

Constructions of Childhood in Apartheid's Last Decades

by

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A Note

I defended this dissertation on April 27th, 2009. It was a day pregnant with meaning. It marked the near culmination of my own journey to completing my dissertation, and the anniversary of South Africa's long walk to freedom. A mere fifteen years ago, South Africa held its first non-racial democratic elections. Over a three-day period, lines of voters snaked across fields and around city streets, waiting for hours to cast their ballots. The majority were jubilant first-time voters, making up about 16 million of the estimated 21 million who were eligible. Images of elderly black people, finally recognized as citizens in their own land flashed across international television screens in evening news reports. These images were soon followed by those of newly-elected president Nelson Mandela, who had been detained by the apartheid regime for 27 years as a political prisoner.

April 27th, or "Freedom Day," is an official holiday in South Africa which celebrates the historic elections that were lauded by many at the time as nothing short of a political miracle. But the day has more recently been marked as a day of mourning. First deemed "UnFreedom Day" by the grassroots movement Abahlali baseMjondolo (isiZulu for "the people who live in shacks"), April 27th has also been mobilized by these and other members of the Poor People's Alliance as an occasion to remind us that the poor are still not free in South Africa.

There remains a tremendous gap between the promises of freedom articulated in

South Africa's new Constitution and the poverty and suffering that continue to plague the majority of people in "free" South Africa. There is also a gap in the renderings of young people and their contribution to this ambiguous phase of freedom; and the complexity of their lived experiences, their internal struggles, and their ongoing hardship and lack of opportunity in the new South Africa. The doing of my research necessarily involved a lot of emphasis and focus on what was not available, what had been forgotten, what had not been recorded or understood, and what was simply beyond an anthro-historical ken. Methodologically I engaged in an archaeological process of trying to bring into focus the found remains of late-apartheid South African childhood.

The initial phase of this process consisted of determining the densities around which childhood congealed. Through everyday interactions, archival research, formal and informal interviews, participation in national holiday and public events, volunteer work at several NGOs,¹ and regular visits to museums, monuments, and memorials, I identified several fruitful areas of inquiry, which I briefly describe in the chapter summaries below. In my dissertation I touch down on specific nodes or sites of meaning-making around which particular constructions of childhood may be tracked.

But my attempts to excavate the meaning of these constructions did not yield any sense of singular settledness and, as I discovered, could not be done in isolation. It seemed at times that the closer I got to my subject, the concept of childhood, the more it

¹ From September 2002-January 2003, I researched the role of children and youth in the struggle against apartheid, and the ways in which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission addressed their involvement as a visiting Researcher at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Johannesburg. From July 2005-November 2006 I volunteered once a week at the Ilitha family Learning Centre, a crèche for approximately one hundred 4 to 6-year olds in Khayelitsha, outside of Cape Town. From August-October 2004 I volunteer taught three discussion sections a week of Introduction to Socio-Cultural Anthropology at the University of the Western Cape outside of Cape Town. From August-November 2006 I catalogued the poster collection at the Arts and Media Access Centre, AMAC (formerly the Community Arts Project, CAP) in Cape Town.

eluded me. Like a mirage, “childhood” seemed to be visible only when I looked at it peripherally, in relation to something else. I am convinced that it is impossible to settle on one definition of childhood. This is not a project that seeks to determine the suitable age of responsibility in South Africa, nor is it one that only aims to demonstrate that childhood is socially constructed. Rather, I attempt to use the idea of “gap” inspired by Georges Perec’s *W or the Memory of Childhood*² to see deeper into the constructions of childhood that circulated at the end of apartheid by considering them in relation to one another. For a gap is also an opening. Just as it is the spaces *between* letters that make words and meaning, I have found that the spaces between knowing and not knowing, between certainty and uncertainty, and between memory and forgetting mark the problem of engaging the study of children and childhood. Arguably, such gaps not only indicate a sense of the challenges of such studies but, in themselves, produce children and childhood as such fertile objects of political engagement and political imagination.

Throughout the course of my research and the many months I spent living in South Africa, it became clear to me that the gaps between the constructions that populate nationalist narratives of South Africa’s struggle for freedom and individuals’ own experiences often generate further suffering among those who survived this period. Feelings of isolation, shame, guilt, betrayal, invisibility, insignificance, deviance, and failure are often amplified by people who do not feel they “fit” into master narratives or representative tropes. So in opening and holding open a space for gaps of various kinds, I see the potential for a different and deeper engagement across intellectual, ethical, and interpersonal domains.

No one completes a journey such as this without a tremendous amount of help and

² Georges Perec. *W or The Memory of Childhood* (London: Collins Harvill, 1988).

encouragement. First and foremost, I would like to thank my parents, Sheila and Lewis Patterson, who have diligently read each word that I have written for public presentation, and most of the books I assigned them. I cannot imagine where I would be without my parents' and my sister Nora's unwavering love and unconditional support. Thanks also to Arun Sasikumar. Though work and geography have often kept me far away from the aunts, uncles, and cousins who are my roots, they remain important sources of love and comfort.

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Preface

This dissertation examines constructions of childhood at a time and place in which black children's lives were defined by tremendous instability. On the one hand, these children are often remembered as the most vulnerable and defenseless of apartheid's victims. Yet, the history of the struggle for freedom in South Africa reveals that young people were also potent political actors, dangerous and willing to take on a whole government, armed with placards, songs, stones, military training, guns, and other weaponry. They were critical targets of state violence, but also powerful political players and themselves agents of violence.

There are conceptual difficulties in thinking of childhood in a context that is so divided, particularly as universalist framings were regularly employed to serve various agendas. Thus my concern is not with defining what childhood was but rather how, in its multiple constructions, it worked. What and how we know about children's lives during this critical period of recent South African history is limited, and often glossed over by a default linking of the categories "children and youth." I argue that in South Africa the child-youth continuum is one that has been especially open to manipulation by various kinds of actors, including children and youth themselves.

In Chapter 1, "Imagining Futures," I begin with the fulcrum of the entire question of childhood in South Africa: the Soweto Uprising of 1976. On this day, approximately 20,000 school children gathered together in an organized march to protest the imposition

of Afrikaans as a primary language of instruction and the substandard “Bantu Education” system more generally. Police responded with brutal force. Two of the primary ways in which the regime sought to subjugate and control children who were black, and black adults (whom it cast as children), were through education and language. The struggle for control over children’s minds was seen as crucial to the apartheid government and to its opponents. “Bantu Education” was a separate and inferior educational system for blacks, designed to produce a subservient laboring class of black workers who would not even hope for anything more. The imposition of Afrikaans as the primary language of instruction was a cornerstone of that plan. If having to speak Afrikaans was considered demeaning to Africans, Fanagalo was nothing short of debasing. A Zulu-English-Afrikaans pidgin, Fanagalo arose within exploitative and often violent labor conditions grounded in an extreme and explicitly racist linguistic hierarchy. Inequality, antipathy, and abuse were both reflected and structured in the language itself. While many of their mothers and fathers were being commanded in Fanagalo, in kitchens, mines, and farms, Soweto youth organized themselves to take a stand against the language of their oppression: Afrikaans. With the state’s attempted imposition of Afrikaans as the primary language of instruction, young people organized and rebelled on June 16th, 1976 with tragic results.

By examining the domains of language and education, the interconnections between language, oppression, race, childhood, and violence are revealed in the ugly irony that Africans were so often treated as adults when they were actually children, and only ever treated as children after reaching adulthood. Black adults were often unable to

act as the authorities, guardians, and protectors of their own children as a result of their infantilization and emasculation by the state.

Shortly after police opened fire on the student demonstrators, photographer Sam Nzima shot a series of six photographs of three young people: Mayubisa Makhubu carrying the slain Hector Pieterse as Hector's cousin Antoinette Sithole ran alongside them, a hand held up in horror. Almost immediately, one of the photos was disseminated around the world, and was splashed across the front page of countless newspapers and televisions. Undoubtedly enabled by the existence of this photograph, the Soweto student revolt of 1976 came to be seen as the critical and defining moment in the history of the anti-apartheid movement. This massacre of at least 104 children under the age of sixteen not only changed the political climate within South Africa, but it deeply affected its political and economic position in the international community.

The absolute centrality of the Soweto Uprising in the nationalist narrative of the struggle for freedom is reinforced by this iconic, powerful, and problematic photograph that simultaneously captures the essence and misses the essence of black South African childhood. The image would come to take on a complicated life of its own that in certain ways both sustained and destroyed the lives of those who were present at the moment of its creation. But the image also played a pivotal role in the historical events that followed. Hector became the ultimate symbol of South African childhood: a slain innocent, too young to die but murdered by a cruel and criminal state that had to be toppled. The prominence of Hector as an icon overwhelms the other two young people in the photo, causing them to disappear: in Sithole's case, figuratively, and in Makhubu's also literally. How can a rereading of this iconic image and an accounting for the gap

between Hector's hyper-visibility with his survivors' invisibility lead to new understandings of childhood constructions from this period? An exploration of such questions opens to new thinking about the changing and contested situation of children amidst various programs of representation including silencing, commemorating, celebrating.

In Chapter 3, "Visualizing Children," I survey the iconography of childhood and trace the historical shifts in the representative range of images of children in South African political posters from the 1980s. Political posters offer a fertile field for exploring the ways in which social conventions of childhood were reflected in popular and institutionalized understandings of apartheid. They were commonly understood in the following and often overlapping frames: 1) as extensions of women, 2) as victims, 3) as a social and political issue, 4) as an envisioned future, and 5) as agents. Children came to be prominently featured in these visual depictions. By tracing the historical shifts (very generally from the first through the fifth representational conventions), I seek to acknowledge and contextualize not just children's suffering, but also openings toward the promise of imagined futures, aesthetic expressions, and collective action.

Chapter 4, entitled "The Complex Grounds of Childhood and Children's Claims" considers the impact of the United Nations International Year of the Child in 1979 on constructions of South African childhood and children by tacking back and forth between local and international developments concerning children. Countering the widely embraced international momentum around improving children's welfare and expanding children's rights, the South African state declared 1979 as a national "Year of Health." This initiative reinforced the casting of black children as a health problem, and served

several state purposes simultaneously. Inherently pathologizing, this construction buttressed a sense of distaste and distance toward black people on the part of whites. Given the deliberate underdevelopment at the heart of homelands policy, it limited state expenditure on welfare services for black children since the majority of them were located in these rural slums. It also deflected attention away from the full range of suffering experienced by black children by reframing its few references to them to focus on the most basic of health issues. Limited immunization campaigns and feeding schemes provided positive public relations material, both at home and abroad, for denying publics who sought to ignore and downplay the brutality and abuse of the apartheid state.

Meanwhile, the African National Congress (ANC) and other anti-apartheid activists and organizations used the momentum and attention that they helped generate for the Year of the Child to push forward the campaign for freedom. There is not just an opposition but a gap between 1979 as South Africa Year of Health and the International Year of the Child, a gap between different frameworks. These campaigns or public initiatives were operating in separate spheres, and were built around very different constructions of and investments in the black child. The space between these two positions--these two imagined possibilities of black childhood-- is the repugnant space of racism, and the locus of apartheid's logic.

A slew of studies, publications, and community events were organized during this period, as international funding flowed into newly formed children's NGOs within the country. One of the most important and interesting of these was Molo Songololo meaning "Hello Centipede" in isiXhosa, which I examine in Chapter 5. Producing a

trilingual magazine “for all children,” Molo was able to foreground children’s rights in ways that the larger political movement was, or did not. Their magazine of the same name featured children’s letters and drawings, and helped facilitate visits between children from various racial and economic backgrounds. The children drawn into the magazine’s shifting project were parts of the extraordinary ferment of this period. On the one hand, their acts of expression and opposition could be encompassed in a language of childhood. But they were also important pieces in a broader mobilization, critical in not only the political formation of children but also in their being less visible and of less interest to the programs of surveillance of the apartheid state. Children experienced not only the brutality of an oppressive state but also the possibilities of navigating alternative channels of learning and politicization, and of commanding some of the terms of their subjection by the state and appropriation by the activists who would seek to give them voice.

