Tenancy made it easier for the government to enforce its plan to build eight hostels.

Despite the lofty goals set by the Alexandra Liaison Committee, the redevelopment plan faced obstacles. Residents complained that the leaders embezzled money, many disliked living in the converted buses, and those who did receive new housing faced higher rents than allegedly cited by the Alexandra Liaison Committee. A rent row developed, and township residents took to the streets with placards, and shouted chants. Rents remained the same exorbitant prices, and flats continued to dot the landscape to accommodate those persons living in buses. Between 1979 and 1983 the government built only ninety-four units, seventy-nine of which were constructed by developers in 1982.²⁴⁵ Residents believed that the development crept because of the

²⁴⁴ "Interview with Unidentified Informant," *Izwi Lase Township*, July 1980.

²⁴⁵ "Alex Builds Flats," *City Press*, April 1983.

deteriorating relationship between the Reverend Sam Buti and Piet Koornhof.²⁴⁶

Whether or not the relationship between the two men affected the development process in Alexandra remains unsubstantiated but the problem of housing still haunts the township today.

Development served as a tool of resistance. Had Buti and his cronies been able to create their vision for a new Alexandra, then they could have successfully changed Alexandra's reputation as a crime haven slum. Opponents sought Alexandra's abolition because it represented an eyesore and it also prevented the development of White suburbs that skirted the township.²⁴⁷ This shows how the white suburbs and Alexandra were inextricably linked even while artificial boundaries such as factories physically separated the areas. Buti's goal therefore, of cleaning up the township, served to redefine Alexandra's image as a peaceful, urbane habitat housing a middle class constituency. While Buti envisaged major changes within Alexandra, tensions also emerged within the community. These tensions surfaced over who could afford to live in Alexandra and take advantage of the new housing development projects. Money served to weed out people. In this regard, Alexandra underwent its own form of incorporation and endorsement similar to the permit system. Instead of residency requirements resting on adherence to Section 10 rights, capital or lack thereof determined the type of domicile people occupied. Differences developed. A portion of the community lived in two-storey or ranch homes, while the other occupied flats. It seemed that the very entity that united people against apartheid, poverty, squalor, and race, is what served to disunite them.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Mike Sarakinsky, "From "Freehold" to "Model" Township, p.

Concluding Remarks

Alexandrans viewed the Peri-Urban Board's takeover as an infringement upon the township's status as a relatively administrative-exempt freehold. This illegal occupation as dissidents regarded the takeover, deprived Alexandrans of self-governance, and local authority. When government officials decided to convert family dwelling Alexandra to a place for migrant laborers in 1963, they began a massive effort to restructure that township, and those occupying Johannesburg's southern, western, eastern, and northern quadrants. Alexandra was to change from a property-owning freehold to a transitory hostel city, while other townships absorbed her overflowing residents. This decision required expropriation of residents, the demolition of their homes, the purchasing of their properties, the cooperation of neighboring townships, and the planning of the national government.

Because the Peri-Urban Board created a system of inclusion and exclusion with the permit system, Alexandra represented a microcosm of the wider society. No distinction existed between urban White and Black areas, save these considerations. Within each public space Blacks needed special permits to enter, reside and could only stay within a specified period. Visitors to Alexandra by contrast needed a conduit plus a pass as did those Blacks entering the urban areas. Racial sequestering enabled Alexandran residents to create an alternate and parallel space. Even with the Peri-Urban Board's ubiquitous presence, Alexandrans opposed apartheid.

Township dwellers related the loss of freehold status to wider societal issues. Lack of citizenship, property rights and physical mobility ranked high on the list of limited or non-existent freedoms. The denial of civil rights similarly affected other South

Africans but also Africans living elsewhere on the continent. Alexandrans readily acknowledged in their official memoranda and conversations, the significance of colonialism to what transpired in the township and South Africa as a whole. Alexandrans internationalized their plight using issues such as the passes, Afrika Day, and the Sharpeville Massacre to broaden a local township concern and to place it within the prism of wider global oppression. Government officials, by contrast, entrenched the inferior position that Africans occupied and embarked on their plan to restructure the designated Black areas.

CHAPTER FIVE: FROM STUDENT UPRISING TO SUBTERFUGE: ALEXANDRAN RESPONSES TO BANTU EDUCATION AND CONTINUAL REPRESSION, 1976-1985

This chapter examines Alexandra's history from the Soweto student uprising to the partial State of Emergency enacted by the President P. W. Botha. It argues that Alexandrans used the opportunity that the student uprising presented to redefine notions of death, and meanings of life. During the student uprising death meant several things such as the inability to mourn properly. The chapter interrogates the psychological aspect of grieving by relaying several accounts which show how government repression played a role in disrupting traditional burial services.

In addition to these objectives, the chapter compares and contrasts the 1976 student uprising with the 1984 education boycott to show continuities and discontinuities from two different historical periods. While this chapter discusses these topics, it also shows how Alexandrans engaged in public and private protests of solidarity. Beginning in 1962, an extensive cell network operated in Alexandra, which enabled operatives to disseminate intelligence, and to engage in urban guerrilla warfare. Alexandra engaged in multiple levels of resistance and used spaces within the homes and cars to further the struggle. Cell operatives, as I argue, became visible actors when they underwent two processes: disclosure and dissemblance.

Introduction

On 16 June 1976, students from Isaac Morrison High School in Soweto led a peaceful march to protest the imposition of Afrikaans. Participants numbered well into the thousands. Police officials met the marchers with heavy artillery, casspirs, hippos,

and live ammunition. Shots fired in all directions. One bullet felled teenager Hector Pietersen, whose lifeless corpse lay straddled in Mbuyisa Makhubu's arms. Sam Mzima, a local professional photographer, captured this scene and immortalized the harrowing image that graced local, national, and international newspapers.

Most studies governing the student uprising focus on Soweto, the movement's epicenter.²⁴⁸ "While the main activity occurred in Soweto. . . Cape Town and Port Elizabeth more than 160 African communities were affected, if only sporadically."²⁴⁹ Alexandra was one of these places. Coauthors Pat Hopkins and Helen Grange explain why Alexandra's participation in the student uprising deserves further scrutiny. "The most serious uprising, however, in which 24 died, was in Alexandra, where many believe the fighting on that single day was more intense than anything that occurred in Soweto during the first two days."²⁵⁰ Alan Brooks and Jeremy Brickhill wrote this, "The press coverage in Alexandra was poor, though some of the fiercest conflicts took place there."²⁵¹ Internationally renowned photographer Peter Magubane echoed these authors' sentiments. While on assignment in Alexandra, he noted, "Soweto was nothing to what happened in Alexandra that Friday. There the police went on a mission to kill. I saw a man shot dead while he was on the toilet."²⁵² Magubane also faced the police's wrath.

²⁴⁸ See Tom Lodge, *Black Politics since 1945*, Clive Glaser, J. Kane-Berman, *Soweto: Black Revolt: White Reaction*, (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1978), Baruch Hirson, *Year of Fire, Year of Ash: The Soweto Revolt: Roots of a Revolution?* (London: Zed Press, 1979), Philip Bonner and Lauren Segal, *Soweto: A History* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, 1998), Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu, *The Soweto Uprising-Counter Memories of June 1976* (Randburg: Raven Press, 1980), M. Mzamane, *Children of Soweto: A Trilogy* (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1992), Pat Hopkins and Helen Grange, *The Rocky Rioter Teargas Show: The Inside Story of the 1976 Soweto Uprising* (Cape Town: Zebra, 2001).

²⁴⁹ Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido (eds.),

²⁵⁰ Pat Hopkins and Helen Grange, *The Rocky Rioter Teargas Show: The Inside Story of the 1976 Soweto Uprising* (Cape Town: Zebra, 2001), p. 108.

²⁵¹ Alan Brooks and Jeremy Brickhill, *Whirlwind before the Storm: The Origins and Development of the Uprising in Soweto and the Rest of South Africa from June to December 1976*, (London: International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1980), p. 347.

²⁵² Ibid, pp. 193-194.

A policeman used his baton to fracture Magubane's nose. While Magubane suffered physical abuse, the worst injustice, the photographer believed, concerned his camera and its contents, which the police destroyed.

The story of Alexandra's contribution to the student uprising belies the notion that Soweto represented the official war torn or resistant site. Students from Alexandra commuted daily to Soweto for schooling so ideas between the two townships transmigrated. This shift in urban spaces allowed for the dissemination of the Black Consciousness ideology as espoused by Steve Biko. That philosophy had as its tenet, a definition of Black that included all oppressed people regardless of skin color or ethnic affiliation. Alexandrans employed this philosophy while conducting a protest in solidarity with Soweto. Although the death of Hector Pietersen represented one of the first fatalities of the student uprising, several other children had lost their lives. In Alexandra, the total reached thirty-nine. The 1976 student uprising divided family members, pitted generations against each other, and fostered interracial cooperation among Coloureds and Africans.

The 1976 Student Uprising in Alexandra

The Significance of Death and Mourning

On 18 June 1976 at 10:00 am on the uprising's first day in Alexandra police patrols encountered approximately 150 uprising participants who tried to force open the windows and doors of a shopping center near the intersection of Selbourne Avenue and Second Avenue. Police officials used loudhailers to request the participants to cease their activity. They ignored the call to surrender and the police opened fire. The melee left six

wounded, four dead, and ten others arrested. The accounts of this encounter appeared in the Cillie Commission Report, a published government document, which investigated the cause of the student uprising spanning from 16 June 1976 to 28 February 1977.

Headed by Justice Petrus Malan Cillie, this report uses a regional approach to itemize the actions taken by residents in various townships. The report identifies and describes the participants involved, the punishments given, the number of deaths, as well as suggesting the overall nature of resistance, in other words, whether they employed the Black Power salute of a clenched fist, if they threw stones or used rifles. Omitted from this discussion are participant or bystander accounts and the reasons why Alexandrans participated in the student uprising. Informants cited these reasons as an explanation for their involvement: a “join or else” ultimatum, inability to pay school fees, to protest against the imposition of Afrikaans or any other language that was not indigenous to a particular group, and because they were Black.²⁵³ To this list of explanations, I add this consideration that the death of individuals sparked others to join the protest because they mourned the loss of friends and sought some form of retribution.

Jabu James Malinga, who participated in the day’s “festivities”, was a husband and father of three who had worked for a steel firm until his employers retrenched him because of his political activism in 1983. On the uprising’s first day, Malinga saw a group of children singing freedom songs, who called him to come outside and join them. Malinga obliged and joined the chorus of protesters as they proceeded onto the beer hall on Third Avenue, then to the Health Committee’s offices on Second Avenue where they encountered trouble with the police. The police opened fire on them, and as they ran

²⁵³ Sipho Zungu, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 22 April, 2002, Ben Mhlongo, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 8 January 2002, and Salani Sithole, interview, tape recording, 18 May 2002.

towards the beer hall next to the cinema on Third Avenue and then onto Second Avenue where they began throwing stones at the police officers near the Health Committee before running all the way to Sixth Avenue. There at Sixth Avenue the police shot Malinga's friend and he lay in a pool of blood. Malinga could hardly see his head from the blood that saturated his friend. A distraught Malinga decided that he had nothing to lose and began fighting the police on Seventh Avenue before proceeding onto Eighth Avenue where he was shot in the back. The flesh wound failed to slow Malinga down as he continued throwing stones and fighting back. He ended up in the hospital for two weeks.²⁵⁴

Malinga's story not only paints a graphic portrayal of police brutality but also plots the trajectory of resistance. Residents, who traveled from one avenue to another, used the havens of the streets in an attempt to elude the police. Alexandra's original layout comprised a gridiron pattern which stretched a square mile. Yet, the records fail to reveal whether or not residents used the "double-ups" or shortcuts or windows as part of their defensive and offensive maneuvers as they did during the 1991-1992 ethnic dispute known as the Sandwich War.²⁵⁵ What is certain was that the residents and the police transformed the streets into embattled war zones. These same spaces also became sites of memory.