Molo Songololo is critical for understanding the contending orientations, conventions, conditions, and forces that made so difficult not only the subjugation of children (including their production as subjects of the state), but also their mobilization by the adult cadres and political movements that would try to capture them. From the late 1970s, many try to harness the events of Soweto 1976 into the watershed event deemed the “the Children’s Revolt” later cast as (one of) the cornerstones of the liberation struggle. The category of children, however, was not entirely sufficient for either the subjection nor the liberation project (though paradoxically, as I argue elsewhere in my work, the two contending projects could share certain conventions and understandings of childhood). As children could not be contained within easy registers of

predictable response, action, control, or expression, *Molo Songololo* becomes, in still another sense, not only a text on children, and in some senses *of* children, a two decade-long story of the difficult and often failing efforts to construct childhood as a cultural, social, and political artifact.

In Chapter 6, “Contesting Childhood: South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission” I explore the much-debated TRC. Established in 1995, it aimed to provide “as complete a picture as possible of the nature, causes and extent of gross violations of human rights committed [between] 1960... [and] 1994... to establish the truth in relation to past events as well as the motives for and circumstances in which gross violations of human rights have occurred.”³

As a result of the wide scale abuses against children and their particular vulnerability at the hands of such action, the TRC held a Special Hearing on Children and Youth. Specifically focusing on apartheid’s impact on children and youth was self-consciously done to establish “a human rights framework for children and young people in order to ensure that they be given the opportunity to participate fully in South Africa’s new democratic institutions.”⁴ Under the apartheid regime in South Africa, especially during the state of emergency years in the 1980s, young people were frequently subjected to murder, torture, bannings, detentions, abductions, and sexual assaults. They were also deeply impacted by their witnessing of these events involving other people. As reported in the Special Hearing on Children and Youth, the legacy of these experiences can include “post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, substance abuse, and anti-social

³ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, *Volume One, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report* (Cape Town: CTP Book Printers (Pty) Ltd., 1998).

⁴The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, *Volume Four, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report* (Cape Town: CTP Book Printers (Pty) Ltd., 1998), 248-249.

behaviour”⁵ not to mention physical pain and disfigurement. Of critical importance are the disadvantages resulting from missed opportunities for “physical, emotional, and intellectual development.”⁶ There is an underlying claim being made about the uniqueness of young peoples’ suffering: that their experiences of violence are more traumatizing and damaging than those of adults. Thus, a violent act committed against a child (or youth or youngster) is portrayed as more violent-- necessarily *excessively* violent-- regardless of political circumstance.

As an institution the TRC defined an official structure for managing the history of trauma, complicity, and reconciliation, and considerably shaped individuals’ and groups’ attempts to come to terms with their pasts in both anticipated and unexpected ways. The commission’s investigation of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and her Soweto-based Mandela United Football Club (MUFC) demonstrates, however, that participants and observers brought their own frameworks of understanding into the process, and within a complex and shifting web of power relations, struggled to bring these understandings to bear on the process, often subverting commissioners’ attempts to impose a new moral order premised upon a shared perception of violence.

Coming to terms with the tragic fate of a young activist named Stompie Seipei presents some of the greatest challenges that I encountered in my work. After being tortured extensively by members of the MUFC as retribution for being a presumed sell-out, the battered body of this fourteen-year old boy was dumped in a field after he was murdered. In multiple and at times contradictory iterations, Stompie is a key figure from this tumultuous time; one who refuses to be laid to rest, and who, despite the multiple

⁵ Ibid., 269.

⁶ Ibid., 271.

layers of his subalternity (black, child, poor, rural, accused, small) wielded enormous strength and influence, both in life and in death. More than just refuse discarded after he was used and reused, as his name (meaning cigarette butt) suggests, Stompie was a multifaceted person. An examination of his complex renderings reveals a great deal about how childhood has been constructed in South Africa, with all of its specific contingencies and generalizations; and how history and narrative are used in different ways, to serve differing interests and agendas, and with consequences that impact the living and the constructions of the dead. It also sheds light into the indeterminacy of everyday life for Africans, and how apartheid succeeded time and time again in making people turn on one another even while uniting them through shared commitments to the call for freedom.

Despite the overlapping and competing efforts of lawmakers, government administrators, politicians, parents, advocates, practitioners and academics to fix these constructions within stable frames of coherence and consensus, children elude the conventions imposed upon them. The possibility of subversion is always there as children intrude into adult worlds, activities, and spaces. They won't stay in their place. Nor is it possible to reduce them to an easy definition in any remotely comforting way.

Examining the highly complex and unsettled nature of childhood in South Africa, this dissertation investigates more critically that process of memory-making, very much taking place in a particular political present, and attempts to wrest the category of "child" out of the domain of passive recipient where it has resided in much (Western) writing, and out of the strictly psychological domain of self and identity formation to further historicize the concept of "childhood." In conclusion, allowing for the unsettledness of gap offers a more ethical response to the complex histories and lived experiences of

South African children of the late-apartheid era, to arrive at more humane and inclusive understandings of South Africa's past, present, and future.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines constructions of childhood at a time and place in which black children's lives were defined by tremendous instability. On the one hand, these children are often remembered as the most vulnerable and defenseless of apartheid's victims. Yet, the history of the struggle for freedom in South Africa reveals that young people were also potent political actors, dangerous and willing to take on a whole government, armed with placards, songs, stones, military training, guns, and other weaponry. They were critical targets of state violence, but also powerful political players and themselves agents of violence. Semantically, socially, intellectually, "childhood" is in its essence constructed in its meanings and usages. The political, cultural, and social work of childhood lies in these conventions. Suffering and violence vex and complicate the constructions of childhood in South Africa, where violence and childhood were structurally and practically linked through the apartheid system. Following the Soweto Uprising of 1976, images of children as victims of state-sponsored violence saturated South Africa and the world. Within the context of the late apartheid period, the complex relationship between childhood and violence fuels new opportunities for additional reflection and debate by reopening questions about agency, responsibility, culpability, and consciousness for reconsideration and revision. It is impossible to settle on one definition of childhood in South Africa, where the child-youth continuum is one that has

been especially open to manipulation by various kinds of actors, including children and youth themselves. In exploring these issues I examine the Soweto Uprising of 1976, the Bantu Education System, the languages of Afrikaans and the pidgin known as Fanagalo, the United Nations International Year of the Child in 1979 and its counter version, South Africa's National "Year of Health," the historical shifts in the iconography and representative range of images of children in South African political posters from the 1980s, and South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission Special Hearings on Children and Youth and The Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and the Mandela United Football Club.

Chapter 1

Introduction: The Question of Childhood

Semantically, socially, intellectually, “childhood” is in its essence constructed in its meanings and usages. The political, cultural, and social work of childhood lies in these conventions. That it can be used so powerfully without much definition, contextualization, or problematization becomes part of its capacity to do so much work. Suffering and violence vex and complicate the constructions of childhood in South Africa, where violence and childhood were structurally and practically linked through the apartheid system. Following the Soweto Uprising of 1976, images of children as victims of state-sponsored violence saturated South Africa and the world, shattering all sense of the sanctity of childhood in modern contemporary society.

Childhood is conceptually drawn as an exceptional space; a sacrosanct entity of unconditional and essential humanism. These images may be fueled in part by a broadly conceived unity of experience, (since everyone was once a child). Often, constructions of childhood work by drawing on the emotional potency with which they are imbued, as seen in the rarely historicized and often unproblematized idea of children as pure, innocent, good, unformed, and vulnerable. Of course, in contrast to these universalizing

framings, childhood, as a social category and concept, changes historically.⁷ It is not a uniform social experience, nor has it ever been. Furthermore, within any society or group there is always a diversity of experiences.⁸

Children often find themselves caught up in broader processes over which they may have little or no control or understanding, but this does not mean that they lack their own perceptions, strategies and interests that lead them to action. For a number of reasons, children and their experiences have often remained largely invisible, or anonymously massed to form a nonindividuated group within historical and anthropological accounts.⁹ Children's everyday experiences rarely get recorded or saved in historical documents. Within most anthropological accounts, a focus on rites of passage has tended to equate personhood with impending adulthood, emphasizing the processes through which children become adults.

More recently, the tendency of viewing children as blank slates or empty vessels has come under fire by several anthropologists who negate the notion that children are merely "pre-adults" passively waiting to be filled by the teachings of their elders and

⁷ Martin Hoyles, ed. *Changing Childhood* (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 1979). While I do not subscribe to deMause's "psychogenic theory of history," more commonly known as "psychohistory," the nine essays in his edited volume *The History of Childhood* (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper Torch Books, 1975) provide empirical evidence of the shifting and highly contingent experiences of childhood.

⁸ Margaret Mead and Margaret Wolfenstein, eds. *Childhood in Contemporary Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955); Helen Schwartzman, ed. *Children and Anthropology: Perspectives for the 21st Century* (Westport, Conn: Bergin & Garvey, 2001); Sharon Stephens, ed. *Children and the Politics of Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

⁹ See Lorene Fox, *East African Childhood, Three Versions* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1967); O.F. Raum, *Chaga Childhoods: A Description of Indigenous Education in an East African Tribe*. (Hamburg, London: International African Institute); Margaret Mead. *Coming of Age in Samoa* (New York: Morrow, 1961). When they have addressed children, anthropological accounts have tended to focus on their roles in kinship structures, ritual, and rites of passage, particularly Arnold van Gennep, *Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960) and Victor Turner, *Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).

their experiences in the future.¹⁰ A growing body of anthropological literature is following in the wake of UN and NGO initiatives, and journalists accounts examining the critical role of children and youth in armed conflict.¹¹ I too understand young people as social actors with their own ideas, motives, and worldviews that impact their communities and the people around them. I take childhood as a differentiated, rich site of analysis which shapes and textures the memories it evokes.

In his *Centuries of Childhood*, Philippe Aries argued for the historical invention of childhood in 19th-century Victorian Europe.¹² His groundbreaking work offered an early contribution that challenged scholars to deconstruct assumptions about the constitution of childhood, but assumed a homogenous experience of childhood along class lines, ignoring the widely varying responses of children as unique individuals. Focusing on language and gender, Carolyn Steedman and her contributors deepened this project through close analysis of how conceptions of 19th-century women and children have been produced, and filled in some of the biggest gaps within master narratives about “the people.”¹³

¹⁰ Several important edited volumes have come out in the last decade, especially: Stephens, ed. 1995; Honwana and de Beock, eds. *Makers & Breakers: Children & Youth in Postcolonial Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005).

¹¹ Alcinda Honwana, *Child Soldiers in Africa* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Jo Boyden, *Children and Youth on the Front Line: Ethnography, Armed Conflict, and Displacement* (New York: Berghahn Books 2004); Graca Machel, *The Impact of War on Children: a review of progress since the 1996 United Nations report on the impact of armed conflict on children* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Dith Pran, *Children of Cambodia's Killing Fields* (New Haven: Yale University Press); Jimmie Briggs, *Innocents Lost: When Child Soldiers go to War* (New York: Basic Books, 2005); Jennifer Armstrong, *Shattered: Stories of Children and War* (New York: Knopf, 2002); Peter Warren Singer, *Children at War* (New York: Pantheon Books 2005).

¹² Aries, Philippe. *Centuries of Childhood: a social history of family life* (translated from the French by Robert Baldick. New York: Knopf, 1962).

¹³ Steedman, Carolyn, Cathy Urwin, and Valerie Walkerdine, eds. *Language, gender, and childhood* London: Routledge, 1985.

Children's experiences, particularly in Africa, have relatively recently entered the purview of anthropological and historical research with the work of Pamela Reynolds,¹⁴ Paul Richards,¹⁵ and Nancy Scheper-Hughes,¹⁶ who have placed children in the center of their analysis. Emerging from a strong Marxist tradition, much of South African historiography concerning the end of apartheid has privileged the economic and the political.¹⁷ This important work was produced with a sense of urgency that sought to analyze and ultimately to change the deep-rooted inequalities within South African society. Since the end of apartheid, there has been a shift toward issues of identity and representation, strongly influenced by literary and cultural studies.¹⁸ This trend has been documented in a variety of forums, for example in what has been termed the "History vs. Heritage" debate. Both of these trends have laid important groundwork for me as I explore adults' childhood memories of circumstances defined by inequality.

Within the emergent and growing body of work in South Africa on young people, the focus has been on the slightly older but at times overlapping category of "youth." Since children are often regarded as lacking the capacity for political consciousness and existing outside the economic sphere, they have not received adequate attention in their

¹⁴ Sandra Burman and Pamela Reynolds, *Growing Up in a Divided Society: The Contexts of Childhood in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1986); Reynolds in Das, et.al., eds. *Remaking a World: Violence, Social Suffering, and Recovery* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

¹⁵ Paul Richards and James Currey, *Fighting for the Rainforest: War, Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1996).

¹⁶ Nancy Scheper-Hughes, ed. *Small Wars: The Cultural Politics of Childhood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

¹⁷ Nigel Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Segregation, and Apartheid* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000); William Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001 2nd ed); Robert Ross, *A Concise History of South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Leonard Thompson, *A History of South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Michael Morris, *Every Step of the Way: The Journey to Freedom in South Africa* (Chicago: HSRC Press); Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945* (New York: Longman, 1983); Christopher Saunders, *Historical Dictionary of South African History* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1983); J.D. Omer-Cooper, *History of Southern Africa*. (London: Heinemann, 1994 2nd ed).

¹⁸ For example, Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael, eds., *Senses of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Social Identities South Africa series.

own right. A growing interest in the role of South African youth, particularly in the struggle against apartheid, has produced several important works including Glaser on Soweto youth *tsotsi* culture of the 1980s,¹⁹ Jacobs, Ramphele, and Reynolds on children and labor,²⁰ Reynolds,²¹ Ross,²² and Monique Marks on youth and resistance,²³ and Chubb and Van Dijk on children and youth in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).²⁴ These works have countered the absence of young people as dynamic social actors in studies of colonialism and struggles for liberation. Several edited volumes have examined experiences of young people from a cross-cultural and trans-historical perspective.²⁵

Childhood is a deeply powerful concept, capable of holding a range of meanings. Much of its authority comes from a persuasive moral imperative that demands consensus on ethical and universalist grounds. The ways that childhood gets reified reveal much about the historical and cultural contests in society at large. As in many contemporary human rights discourses, debates and discussions about childhood are often cast in terms of a fundamental universalism that (ideally) transcends the specifics of time and space.

Despite the overlapping and competing efforts of lawmakers, government administrators, politicians, parents, advocates, practitioners and academics to fix these constructions within stable frames of coherence and consensus, children elude the

¹⁹ A *tsotsi* is a gangster, or hoodlum. Glaser, Clive, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976*. (Portsmouth, N.H.: Henemann, 2000).

²⁰ Jacobs, Sean, *Assaulting Childhood*; Ramphele, *A Bed Called Home: Life in the Migrant Labour Hostels of Cape Town* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press).

²¹ with Das and Ramphele, 2001.

²² Ross, Fiona. *Bearing Witness: Women and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (London: Pluto Press, 2003).

²³ Marks, Monique, *Youth Warriors: Youth Politics, Identity and Violence in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2001).

²⁴ Chubb, Karin and van Dijk, Lutz, *Between Anger and Hope: South Africa's Youth and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. (Johannesburg; Somerset, NJ: Witwatersrand University Press, 2001).

²⁵ Cole and Durham. *Generations and Globalization: Youth, Age, and Family in the New Global World Economy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

conventions imposed upon them. The possibility of subversion is always there as children intrude into adult worlds, activities, and spaces. They won't stay in their place, because indeed they are interacting with adults all the time and shaping their worlds as adults labor to control and shape theirs.

What and how we know about children's lives during this critical period of recent South African history is limited, and often glossed over by a default linking of the categories "children and youth." Whether in government policy, historiography, or public history accounts of young people's experiences during apartheid, this coupling is almost always used in reference to older youth in ways that have obscured and elided the experiences of pre-adolescent children. As I will explore in the chapters that follow, in South Africa the child-youth continuum is one that has been particularly open to manipulation by various kinds of actors including children and youth themselves.

* * * * *

fragments from *W or the Memory of Childhood*, by Georges Perec

My childhood belongs to those things which I know I don't know much about. It is behind me; yet it is the ground on which I grew, and it once belonged to me, however obstinately I assert that it no longer does...²⁶

That mindless mist where shadows swirl, how could I pierce it?²⁷

...childhood is neither longing nor terror, neither a paradise lost nor the Golden Fleece, but maybe it is a horizon, a point of departure, a set of co-ordinates from which the axes of my life may draw their meaning.²⁸

²⁶ Perec, *W or the Memory of Childhood*, 12.

²⁷ Raymond Queneau, as quoted in *ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

In his autobiographical novel/memoir *W, or, the Memory of Childhood*, Holocaust orphan Georges Perec attempts to penetrate the mist of muddled memories of his traumatic childhood employing various strategies of perceived neutrality and objectivity.²⁹ In alternating genres, Perec gathers fragments, gaps, and uncertainties to write about a childhood he can't remember. In many ways this book is an organized, schematic attempt to access his early life using many of the tools and approaches of anthropologists and historians. But it is only within the gaps between verifiable truths and misrememberings that Perec finds meaning and access to past experiences. It is in sentiment—in all of its patchiness and supposed evidentiary weakness—that a sense of Perec's childhood may be found. Sentiment, which resides in the ephemera of gap, is what renders his childhood visible and meaningful.

Perec was working as a scientific archivist when he first attempted to write fiction around the age of twenty. Some twelve years later he joined a collective called OuLiPo, short for “**O**uvroir de **l**ittérature **p**otentielle”, which translates roughly as “workshop of potential literature.” The collective included mainly French speaking writers,³⁰ scholars, and mathematicians, who sought to “assist the renewal of literature by inventing, refining, and refurbishing *formal devices*, which can be thought of equally well as tools,

²⁹ Quite unexpectedly I happened upon this remarkable work that so thoroughly captures, questions, and represents my own encounters with adults remembering childhoods fringed by or grounded in trauma. It came at a crucial time for me as I was confronting the holes in my own research and attempting to determine what I had learned Perec has provided a very helpful theoretical intervention for me in my work on memory. I stress the *theoretical* contributions of this comparison, and reject any implications of contextual comparison. I am not equating the Holocaust with apartheid, and refuse to engage in ranking experiences of mass suffering. The discovery was modeled by many of my own heroes of anthrohistory who have also found theory in unlikely places.

³⁰ Most notably, Italo Calvino.

or constraints, or constrictive forms.”³¹ Utilizing structures drawn from the realms of mathematics, logic, and chess as constraints, Perec and his fellow writers were “astonished by the way that through this apparently conscious process, the unconscious appears more likely.”³²

Noted for his creative energy and intense love of word-play, Perec proved to be quite prolific before his premature death just four days before his 46th birthday. He produced more than 20 works including a 300-page novel written without the letter “e,”³³ a novel in palindrome, an oral history project about Ellis Island,³⁴ dozens of crossword puzzles, and a survey of the 124 dreams he recalled having between May 1968 and August 1972.³⁵ In an interview in 1981 he said it was his ambition to have used all the words in the dictionary by the end of his life. He further declared, “I would like to say everything in every way possible.”³⁶ Perec was an observer and recorder of “everydayness,” and saw his work drawing most prominently from the fields of sociology, autobiography, the “ludic,” and narrative.³⁷

W or the Memory of Childhood was reportedly his most challenging work, taking 13 years to complete.³⁸ The first of his intertwining narratives spins a lurid fictional tale of an island society ruled by “boundless terror” in which conscripted athletes are forced to compete against one another in events designed to maximize their suffering and

³¹ Bellos, 10 from Warren Motte, Jr., *Oulipo: A Primer of Potential Literature* (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 1986).

³² Ibid.

³³ *La Disparition* (1969), translated to *A Void*.

³⁴ *Récits d'Ellis Island: Histoires d'errance et d'espoir*, (INA/Éditions du Sorbier, 1980) translated to *Ellis Island and the People of America* (with Robert Bober), trans. by Harry Mathews (New York: New Press, 1995).

³⁵ *La Boutique obscure: 124 rêves*, (Paris: Denoël, 1973).

³⁶ “The Doing of Fiction” Georges Perec. 1993. [Extracts from a tape-recorded conversation in English with Kaye Mortley, Paris, August 1981]

³⁷ Bellos, 12.

³⁸ The narrative pieces of *W* were submitted in their earliest form in 1969 as a serial to the French journal *La Quinzaine littéraire*.

humiliation. Based on a set of drawings that he had produced around age thirteen, the parallels with Nazi ideology and the horrific conditions of the concentration camps are clear. Spliced throughout this gradually unfolding narrative are autobiographical fragments from Perec's childhood in France around the time of Germany's occupation.

Perec marshals all of his evidence and presents it to his readers, including an attempt made 15 years earlier to capture and record everything that he knew about his parents. He can't allow the primary text to stand on its own, however, believing that by exposing and disclosing the inaccuracies of his account he will discern a deeper truth about his early years. Perec forces his readers to witness the whittling away of his narrative through an exhaustively critical exegesis. The six pages of original text are subsumed by the eight pages of footnotes consisting of interruption, qualification, interrogation, refutation, clarification, speculation, sensation, reevaluation, documentation, reflection, revelation, confession, expression, interpretation, and correction. The critical interventions Perec makes into his own text are often totalizing in scope: "There's no basis for any of this",³⁹ he claims, and "I do not know the source of this memory, which nothing has ever confirmed".⁴⁰ Perec admits to his own inventions, calling himself out by exposing evidence and contradictory accounts that destroy his credibility.

Like an anthro-historian,⁴¹ he seeks to assemble and read a range of fragments in his quest for meaning through a more intimate engagement with his past: stories, old

³⁹ Perec, 1988: 13.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 37.

⁴¹ Perec invokes the disciplines' core methodologies early on: "For years I sought out traces of my history, looking up maps and directories and piles of archives. I found nothing, and it sometimes seemed as though I had dreamt, that there had been only an unforgettable nightmare." (3); and "...in what I am about to relate ... I wish to adopt the cold, impassive tone of the ethnologist: I visited this sunken world and this is what I saw there," *ibid.*, 4.

journal entries from his youth, newspaper articles, photographs, fantasies, scars. The tangible traces of his parents are devastatingly few: five photographs of his mother, only one of his father. He searches for patterns, and strives to determine what is characteristic and what isn't, plumbing the details for more knowledge, broader understanding, and more deeply felt emotions. The circumstances of his separation are profoundly traumatic on both the personal and collective level: born to Jewish immigrants from Poland, Perec first loses his father, who was wounded and bled to death fighting against the Germans, and shortly thereafter his mother, who was deported to Auschwitz and murdered.

While Perec's interruptions are abrupt, they are made in a language that is often unsure. His narrative is thus marked by an interesting juxtaposition: uncertainty sits along side precision, recalled feelings and imaginings with a preoccupation with numbers, facts, figures, and dates. He does a lot of counting,⁴² as if numbers can fill the void of uncertainty with something settled and fixed. He strips his narrative down to only verifiable facts, dissecting his memories with obsessive zeal. In the process, Perec's own knowledge and understanding of who he was and what he experienced is fragmented even further: any loose claim he had on his childhood has slipped away from him. He relentlessly pursues exactitude, verification, ordered chronology, and underlying meaning, seeking to distill the "Truth" from multiple sources. The ultimate effect, however, is not a clarification but an obfuscation—in fact an *annihilation* of any salvageable meaning or memory of substance. The neutrality he seeks leads him not closer to his truth but further from it. This process initially distracts us from the devastating void of a childhood without parents.

⁴² For example, noting the number of his own spelling mistakes in a single name.

Perec presents a wonderfully complicated exploration of the inner workings of memory. Acknowledging the overwriting influences that shape and partially constitute his memories, he confesses that one of his fondest was likely taken from a Rembrandt painting,⁴³ raising the question of what popular icons can do to memory. Upon close inspection he finds Hans Christian Andersen and Victor Hugo, the 1937 film *Bizarre Bizarre*,⁴⁴ and illustrations from children's books trespassing in similar ways. A fusion of fiction and life is revealed, along with the sometimes arresting, sometimes sneaking power of images—whether from literature, art, history, imagination, or constructions of childhood—to overwrite our access to pasts in complex ways.

Another treasured memory is destroyed when he realizes that he has co-opted a classmate's experience of an accident as a personal remembrance of his own.⁴⁵ As stories circulate among people and within one's personal narratives, the boundaries between reality and fantasy and self and others can be difficult to discern. Fantasy obscures and fills gaps, and sometimes even creates them. Fantasy accommodates metanarratives, and the foundational narratives of our selves as they shape-shift. We all carry around our own personal mythologies to fill gaps—sometimes the gaps between who we are or have been and who we would like to be.

Dreams also feed memory. Perec shares one of his: “several versions of it exist, and overlaid upon one another, they make the memory itself more illusory. The simplest statement of it would be this: my father comes home from his work; he gives me a key.

⁴³ “The subject, the softness, the lighting of the whole scene are, for me, reminiscent of a painting, maybe a Rembrandt or maybe an invented one,” 14.

⁴⁴ Perec 1988, 39-40.