Blood stains left an indelible impression identifying spots where the police shot teenagers such as Philip March, a student activist who had attended "nightly" soccer meetings. When Philip's mother, Tukie March, went looking for her son, his friends took her to the blood stained spot where Philip had laid before being taken to the hospital.

²⁵⁴ Jabu James Malinga, interview, Alexandra Township, October 28, 1996. Truth and Reconciliation Commission, <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/index.htm>.

²⁵⁵ Veli Mahopa, interview, tape recording, Alexandra, South Africa, 9 March 2002.

Philip March died on 20 June 1976, two days after three bullets penetrated his body. The Cillie Commission failed to mention what happened to his blood soaked body unlike another example, which describes Sipho Mavimbela, and explains that his body arrived at the police station by an unidentified person.²⁵⁶ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report and Mark Mathabane's autobiography, *Kaffir Boy*, provide some further insight on whether or not family members or the morgue reclaimed the bodies from the scene, or if relatives conducted proper burials or viewed the deceased as political heroes or vagabonds unworthy of eulogizing, hand washing and other ceremonial rites.

When the March family tried to conduct a proper burial, police officials stormed the graveside ceremonies and fired teargas onto the crowd. Clouds of smoke inundated the air. Crowds ran with bowed heads and covered mouths to prevent smoke inhalation. Mrs. March recalled, "The coming back [from the funeral] was not so nice because traditionally we cook food for people who come and then from there people were not at ease."²⁵⁷ Police officials had interrupted the public ritual of mourning and had denied family members the opportunity to remember Philip and eulogize him in the manner they saw fit. This inability to conduct proper funeral rites carried over to the home, where as March revealed women cooked food after the funerals. March alluded to the importance of cooking, yet she failed to mention what foods she or other family members had prepared and whether or not there was a ritual associated with eating.

Not all funerals occurred under such intense pressure. The death of a teenager named Mashudu prompted many community members to defy legislative measures that prohibited gatherings of three or more people. Mashudu received a proper burial unlike

²⁵⁶ Appendix, Cillie Commission Report, p. 111.

²⁵⁷ Irene Tukie March, Interview, Alexandra Township, October 28, 1996. Truth and Reconciliation Commission, <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/index.htm>.

her counterpart Philip March. Attendants sang liberation songs and delivered speeches. The unidentified preacher, who presided over the services, proclaimed, “in her, as in hundreds of other black children who have died since this whole nightmare began, had been embodied the hope for a better Africa.”²⁵⁸ The funeral service provoked contemplation and comparisons with countries having similar racial systems as Mathabane revealed:

After the funeral I went back home, shut myself in the bedroom and questioned a belief I had long cherished: that there was a place in South Africa for the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, that what Martin Luther King, Jr., had done for blacks in America could be done for blacks in South Africa.²⁵⁹

Mathabane’s account conveys another important purpose of funerals in that it allowed the living to question and to deliberate over the status quo. Moreover, funerals provided the opportunity for attendants to discuss world issues and to make parallels with other places. These comparisons enabled township residents to understand that what transpired in Alexandra did not occur within a vacuum. Apartheid apologists did not want Africans to understand that similar systems of racial segregation existed in other places around the world, let alone that there were activists opposing these inequitable relationships.

Funerals enabled attendants and speakers to disseminate information, to provoke critical thinking, to assure the living of freedom’s advent, and to honor the fallen. Funerals also resurrected the living. Death occurred on multiple levels because the bereaved also died when they could and could not honor the deceased. The ability to pay homage resuscitated parents, friends, and well-wishers stricken with grief. The fact that

²⁵⁸ Mark Mathabane, *Kaffir Boy*, p. 267.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

the funerary space became a battlefield shows how much of a threat the celebration of life and death represented. “Funerals constitute distinctive public spaces that focus local attention on how particular persons’ sentiments influence the well-being of others. Funerals are key to the exercise of civil conduct.”²⁶⁰ In Alexandra and other parts of South Africa, funerals became a symbol of state repression.

While Belinda Bozzoli captures the pageantry of the funeral ceremonies in her work, *Theatres of Struggle*, which focus on the 1986 Alexandra Rebellion, she leaves room for further interrogation and elaboration in the private and public domain.²⁶¹ Publicly these funerals represented more than a continuation of the liberation struggle for they were rites of passage not only for the deceased but also for the survivors. Funerals became a testament to convictions. These public events were spaces where participants renegotiated control and power over life. Yet while pageantry underlay these events the behind the scenes activities tell another story. For example, privately held activities, such as the “after tears parties,” and the unveiling of the tombstones, also form part of the ritual.²⁶²

The meaning of death and the practice of mourning changed over time, and Bozzoli gives readers only one capsule of this exploration. Were the same rituals of pomp and circumstance always part of the bereavement process for Alexandra’s residents or did national laws or historical circumstances determine their production, and were they always defined as political funerals? The 1950 May Day labor protest serves as an example. This protest started when a group of people gathered at the Plaza on Ninth

²⁶⁰ Deborah Durham and Frederick Klaitz, “Funerals and the Public Space in Sentiment in Botswana,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 28, 4 (December 2002), p. 5.

²⁶¹ Belinda Bozzoli, *Theatres of Struggle and the End of Apartheid* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), pp. 210-232.

²⁶² Josiah Jele, interview, tape recording, Pretoria, South Africa, 2 April, 2002.

Avenue and threw stones at the building before burning it. Relatives of the twelve killed during the protest declined to have a political funeral. "What have these innocent people done that they should have been killed? Why should they and not the leaders be dead?" Unlike May Day leaders, relatives did not view the deceased as part of the collective struggle instead, they saw them as individuals who deserved private memorial services divorced from the pomp and circumstance which usually accustomed political funerals. The deceased's honor lay in the private recollections of family members rather than the victims' political endeavors or convictions.²⁶³ Political funerals occurred more frequently in later decades and were not seen as sacrilegious instead they were viewed by attendants as rites of passage. In 1976 when youth such as Mashudu lay dead, shouts of Viva Mandela!, and Viva Joe Slovo! deafened the crowds. Mashudu was a heroine because her death symbolized the brutality of the apartheid regime. Her "liberation" as did that of Hector Pietersen served to intensify the struggle of those left behind.

Scientific explanations exist, for example, the Cillie Commission Report contains extensive detail on how the police killed people. The appendix lists personal particulars, race, sex, and age, date and place of death, the post-mortem number, the cause of death, finding for liability, circumstances leading to the death and the report even noted the alcohol blood levels. Thirty-two people, comprising twenty-eight males, and four females, died on the uprising's first day. Post-mortem evidence revealed that the deceased died from police shootings, stab wounds, head and other injuries, and ricocheted gunfire.²⁶⁴ Police officials gave each deceased person a post-mortem number, and described the date, and place of injury or death, and the circumstances surrounding

²⁶³ "Relatives of May Day Dead Reject 'Political' Funerals," *Bantu World*, May 13, 1950.

²⁶⁴ Cillie Commission Report, 6.12 Witwatersrand, pp. 109-117.

these occurrences. For example, in one entry which described the death of Jacob Ledwaba, the Cillie Commission Report stated the following, “the deceased was accidentally shot dead when the motor car in which he was a passenger was fired at.”²⁶⁵ The report half-heartedly assigned culpability to the police as this entry for Aubrey Van Rooyen, illustrates, “The deceased presumably died by the police.” Another entry credits the police with the death, however, cites the reason for this unknown female’s parting as her fault. The report read, “The deceased was killed by the police during looting and arson at a store-she disregarded an order to stand still.”²⁶⁶ The chart below contains the cause of death, age, sex and race of the party.²⁶⁷

Table 8
Student Uprising Fatalities

Name	Age and Sex	Method of death
Florence Magadani	16 years, Black female	killed by the police
Grace Masenya	46 years, Black female	shot dead by the police
Jacob Mathebula	32 years, Black male	died from a gunshot wound
Sello Matsonyane	32 years, Black male	gunshot wound
Sipho Mavimbela	17 years, Black male	gunshot wound in the chest
Macina Memani	34 years, Black male	gunshot wound in the chest
Felix Mhlango	21 years, Black male	gunshot wound
Bekameva Chule	33 years, Black male	gunshot wound in the chest
Shadrack Kekane	12 years, Black male	gunshot wound
Maleka Kgampe	25 years, Black male	gunshot wound
Jacob Ledwaba	19 years, Black male	gunshot wound
Nomvulu, Nokwana	13 years, Black male	multiple injuries
Unknown	28 years, Black female	gunshot wound in the chest
Margaret Wilson	25 years, Coloured female	gunshot wound
Aubrey Van Rooyen	13 years, Coloured male	gunshot wound in the chest
Mangoene Vilankulu	23 years, Black male	gunshot wound
Elizabeth Siklangu	36 years, Black female	gunshot wound
Benjamin Sithole	34 years, Black male	gunshot wound
Sikhathi Sithole	29 years, Black male	gunshot wound
Madimetya Tefu	31 years, Black male	gunshot wound
Lele Thobejane	31 years, Black female	gunshot wound in the chest
Isaac Modukanele	22 years, Black male	gunshot wounds
Peter Nkutha	26 years, Black male	gunshot wounds
Cornelius Noge	39 years, Black male	gunshot wound

²⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 109.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 115.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, pp.77, 109-117.

Name	Age and Sex	Method of Death
Nchimane Pitse	20 years, Black male	gunshot wound
Jeremia Radebe	50 years, Black male	gunshot wound in abdomen
Harry Ruiters	35 years, Coloured male	gunshot wound
Samuel Sealetsa	23 years, Black male	gunshot wound
Victor Sealetsa	39 years, Black male	gunshot wound in abdomen
Jabulani Sebeela	24 years, Black male	gunshot wound
Kgangetsile Senatle	22 years, Black male	gunshot wound
Lawrence Serobe	17 years, Black male	gunshot wound
Philip March	16 years, Coloured male	gunshot wound
Grace Masenya	46 years, Black female	gunshot wound in abdomen
Dick Majola	21 years, Black male	gunshot wound
Godfrey Mahapo	13 years, Black male	gunshot wound
Jacob Magazi	62 years, Black male	gunshot wound

Alexandra's youngest reported tragedy was Shadrack Kekane, a twelve year old Black male; however, the evidence presented by oral informants reveals something different. One Alexandran resident, Abbey, remembered witnessing a "bus driver" backing up and running over a small toddler by accident. The vehicle's wheels crushed the infant and left the tires' indelible imprint on his mauled body.²⁶⁸ This toddler was not among the registered fallen in the Cillie Commission Report, however, Namvula Nokwane, a thirteen year old Black female, who died similarly, when a hijacked bus crushed her against a wall, remained among the ranks.²⁶⁹ No Alexandrans expressed their viewpoints concerning the acts committed; therefore, the Cillie report fails to capture the human side of death, such as mourning and the rituals associated with it.

An account provided by Alan Brooks and Jeremy Brickhill provides an alternative discourse to analyzing death that relies less on statistics and more on descriptions. The scholars wrote: "on another occasion four youths ambushed a policeman who was guarding a shop, and wrested away his rifle. His cries attracted

²⁶⁸ Abbey X (pseudonym), interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 5 May 2002.

²⁶⁹ Cillie Commission Report, p. 77.

colleagues who opened fire killing three of the youths-but the fourth escaped with the rifle.”²⁷⁰ Brooks and Brickhill describe the acts while in progress as opposed to the Cillie Commission report which listed the events as itemized accounts. With the Cillie Commission Report death features as a committed act of the past, while Brooks and Brickhill’s account show the progression and explain how the process endured an interruption. For example, the police officer’s cries interrupted the act of death because they alerted his colleagues of trouble.