⁴⁵ Recalling a mutual friend, Philippe Gardes, the author and an acquaintance discover they were all at the same school together, and in the same class. Louis Argoud-Puix remembered Philippe, but not the author, who then asked him about an accident he was “supposed to have had.” “He did have a precise recollection of an accident identical in every way... which had happened to the self-same Philippe...” (ibid., 80).

In one version, the key is made of gold. In another version, I swallow the coin, everyone fusses, and the next day it turns up in my stool.”⁴⁶ The symbolic possibilities are not lost on the author. Perec reminds us that memory, identity, and experience also inform and shape our tastes and desires: “The memories I have of my father are not many. At a particular time in my life, in fact at the time I referred to previously, the love I felt for my father became bound up with a passionate craze for tin soldiers.”⁴⁷

David William Cohen’s *Camella Teoli*⁴⁸ and Alessandro Portelli’s *Luigi Trastulli*⁴⁹ have demonstrated how “untrue” stories can elicit deeper understandings. Similarly, Perec teaches us more about his childhood by exposing the contradictions and contestations, such as those raised by his aunts and cousins, than a single, consistent account could ever provide. It is in attempting to reconcile these “misrememberings” that Perec provides a rare glimpse into his own interior world. Strikingly, several of these inconsistencies involve injury and illness, typically inflated or chronologically shifted onto the period of life after he lost his parents. In Perec’s own (self) analysis,⁵⁰ this is not coincidental but rather a symbolic symptom of his experiences: “The Red Cross evacuates the wounded. I was not wounded. But I had to be evacuated. So we had to pretend I was wounded. That was why my arm was in a sling. But my aunt is quite definite: I did not have my arm in a sling; there was no reason at all for me to have my arm in a sling. It was as a ‘son of father deceased’, a ‘war orphan’, that I was being evacuated by the Red Cross, entirely within regulations.”⁵¹

⁴⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁸ David William Cohen, *The Combing of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1994).

⁴⁹ Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1990).

⁵⁰ Interestingly, he was undergoing psychoanalysis when he completed this manuscript.

⁵¹ Perec, 1988.

While narratives of redemption, conscientization, and becoming suggest otherwise, Perec confirms that there are not always straight lines between the former child self and the adult he grows into. Much is beyond the frame, and cannot be captured by it or held within it. An unframing is required. And an acceptance and acknowledgement of the many gaps within our research can potentially create an opening for a wider range of more honest and inclusive scholarship.⁵² As Perec and so many other Holocaust writers have shown, there is an ethics of emptiness that allows for and works with—rather than against—spaces of gap and absence. In fact, neutrality and objectivity seem not only flat and void of substance, but inappropriate, inhumane, and abhorrent.

Through an alternating double narrative of dissected memoir and dark fantasy, Perec's construction of "childhood" is revealed to be more of a sieve than a frame. By moving back and forth across the two main story lines, he exposes something that neither of them can fully contain. There is something else that we as readers—and as anthrohistorians—must recognize in the space between.

The adventure story is rather grandiose, or maybe dubious. For it begins to tell one tale, and then, all of a sudden, launches into another. In this break, in this split suspending the story on an unidentifiable expectation, can be found the point of departure for the whole of this book: the *points of suspension* on which the broken threads of childhood and the web of writing are caught.⁵³

The work of anthrohistory then may be seen as a mapping of these points of suspension, and engaging with them: taking them up and wrestling with them for awhile. It is within these spaces that the alchemy of memory, imagination, and sentiment can transmute and subsist. This is crucial if we are to produce textured histories of

⁵² Perec would seem to suggest that as researchers too often we feel thwarted by the holes in peoples' memories and the dead ends in the archives.

⁵³ Perec, 1988 preface.

childhoods that make the social worlds of children available. The gaps of childhood are often filled by claims of universalism, just one of the many ways in which the subordination of children effectively avoids meaningful engagement with their thoughts and experiences.

Much of our knowledge about our childhoods is derived from others. If growing up severs us in certain ways from our childhoods, (certainly in terms of our subject-positioning shift into the dominant and hegemonic field of adulthood), what can bring us back? What prompts reconnection, reformulation, reevaluation, and understanding of one's childhood? In *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana*,⁵⁴ Umberto Eco makes a compelling case for the singular power of sensory triggers such as music, smells, images, sounds, and textures. Percec also explores the range of ways that we know about our childhoods: through first-hand memories, the stories relatives tell, photographs, archives; through dreaming, imagining, feeling, and sensing; and by plugging into the larger frameworks of history, film, novels, and popular culture.

Memories of childhood are especially episodic, and often articulated in the language of superlatives and firsts. What factors within our childhoods and ensuing lives contribute to the highly selective, unstable, and ongoing memory process that enables us to carry or keep on hand certain experiences that may then be brought forward, laid out, offered up?

In Percec's account, memory is defined by its own emptiness or hollowness. Percec exposes the holes in his memory and narrative accounts until they overwhelm what he thinks he once knew or experienced. His analysis subsumes content and severs sentiment. By trying to fill in the gaps, Percec distills his early life story down to

⁵⁴ Umberto Eco, *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2005).

nothingness, and obliterates his own memory. By filtering out the inconsistencies, the interpretations, the speculations, and the unverified, we only get further from any real understanding or sense of the past. It is through this annihilation of personal memory that we as readers confront the utter devastation of the Holocaust in witnessing a relentless pursuit of a truth so fleeting and fragile it is destroyed through the very means used to fix and reinforce it.

For Perec, sentiment activates, animates, and grounds the fragile sense of meaning in his early life. Early in his narrative he writes, “I possess other pieces of information about my parents; I know they will not help me to say what I would like to say about them.”⁵⁵ He shows that sentiment is not merely memory’s dress, but a fundamental part of its very constitution. Sentiment is one of the lenses through which children become visible.⁵⁶ Perec is more available to us in the early part of the book,⁵⁷ when he is still capable of registering felt emotion.

Narrating how the most tragic events of his life unfold, Perec describes his last contact with his mother with clinical sparseness: “One day she took me to the station. It was in 1942. It was the Gare de Lyon. She bought me a magazine which must have been an issue of *Charlie*. As the train moved out, I caught sight of her, I seem to remember, waving a white handkerchief from the platform. I was going to Villard-de-Lans, with the Red Cross.”⁵⁸ And finally, achieving his desired but devastating degree of “neutrality and objectivity,” he finishes her story: “I’ve been told that later on she tried to cross the Loire... She was picked up in a raid, together with her sister, my aunt. She was interned

⁵⁵ Perec 1988, 14.

⁵⁶ As one can observe in the characteristically sentimental genre of childhood memoir, for instance.

⁵⁷ Like Martin Amis’ *Time’s Arrow*, another unconventional work about the Holocaust that experiments with temporal frame and structure, it may be argued that Perec’s *W* only makes sense in reverse.

⁵⁸ This journey was actually his rescue through the Kindertransport.

at Drancy on 23 January 1943, then deported on 11 February following, destination Auschwitz. She saw the country of her birth again before she died. She died without understanding.”⁵⁹

As he excises the subjective and speculative parts of his memory, the more dispassionate he becomes. With the authority of neutral objectivity, his narrative is rendered flat and yet overly saturated with meaning: “We never managed to find any trace of my mother or of her sister. It may be that they were deported towards Auschwitz and then diverted to another camp; it is also possible that their entire trainload was gassed on arrival. My grandfathers were also both deported.”⁶⁰

The ways of not knowing are much fuller and constitutive than the facts, which fall flat and cold. As his story unfolds, there is less and less engagement with the finality of what is known because the medium for knowing has been extinguished: It is only within the spaces of uncertainty that sentiment can be held. “From this point on, there are memories – fleeting, persistent, trivial, burdensome – but there is nothing that binds them together.”⁶¹

* * *

We are constantly engaging with aspects of the past. When we look up at the night sky or through a telescope, some of the light that we see may be from stars that have been extinguished for thousands of years. It is not simply a matter of a time-space distance. A certain mindfulness toward simultaneity is required.⁶² Different time-

⁵⁹ Perec, 33.

⁶⁰ Perec, 41

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁶² As Perec notes, “I could generalize a little, that in almost everything I am producing there is, we could say, a story and the story of the story. A fiction and a fiction about the fiction and like, it’s like mirrors, and it doesn’t end with the fiction and the fiction about the fiction—there’ll be speculation about the

moments constitute the skyscape, and the objects we are closest to do not necessarily appear most clearly. One must also consider the intensity and strength of certain bodies, in relation to one another. Strong memories can trump more recent ones in their sway and power, and the clarity of their vision in both detail and impact. The brightness of stars is ever and always relational. Without other celestial bodies to compare them to, we would have no way of determining either their place or size, nor their significance in the universe.



Figure 1-1 "Blanket," mixed media, Sarah Wyman, 2008

Employing innovative sources and unconventional methods, Georges Perec unravels a rich palimpsest of perspectives through a shifting range of temporal, emotional, and conceptual vantage points that speak through the gaps existing between

fiction of the fiction and so on. And there is, I could say there is several levels. But I can't know exactly what the fiction is. It's like a mayonnaise, I should say." (26)

them. The very inaccuracies and imaginings which overwrite most of Perec's memories of his murdered parents largely constitute his connection to them. The source of meaning in his childhood is only visible when viewed through the sedimented sentiment of the unsayable.

In Perec I've found a theorist of memory who puts forward the idea of gap as a means of keeping something alive, engaged, and dynamic.⁶³ Of course, there can be no singular reading of gap, for gaps are attributable to many things.⁶⁴ Not every gap is imbued with equal significance.⁶⁵ When it comes to children, one of the most frequently invoked is a cognitive gap in which a child's worldview, analytical skills, life experience, maturity, understanding, etc. is recognized as different from that of adults. Far too often, however, adults assume that children have an absence or void of understanding rather than seeking out what their understanding is. The prominence of imagination in children's thinking creates a space between adult and child, and real and fantasy as well. Usually subordinate in their family and society, children's subalternity engenders many kinds of gap deriving from issues of power, voice, and choice. Meta-narratives, including those of cultural texts, nation, the concept of "childhood," and self can serve to both situate and occlude past experiences as accessed through memory.

⁶³ In *The Texture of Memory*, James Young speaks to this notion by arguing that memorializing something limits and even deadens public engagement with it. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

⁶⁴ There are several types of gaps which constitute, shape, and define the ways in which we produce and engage with our memories of our own childhoods. Each of these gaps overlaps with the others, compounding and destabilizing them further.

⁶⁵ Could we not understand something hugely significant by looking harder for the patterns in what is missing, and what *doesn't* appear, rather than just looking at what does? What if we aimed to produce a photonegative image of history, inverting the traditional process of "historian as sleuth" to bring gap into the foreground? What would a biography look like that consisted of the stories *not* told, the events and people and experiences *not* remembered? If one could gather all of holes and silences encountered, how would such an archive of absence be ordered? How would it be read? In some ways this is Jennifer Cole's approach in *Forget Colonialism? Sacrifice and the Art of Memory in Madagascar*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

Narratives of childhood memory are marked by a layered ambiguity of definition: the borders between self and others, real and imagined, first-hand or borrowed, and a dubious grasp on temporality. An act of translation to oneself is required to make sense of the child you once were. Stepping off from *W or the Memory of Childhood*, I would like to consider the costs and consequences of trying to override the gaps of memory. I would like to pause and hold a space for gap in my work: to (re)consider it as a dynamic and productive space for anthrohistorical work, to acknowledge it, learn from it, take it on its own terms, and try to understand what those are. For it is not enough to say that memory is a process, or to acknowledge the belatedness of testimony. We must also tend to the patterns in *how* these processes work, and what their shaping influences, logics, and constraints are.

* * * * *

Violence shatters. It creates holes in people, families, and landscapes. As a concept childhood has a great deal of force. It is a highly emotive category often claimed as universal. It relies upon familiar narrative structures and often manages to evade the contradictions among them. The discourse of childhood is embedded in deep sentiments (particularly nostalgia), ideas of innocence and purity, and (Eurocentric) assumptions about children spending most of their time playing. But childhood is also a space of struggle, contested by those both within and outside of it. The pervasiveness of violence in late apartheid South Africa disrupts the efforts to settle constructions of childhood in South Africa, both now and then.

With the passage of time, and the movement of individuals out of the identity category of “childhood” (which in South Africa can be drawn out for a very long time),⁶⁶ certain constructions may no longer serve those who may have once endorsed them. During apartheid, individuals, organizations, political movements, and the state drew upon and created constructions of children that served their interests. These interests were subject to change, and have had unforeseen consequences and outcomes. For instance, the former youth who fought for freedom are often referred to as “the lost generation.” Succinctly described by journalist Kamika Dunlap: “They left school to fight apartheid. Today, unemployed and undereducated, they fight their personal demons.”⁶⁷ The pathologizing defeatism of this appellation not only obscures the varied roles of the young in the struggle, it also occludes the historical and continuing contestation of these very categories.

It is important to remember the very real stakes involved in these constructions. They are palpable and devastating, particularly to those for whom the least has changed. The vast majority of the children and youth of the anti-apartheid era continue to live in extreme poverty. South Africa’s Gini coefficient, a measure of society’s inequality, is one of the worst in the world. In that sense, little has changed since 1978 when South Africa ranked “higher than any of the other 57 countries in the world that were examined.”⁶⁸ Inequality pervades every space, and every aspect of South African society.

⁶⁶ For example, one may be a member of the ANC Youth League until 35 years of age.

⁶⁷ <http://journalism.berkeley.edu/projects/safrica/facing/juvecrime.html>.

⁶⁸ de Lange and van Seventer cited in Wilson and Ramphele *Uprooting Poverty* (New York: Hunger Project Global Office:1989), 18.

Both violence and childhood are often cast as transcendent of cultural and historical particularity because they are assumed to draw force from individuals' innermost core of humanity. But these constructs are highly unstable, and engaged with sensibilities and understandings that are individualized, and culturally and historically specific. Within the context of the late apartheid period in South Africa, the complex relationship between these two constructs fuels new opportunities for additional reflection and debate by reopening questions about agency, responsibility, culpability, and consciousness for reconsideration and revision. What does it mean to take very seriously the concept of a *child* as the product of a history? Using different sets of sources, the chapters which follow seek to consider this question.

Chapter 2

Imagining Futures

The Soweto Uprising

On the morning of Wednesday, June 16, 1976, an estimated 20,000 schoolchildren gathered at Orlando West Junior Secondary School, carrying placards of protest with slogans such as “To Hell with Afrikaans,” “Away with Bantu Ed,” “Black Power,” “If we must do Afrikaans, Vorster must do Zulu,”⁶⁹ and “Viva Azania.”⁷⁰ Marching along Vilakazi Street toward Orlando Stadium, the singing throng swelled as groups from different schools converged in the early morning sun. The students’ complaints included overcrowding, lack of adequate facilities and resources,⁷¹ and a recent government decree requiring that arithmetic, social studies, geography, and history be taught in Afrikaans.

The previous weekend, more than 400 students attended a meeting at Naledi High School of the South African Students Movement (SASM) Action Committee to plan their

⁶⁹ National Party member John Vorster was Prime Minister of South Africa from 1966-1978 before stepping down to President from 1978-1979 in an attempt to deflect attention from his complicity in the so-called “Muldergate” scandal, in which Minister of Information Connie Mulder lied in Parliament about the government’s secret funding of a newspaper front, *The Citizen*.

⁷⁰ Helena Pohlandt-McCormick has compiled and published a list of slogans on banners and placards carried during the Soweto Uprising. Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, *I Saw a Nightmare... Doing Violence to Memory: The Soweto Uprising, June 16, 1976* (0-231-50376-8. Gutenberg<e>: Columbia University Press, 2005). <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/pohlandt-mccormick/pmh02y.html>.

⁷¹ At this time government spending for education was an estimated R654 a year per white child, R220 per Asian child, R158 per “Coloured” child, and R42 per black student. Corresponding Teacher:Pupil Ratios in 1978 were 1:20 for whites, 1:27 for Asians, 1:30 for “Coloureds,” and 1:50 for blacks Africans. *South Africa Institute of Race Relations Annual Survey 1978* (Johannesburg: South Africa Institute of Race Relations), 399.

peaceful mass demonstration. There they formed the Soweto Students' Representative Council, led by Tebello Motopayane as Chairperson, Tsietsi Mashinini, and Seth Mazibuko. Each of the secondary schools elected two leaders to represent them on the SSRC. Parents were not included in these discussions as students believed they would try to intervene and stop the protest. As Sibongile Mkhabela, a student organizer recalled, "The students agreed that 16 June was the day when all the students of Soweto would march in protest against Afrikaans, Bantu Education and the illegitimate South African government. The list of students' grievances grew longer every day..." The students even anticipated the police might respond with force, but were willing to face the dangerous possibilities regardless:

We thought that we were being proactive when we openly discussed all the possible responses of the government of the day...we assumed that the government would throw teargas, hose us, get us detained for a day or, at worst, use rubber bullets. With hindsight, this was at best naïve, even silly of us.⁷²

Accounts vary on the sequence of events, whether the police fired warning shots, when students began pelting them with stones, and the timing of the release of police dogs.⁷³

The degree to which the police felt threatened by the school children is still debated with some pointing to the inexperience and youth of several of the armed troops themselves, while others have insisted that the bloodbath which followed was motivated by arrogant irritation that students would dare to challenge the security arm of the state. As an assistant editor of the *Financial Mail*, John Kane-Berman wrote one of the earliest books on the uprising, and noted that many eyewitnesses blamed police for initiating the violence with students by trying to confiscate their placards and halt the march. "The

⁷² Sibongile Mkhabela. *Open Earth and Black Roses: Remembering 16 June 1976* (Braamfontein: Skotaville Press, 2001), 50-51.

⁷³ As documented in testimony from the subsequent investigation of the Cillie Commission and the many accounts that have been published since.

students taunted them, and they responded with teargas. Some reports had it that stones were then thrown and shooting started, while others said the police opened fire before... [A]pparently no order ...to disperse was heard, and a senior police officer admitted at the time that no warning shots had been fired either.”⁷⁴ Police commander Theuns “Rooi Rus” Swanepoel is believed to have given the command to fire on the schoolchildren, a choice he apparently never regretted. As he told the TRC, “I made my mark. I let it be known to the rioters I would not tolerate what was happening. I used appropriate force. In Soweto and Alexandra where I operated, that broke the back of the organizers.”⁷⁵

Several Soweto survivors remember the releasing of police dogs as the instigating trigger that set off the students’ insurgency. One of the most ubiquitous agents of terror and violence was the police dog. As former student activist Sifiso Ndlovu remembers from his childhood in Soweto, “For us in the black community, the dog was a symbol of police power, brutality and of the contempt of white supremacists for black people’s dignity and life. Most police dogs, and those privately owned by white South Africans are ‘colour-conscious’. They are often trained to attack black people without restraint and to be venomous towards black people in general. The latter are often seen as unwanted intruders, invading white people’s personal space and life.”⁷⁶ Police dogs were ordered to attack detainees in prison, protesters in the streets, and anyone who looked suspicious or acted afraid. Protestors in Soweto attacked police dogs as they charged, stabbing them with knives and setting them alight.

⁷⁴ John Kane-Berman, *Soweto: Black Revolt White Reaction* (Braamfontein, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1978), 1.

⁷⁵ Lucille Davie, “Hector Pieterse gets his Memorial,” Official Website of the City of Johannesburg (October 24, 2001), <http://www.joburg.org.za/content/view/263/51/>.

⁷⁶ Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu. *The Soweto Uprisings: Counter-Memories of June 1976*. (Randburg: Ravan Press, 1998), 1.

When police opened fire on the masses, chaos ensued and the students temporarily retreated. Young protesters turned their anger onto the state symbols of power, vandalizing and destroying government buildings, Putco buses, municipal beerhalls and bottle shops, and white business vehicles. Police vehicles were also stoned and set alight. Black people believed to be collaborators, including urban Bantu Councilors, were also targeted. A black police officer was pulled from his car, handcuffed and beaten, and two white West Rand Board officials were beaten and killed. Police roadblocks were set up at all entrances to Soweto, and sharpshooters fired upon protesters from helicopters overhead. The battle continued into the night and over the next several days. On June 17, students at the University of the Witwatersrand attempted to march in solidarity with the Soweto students but police attacked and broke up their demonstration.

The official death toll was listed at 23, but at least 104 children under the age of 16 were killed in this massacre. Some reports have estimated at least 600 people were killed, mainly teens. Protests spread across the country from Soweto to other townships on the Rand, East Rand, and the Universities of the Witwatersrand, Rurifloop, Ngoye and Natal.

After three days of rioting, the Minister of Bantu Education, Michael C. Botha, closed all Soweto schools and eventually dropped the requirement for Afrikaans instruction before reopening them on June 26th. Resistance soon spread across the country as African, “Coloured” and Indian students protested against the injustice of the apartheid state through youth demonstrations, enforced boycotts, and school burnings. Other towns on the Witwatersrand, Pretoria, Durban, and Cape Town were all home to

significant demonstrations that flared into violence. Police attacked and raided townships, rounding up school children in mass detentions. As growing numbers of township children were detained, shot, and killed, as Reverend Frank Chikane described, “a new generation of young militants... emerged.”⁷⁷

The former Soweto Parents Association became the Black Parents’ Association (BPA), and organized to help arrange medical, legal, and funerary services for victims of the police action. Winnie Mandela, wife of detained ANC leader Nelson Mandela, was centrally involved in the organization of the BPA and was actively engaged in dialogue with the youth. When the classroom-based Soweto Students’ Representative Council (SSRC) leaders called for students to return to school, few complied and the reopening of schools in the last week in July was marked by high absenteeism and arson attacks. This tactic was used widely, and within ten days 50 schools in the surrounding Transvaal region had been damaged by fire. On August 3rd police conducted a series of raids, purportedly searching for SSRC leaders, and effectively emptying the schools once more. They remained vacant for the rest of the year.

As protests by schoolchildren continued to spread, police responded with violence, particularly in Cape Town and other areas of the Eastern Cape. In August and September the SSRC mounted several successful stay-aways, using a range of persuasion and coercion. The second of these broke into violence when a section of migrant workers in Mzimhlope Hostel in the Meadowlands area of Soweto, allegedly encouraged by police, waged an attack on young people in the streets of Soweto. Subsequently,

⁷⁷ Frank Chikane, “Children in Turmoil: The Effects of the Unrest on Township Children” In *Growing Up in a Divided Society: the Contexts of Childhood in South Africa*, ed. Sandra Burman and Pamela Reynolds (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1990), 333.

organized youth resistance was geared toward campaigns against shebeens [venues, often people's homes, for the illegal selling of alcohol, usually traditionally-brewed beer], alcohol, and Christmas celebrations. A new phase of the struggle had started: with the youth at the helm, continuing confrontation would characterize the resistance.

In the government crackdown that followed, SASM and other Black Consciousness Movement organizations were banned. A new national organization, the Congress of South African Students, was formed to fill the gap. Establishing branches across the country, COSAS capitalized on the heightened commitment that had coalesced as a result of the courage of the students of Soweto.⁷⁸ The Bantu Education System began to crumble as black schools fell apart. As youth became increasingly politicized in the late 1970s and 1980s, schools served as centers of resistance to apartheid and were consequently continuously targeted by the state. Schools were the sites of mobilization, intimidation, political influence, and harassment as police occupied schools and arrested students, sometimes *en masse*. Some students were forced away by principals because they were seen as instigators, and some administrators and teachers not only failed to protect students from the cruel activities of police within their schools, but even collaborated with state agents who targeted students and their families.

⁷⁸ “Initially a Black Consciousness orientated organization, a year after its formation COSAS became the first organization to declare its support of the Freedom Charter. Its first president, Ephraim Mogale was actually a clandestine member of the ANC and was later to be convicted of furthering the aims of the ANC.” The United Democratic Front, “Affiliate Organisations: The Congress of South African Students (COSAS), South Africa History Online, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/governance-projects/organisations/udf/affiliates-student-orgs-cosas.htm>.

The security police responded with force, arresting thousands of students who often languished in jail with no promise of trial. Outside of school, state tactics included harassment, abuse, detention, and house arrest of children and youth, which also had a tremendously disruptive effect on their education. Whether they were forced to leave by the police, administration, or their peers, or they chose to leave in protest, many students missed writing their exams, which had serious consequences for their educational progress and future lives.