With the police officer’s life spared, his colleagues redefined the meaning of death when they took away three lives. Death, in this example, pitted Whites against Blacks and involved a form of retribution on the part of the policemen. These policemen settled the score and also restored a semblance of authority within the township. This example also shows the different power relations that existed. In the beginning, the four uprising participants had the upper hand, but when reinforcements came, the tables turned, and the police assumed dominant position. The uprising participant that escaped with the rifle also assumed a dominant position because of the weaponry that he now had. Death and life were negotiated rituals. Dominance translated into a numerical advantage for the policemen and a psychological benefit for the lone gunman.

The Path of Resistance During the Student Uprising

Alexandrans had to operate within the township’s borders because the police had sealed off all entrances and exits, besides cordoning off Wynberg and the industrial area which encircled the township.²⁷¹ With the presence of armed policemen, the path of

²⁷⁰ Alan Brooks and Jeremy Brickhill, *Whirlwind before the Storm*, p. 21.

²⁷¹ Ibid, p. 20.

resistance took these forms. Participants, whom the Cillie Commission Report identifies as scholars, *tsotsis* (thugs), parents, and children, targeted specific businesses, and schools. Businesses included: the Hi-Ho Lawnmower Factory and the Mimosa Café on London Street, Green's Fresh Meat Supplies on Selbourne, and several bottle stores. The latter two locations were important for the following reasons. Located on First Avenue, Green's Fresh Meat Supplies store served as an abattoir, and Alexandrans went there to purchase cattle parts not sold to Whites. How long Green operated his business in Alexandra remains undetermined.

Green, who was Jewish, violated freehold tenure policy because he owned a commercial business in an area slated for Coloureds and Africans only. Neither the Cillie Commission report nor the oral testimonies collected provide an explanation for Green's shop serving as a target, so a hypothetical guess is in order. While this store served the community's needs, participants perhaps used the opportunity that the student uprising presented to wage a complaint against the infiltration of Whites in Alexandra. The Alexandra Traders Association had already launched a similar campaign against Indian shop owners in 1956, so acrimony did develop between racial groups because of competing businesses. Africans targeted these same Indian businesses during the student uprising.²⁷²

At least two shops belonging to Indians on Vasco da Gama were soft targets. One shop was gutted completely, while the other one required maneuvering on the group's part to gain entry. Behind that shop lived an Indian and his family. Participants stormed

²⁷² "Alexandra Traders Protest Against Indian Traders," *Bantu World*, April 9, 1949. "Africans Wage 'War' Against Indians," *The World*, November 10, 1956. Africans wanted to remove Indians from the township. They met on Wednesday 7 November 1956, to discuss legal action against the businessmen and their permanent removal from the township.

the shop, tore down the burglar proofing, and the steel gates that barred the front door. The family, which occupied the building's residential section, had barricaded themselves for protection. Moments before the assailants broke down the barricades; the police arrived and prevented them from carrying out their threat to kill this family. Cautionary appeals sounded from the loudspeakers, but the perpetrators ignored them and the warning shots that followed. Three people lost their lives. One woman was shot dead while fleeing, and two men endured mortality while trying to break in using one of the shop's back windows. The barricaded Indian family remained unscathed, while the police arrested the remaining protesters.²⁷³ The path of resistance showed the routes of death, fear and intimidation. For instance, the Indian family had barricaded themselves inside the shop. While the Indian family awaited their fate, those outside the store controlled the escape routes until the police arrived.

This account, as does Green's vignette, reveal important information about the nature of resistance and its interpretation. Instead of analyzing the violence as acts of resistance, the Cillie Commission report labeled all breaking and entering as looting rather than understanding the moral economy that governed the residents. People needed food and household supplies, as these quotations illustrate, "this bag of mealie meal will last forever," this paraffin drum will keep the family going for months and "I have enough candles to light up the whole [of] Alexandra."²⁷⁴ People also attained carcasses of sheep, Coca-Cola, infant formula, and a rodent killer called Rotex. Neither dogs nor burglar proofing inhibited unemployed and hardworking Alexandrans from securing much needed items. One unemployed man visited a store where he used to work, and

²⁷³ Cillie Commission Report, p. 32.

²⁷⁴ Mark Mathabane, *Kaffir Boy*, p. 265.

upon seeing that evacuated Chinese shop owners had barricaded the entrance, he proceeded to distract the dogs by giving them some poisoned meat. With the dogs dead, he and others cut the fence and entered the store.²⁷⁵

Besides acquiring needed household items, uprising participants targeted these businesses for another reason. Alexandra mirrored South African society because a small minority controlled Alexandra's economy and few Blacks had sustained economic enterprises plus according to Mathabane, the Chinese shop owners cheated and overcharged Africans.²⁷⁶ Moral retribution guided these protestors as fear governed the shop owners' actions. Asians were not the only ones fleeing. Neighboring Whites feared that the rebellion would spill over to their suburbs, and as much as the government tried to insure that everything was under control, White flight intensified. Asians and Whites chose self-imposed exile to staying in Alexandra and witnessing the bedlam. A Senior Police Officer relayed this description to the Cillie Commission which best captures the struggle's temper and tenor: "We ran forward into a crowd of 800 Bantus who were shouting and giving the Black Power sign. . . I ordered them to disperse and one charged me with a brick. He was just about to throw it when I fired at him with an R 1 (automatic rifle) and he fell."²⁷⁷

Scenes such as this characterized Alexandra's embattled state. This is another area where the Cillie Commission report failed to bleed its sources for additional information. No correspondent was there to interview Asians or Blacks regarding the uprising or why they chose to leave the township. Instead, the report discounts the significance of human flight. Whether moving to a white suburb or leaving the country, human flight served as a

²⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 264.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Brooks and Brickhill, *Whirlwind before the Storm*, p. 24.

form of resistance and acquiescence. Asians and Whites left the township for security reasons, as did Africans but the latter also sought political indoctrination and combat training as members of the military wings of the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress.²⁷⁸ Traffic also increased into Alexandra, despite the fact that the police had posted men at each entrance and exit. Parents working in Johannesburg worried about their children and braved the bus ride and the war-like conditions within the township to insure their children's safety and to have a peace of mind.²⁷⁹ As people trickled into and out of the township, clouds of smoke engulfed the air, shots rang out, dead corpse lay strewn on the ground and schools went up in flames.

Schools, the place where teachers were to teach all subjects in Afrikaans, served as another target. Africans attended segregated ethnic and linguistic schools. Coloureds attended schools in Coronationville and other places, so there was already separation between them and Africans. Alexandra had only one secondary school due to the fact that the government had revoked the township's status as a family dwelling area, so most school-aged children attended educational centers in Soweto. Ideas transmigrated from Soweto to Alexandra and vice versa. Students employed similar strategies. For example, in Soweto, scholars locked the school gates, and taunted students who wanted to attend school by throwing stones at them.²⁸⁰

In Alexandra, students targeted thirteen schools, among which were the Alexandra School and Ithuthe School, and set them on fire. Portions or all of these school buildings suffered damage. Alexandrans and Sowetans targeted schools because they

²⁷⁸ Michael Cross and Linda Chisholm, "The Roots of Segregated Schooling in Twentieth-Century South Africa," in Mokubung Nkomo (ed), *Pedagogy of Domination: Toward a Democratic Education in South Africa*, ((New Jersey: African World Press, 1990), p. 61.

²⁷⁹ Miriam Sekele, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 18 May 2002.

²⁸⁰ Cillie Commission Report, p. 85.

represented symbols of oppression. These were the sites where they learned Afrikaans, and “tribal” customs, the white man’s history and other subjects that rendered them subservient to white needs. Becoming lawyers, doctors, and other professionals stood, according to mainstream Afrikaner beliefs beyond their intellectual grasp. Disparities also existed between Africans and Coloureds. Coloureds received free stationary and books, while Africans paid for these necessities plus tendered school fees.²⁸¹

Students also registered their grievances by not writing their exams. Salani Sithole explained the significance of this action. He stated, “To avoid humiliation we didn’t write exams in 1977, the whole of Alexander. It was a time of boycotting and conscientization when people started thinking about going into exile against the system.”²⁸² Sithole raises an important option for Alexandrans and other South Africans, exile. Exile represented an opportunity for township dwellers to broaden the struggle by participating in the PAC and ANC military wings.

During the height of the uprising, teachers resigned.²⁸³ Schools lay empty for another reason. Students and parents could not afford school fees, and the additional year in school taxed already overstretched budgets. Concerned parents wanted to find something for students to do besides wander the streets, so they along with the Alexandra Liaison Committee founded the Thusong Youth Centre in 1979, the year of the International child.²⁸⁴ Thusong stands near the council houses, and a row of staircased flats on Tenth Avenue. Eight classrooms, an auditorium, office, library, boardroom, and

²⁸¹ Carol Britz, interview, tape recording, Alexandra, South Africa, 16 April, 2002.

²⁸² Salani Sithole, interview, tape recording, Alexandra, South Africa 18 May 2002.

²⁸³ Jonathan Hyslop, “Teacher Resistance in African Education From the 1940s to the 1980s,” in Mokubung Nkomo (ed.), *Pedagogy of Domination: Toward a Democratic Education in South Africa* (New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1990), p. 94.

²⁸⁴ Beauty More, interview, tape recording, Alexandra, South Africa, 27 May 2002.

a caretaker's headquarters house computers, terminals, electric type-writers, a photographic laboratory and fully equipped kitchen.²⁸⁵ A dozen teachers offered seventeen subjects. Thusong created junior mayors and deputy junior mayors to oversee the building's activities.²⁸⁶

According to Thusong employee Beauty More, "The objective of this center was for us to try and rebuild the youth after the 1976 riots because kids didn't want to go to school."²⁸⁷ At Thusong the youth learned Afrikaans, English, dancing, money management, cooking, sewing, typing, first aid, and karate.²⁸⁸ The center not only offered basic skills instruction, but also encouraged the arts. Youth participants staged plays, wrote poetry, painted, and sculptured. Besides, these activities Thusong employees mentored the youth, debriefed them, and provided counseling services. More provided an explanation for the latter offering. She stated, "We didn't know a person was traumatized. . . In the olden days we viewed things such as counseling, as a white thing."²⁸⁹

Parents took physically unhurt children to mean that they had no problems or suffered from any ailment because as More stated, "The children were safe."²⁹⁰ Safety became the antidote for fixing and overlooking emotional problems. Only when students began discussing various issues did More and parents understand how the uprising had affected them. More's account depicts another side of life and death especially for those that survived. Survivors needed to find ways to cope with the loss of loved ones.

²⁸⁵ "Alex to get New Centre for all Its Youths," *Sowetan* September 28, 1984.

²⁸⁶ Charles Carter, 'We are the Progressives': Alexandra Youth Congress Activists and the Freedom Charter, 1983-1985, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 17, 2 (June 1991), p.198.

²⁸⁷ More, interview.

²⁸⁸ "Alex to get new Centre for all its youths."

²⁸⁹ More, interview.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

Thusong provided an outlet for township dwellers at a time when the government had repressed all creative channels. The “fort” which was the name given to the Thusong Youth Centre, served as safe haven for students who reconstructed the meaning of death through poetry, plays, and other forms of visual and written art.²⁹¹

Circumstances surrounding the student uprising reveal that death featured prominently in the political and social life of Alexandrans. Alexandrans defined death in their own terms when they honored the fallen as political heroes. Funeral attendants experienced their own “passing” as they sang liberation songs and listened to the various speakers who rendered eulogies. More’s account, however, shows the alternative side of death, the coping that “the living” must undergo.

Therapy helped students who witnessed friends dying or visited them at the hospitals before their death to grieve and it allowed parents to understand for the first time that being safe did not mean that death or the threat of being killed did not affect children. The Thusong Youth Centre played a major role in helping school-aged children and older youth to deal with nightmares, insomnia and other forms of trauma.²⁹² A different forum, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, helped Mrs. March to confront the perpetrators who killed her son Philip. It is these outlets which allowed parents and the youth to grieve and to understand the deteriorating relationship between parents, children and elders.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

Crossing the Generational Divide: Relationships between Students and Elders

Relations between elders and youth broke down during the student uprising. The story of Susan Piliso, a Soweto born Alexandran, provides an example of the moral decay that governed elder/youth relations. Students came to Piliso's house with a large tank which they placed on her stoop. The tank contained benzene, methodine spirit, petrol, and paraffin. A pipe enabled the student activists to funnel the tank's contents into bottles. Piliso refused to let the tank stay there. Students scoffed at her decision and warned her to stay inside with the doors locked and not to talk to the police. However, if the police asked questions avoid telling the truth. A reluctant Piliso cowered because she remembered what happened to a friend who had refused the youth's request to spend a night at her place. The students came the next day with a whole van and she had to accommodate them.²⁹³

It appears from this recount that single women faced problems from student activists rather than married couples because they perhaps appeared more vulnerable. This shows the negative side of resistance and reinforces the idea that participants joined the uprising because of force or strong peer pressure. This also reveals something important about familial relations and the absence of men in the home. Males protected the households therefore their absence created the impression that homes were defenseless. Questions of ownership and occupation also emerged.

Piliso's recollection also revealed how personal property became part of the collective during the liberation struggle. Homes and front steps became political. Confiscation of personal property involved aggressive behavior and disrespectful

²⁹³ Susan Piliso, interview, tape recording, Alexandra, South Africa, 15 March 2002.

commentary from mostly male participants. Male authority supplanted seniority. These interpersonal relationships also reenacted male/female roles within contemporary African society, where men allegedly led, and women followed. Piliso's testimony reveals another important consideration concerning rules of engagement during "war" and a time of peace. In war, all customs fell by the wayside as student activists reconstructed the township's boundaries to establish weaponry and trenches. Private homes emerged as alternate battlefields where disputes centered on miscommunication or over ideological differences.

Parents wanted to pursue one strategy to attain freedom and the children another tactic. Two vignettes, one between a father and son, and the opposite counterpart, between mother and son, support this assertion. Tshediso Buti, one of three sons of the Reverend Sam Buti, was an active student leader, serving as a member of his high school's Student Representative Council (SRC), and as part of his father's junior Mayor Council. While returning home from school one day he had an epiphany that he later revealed to his father. He stated, "Father, I now know who the enemy is. It is you."²⁹⁴

Because of the elder Buti's affiliation with the Dutch Reformed Church, SRC members treated Tshediso and his siblings as community outcasts.²⁹⁵ Tshediso's convictions about Black Consciousness ideology allowed him superficial and limited entry into the inner circle of other African students. Students questioned his loyalty to the struggle because of his father's theological position. While these individuals were registered as Blacks, and fit neatly into that social construction, their participation in the struggle became null and void because of the position the father held.

²⁹⁴ Tshediso Buti, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 17 January 2002.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

Alinah Serote, a former nurse, and Alexandra property owner, also faced racial exclusion. Serote discussed Alexandra's history and even shared some personal antidotes. Serote, by her own admission, first became politically aware when the police detained her son poet and writer Mongane Wally Serote, without charging him in 1969. She stated, "I was told the reason they detained him because of the type of books that he was writing. You know he wrote books about Alexander, but I couldn't understand why he got arrested when he was telling the truth."²⁹⁶ It was not until she heard and began participating in the Soweto branch of Women for Peace and established an Alexandran branch that she became politically aware. Women from diverse educational, occupational, and social backgrounds harnessed their power to teach females sewing, welding, gardening, catering, baking, candle making, learning computer technology, and furniture making²⁹⁷ Besides teaching vocational skills, Women for Peace fought for peace without confrontation, women's rights, apartheid's abolition, grassroots empowerment and interracial cooperation.

While these were lofty goals, and in alignment with those sought by a diverse populace of young people, generational tensions did emerge between parents and children. The problem was that Women for Peace allowed for the inclusion of whites among its membership, and many students strongly opposed this interracial composition. Serote was undaunted by the opposition and used the organization and its status as a non-confrontational and interracial group, to speak before Parliament. Government officials prohibited Africans from presenting their grievances before Parliament, however, because White women supported Women for Peace doors opened for Serote. She

²⁹⁶ Serote, interview.

²⁹⁷ Dorah Molepo, interview, tape recording, 26 February 2002.

recalled the importance of this interracial union, “Because we had the whites [Bridget Oppenheimer and Cecile Cilliers,] and their daughters, we could go forward. We knew that alone we would be fodder for their [Afrikaners] guns. They would kill us.”²⁹⁸ She used the platform to explain the children’s predicament, especially reversing the situation putting Africans in power and Whites having to comply with a change in language policy. Serote then appealed to Parliament members to make them understand that students wanted them to listen not shoot and kill them.²⁹⁹

Serote’s statements are powerful for several reasons. She stood before Parliament and personalized the story of school children dying at the hands of state employees. Then, Serote took the theory of compulsory language and made it practicable by putting faces on the masses. Her dialogue with high government officials enabled her to enter mainstream white society and plead on behalf of the youth. Motherism, the act of protecting children, guided her decision. Some mothers such as Mrs. M. still suffer from lingering pain brought on by the uprising. Mrs. M. stated, “Those times, I don’t like to talk about those times. How can you go to work when your child is in jail for three months?”³⁰⁰ Mrs. M. presented another consideration, imprisonment. Imprisonment served as a form of death because police officials prevented parents from visiting their children. Instead, they endured seclusion behind bars while parents worried. Both Serote and Mrs. M. wanted to protect their children but also those of other parents.

²⁹⁸ John Carter, *Ray: A Memoir of Ray Carter* (Cape Town: Pretext, 1997), p. 39. Oppenheimer explained the rationale for establishing Women for Peace, “women were not bound as men [were] by politics of convention. We’re free to operate.” Women for Peace differed from Soweto’s Black Parent Council (BPC), a coed group founded by Manas Buthelezi or the Alexandra Interim Committee; both formed in the uprising’s wake, and created to help parents grieving from the loss of loved ones obtain legal fees.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Mrs. M. interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 5 May 2002.

Ideological differences further separated parents and children. For example, Serote's son Mongane was a Black Consciousness proponent while she on the other hand, supported interracial cooperation with Whites. Although both mother and son adhered to separate philosophies, an ideological congruence, however, did exist. They aligned to philosophies that sought racial cooperation. The difference, however, concerned the racial composition and the meanings of these configurations. Proponents of Black Consciousness defined the term Black to include all oppressed people, whether they were from Asian, African, or European extraction. Women for Peace, by contrast, formed an all-together different form of Pan majority/minority union. While the organization also represented an ethnic plurality, it was a female dominated, middle-aged and a parental body whereas Black Consciousness ideologies were a co-ed group of mostly young people. Women for Peace, as did Black Consciousness ideologues, used English as a medium of communication. Mongane Serote explained the significance of employing a foreign tongue as a literary motif:

As English was not the people's first language we felt we had to use simple, direct English that would be clearly understood, and it was this that became, at one and the same time, a language of the poets and a language of liberation.³⁰¹

English liberated Black Consciousness poets but also Women for Peace members, however, the primary difference lies in its application. Female participants spoke in several tongues and needed a lingua franca to bridge the divide between Black and White, and the national and ethnic differences that existed within each group. Women for Peace members did not resort to using vernacular languages when writing down

³⁰¹ Mongane Wally Serote, "Post-Sharpeville Poetry: A Poet's View," in *On the Horizon* (Fordsburg: Congress of South African Writers, 1990), p. 10.

minutes or engaging in meetings whereas Black Consciousness poets spoke in vernacular languages and captured their written artistry in English. These contrasts between styles and organizational and political leanings reflect differences in ideology. Sometimes these philosophies differed from their public role. The fact that parents intervened on behalf of children shows the multiple levels of resistance that predominated in Alexandra. Instead of government officials playing a role in the youth's development by providing remedial programs or other assistance, parents assumed the lead and demonstrated their agency.³⁰² Parents intervened by creating the Thusong Youth Centre and by sending a delegation to Parliament. Missing from this analysis is statistical information regarding the number of youth who participated at Thusong and what types of programs that they developed. Further research should shed light on how Africans and Coloureds interacted during the uprising and its aftermath.

While several works such as Gavin Lewis's *Between the Wire and the Wall*, Ian Goldin's *Making Race* or Zimitri Erasmus, *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place*, focus on Coloureds using identity and political movements as foci, these monographs do not fully explore the relationships that Coloureds had with Africans especially in a township such as Alexandra where they lived side by side.³⁰³ The 1976 student uprising showcased the tensions between parents and children yet more work needs to be done to explore the relationship of Coloureds and Africans. The story of Philip March showed that Coloureds joined in solidarity with Africans as does this quotation given by Carol

³⁰² Jon Abbink and Ineke van Kessel (eds). *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth, Politics, and Conflict in Africa*, (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 8-10.

³⁰³ See Gavin Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall: A History of South African Coloured Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), Ian Goldin, *Making Race: The Politics of Economics and Coloured Identity* (London: Longman, 1987), and Zimitri Erasmus, *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: New Perspectives on Coloured Identities in Cape Town* (Cape Town: Kwela, 2001).

Britz, she stated, “We joined the uprising so that they may also get what we have as Coloureds.”³⁰⁴ While these examples highlight interracial cooperation, we must further interrogate and interview people to ascertain the depth of this unity or depending on additional evidence, the disunity. The level of organization among Coloureds also deserves further attention. In what ways did Coloureds distinguish themselves as a separate group? Back in the mid 1930s, Coloureds formed the Alexandra Coloured Association. At one time Coloureds, bought into the then segregationist policy because the Alexandra Coloured Association had called for a separate Coloureds bus and more representation on the Health Committee. So, there exists a history of separation and unity between Coloureds and Africans that deserves further scrutiny.

Lastly, it is important to compare and contrast the 1976 student uprising to a later educational struggle that occurred in 1984. The strategies of resistance were similar and therefore show the continuities from one decade to another. During the 1984 education boycott students left classrooms empty as they protested the prefect system. Not only did students demand an explanation for their indefinite suspension but they wanted the Minerva Representative Council (MRC) to replace the prefect system, because they felt the body did not represent the students’ interests or promote student alliances.³⁰⁵ Thomas Baloyi, Minerva High School principal, ordered the students most of whom were MRC members to leave the premises immediately. Minerva High was no stranger to resistance. Trouble had started at Minerva earlier in the year when students demanded the

³⁰⁴ Britz, interview and Tukie March, Truth and Reconciliation. Although Philip’s mother tongue was Afrikaans he empathized with Africans by providing a hypothetical explanation. He reversed the situation and instead of Afrikaans being the imposed language he substituted isiZulu to make his point, to show what types of problems this would cause for someone already studying at Standard 9 or 10 when they were almost done with their education.

³⁰⁵ Jan Sekele, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 24 April 2002.

introduction and recognition of a fully-fledged student's representative council. While the body was allowed to operate within the school, it faced stiff competition from the principal.³⁰⁶ Students had four demands: a full refund of R15 for the cancelled woodshop class, an end to sexual harassment, abolition of corporal punishment and the scrapping of age restrictions.³⁰⁷

Students targeted Baloyi because of what he represented. He was the part of the state's establishment, and therefore seen by the students as cooperating with the regime. Both case studies show two things. Symbols of state repression were similar; however, students in the 1984 education boycott personalized the struggle by attacking Baloyi. Their appearance at Baloyi's home transformed his private space into a political one. This strategy was very similar to students requesting Piliso to store a drum on her front stoop. Alexandrans remade the political environment by using the streets and the schools to voice their grievances.