As the line between children and youth blurred with Soweto, the line between young people and parents was drawn more firmly. June 16th shifted the conceptual grid in which for generations, the power relations between children and adults had been emplotted. Karis and Gerhart argue that in addition to the “unprecedented challenge” the Uprising posed to white domination, “Older blacks likewise experienced a loss of authority as parents, teachers, urban councilors and even respected senior political notables found themselves deferring to the high school students whose initiative, courage and energy were the driving force of the revolt.”⁷⁹ In her case study of Elukhanyweni, Ina Roux points to another causal factor which set the stage for intergenerational conflict. She argues that the prevailing social order among Africans in pre-apartheid South Africa was rooted in the possession of land. Previously, “the authority of the older generations had derived from the body of survival skills and knowledge they possessed and were able to hand on to the succeeding generations. With the change in environment from

⁷⁹ Thomas G. Karis and Gail M. Gerhart. *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1990, Vol. 5: Nadir and Resurgence, 1964-1979*. (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 1997), 167.

essentially subsistence farming to that of the resettlement area, many of these skills became relatively unimportant or obsolete.⁸⁰

As one student noted in 1976, writing to *The World* newspaper, “Our parents are prepared to suffer under the white man’s rule. They have been living for years under these laws and they have become immune to them. But we strongly refuse to swallow an education that is designed to make us slaves in the country of our birth.”⁸¹ Following the Soweto Uprising, increasingly militant youth grew impatient with what they regarded as their parents’ submission to white exploitation. As Burman and Reynolds observed, active support for their demands in 1976 was not forthcoming from parents:

Except for isolated instances of support such as that from the Soweto Parents Association, the children were organizing their own struggle with their own leadership, irrespective of the wishes of their elders. The passivity of parents was seen by their offspring as ...[the] failure of parents to struggle with their children and to provide leadership [which] widened the generation gap. The more radical children almost lost confidence in their parents. They felt that their parents were prisoners of fear and death.⁸²

And so it was that on June 16th, the school children of Soweto cast off the constraints of conciliation and renounced the restricted horizons of their parents’ passivity.

The youth injected the struggle with a sense of urgency that had been lacking in the previous decade, post-Sharpeville, as a result of the incarceration, banishment, and escape into exile of many top leaders. Although the government tried its best to censor all coverage of the shocking events of the uprising, news spread and arguably opened the space of critique by inspiring, shaming, and outraging those both at home and abroad

⁸⁰ Ina Roux, “The Children of the ‘Surplus People’: A Case Study of Elukhanyweni” In *Growing Up in a Divided Society: the Contexts of Childhood in South Africa*, ed. Sandra Burman and Pamela Reynolds (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1990), 252.

⁸¹ “June 16th Uprising,” <http://africanhistory.about.com/library/weekly/aa060801b.htm>.

⁸² Burman and Reynolds 1990, 340.

who would have turned away from the schoolchildren's demands. Obed Kunene, editor of the Zulu newspaper *Ilanga* [The Sun], articulated the moment in powerful terms:

Blacks do not destroy facilities... They destroy symbols of the entire system devised by whites for them... pass laws with their repugnant manifestation, Bantu education, job reservation, unequal pay for equal work, no security of tenure, no landownership rights, poor living conditions, migrant labour, inequitable distribution of the country's wealth, and a denial of the democratic right to decision-making. It is a system that has virtually ruined the fabric of black society, especially in the urban areas. It is abhorred, resented, despised, and hated almost to pathological limits.⁸³

In laying out the deeper history of injustice and oppression, Kunene invoked the longer and perhaps less-appreciated struggles that the Soweto generation's parents and grandparents had fought. For to truly recognize the rupture of the students' explosion onto the scene of the struggle, one must look back at the origins of apartheid's architects' attempts to annihilate the aspirations of black youth.

Bantu Education and the Crafting of the African Child

The foundation of the apartheid system was the social stratification of South Africans along racial lines. Africans, "Coloureds," Indians, and whites were slotted into a rigid hierarchy that determined every aspect of their lives. Education was one of the most favored and powerful tools used by the government to promote its ideology. The struggle for control over children's minds was seen as crucial to the apartheid government and to its opponents. Since the arrival of the first Europeans in the beginning of the colonial period, the education of black children has been a fraught and contested issue. In collusion with members of the military and civil service, missionaries sought to

⁸³ As quoted in Hermann Giliomee and Bernard Mbenga, *New History of South Africa*. (Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers, 2007), 364.

“civilize” Africans through formal teaching, religious inculcation, and the banishment of certain customs and practices.

As long as whites have sought to impose their ideas onto Africans, Africans have resisted. But for some, including ANC leader Nelson Mandela, a missionary education became a vehicle for upward mobility within an increasingly authoritarian system of racist disenfranchisement and exploitation. It enabled some Africans to attain higher paying and higher status positions as civil servants. This tiny window of very limited opportunity was largely closed, however, only a few years into apartheid rule.

In 1953, the Bantu Education Act (Act No 47) officially established a separate educational system for Africans. Written by apartheid architect and Minister of Native Affairs⁸⁴ Hendrik Verwoerd, the act enforced racial segregation for all schools and established a Black Education Department in the Department of Native Affairs, which was tasked with developing a new curriculum suited to “the nature and requirements of the black people.” Verwoerd’s system of Bantu Education was designed to “train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life,” which for Africans meant serving their own people in the homelands or working in manual labor positions under whites. The Minister’s intent was not only to proscribe the arenas of employment for Africans but also to delimit their life opportunities and to stifle their ambition for advancement. Verwoerd argued that Africans should not be “misled” into developing “expectations in life which circumstances in South Africa do not allow to be fulfilled.” As he declared, “Natives will be taught from childhood to realize that equality with Europeans is not for them.”

⁸⁴ The Department of Native Affairs was later called the Department of Bantu Affairs.

What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics which it cannot use in practice? There is no place for him above the level of certain forms of labour... We should not give the native an academic education.... we should so conduct school that the native will know that he must be a labourer in this country.⁸⁵

The Bantu Education Act enabled much greater administrative control and surveillance by the state than that which had existed in the preponderance of mission-run educational institutions. Schools were required to register with the Black Education Department, which now controlled teacher training, hiring, and curriculum development. Teachers and administrators seen as subversive were removed. The new law led to a substantial decrease of government aid to black educational institutions, which were now to be funded primarily from direct taxes paid “by Africans themselves.” When the law passed, 90% of African schools were state-supported mission schools. Most of them closed to avoid the discriminatory mandates of the apartheid state.

In keeping with the aims of Christian National Education,⁸⁶ a key component of early Afrikaner nationalism, it was hoped that Africans schooled in the Bantu Education system would maintain their separate “Bantu culture[s]” and either remain in their tribal homelands or work as manual laborers for Europeans. The system called for mother tongue instruction at the primary level, which served to further fragment the African population into distinct and separate “tribes,” in accordance with homeland policies and later zoning laws. Indeed, the legislation imagined that all African children then and

⁸⁵ H. F. Vorwoerd, architect of apartheid, describing his Bantu Education Act of 1953. He was quoted in the following article: Kate Philip and Brendon Barry, *NUSAS and the UDF* (August 2003), <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/pubs/umrabulo19/nusas.html>.

⁸⁶ Originating in 19th-Century Boer Republics and Afrikaner resistance to the imposition of anglicization by the British after the South African War of 1899-1902, Christian National Education was based on the philosophy of Fundamental Pedagogics, which stressed adherence to one’s own religious and cultural beliefs—that is those that helped to create docile subjects under Afrikaner rule. See Peter Kallaway, ed. *The History of Education Under Apartheid: 1948-1994: The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall Be Opened*, New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2002), 2-15.

forever would be raised in households and communities in which “mother tongues” were indigenous African languages.

In 1954, the African National Congress (ANC) called for a boycott of all Bantu Education schools and proposed alternative informal education for African children. The boycott campaign failed to gain momentum, however, as funds were limited and participating teachers were threatened by the state. The obscene injustice of this system motivated many to protest when it came into effect on April 25, 1955. Seven thousand pupils and one hundred and sixteen teachers were dismissed as a result of their participation in boycotts.⁸⁷

In 1959 the Extension of University Education Act placed similar demands on institutions of higher education in calling for the establishment of new ethnically-based institutions for blacks, and separate universities for “Coloureds” and Indians. Few options⁸⁸ remained for black students who could no longer attend white universities. Students caught within the new system grew increasingly resentful of the inferior education they were receiving, and increasingly organized in their resistance. In 1969 charismatic Black Consciousness leader, Steve Biko, inaugurated the all-black South African Student Organisation (SASO) as an alternative to the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), founded by English- and Afrikaans-speaking students in 1924. Although NUSAS was interracial in membership,⁸⁹ anti-apartheid in ideology, and

⁸⁷ “The History of Education and Childhood,” <http://www.socsci.kun.nl/ped/whp/histeduc/apartheid.html>.

⁸⁸ They included Fort Hare University, a state-controlled institution for Xhosa people, the University of Natal medical school (open to Asian, Black and “Coloured” students only), and the University of South Africa (UNISA), a correspondence institution.

⁸⁹ After World War II, NUSAS became more politically progressive. In the 1950s the organization opposed the government’s segregation of tertiary schools, and segregation in general. Christopher Saunders, Nicholas Southey, and Mary-Lynn Suttie. *A Dictionary of South African History, Second Edition* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2000), 122.

national in name, it was led by white students and Biko believed that black students should organize and speak for themselves. In his words:

It seems sometimes that it is a crime for the non-white students to think for themselves. The idea of everything being done for the blacks is an old one and all liberals take pride in it; but once the black students want to do things for themselves suddenly they are regarded as becoming 'militant' ... What we want is not black visibility but real black participation. In other words it does not help us to see several quiet black faces in a multiracial student gathering which ultimately concentrates on what the white students believe are the needs for the black students... There is a dichotomy between principle and practice in the organization [NUSAS]. We reject their basis of integration as being based on standards predominantly set by white society. It is more of what the white man expects the black man to do... We feel we do not have to prove ourselves to anybody.⁹⁰

School-based Students' Representative Councils became a major site of organized youth resistance. Frustrations reached a boiling point in June 1976, when students rallied again in response to this evil with far-reaching consequences.

As a result of the inferior and inadequate education system imposed on African students and the horrific circumstances of daily life under apartheid rule, African schools were rife with problems. The government's "divide and rule" strategy discouraged interracial and interethnic mixing and admitted students accordingly. Many students were forced to walk long distances, often past closer schools where their attendance was forbidden. Plagued by derelict facilities, exploitative working conditions, and inadequate resources, teachers (who were themselves often poorly qualified) struggled to educate the youth. Under these dismal circumstances many teachers resorted to draconian punitive measures in attempts to control their students. The profligate use of corporal punishment in the African school system subjected students to excessive physical abuse and

⁹⁰ Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like* (London: Heinemann, 1987, c1978), 5.

contributed to the increasing number of school leavers.⁹¹ Further exacerbating this trend was the national leaving-age of 15 that forced older students out of the education system altogether regardless of skill level.

The schools were incredibly understaffed with an average teacher-pupil ratio of 1:43 in 1983.⁹² Overcrowded classrooms were used on a rotating basis, known as the "hot seat" system, implemented to increase the capacity of primary schools. This system replaced the four and a half hour session with two sessions of three hours each.⁹³ In keeping with the government's homelands policy which sought to relocate Africans to their ethnically designated homeland, no new high schools were built in Soweto between 1962 and 1971.⁹⁴ White universities were closed to black students in 1969. In 1972, however, the government responded to pressure from the business sector, which was experiencing a shortage of "educated" African workers, and built 40 new schools in Soweto; secondary student enrolment increased from 12, 656 in 1972 to 34,656 in 1976.⁹⁵ The period of growth proved to be short-lived, however. Education cutbacks followed soon after as the state continued its tactics of social engineering and responded to the economic depression that hit South Africa in 1975.

As conditions worsened and students increasingly mobilized against the injustice of the apartheid system, the popular slogan "Liberation before education" encapsulated the sense of urgency and the stakes of the struggle for freedom. Students spoke out against corporal punishment, undemocratic practices within schools, the inferior quality

⁹¹ "School leavers" is the commonly used term in South Africa for student drop-outs. The term "learners" is often used for "students."

⁹² Burman and Reynolds 1990, 339.

⁹³ African National Congress South Africa, "Our Children: International Year of the Child" (1979).