Just as the government's decision to impose Afrikaans as a medium of instruction sparked unrest in 1976, so did P. W. Botha's decision to issue constitutional reforms in March 1985. These reforms allowed for representation for Coloureds and Indians in a segregated three-chamber Parliament. In *Miriam's Song*, Miriam Mathabane described the situation. She wrote, "A week never went by without news of police opening fire on protesters in various townships across the country. Dozens were killed and scores more detained" forcing Botha to issue a partial State of Emergency in June 1985.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ "Tense Situation at Alex High School," *Sowetan* June 7, 1984.

³⁰⁷ "Pangas on Kids' after Boycott," August 12, 1984.

³⁰⁸ Miriam Mathabane, *Miriam's Song: A Memoir by Miriam Mathabane as told to Mark Mathabane*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), p. 179.

Underground Political Activity in Alexandra, 1962-1978

Documented underground political activity in Alexandra begins in 1962, two years after the infamous Sharpeville Massacre which led to massive police crackdown on political organizations and nationwide repression. The records for this cell structure come from the Sexwale Trial, which contains information on clandestine activity spanning from 1962 to 1978. The Sexwale trial documents the activities of twelve people accused of participating in terrorist activities, conspiring with banned political organizations, and distributing propaganda among a list of additional charges.³⁰⁹ The activities are mostly of men. The absence of women other than as state witnesses or as decoys does not mean that females did not participate in clandestine activity. Several works exist on this topic. In *Colonels and Cadres*, Jacklyn Cock examines gender in South Africa by analyzing oppression, war, the underground movement, and the South African Defense Force among other topics.³¹⁰ Other works which feature women appear

³⁰⁹ Sexwale Trial Record, pp. 2243-2244. Besides, Sexwale other Alexandran defendants included Lele Jacob Motaung (accused No. 3), Jacob "Currie" Seathlolo (accused No. 11), Naledi "Chris" Tsiki, (accused No. 2), Joseph Tseto (a prosecution witness), Martin Ramakgadi (accused No. 6), and Simon Samuel "Bafana" Mohlanyaneng (accused No. 4). The accused faced other charges such as recruiting members for outlawed organizations and their military wings, for training persons in war tactics and maneuvers and subversive activities; for engaging in secret expeditions outside the country to train people; for returning military trainees secretly back to South Africa and have them smuggle arms, ammunition and explosives into the country; for establishing arm caches and hideouts or safe houses in South Africa; for committing acts of sabotage; infiltrating associations; and for seeking to establish and/or extend an underground organization in South Africa by creating secret groups or cells and arranging finance to support the cells. Five additional counts followed the main one or "the alleged conspiracy", however, only the first, second, and fifth count, participation in terrorist activities, and unlawful or banned organizations, applied to all the accused. The other counts applied as follows. Count three which was possession of firearms, explosives, weapons, and ammunition were registered against Bafana and Jacob Seathlolo. Seathlolo and Bafana faced another charge under count four along with Sexwale, Tseto and Motaung for harboring, concealing and providing assistance to alleged terrorists. Prosecuting attorneys had hundreds of exhibits, ranging from identifiable fingerprints on glycerin bottles to earthen concealed bagged weapons. Witnesses included the defendants' friends, spouses, siblings, and other relatives, police officers, and informants.

³¹⁰ Jacklyn Cock, *Colonels and Cadres: War and Gender in South Africa*, (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991).

in biographical accounts.³¹¹ During an interview with Robin Curnow, Thandi Modise discusses the struggle that women faced as females in a male dominated environment and the problems that presented, such as sexual abuse, disrespect, and the need for women to prove their femininity and masculinity.³¹² Women such as Modise were granted the title of honorary men.³¹³ To reclaim their femininity Modise stated that on the weekends the women wore dresses and during the week they dug trenches to prove their masculinity.³¹⁴

While these sources exist, they only relay the accounts of women who left the country, and went into exile rather than examining those who stayed in the country and participated in an underground cell structure. The one record which includes women, the Sexwale Trial, places them in subordinate position; they served beer to comrades along the Jukskei River, posed as decoys, and provided testimony. While the Sexwale trial record does not silence women, it features the fraternity among men. Males bonded over beer, political conversations, weaponry demonstrations, and car rides.³¹⁵ These activities

³¹¹ See Ruth First, *117 Days: An Account of Confinement and Interrogation Under the South African Ninety-Day Detention Law*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), Maggie Resha, *'Mangoana O Tsoara Thipa Ka Bohaleng: My Life in the Struggle*, (Johannesburg: Congress of South African Writers, 1990), Ellen Kuzwayo, *Call Me Woman*, (London: The Women's Press, 1985), S. Magona, *To My Children's Children: An Autobiography*, (London: The Women's Press, 1991), M. Ramphela, *A Life*, (Cape Town: David Philip, 1995), Winnie Mandela, *Part of My Soul Went With Him*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), Frances Baard, *My Spirit is not Banned*, (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1986), Caesarina Makhoere, *No Child's Play: In Prison under Apartheid*, (London: The Women's Press, 1988), Phyllis Ntantala, *A Life's Mosaic*, (Cape Town: David Philip, 1992), and Zoe Wicomb, *Asking for Trouble: Autobiography of a Banned Journalist*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987).

³¹² Robyn Curnow, interview, "Thandi Modise: A Woman at War," *Agenda* (2000), pp. 36-40. Jacklyn Cock, *Colonels and Cadres*, p. 150. Thandi Modise was called the 'knitting needles guerrilla' because "while she was operating underground as an MK cadre reconnoitering potential military targets, she tried to look as ordinary as possible, and carried a handbag from which a pair of knitting needles protruded."

³¹³ Elaine Unterhalter, "The Work of the Nation: Heroic Masculinity in South African Autobiographical Writing of the Anti-Apartheid Struggle," *The European Journal of Development Research*, 12, 2 (2000), pp. 167 and Robin Curnow, "Thandi Modise," p. 38.

³¹⁴ Robyn Curnow, "Thandi Modise," p. 38.

³¹⁵ Jacob Seathlolo, Sexwale Trial Record, pp. 213-216. Not only did Seathlolo use his residential space for subversive reasons, his vehicle also performed the same purpose. One day Seathlolo needed his unassuming Ford Fairmont serviced, so he and One-night took the vehicle to the local garage. Seathlolo lifted up the hood, and took out the sump, plus a newspaper wrapped item from under the engine. Enclosed within the paper was a loaded revolver. One-Night questioned his boss about the weapon, and wanted to

fostered unity and enabled them to disseminate intelligence. Intelligence refers to the knowledge that insurgents had concerning potential acts of sabotage, other cell members, location of weaponry, targets, and safe houses. Safe houses included churches also private homes such as the one belonging to Jacob Seathlolo on 124 Seventh Avenue, which the government labeled as a “terrorist den.”³¹⁶

Cell members employed the Mandela Plan, which called for the formation of small political units, which had cell commanders, stewards and foot soldiers who “oiled the machinery.”³¹⁷ According to Freddy Lekiso Kumalo, an operative who remained invisible until a raid produced his capture in 1992, “I use to see it [the underground] as the conveyor belt. This conveyor belt you don’t need to cut because it is the belt that is going to convey food to the masses.”³¹⁸ This metaphorical food that Kumalo alluded to was the political indoctrination and military training that freedom fighters underwent. According to James Ngculu, the ANC educated its cadres in the four pillars of the revolution: which included the underground, armed struggle, mass mobilization; and international mobilization.³¹⁹ Political training comprised covering the history of the ANC, wars of resistance, the international situation and its relationship to South Africa, Marxism-Leninism and a weekly current events analysis and monthly political

know how he had acquired it. Instead of answering, Seathlolo demonstrated the weapon’s functional ability. Problems developed when Seathlolo could not return the gun to its original position as the barrel laid precariously on the butt. Fearing a fatality, Seathlolo cautioned his weaponry novice passenger, “Let’s leave this alone otherwise we will kill ourselves.” Seathlolo then rewrapped the weapon, and placed it in a position for the owners to fetch it from the garage, and they both left. While resuming travel, Seathlolo told One-Night that he could also retain a revolver, as if to insinuate that an arrangement could be made for procurement upon the passengers’ immediate request. The two went back to Seathlolo’s home, where the owner discussed the chemicals that he had stored there. Seathlolo wished to transport them to his farm, so he put a parcel in the back of One-Night’s car, and told him to go ahead to the farm, and he would join him a few days later.

³¹⁶ Jacob Seathlolo, Sexwale Trial Record, pp. 2296-2297.

³¹⁷ Thomas Karis and Gwendolen M. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*

³¹⁸ Freddy Lekiso Kumalo, interview, Alexandra Township, 3 March 2002.

³¹⁹ James Ngculu, “The Role of Umkhonto we Sizwe in the Creation of a Democratic Civil-Military Relations Tradition,” www.iss.co.za/pubs/Books/OurselfsToKnow/Ngculu2.pdf, p. 244.

discussion.³²⁰ Cell operatives received political indoctrination and military training in Tanzania, Mozambique, the Ukraine, China, Swaziland, and Lesotho. They crossed international borders to deliver intelligence, pick up and take recruits to neighboring countries, and to engage in acts of sabotage.

While it was difficult to maintain a political movement, Kumalo explained that they converted Alexandra's churches into underground cells however; he remained reticent about the cell's precise activities. "According to our indoctrination, we were not supposed to reveal our strong rep bases in spite of the casualties of the struggle."³²¹ The cell leader's identity remained a secret, which only the liaison, the person carrying the information and instructions to pass along to the foot soldiers, he knew. Kumalo

explained the method of operation using the imagery of an assembly line. He stated:

being underground was a very dangerous thing because they will send somebody that you don't know that person. I was oiling the machinery. I used to see it as the conveyor belt. This conveyor belt you don't need to cut because it is the belt that is going to convey the food to the masses while they keep on fighting for total liberation.³²²

Kumalo and the Sexwale Trial provide detailed information on two cell units which operated in Alexandra, however, the subject matter requires further research to address additional inquiries. The next section begins to address some of these lingering

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Kumalo, interview.

³²² Ibid. Kumalo shared another secret. He told how the cell operation worked. Kumalo did not disclose the locations of the activities, but his description of them follows. Cell members often met with villagers, whom they greeted, and learned about their grievances, and passed the information to the unit commander, who made a decision to act. "If the unit commander decided yes, let's move, we start our skirmishing, [and dig] a little hole and put a T double S landmine at a road leading to a farm house." That landmine had the potential of blowing up targets as far as 500 meters away from where the subversive stood. "That was a nice thing because we were not blood thirsty terrorists as we were labeled, but were fighting for total independence."

questions regarding the cell structures. It hypothesizes about the role of women and gender in the formation and maintenance of cell structures. The study of cells within Alexandra or South Africa as a whole rests on the oral testimonies of involved parties and their memories. Finding informants remains a difficult task for the historian because former participants may embellish the past or refuse to come forward since they operated “invisibly.”³²³ Others such as Kumalo controlled what they wanted recorded for posterity. Kumalo’s testimony, for example, raises three issues: what happen when the identities of insurgents became public knowledge to the police; how were women used in the movement as cell operatives within the country; and lastly, in what ways did Alexandra’s spatial confines inhibited or encouraged cell activity? Answers to these questions, especially the latter two, require further research beyond this work’s scope, however it is important to raise these issues.

Disclosure and Dissemblance and Their Relationship to Visibility

Resistance, as Raymond Suttner shows in his work which theorizes underground political activity, was often concealed or camouflaged even though actions had a public stage.³²⁴ Cell operatives were invisible actors because they often carried out work not easily recognized by the masses as political or relating to the liberation struggle. Underground activity involved subterfuge, which Alexandrans from various persuasions employed to transport weaponry, disseminate intelligence, and other valuable material to comrades in neighboring countries or townships.

³²³ Raymond Suttner, “The African National Congress (ANC) Underground, p. 126.

³²⁴ Ibid.

While Suttner analyzes the role of cell operatives and their use of the Mandela Plan, he fails to explain what happens when their identities are exposed and by what means that takes place. I call this the process of disclosure. Disclosure means the act of uncovering the identities, activities and whereabouts of cell operatives. Disclosure involves discovery. Discovery is the moment when police officials or family members and friends become aware of the complicity of cell operatives and prevent them from dissembling any further.³²⁵ Discovery occurs on multiple levels. For instance, cell members lose their invisibility when police officials raid and confiscate political propaganda and other items.

Sometimes cell operatives were unmasked when family members or friends stumbled upon armed caches found in homes or inside cars. Cell operatives gained certain advantages from disclosure. For one thing, they recruited insurgents, and gained a fraternity since they took oaths to protect those in the units. Visibility also led to promotion within the cell structure. Cell operatives could advance among the ranks and become supreme commanders. Lastly, another advantage was that cell operatives could use the visibility to heighten awareness of the liberation struggle both at home and abroad.

Several examples illustrate how the theory of disclosure and dissemblance applies to this narrative. Emily “Bushy” Seane, a state witness, and former girlfriend of Jacob Seathlolo, one of the eleven accused, discovered something unusual in the garage when she went to get petrol.³²⁶ While unscrewing the cap and putting her finger inside

³²⁵ Dissembling can still occur even if police officials know the identities of cell operatives because of the activities that they participate in and knowledge that they possess.

³²⁶ The State Versus: Mosima Sexwale and Eleven Others, Case Number: CC. 431/77, Volume 48, Pretoria, April 5, 1978. Sexwale Trial, pp. 2296-2297. Seathlolo, member of the Spoilers gang, owned a

the 20 liter tin, she found a paper inside the drum. Seane took the tin inside the house, cut part of it open and then summoned Freddie “One-Night” Motaung, Seathlolo’s mechanic and friend. Motaung took five scorpion machine pistols from the paper wrapped tin, and placed them into a cardboard box and carried the objects home with him, where he buried the confiscated booty in a bushy garden, where he dug a tree, and put the parcel inside that hole. The next day he retrieved the items and passed them onto a person waiting at Seathlolo’s home.³²⁷ Seane found out about her boyfriend’s dual life if she in fact had no prior knowledge of the duplicity. With the uncovering of the weapons, she now understood how cell operatives transported the banned items. Court records fail to disclose if Seane and Seathlolo had a conversation about the weaponry or if anything else transpired between her and Motaung or if she herself became an operative.

Each discovery produced different and similar results, for instance some discoveries resulted in arrest. Tokyo Sexwale, who engaged in political instruction and military training, was Alexandra’s supreme cell commander whose forte was military engineering.³²⁸ While at Sam Seathlolo’s residence at Number 124 Sixth Avenue on 31

bottle store business, a farm, and bequeathed property in Alexandra that he inherited as the eldest son following his mother’s death. He lived at Number 50 Sixth Avenue while his siblings occupied homes at Number 124 Seventh Avenue, and Number 159 Ninth Avenue. The latter location, where Martha Seathlolo Mokgatle lived, was a proper residence, while the government regarded the former place, where Sammy Seathlolo lived as a “terrorist den.” Jacob Seathlolo faced charges for possession of firearms, ammunition, and explosives which included: five scorpion sub-machine guns; one Tokarev pistol with a magazine that contained five rounds; nine hand grenades; three loose detonators’ two detonators for hand grenades with each one attached to a vinyl cloth, ten detonator caps and three pieces of safety fuse.

³²⁷ Ibid, p. 2223.

³²⁸ Ibid, p. 552. Sexwale received instructions with Motaung, and Joseph Tseto at an ANC training camp in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; while Sexwale and Naledi Tsiki received military training in Moscow. Sexwale participated in the Bordergate incident, a large explosion taking place in Swaziland in December 1976. Following this event, Sexwale entered South Africa and assumed his duties as Alexandra’s supreme cell commander. In Alexandra, Sexwale engaged in political instruction and military training, and met other comrades at predetermined spots, where they exchanged weapons and/or information. One clandestine meeting took place at a friend’s house at Sixth Avenue. Sexwale and another guy walked to a room where

December 1976, the police surprised him at 3:50 in the morning. Dressed in only a pair of trousers, Sexwale used an alias, Solomon Khumalo, and a concocted story that he was a butcher from Newcastle, when questioned by the police.³²⁹ His lies fell upon deaf ears as the police handcuffed and arrested him.

Motaung faced a similar surprise sting; however, the process of disclosure garnered greater evidence. At Motaung's premises lay five scorpion machine pistols, one magazine with 7 by 7, sixty-two bullets, seventy-five pamphlets titled, "Message to the Workers from the South African Communist Party," and unidentified newspapers.³³⁰ Seathlolo, on the other hand, had items used to make weapons such as glycerin, and powder, which he stored at his residence and at a farm. These discoveries produced concrete evidence. Possession of banned literature or office equipment was another way that cell operatives became visible. During a search and seizure at Martin Ramokgadi's home, Sergeants De Waal and Cox found the September 1976 issue of "Bandwagon." Along with the material, the police took into their custody, an Olivetti typewriter, blank postal orders, with one postal order payable and addressed to Nelson Mandela, and a letter signed by Whitey.³³¹ Banned literature, materials to make explosives, possession of weaponry, and office equipment led to the visibility of the freedom fighters.

Sometimes, however, discovery did not always mean arrest. Thabo Mnisi, a

the occupants stored beer bottles, and he took out a bag from behind an old tire. Besides showing and demonstrating the weapons, a TT pistol, a scorpion machine pistol, and a hand grenade, Sexwale discussed his personal history and training. Then, he explained the philosophical difference between the ANC and the PAC. He stated, "The ANC fought against the government while the PAC against the Whites." Other meetings occurred in broad daylight and under a false pretense. At the corner of Tenth Avenue Sexwale and Martin Ramokgadi constructed a shanty building while passing each other the planks and iron they reported findings and gave each other instructions.

³²⁹ Other operatives used aliases. Naledi Tsiki often went under the pseudonym of Patrick Mandla Tumeni Magagula, which he used for passport purposes.

³³⁰ Sexwale Trial, p. 2223.

³³¹ Ibid, p. 2260.

physician, and former freedom fighter, who spent several years in Cuba, recalled the day when the police “discovered” him. Mnisi had attended a meeting at Eighteenth Avenue where the police had stormed the site and began arresting individuals in 1976. Using the windows to escape, Mnisi fled and found a nearby house and hid under a bed where he found another body. Three policemen scurried about the room and warned them to come out of their hiding places or they would shoot. This time the “discovery” did not result in the arrest or disclosure of Mnisi’s secret identity because he pleaded with the police that he was not involved in the student uprising or was a cell operative.

Another incident involving Mnisi produced different results as the police went on a township-wide search for him. In fact, they found him standing in line with other people, but upon questioning Mnisi denied that he was Thabo. After Mnisi sped off in his car, the people who had huddled around him told the police that the very Thabo they sought was the man in the black overalls and cap they had just questioned. A car chase ensued. Mnisi eluded the police; however, his identity remained disclosed.

The first example shows that the process of disclosure did not always entail having positive identification. Police officials had Mnisi’s name not his build, complexion, or distinguishing body features. That was not the case in the second example. Police officials not only had positive identification but also had eye witnesses who knew where Mnisi lived in Alexandra. He was now disclosed. His visibility made him a target in the community, so he left the country in 1975 and went to Cuba where he studied and practiced medicine until he returned to South Africa in 1991.³³²

³³² Thabo Mnisi, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 7 May 2002. There on the island nation reputed for its highly acclaimed health facilities, Mnisi studied medicine, learned Spanish and lived there until his return to South Africa in 1991. When he began his participation as an underground insurgent in 1975,

Mnisi's disclosure did not occur under the gaze of the legal system as those involved in the Sexwale Trial. Instead, the police singled him out as a community leader. The same thing happened to Rose Innes Phahle, the son of a principal and school teacher. Phahle became visible when the police officials began hounding him for months because of his activities in the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), a socialist organization and the Movement for Democracy Content (MDC).³³³ In 1964, Phahle applied for an exit permit but was told by a friend in the pass office that the government had denied the visa. Armed with this information, Phahle then called a Home Affairs Office in Pretoria, where a worker there told him that the government had approved his request and that he could pick up the permit or have it mailed. He chose the latter option and picked up the document. Phahle went underground for a week before leaving the country and heading to London.

Cell operatives also played a role in creating their visibility. They often engaged in the process of disclosure when they disseminated intelligence, possessed banned literature or subversive documents, served as a broadcaster for Radio Freedom and engaged in recruitment. Martin Ramokgadi, a Sexwale Trial defendant, for example, transmitted information to his Swazi friend Peter Mohlahla, using the inner portion of a cigarette box to inscribe a secret encrypted message.³³⁴

In another example, Joseph Tseto forwarded sealed envelopes marked only with the name John and Martin inscribed on them. One note contained this message, "I have

Mnisi was not a confirmed ANC member, although the cell in which he served was aligned to the nation's oldest Black political body.

³³³ Rose Innes Phahle, interview, tape recording, Illovo, Johannesburg, 4 February 2002.

³³⁴ Sexwale Trial, pp. 2271, 2260, and 2330. Ramokgadi received the following money allocations: R500-00 January 1976; R2000-00 July 1976; R1000-00 August/September 1976; R1000-00 November 1976; and R1000-00 December 1976. Money was not the only currency that Ramokgadi smuggled; intelligence and literature also ranked high as valued commodities. Ramokgadi faced other charges besides money laundering, recruiting, and transporting, he also distributed incendiary literature.

come to collect the wedding cakes.” These fictitious baked goods were references to freedom fighters Alois Manci and Pat Mayisela, whom a man named Albert, drove along with recruits to Swaziland in the ANC combi with keys supplied by Ramokgadi.³³⁵ Ramokgadi became visible when he made known his identity to Mohlahla and Tseto to his unidentified accomplice. With this disclosure the two men faced the possibility that they might encounter informants.

Informants were a concern for Bafana, a bugle band player, shebeen owner, and Sexwale trial defendant. While on a reconnaissance mission to Swaziland, Bafana learned that Norman Tshabalala intended to reveal the cell’s secrets to the police force. Operatives then switched safe houses to avoid complete disclosure. As the example with Bafana shows, cell operatives, renegotiated the patterns of resistance in order to continue their pursuit of liberation. Renegotiation allowed these “underground” activists to maintain visibility without risking arrest. Sometimes information about informers came from unlikely sources. Former cell insurgent Michael Dingake described a conversation between him and police officer Dunga regarding informers. He wrote:

One day after a public meeting in Alexandra, Sergeant Dunga had approached me to complain about the hostile attitude demonstrated by members of the ANC, towards himself and other members of the police force. Said Dunga: ‘You should not hate or worry about us because you know who we are. You should be worrying more about the informers in your ranks. They are a danger to you and the struggle, not us.’³³⁶

Whenever the identities of insurgents became public knowledge, they underwent “masked visibility.” Masked visibility means that there is a process of disclosure; however, cell operatives are still able to dissemble. Another example from Dingake illustrates this point. Dingake left for work before dawn and returned under the cover of

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Michael Dingake, *My Fight against Apartheid*, (London: Kliptown Books, 1987), p. 60.

dusk.³³⁷ Despite these precautions, the police had discovered his hideout, which they visited. Upon arriving at this safe house, the police encountered other occupants and despite their denial of knowing Dingake, asked them to give him a warning that they intended to arrest him. Dingake shares this recount:

The policeman I shall call Sergeant B (the black security police officers were sergeants, it was their highest rank at the time), had come on a mission to tip me off about the impending raid. ‘Tell Mike, we are coming to raid this place tonight. He must take precautions.’ The denial of my stay at the place did not dissuade Sergeant B. ‘The Special Branch know he stays here. It is useless in denying it. Please warn him.’³³⁸

Dingake heeded the warning and was not present when the police came back. His story sheds light on how the police played a role in creating Dingake’s visibility. Since the police already knew of Dingake’s identity and his affiliation with the underground movement, the new process of discovery entailed finding his safe house. Police officers violated the sanctity of the safe house when they came and questioned the occupants. These examples show that the police were not monolithic in their thinking or in the way they conducted official or unofficial business. Each time Dingake received warnings. The first warning was for Dingake to scrutinize the underground movement for potential informants while the second warning concerned his impending arrest. Why the police officers chose to apprise Dingake of these issues remains undisclosed.