⁹⁴ "June 16th Uprising," <http://africanhistory.about.com/library/weekly/aa060801a.htm>.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

of their facilities and the Bantu education system, a lack of accountability, and the enforcement of the school leaving age. As former Soweto youth Sifiso Ndlovu recalled, “What were initially problems that related to the lack of facilities and resources now became epistemological and ideological issues which included the (ab)use of language and power.”⁹⁶

Despite the conditions in which they were living, students during this period were also incredibly resourceful. Many children passed along their education to family and community members around them in one of the more positive and productive outcomes of the inversion of some aspects of generational power relations. As Sibongile Mkhabela recalls, when she was a child living in Soweto:

[I]t was exciting to play ‘teach a parent.’ Ma, who had a housekeeping job at the Baragwanath Hospital’s cerebral palsy unit, desperately wanted to overcome her educational limitations... We encouraged her to learn to read and write so that she could be promoted to a nurse assistant. ‘Ma, this is how you should hold a pencil,’ ‘Ma, this is how to write your name.’⁹⁷

Mkhabela also remembered the involvement of student leaders in providing additional educational opportunities for those who needed extra assistance: “During the school holidays Naledi High School was a hub of activity. Student leaders took over the academic programme, as they organized extra classes, approached their teachers or former students, or even encouraged one another to assist with revision of work or in areas which they felt less confident in.”⁹⁸

Tensions escalated considerably when Afrikaans was imposed as the medium of instruction in African schools. Few teachers were fluent in Afrikaans, which many within the resistance movement regarded as ‘the oppressor’s language.’ I spoke with

⁹⁶ Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu. *The Soweto Uprisings*, 14.

⁹⁷ Sibongile Mkhabela, *Open Earth and Black Roses*, 7.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 30.

many members of the “Soweto generation” who recalled the intense hatred that developed among schoolchildren for the language. As one activist described, even the sound of the language seemed harsh and severe. Afrikaans, she noted, is still seen by many black South Africans as a language best suited for berating, cursing, and commanding. She still finds the guttural tones in particular to be ugly and grating, and representative of the roughness and force that Afrikaners were renown for exercising on black people. Moreover, Afrikaans was not helpful to students seeking clerical work because English was preferred in the business sector.

In February 1976, two teachers at the Meadowlands Tswana School Board were fired because they refused to teach in Afrikaans. Students in schools across Soweto began to go on strike as early as May, and several students refused to write their mid-year exams in protest. As Paul Ndaba remembered, Afrikaans was not only difficult for students: “the teachers themselves were not well equipped to teach these subjects in Afrikaans....The marks that we got ... were extremely bad. We saw that we were not getting anywhere.”⁹⁹ In protesting the conditions they faced in school, students gave voice to the larger issues of injustice that plagued South African society as a whole: “We all understood that while the imposition of Afrikaans was a catalyst for action, it was not the real issue. The real issue was to free ourselves from an education that aimed to keep us as ‘boys and girls.’”¹⁰⁰

In seeking to impose Afrikaans onto black children, the apartheid government was laying the groundwork for future generations’ subservience for years to come. Within a socioeconomic system so deeply and redundantly grounded in racial inequality,

⁹⁹ “Verbatim statement of Paul Ndaba – December 1995. [Mr. Ndaba was my classmate at PJSS [Phefeni Junior Secondary School] in 1976.” As cited in Ndlovu, *The Soweto Uprisings*, 20.

¹⁰⁰ Sibongile Mkhabela, *Open Earth and Black Roses*, 50.

alternatives would not only be hard to imagine, as Verwoerd planned, but even impossible to articulate. Nowhere was this more pronounced than in the “language” whites often used to communicate with the students’ parents called “Fanagalo,”¹⁰¹ or more degradingly, “Kitchen Ka(f)fir.”

Fanagalo

Fanagalo is a controversial form of communication that evokes a range of interpretations and responses. Understanding Fanagalo is important to my argument about the overwriting of childhood, race, and violence in apartheid South Africa because, as evidence of the ways in which African adults were infantilized and coded as children it provides an example of how apartheid ideology inverted expectations of African children and adults. The origins of Fanagalo, and whether it should be classified as a language, a pidgin, or a creole, are disputed. In his foundational 1953 text, D.T. Cole argues that Fanagalo originated on the sugar plantations of Natal around 1860 with Indian indentured labourers.¹⁰² He bases this claim largely on the fact that the Zulu term for the language, *isikhulu*, means “the language of the Coolies.”¹⁰³ Another African language expert, Rajend Mesthrie, rejects this premise and believes it to be a pidgin language created out

¹⁰¹ Sometimes spelled “Fanakalo,” this pidgin or creole is known by a range of other names across the southern Africa region including: Mine Ka(f)fir, Pidgin Bantu, Isilololo (“Because of its extensive use of the ‘article’ *lo*.”), Basic Bantu, Basic Nguni, Basic Zulu, Silunguboi (“The type of *Isilungu Zulu for ‘European language’* which is used in speaking to the ‘boys’”), Conversational Zulu, Isikula.“ also Isikula, C[(h)]ilaplapa, Isipiki, Cikabanga. “Fanagalo,” *Oceanic Linguistics Special Publications, No. 14, A Bibliography of Pidgin and Creole Language,s* University of Hawai’i Press, 1975), 704-706.

¹⁰² D.T. Cole. “Fanagalo and the Bantu Languages in South Africa,” *African Studies*, Vol. 12, No 1, March 1953, 1-9.

¹⁰³ “Coolies” is a derogatory slur for Indians.

of necessity by mineworkers from across the southern Africa region who spoke a variety of different languages.¹⁰⁴

Regardless of origin, Fanagalo arose within labor conditions grounded in an extreme and explicitly racist linguistic hierarchy. The only contact that most whites had with Africans in the colonial and apartheid periods was through working relationships in which whites were in positions of power. As such, Fanagalo's vocabulary largely consists of words relating to manual labor, and mining in particular.¹⁰⁵ In his introduction to African languages text, G. Tucker Childs writes that the name is derived from "one of the most common utterances: *Enza fanaga-lo!* 'Do like this!'"¹⁰⁶ The language is based upon this command form, and consists largely of action verbs for various types of labor, such as "fetch," "lift," "clean," and "carry."

While the verbs in Fanagalo are typically limited to commands, the range of subjects is even more limited. When used by a white person, the subject is almost always a spoken or implied "boy," or "girl"; "Baas" or "Madam" when used by a black worker to communicate with his or her employer. An examination of some of the instructional phrasebooks and glossaries that were published in the last several decades reveals the antipathy and inequality both reflected and structured in the language itself. Such books were distributed on mines to white overseers, and were available for purchase through the

¹⁰⁴ Rajend Mesthrie, ed. *Language and Social History: Studies in South African Sociolinguistics*. (Cape Town: David Philip), 1995.

¹⁰⁵ Cole argues that "It is hardly surprising, considering the nature of its development and its function, that Fanagalo has an extremely limited range of expression... with its total vocabulary of under 2,000 words." Cole, 7.

¹⁰⁶ George Tucker Childs. *An Introduction to African Languages* (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2003), 209.

mail. S.E. Aitken-Cade's *An Amusing and Instructive Kitchen Kaffir Dictionary*¹⁰⁷
degrades and dehumanizes Africans from cover to cover.

¹⁰⁷ S.E. Aitken-Cade. *An Amusing And Instructive Kitchen Kaffir [sic] Dictionary* (Salisbury: Joelson House, 1951). Although printed in Southern Rhodesia, this instructional phrasebook was intended for readers across the region and written in the same vein as those coming out of South Africa. I begin with it because it is the oldest copy of such publications that I was able to locate. "The contents of this book were originally published in monthly instalments [sic] in 'the Rhodesian Tobacco Journal,' the only Journal published in Africa devoted solely to tobacco."

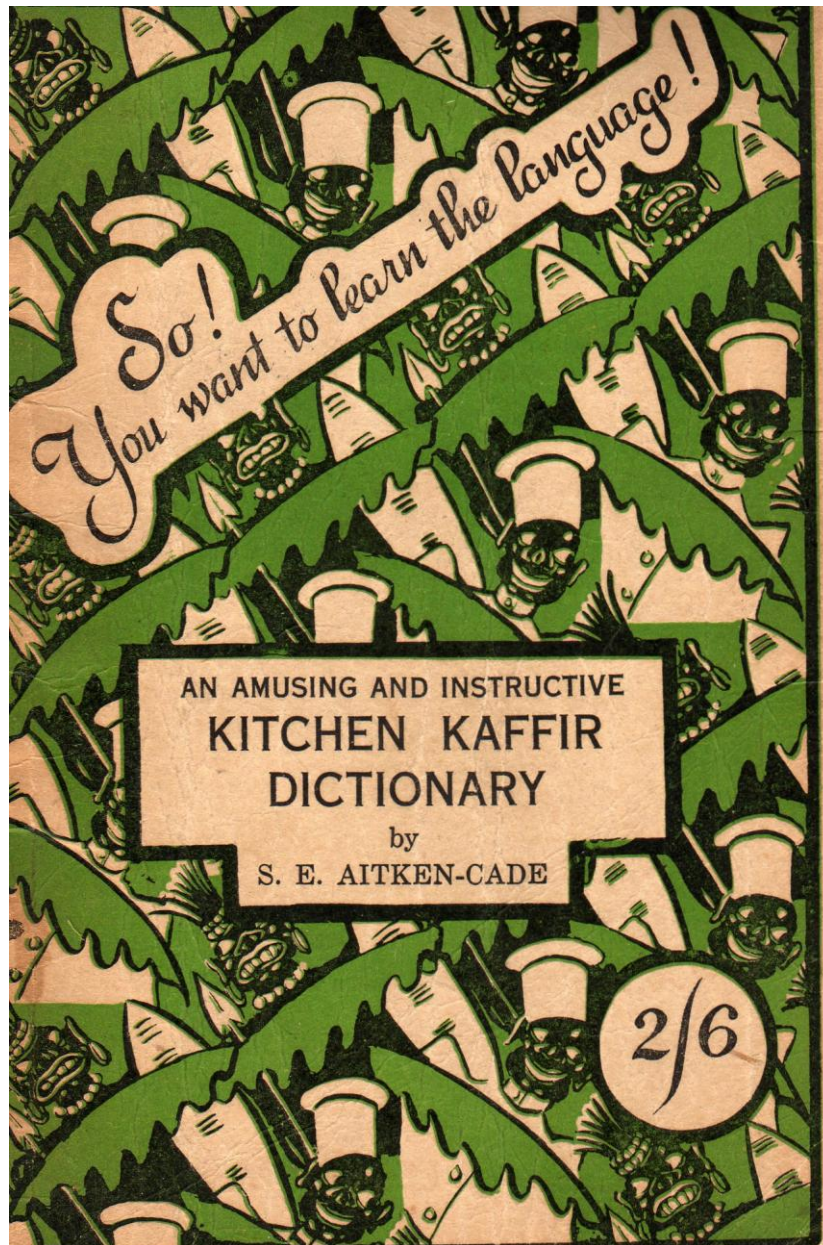


Figure 2-1 Kitchen Kaffir Dictionary

For those who “want to learn the language,” the small “dictionary” depicts two racist caricatures of a smiling African with exaggerated features in alternating cook and “tribal” garb. The vocabulary in this publication consists almost exclusively of commands, criticisms, insults, invective, and complaints of illness. Whites may use it to tell their servants, “This meat is too tough,” “This paint is too thick,” “This wine is too sweet,” or

“Fetch the tomatoes.” A great many of the entries provide instruction on how to tell one’s worker(s) to do things again, properly, faster, or more quietly.

Many have remarked that Africans have often been addressed and treated as children by most whites in apartheid (and, all too often, post-apartheid) South Africa. This is reflected in a wide range of ways: from the ubiquitous terms of address (“boy” or “girl”) to the clothing African men had to wear (including short pants, worn only by white children). There is also a perduring preoccupation with “teaching” Africans and disciplining them, typically the kind of concerns that adults have with children. Africans have often been treated as if they are unintelligent, lazy, lascivious, dishonest, superstitious, and unclean. South African whites have historically disciplined their (usually African) servants with forms of abuse often delivered as “punishments” intended to “teach.” Africans have also been treated by whites with a great deal of irritation, contempt, violence, and hatred. Several examples may be found in this Fanagalo “dictionary” from 1951.¹⁰⁸ In the selection of entries below, racism, violence, and disregard for Africans’ humanity is presented as humorous instruction:

AS, adv.—*sa*. Unbelievable but true. Proves that the native mind works in the opposite direction to ours. K.K.¹⁰⁹ *fanika*. “Do as I tell you!” “Enza fanika mena kuluma wena.”

BEAUTIFUL, skip it.

CORRECT, vb. tr. – *gadzira, ruramisa*. K.K. *longisa*. A word constantly to be used as something needs correcting most of the time on any farm but more so in Rhodesia. Most of the work already completed requires correcting. “That hoeing is bad, correct it.” “Lapa wena rimili yena mubi sterek, longisa.”