Cell operatives became visible when they recruited. Naledi Tsiki held a demonstration of weaponry at his home on two different occasions for a man named Sam Ndaba, who was later a state witness in the Sexwale Trial.³³⁹ Khumalo put it best when he stated, “being underground was a very dangerous thing because they will send

³³⁷ Ibid, p. 61.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid, pp. 550-551.

somebody that you don't know."³⁴⁰ Johannes Jordan, a former inspector for the Transvaal Council of Peri-Urban Areas, and the first state witness of the Mandela case, provides an example of the need for insurgents to exercise caution. He walked into the house belonging to Douglas Mvemve, who had a piece of paper which he quickly put into his pocket. The paper, which appeared in English and Afrikaans, heralded the clarion to arms.³⁴¹ Possession of a piece of paper, a booklet or even photographs of township events disclosed the identity of cell insurgents and made them visible.

Another way that cell operatives became visible was by serving as broadcasters for Radio Freedom. Radio Freedom first hit airwaves in Lusaka, Zambia in 1967, and from staggered frequencies in five African countries; Ethiopia, Angola, Madagascar, Tanzania, and Zambia it received airplay from "above-ground."³⁴² It was the voice of the African National Congress and Umkhonto weSizwe. It rivaled and provided an alternative news format to the nationally controlled South African Broadcast Corporation (SABC). Programs were featured in all South Africa's major languages which included: isiZulu, Sesotho, English, Afrikaans, and isiXhosa. Radio Freedom broadcast music, interviews, poetry reading, news programs, speeches, drama, performances, and commentary. This contraband station began with its daily sign on:³⁴³

³⁴⁰ Kumalo, interview.

³⁴¹ "Witness Tells of ANC Booklet," *The World*, December 10, 1969. John Mhlontlo, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, 16 January 2002. John Mhlontlo was an avid photographer, who shot pictures of Alexandra's weddings, dances, and political meetings, but because of his fear of being arrested for having this material, he destroyed his entire collection which dated back to the 1940s. Mhlontlo was not a cell operative but having these documentations made the apartheid regime suspected him of carrying out subversive activities.

³⁴² Radio: Freedom: Voice of the African National Congress and the People's Army Umkhonto weSizwe," by Bill Nowlin, Rounder Records, 1996.

³⁴³ Ibid. Daily transmissions showcased the talents of exiled musicians. Alexandra's very own Hugh Masekela was among the talented. Hugh Masekela and Michael D. Cheers, *Still Grazing: The Musical Journey of Hugh Masekela*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 2004), pp. 20, 38, 39, and 238. Born in Witbank, but raised in Alexandra, Hugh was one of three children belonging to Thomas and Polina Masekela. Thomas Masekela, a self-educated man of horticulture, carpentry, architecture, landscape,

<i>Amandla ngawethu</i>	We have the power
<i>Hamble Kahle mkonto</i>	Go well mkonto
<i>Wemkonto, mkonto wesizwe</i>	You spear, spear of the nation

Cell operatives were organic leaders because they had the function of intellectuals.³⁴⁴ They met along Alexandra's Jukskei River, in the woods, in the cell members' homes, and on the street. During these planned meetings, operatives disclosed their identity to recruit prospective Umkhonto weSizwe members or as the next example shows, to fellow cell members whom the police could use as informers. For example, a meeting between Sexwale and Ramokgadi occurred in broad daylight using subterfuge. At the corner of Tenth Avenue, Sexwale and Ramokgadi constructed a shanty building and while passing each other the planks and iron they reported findings and gave each other instructions.³⁴⁵ On other occasions they taught African history. Subjects included lengthy discussions on the development and evolution of the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress.³⁴⁶

From the examples illustrated we learned that some operatives faced arrest while others chose exile. This leaves some lingering questions. What happened to those men

design, among other talents and skills, served as one of Alexandra's Health Inspectors and one of the people who appealed on behalf of the nightsoil workers, while Polina Masekela held a position as a head social worker at the Entokozweni Family Welfare Center. Despite his mother's reservations concerning Alexandra's poor infrastructure, and reputed status as a crime haven, the township offered Masekela a diverse and vibrant community. In his autobiography, Masekela confessed, "aside from witnessing the destruction of my grandfather's legacy and life, life in Alexandra during the late 1940s began taking a form that would shape my political and racial ideology." While living in exile in the United States and on tour at Woodstock's Joyous Lake, a tune spiritually embraced Masekela and held a tight grip on him. He went to the piano, and effortlessly began to sing "Stimela", a song about a train, that came to him like "... a tidal wave, and if I [didn't] get a piano there and then, [it was] lost forever." "Amandla: A Revolution in Four Part Harmony," Lee Hirsch, direction, 2002. That song, which featured in Lee Hirsch's documentary, "Amandla," highlighted and interspersed Masekela's performance with Black miners plumbing deep into the earth's belly for gold. Masekela's songs and other exiled South Africans provided endless entertainment for Radio Freedom listeners in Alexandra and elsewhere in South Africa. Persons caught listening to Radio Freedom's revolutionary and Afro-centric platform received a five to eight year sentence.

³⁴⁴ Raymond Suttner, "The African National Congress (ANC) Underground," p. 135.

³⁴⁵ Sexwale Trial, p. 2000.

³⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 2290.

and women who stayed in Alexandra who continued living a façade and carried on their subversive activities even though the police knew their identity? Kumalo's story sheds some light on this inquiry, but his secret identity remained intact, except for the young lady who found a bag of weapons hidden under his couch.³⁴⁷ Dingake pushes the issue further, when he acknowledges his disclosure, but were all Alexandrans as fortunate as he? Did other persons become informers? Sam Ndaba, who testified for the state in the Sexwale Trial, turned into an informer. He possessed inside knowledge on the political indoctrination and weaponry training that recruits underwent and shared this information with the court. Ndaba stated, He [Tsiki] had promised us that as soon as we obtained the people whom he wanted he will then give us firearms in order that we must teach people.”³⁴⁸

It is unknown whether Ndaba received any special treatment for his testimony. What is certain was that Ndaba knew the identity of Naledi Tsiki, thus he possessed intelligence that the state desired. Ndaba's complicity shows two things. Residents who served as freedom fighters addressed multiple audiences and played different roles depending on the stage assumed. In addressing these multiple audiences, Ndaba used quiescence as a form of resistance against the people whom he presumably represented. He chose to use his position within the community to inform the state of his colleague's actions. How does intelligence get defined when examining freedom fighters, and especially those who consorted with the police? We know that different meanings of intelligence exist, for instance, in Ndaba's case intelligence came to be defined as having privileged knowledge. Knowledge represented the whereabouts of cell members, and

³⁴⁷ Kumalo, interview.

³⁴⁸ Sexwale Trial, p. 553.

what plans they had for acts of sabotage or potential recruits. While the same definition applies to Sexwale and Kumalo, it extends to cover their incorporation of African history, weaponry assembling, and political indoctrination. These activities helped to explain why Suttner regards cell operatives as organic intellectual because they functioned as such.³⁴⁹ MK members and informers dissembled due to the nature of resistances that they waged. Yet, despite this process, they underwent multiple levels of discovery. The process of discovery sheds light on how cell operatives and informers created or masked their identities and performed for multiple audiences.

Concluding Remarks

The struggle to obtain freedom created changes within the township, but also the people themselves. Parents and children had opposing ideological viewpoints and executed different strategies of resistance during the 1976 student uprising. The 1976 student uprising redefined societal relations within Alexandra. Blacks became suspicious of Coloureds, and further distrustful of Whites. Elders no longer held their revered traditional and societal positions. Instead, they faced the wraths of angry youths bent on destroying apartheid's edifice with one fell swoop. Black Consciousness ruled the day, and those persons not accepting the definition of Black as all oppressed people no matter race or ethnicity, fell by the wayside. In the wake of the student uprising parents banded together and formed Women for Peace, an interracial middle-aged female organization, which sought to abolish apartheid peacefully. This group sent delegates before Parliament and pressed the importance of authorities listening to the students rather than killing

³⁴⁹ Raymond Suttner, "The African National Congress (ANC) Underground," p, 135.

them. Women for Peace differed from Black Consciousness ideologues because its members sought racial cooperation with Whites.

While relations between parents and children changed during this time, so did the township and its composition. Thirty-nine people lost their lives, while other youth fled, and went into self-imposed or involuntary exile. It appeared that a leadership vacuum had emerged on the ground, however, ANC and PAC military wings reconfigured and formed cells of three to four people sometimes more, and operated underground. Multiple leaders and safe houses emerged, rather than having one defined person or headquarters.

Safe houses included private residences, or garages. The Jukskei River, shebeens, and foreign countries also served as important sites for cell insurgents to disseminate intelligence. These places harbored political activists, and honed their skills in subterfuge and weaponry. Alexandra became a place for refuge and a place where they engaged in defensive measures. These defensive measures comprised digging earthen trenches to stall the police, throwing stones, creating Molotov cocktails, and disseminating information. Private transport business ferried intelligence and cell operatives from different townships, within Alexandra, and outside South Africa's borders. Cell leaders distributed intelligence at these sites, politically indoctrinated potential recruits about the history of the African National Congress or the country's history, or they forwarded messages using cigarette box tops. Alexandrans improvised space and camouflaged objects within other objects such as petrol canisters where they stored chemicals for making explosives. These spaces appeared innocuous yet they contained dangerous weapons.

During the eighties Alexandrans participated in “above” ground activities despite the wave of repression that enveloped black townships. Alexandrans developed a pattern of resistance. Students, for example, at Minerva High School sought recourse first by talking to the principal, then by setting the school aflame. These actions mirrored what transpired during the 1976 student uprising in that students viewed the educational system as a vestige of state oppression and mounted their attacks against that symbol. Students at Minerva High School went after the principal and extended the boundary of the fighting from the school to the principal’s private home. Personal property became part of the collective struggle. Whether owned by the state or individuals, property became a means by which Alexandrans altered the relations of power.

With the cell system, Alexandra transformed from a public protest center, which it became during the 1976 student uprising, to a private one, when township dwellers continued to flood South Africa’s borders to form exiled communities in neighboring Botswana, Zambia, Tanzania, and in places not on the African continent such as Cuba, Russia, and England among other countries. Cell operatives became visible when the police targeted them for subversive activities, when family members and friends discovered materials used to make weapons or when they saw banned literature or had office equipment in their homes. Visibility enabled cell insurgents to recruit and to skip country. Thus, the process of disclosure entailed understanding how cell members unveiled themselves to participate in the liberation struggle.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Alexandra's location as a "black island in a white sea," enabled township residents to defy territorial segregation and use the geographical limitations of the township's enclosed space to establish a culture and tradition of resistance. Alexandrans built this tradition of defiance by creating and using the spatial constraints of their physical environment to oppose compulsory segregation. Residents waged struggles against the public transit company, occupied township owned land, protested against the imposition of Afrikaans and the financial burden this curriculum change presented, declined to render refuse services, and held protests in solidarity with other townships such as Soweto during the 1940s squatters' campaign and again during the 1976 student uprising. Trans-township cooperation provided the opportunity for residents in each enclave to explore other possibilities of communication, community, and empowerment.

This type of unity raises some important questions concerning the development and maintenance of distinct characteristics of defiance. Besides, providing a comparative analysis, a study which showcases the history of two different places allows for the creation of networked historical accounts. According to geographer Alan Lester, networked historical accounts highlight the holistic experience of Africans and provide a more detailed understanding regarding the relationship to space and place.³⁵⁰ A regional approach provides the opportunity to expand previous notions regarding space, identity, power and race. This methodology also enables researchers to develop different theoretical frameworks to redefine and reexamine age-old topics. Thus, understanding

³⁵⁰ Alan Lester, "Introduction: Historical Geographies of Southern Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, 3 (September 2003), pp. 605-606.

the relations of power and how these structures restrict and expand within a given residential area sheds light on the impact of territorial segregation and other national legislative measures that created the conditions under which Africans lived.

Political scientist Tom Lodge offered this type of intra-comparative analysis when he discusses the bus boycotts of Evaton and Alexandra, which occurred respectively in 1955 and 1957. His analysis shows the contrasts between these two protests and also how they impacted the residents in each location from an economic, social, and political standpoint.³⁵¹ A similar study exists for Alexandra and Soweto regarding the 1976 student uprising. Then, students from Alexandra attended high school in Soweto where they shared and created intelligence, discussed the implications of Afrikaans upon their academic education, and planned a protest that began in Soweto and spread to other parts of the country. An analysis of Soweto and Alexandra provides scholars with the opportunity to examine the protest's place of origin and the subsequent host region. Host region refers to the area where the protests developed and assumed different forms from the originating center. Alexandra and Soweto present a unique comparative study because of the different types of townships that they represented. Alexandra was a former freehold while Soweto was under municipal control. The former spread within a mile while the latter sprawled out into many subdivisions within one township.

A study of the student uprising featuring Soweto and Alexandra presents the opportunity to analyze these issues: interracial cooperation or disunity between Africans and Coloureds, the methods of reprisals by the police and state agents, the different strategies of resistance employed in each region, the impact of gender and age upon the protest, how the protest ended and what long-term effects did they bear upon each region

³⁵¹ Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983), pp. 153-187.

involved, and how did jurisdictions within a particular township determine how residents responded to power struggles or national laws that inhibited and fomented the traditions that developed.

While Alexandran residents used various strategies of resistance, power struggles ensued. Contestations of power emerged when residents opposed the state, the township's administrative structure, and each other as the case study between the squatters and Alexandra's bona-fide residents revealed. When the squatters occupied two of Alexandra's public squares, they reversed the power dynamics that existed within the township. Alexandra represented a subordinate political and residential space because government officials had deemed it their objective to have places such as Alexandra serve as a labor reservoir. However, with the squatters' presence, every place in Alexandra save the squares became the dominant space within the township because those areas contained the stores, the system of governance, and the sewage system.

The example of the squatters shows how Alexandrans created another form of segregation that mirrored the dominant society when they created a territory within a territory and cordoned off the squares and prevented public access to them by posting guards at the entrances. With this internal form of segregation squatters redefined the power structure by adopting a policy of exclusion and inclusion. Interracial tensions emerged and this study begs for further inquiry in order to tease out different nuanced interpretations. For example, it is important to understand the role of the African National Congress during the squatters' movement and why Schreiner Baduza was the only successful squatter leader to have the President-General speak on the squatters' behalf.

A more extensive analysis of the ANC's role or lack thereof in the squatters' movement presents the opportunity to shed light on the policy of branch organizations and their development. Thus far, the literature lacks sufficient analysis of the African National Congress in Alexandra and also its relationship to other political organizations that developed in the township such as the Daughters of Africa Association or the Communist Party. It is important to analyze how these organizations represented Alexandra and the protests its residents waged. Because the African National Congress changed its stance by adopting a policy of mass mobilization in the 1950s, it is incumbent upon scholars to question the ANC's absence in some of the protests that occurred in the country, especially in places such as Alexandra where a large number of labor strikes occurred. The ANC missed an opportunity to mobilize for better living conditions, adequate pay, and standardized labor conditions, when twelve nightsoil workers led a strike in Alexandra in 1957.

Nightsoil workers provide a different example of challenges to the dominant power structure. These sanitation workers refused to pick up human excrement causing a backlog to pile up in the township which not only affected the residents' bodily functions but also impacted Alexandra's overall welfare, which already suffered from the presence of communicable diseases. Nightsoil workers reversed the traditional roles that men held. Instead of protecting the home, they created the circumstances under which threatened the security. Besides, the power dynamics that the nightsoil workers altered with their work slowdown, these sanitation laborers provide important glimpses into understanding gender in the analysis of resistance.

While women supervised the domestic confines of the home, nightsoil workers controlled the township's public space and presented a challenge to political normalcy. Criticism from neighboring white suburbs already existed concerning Alexandra's unhealthy atmosphere, yet nightsoil workers refused to ply their trade. Records fail to disclose whether or not women challenged these laborers and argued for a healthier urbane habitat as a means to reposition themselves as caretakers of their private domain and the public one which they occupied. Instead of becoming public servants who advocated for indoor plumbing, proper drainage systems, electricity and other amenities, women stood by the wayside during this strike. This stance differed from the one they took with the squatters' movement. Then, the Alexandra Women's League staged a daylight sit-in at the Health Committee's offices where members met with national officials, and demanded the squatters' removal and also better amenities within the township.

All of the participants of Alexandra's early protests missed an opportunity to use development as a form of resistance. Development provided Alexandrans with the opportunity to reverse governmental trends and make the township more inhabitable as opposed to the inferior settings they occupied and government officials endorsed. The Reverend Sam Buti used this strategy when he helped the township earn a reprieve and restore it as a family dwelling area in 1979. Buti cleaned up the township and sought to model it on the white suburbs that he observed. While development entailed installing proper sewage systems, building different housing sections based on levels of income, and altering Alexandra's traditional grid-iron pattern, Buti's plan changed Alexandra's character as did the forced removals. A class structure developed and many people left

the township so reducing the possibility of using population density as a form of resistance. In previous years, Alexandra's size thwarted extensive police investigations and served as a deterrent to intrusion.

Besides analyzing Alexandra's social and political history, a dearth exists for the township's contribution to culture. Alexandra had several sports teams which included football, basketball, tennis and even golf, yet scholars pay more attention to its resistance struggles rather than examining leisure. Leisure affords scholars the opportunity to deconstruct race and to analyze how it governed the terms that defined sports. Sports provided an outlet for athletes and served as a means of communication during apartheid's height. Yet, its role in Alexandra's history remains virtually unknown.

Snippets of Alexandra's sports history appeared in the *Sowetan*, *Bantu World*, *Ilanga laseNatal* and other printed mediums such as the Alexandra News Bulletin which filled in missing gaps; however, not one serious scholarly study exists for this township.³⁵² These extant sources provide the beginning for a study that begs for further interrogation and reclamation because as a form of leisure, sports highlighted the interface between race, identity, politics, and gender. Gender dynamics serve as important analytic tools for understanding how the social construction of masculinity and femininity affected the terms under which sports operated. Peter Alegi best describes the

³⁵² Other sources pertaining to sports and South African history include these entries: Peter Alegi, 'Amathe Nolimi (It is Saliva and the Tongue): Contracts of Joy in South African Football, c. 1940-1976', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 17, 4 (2000): 1-20, Paul Darby, *Africa, Football and FIFA: Politics, Colonialism and Resistance* (London, Frank Cass, 2002), Douglas Booth and John Nauright, "Embodied Identities: Sport and Race in South Africa," *Contours* 1, 1 (2003): 16-36, Christopher Merrett, "In Nothing Else are the Deprivers so Deprived": South African Sport, Apartheid and Foreign Relations," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 13, 2 (1996): 146-165 and Christopher Merrett, 'Sport, Racism and Urban Policy in South Africa: Pietermaritzburg: A Case Study,' *Sporting Traditions* 10, 2 (1994): 97-122.

significance of gender and its relationship to sport, when discussing the physical nature of football and how fans and athletes reconstructed male identities.³⁵³

While studies exist to explain male participation in sports, few extant sources discuss the role of females and the impact that sports played on their lives. Alegi points out that women attended games, participated in supporter's clubs, and organized teams.³⁵⁴ This explains women's participation outside the confines of the sport, however, it fails to tease out their roles as athletes and how participation in a spectator sport altered their identities as females which historian Martha Saavedra addresses in her comparative study of Senegal, South Africa and Nigeria.³⁵⁵

By studying Alexandra's sports history, scholars can integrate the township into broader political debates and highlight the different historical eras that defined the township and the society at large. This study also presents the opportunity to discuss the construction of an African identity or multiple identities and whether or not ethnicity played a role in their formations. Furthermore, how did the oral culture which developed over time from audience participation determine the manner in which sports developed in Alexandra and other townships? Oral testimonies provide the key for unearthing the significance of nicknames that players received, and how athletes transformed the sports field into potential sites of resistance. In Alexandra, athletes used soccer meetings to disseminate intelligence and to plan future operations. While the athletic fields served as sites for developing masculinity, these same venues fostered family ties as spectators

³⁵³ Peter Alegi, *Laduma! Football, Politics and Society* (Scottsville: University of Natal KwaZulu Press, 2004).

³⁵⁴ Peter Alegi, Southern African Sport, 3 replies, H-Net Discussion log, February 27, 2004 www.HAfrica@h-net.msu.edu.

³⁵⁵ Saavedra, Martha. 'Football Feminine Development of the African Game: Senegal, Nigeria and South Africa', *Soccer and Society* 4, 2/3 (2003), 225-253.

often included entire family members in addition to single individuals. Sports serve as one example of a form of leisure; music represents another category.

Several studies and feature length films document the history of music and its impact upon the liberation struggle; however few if any exist on Alexandra.³⁵⁶ Using Radio Freedom as an example, this dissertation explains how exiled South Africans created music to draw attention to apartheid. This inclusion only scrapes the surface to furthering our understanding of music and its relationship to politics in South Africa. Further research on Alexandra requires that scholars address this dearth in order to understand the impact of music and its relationship to gender and fashion. For example, the Dark City Sisters, which comprised Joyce Mogatusi, Francisca Mngomezulu, Esther Khoza, Hilda Mogapi, and Katie Oleni, perfected the Mbaqanga medium under the EMI Record Label, honored African heritage with their clothing.

Dark City vocalists appeared on stage in traditional Swati clothing.³⁵⁷ Women wore black pleated skirts called *isidwaba*, which they accentuated with a red or brown cloth (*emahiya*) draped over their shoulders. Sometimes *emahiya* served as commemorative cloths because designers often wove the Swazi King's face onto the fabric. Nets, with white wool tied at the end and shaped into a conical beehive, covered heads sporting Afros, corn rows or straighten locks.³⁵⁸ While bare feet danced, and necks laced with traditional multi-colored beads, bobbed to the beat. These women allowed their bodies to serve as national treasure troves, because they exported and retained Swazi

³⁵⁶ David Coplan, *In Township Tonight!* (London: Longman, 1985), Gwen Ansell, *Soweto Blues: Jazz, Popular Music and Politics in South Africa* (New York: Continuum, 2004), "Amandla: A Revolution in Four Part Harmony," Lee Hirsch, Director, (2002), and "Rhythm of Resistance: Black South African Music," (1979).

³⁵⁷ Katie Oleni, interview, tape recording, Alexandra Township, April 3, 2002.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

tradition and culture through song but also fashion. The group's sole male leader, Mahlatini also wore African garb which comprised cowhide pleated skirts and daishikis or he flaunted his bare chest. Music provides the avenue for understanding the interface between race, ethnicity, gender, and transnationality. Therefore, future studies require the inclusion of music as analytical category to underscore how Africans possessed agency during the segregation and apartheid eras. Alexandrans as did other South Africans used music to challenge the status quo, and to comfort tired souls.

All of these suggestions reveal that Alexandra's history represents a vast territory of intellectual inquiry. This dissertation, which focuses upon Alexandra's protest struggles, only opens the discussion. Alexandra's history serves as a reminder that segregation and apartheid manifested in various forms and that the spaces in which these policies developed played an integral role in determining the types of resistance that emerged.

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