¹⁰⁸ All entries included below are taken from Aitken-Cade, *An Amusing and Instructive Kitchen Kaffir* [sic] *Dictionary*. The entries contain many inconsistencies in punctuation and format. Rather than distracting more from a somewhat distracting text I have reproduced the entries as they originally appeared, but without noting every irregularity.

¹⁰⁹ “K.K.” stands for “Kitchen Kaffir.”

DRUM, n. – *ngoma*. K.K. *ngoma*. Very noticeable over the week-end. Properly sterilized these percussion instruments make fine sundowner tables. The more sundowner tables the less noise from the compound.

HATE, vb. tr. – *nyenya*. K.K. *aikona funa*. “That boy is a loafer, I hate him.” “Lo muntu yena loaf. Mena aikona funa yena.”

HUMBLE, vb. int. – *zirereka*. K.K. No word has been found as the state is no longer popular among the natives.

LIE, vb.—*nyepa*. K.K. *manga*. It is extraordinary that there are so few words to describe this national pastime of the native Africans. “You are telling me a lie.” “Wena kuluma manga.”

MEMORY, n. – *rutondero*, *yeuko*. K.K. This attribute seems to be lacking in all natives who can speak kitchen kaffir.

MIND, n. – *njere*. K.K. appears to be blank here.

PERSERVERANCE, n. – *rusimbro*. Unknown quality now-a-days.

PERSON, n. – *munthu*, *munhu*. K.K. *moontu yena aikona moontu*. “That is not a person, it is an animal.” *Yena aikona moontu lo, yena nyamazaan.*”

RELY, vb. int. – *tenda*, *vimba*. Rather a useless word. No reliance can be placed on the Native staff unless they are constantly watched.

Africans are presented here through the odious ideology of white supremacy, objectified into dehumanized drones more akin to animals than people. The multiple scathing references to the inferiority of their minds—blank, lacking the capacity for memory, full of lies, and “working in the opposite direction to ours” confirms the deep-rooted racism that pervaded and perseveres in South African society. Other frequent references, as seen above, allege that Africans are intrinsically ugly, incompetent, and unclean. There are also several references to the offensive smell and sound of Africans. Readers can learn to say, “Go and wash. You smell,” and “Tell those boys to stop

singing.” Within Fanagalo, antipathy and inequality are structured into white-black relations at every juncture.

The creativity applied to finding new and “humorous” ways to abuse and demean reveals a disregard for African life that is deeply embedded not only in the ideology, laws and social practices of the apartheid system, but also the language so often used to interact across racial lines. Hierarchy, violence, and dehumanization were naturalized and built into the very means of communication, as seen in the normalization and use of words such as those below:

BEAT, vb. very tr.—*rova, rowa*, K.K. *chaiya*. “I’ll beat you.” “Mena chaiya wena.” If you are going to get any effect do it first and talk later.

BEFORE, adv., prep. and conj.—*pamberi*... “Put my shoes before the fire.” “Faka lo shoes gamena side kuno ga lo moto.” “Push the car back.” “Shovo lo motor car lapo pambili,” “Push the car forward.” “Shove lo motor car lapa move,” ... You’ll soon get the hang of it and much can be done by violent gesture.

CHEEK, n. – *dama*. Do not confuse the noun with the adjective. When a munt says that the Missie is “Maningi cheek” it means that the lady is trying to get a job done. The correct word to use with regard to an employer is ‘hasha.’ K.K.: “The Boss was angry and hit me on the cheek.” “Lo Boss yena enzili cheek maningi yena chayili skop gamena.”

CHOKER, vb. tr. – *dzipa*. The inclination should be resisted.

COCCYX, n.—*mudinhi, mudani*. K.K. *matako*. “Kick on the coccyx.” “Chaiya boots lapa matako.”

DRIVER, n.—*muchayiri*. K.K. *driver, chauffer*. Natives in this class can be a great liability unless firmly handled. A *muchayiri*, driver or chauffer will not demean himself by doing any work at all unless properly handled. A starting handle or a whip handle comes in useful.

EDUCATE, vb. tr. – *dzidzisa*. K.K. *fundisa*. “You don’t know how to work, I will educate you.” ... If the boy runs like a hare you have been understood.

FAST (hurry) – *kurumidza, chimbadza, kasira, fambisa*. K.K. *checha*. None of these words will have any marked effect without physical support

PIT—n. – *rindi, gomba*. K.K. *mugodi*. “He has fallen down the mine shaft.”
...*Yena wili lapa mugodi*.

SEEM - “He seems to be dead.” “Fanika yena fili.”

SEND, vb. tr. – *tuma*. K.K. *hamba, hambisa*. “Send the boy to the doctor.”
“Hambisa lomuntalapa Dokodeya.” Better send him to the Police.

SKIN, n.—*ganda*. K.K. *sikumba*. “I’ll skin you.” “Mina pumesa sikumba gawena.”

TIE, vb. tr.—*sunga*. K.K. *bopa*. “Tie him to that baling press until the police come.” “Bopa yena lapa screw paka yena fika Mapolisa.”

The entries above make visible and explicit the ways in which race, violence, and childhood are inextricably intertwined, not only in the labor system and social practices they point to, but in the structure of the language itself. Apartheid whites often described Fanagalo in neutral ways, as if it is merely a benign language that enables people from different linguistic backgrounds to communicate. Still today, in many contemporary business and journalistic accounts it is described as a mixture of Zulu, English, and Afrikaans that was (and is) used in labor situations involving people of various “races” and language groups across the southern African region.¹¹⁰ Blogs and social networking websites abound with discussions in and on these colonial pidgins or creoles, created by and catering to whites (especially expatriots) expressing the longing of nostalgia.¹¹¹ Again, the degradation, violence, and racism embedded in the structure of the language itself are rarely mentioned, much less decried.

¹¹⁰ For instance, it is defined in an article on contemporary mining as a “creole that was developed to bridge the communication gap between black workers, who spoke a variety of tribal tongues, and their white bosses, who spoke English or the Dutch-derived Afrikaans.” Nicole Johnson, “In Mines’ Depths, South Africa’s Women find Equality,” *St. Petersburg Times*, October 15, 2006.

¹¹¹ See <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/1356-3289.htm>, “Communicating to a diverse workforce” and <http://miningtechnology.wordpress.com/2007/02/05/speaking-fanakalo-in-the-mine/>, “Speaking Fanakalo in the Mine.”

Today, thanks to the language provisions enshrined in the new Constitution passed in 1997, South Africa is known for its progressive language policy.¹¹² With eleven official languages, the promotion of indigenous languages is prioritized.¹¹³ But Fanagalo is still the lingua franca used in the mines. A few reasons have been cited for its continued use. But even while noting the value of Fanagalo as a means of communicating and thus preventing accidents and maintaining satisfactory relations between workers, even in 1953 Cole concluded that “to address the Bantu [sic] in this debased jargon, if not insulting, is certainly not courteous.”¹¹⁴

If having to speak Afrikaans to whites was considered demeaning by Africans, taking orders in Fanagalo from them was nothing short of abjection. Through the use of Fanagalo, white interactions with Africans were structured to be harsh, as the power differential is embedded in the language. While many of their mothers and fathers were being commanded in Fanagalo (“Kitchen Ka(f)fir” or “Mine Kaf(f)ir”), Soweto youth organized themselves to take a stand against the language of their oppression: Afrikaans, in part to prevent the imposition of an even more degrading language in their future.

In imagining a future free from Fanagalo and the power relations it reinforced and reified, Soweto youth fueled the anti-apartheid movement with new energy and urgency. Inspired by the hope and confidence Black Consciousness ideology offered, many members of the younger generation seemed more willing and able to become, as Steve Biko suggested, “real black people who don’t regard themselves as appendages to white

¹¹² Russell H. Kaschula, “South Africa’s Language Policy in Relation to the OAU’s Language Policy for Africa,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 136, 63-75.

¹¹³ The degree to which these priorities have been adequately put into practice is a subject of debate. See D.E. Mutasa, “Language Policy and Language Use in South Africa: An *Uneasy Marriage*. *South African Journal of African Languages*, 2000, Vol. 20, Issue 3.

¹¹⁴ Cole, 1953, 9.

society.”¹¹⁵ The youth of Soweto may have defined the essence of Biko’s definition of Black Consciousness, possession of “an attitude of mind, a conscientization necessary for political activism to succeed.”¹¹⁶

Hector Pieterse and June 16th

The Soweto Student Uprising would be recognized as a watershed event in the dismantling of the apartheid system, but none could have imagined the impact of this day at the time. “June 16th”¹¹⁷ as it is also commonly known, was not only the defining moment of youth involvement and visibility in the anti-apartheid struggle, but it was arguably the fulcrum of the struggle itself. Overnight, people on both sides of racial and ideological divides were reevaluating the apartheid state and reimagining, with hope and with fear, what their futures might hold. For opponents of apartheid, this turning point had a face. One of the first students slain was 13-year old Hector Pieterse.¹¹⁸ He was photographed by *The World* newspaper photographer Sam Nzima in the arms of 18-year old Mbuyisa Makhubu as his horrified sister Antoinette Sithole ran alongside him. Retreating from the chaos, Nzima rushed the three young people to Naledi Clinic in his car, where Hector was officially declared dead on arrival.

The hidden histories surrounding Hector Pieterse and the consequential capturing of his famous photograph by Sam Nzima on June 16th are deep and multiple.

¹¹⁵ Biko, Steve, *I Write What I Like*, 51.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ A lot has been written on the Soweto Uprising, and many ideological claims and battles have been waged through the telling of these events. I do not wish to engage with that dimension at this juncture, however, and am certainly not trying to lay claim to any particular version of that day or the surrounding events.

¹¹⁸ Although Hector Pieterse was mourned as the first victim of Soweto, 15-year old Hastings Ndlovu is now believed to be the first child shot and killed.

To start, the story of his name is part of a broader family engagement with the apartheid regime's racial classification apparatus and its many painful outcomes. Originally the Pitso family, the Pieterse's changed their surname in an attempt to pass as "Coloured." When the photograph was disseminated across the country and the world, it was known by what the family insists is an incorrect spelling: Petersen.¹¹⁹

The famous photograph was one in a series of six sequence shots and other photos from that day, and as a result of the photos Nzima was harassed relentlessly by security forces. Within a year he fled Johannesburg and temporarily abandoned photography. It is also important to note that few or no American or British photographers or reporters were present in Soweto on June 16, and the African photographers who were (including Sam Nzima, Harry Mashabela, and Alf Khumalo, who had his film destroyed by the police), opened a window of opportunity for black reporters.¹²⁰ Through their coverage and presence in townships, these photographers and reporters "transformed their status within the townships. Journalism began to be perceived by young Africans as a possible avenue for resistance."¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Lucille Davie, "Hector: the Famous Child whose Face is Unknown," City of Johannesburg Official Website, June 14, 2002. http://www.joburg.org.za/june_2002/hector.stm

¹²⁰ Lucille Davie, "Hector Pieterse gets his Memorial," City of Johannesburg Official Website, October 24, 2001. <http://www.joburg.org.za/october/hector.stm>.

¹²¹ James Sanders. *South Africa and the International Media 1972-1979: A Struggle for Representation* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 175- 177.



Figure 2-2 Hector Pieterse Memorial, Soweto

Nzima's photo appeared all over the world in newspapers and on television screens, solidifying opposition to the brutal apartheid system both domestically and internationally. The photo came to symbolize the struggle against apartheid itself, and of the youth especially.¹²² It is still highly visible in South Africa and the world, as may be seen in the figure above at the present-day Hector Pieterse Memorial in Soweto. The international coverage and ensuing public outcry continue to emphasize the young age and innocence of the victims and the unjustifiable actions of the police. The image was reproduced on banners, posters, fliers, and t-shirts more than any other in anti-apartheid materials for the subsequent duration of apartheid rule.

The quintessential South African poster child, Hector was appropriated by all sorts of

¹²² Compare to the more recent example of another “poster child,” Elian Gonzalez, whose image came to symbolize the division between the United States and Cuba in June 2000 when he survived a disastrous attempt to flee Cuba on a small boat that capsized and killed 11 of its 14 passengers, including his mother. In this particular case, both sides (those advocating his return to Cuba and those lobbying for his resettlement in Miami) used his image to represent a broader struggle that encapsulated the aspirations, values, and hopes of a nation.

causes connected to liberation over the next fifteen to twenty years.¹²³ He became the preferred vehicle for looking back to look forward. As the recurring face and figure of the struggle, why did Pieterse capture the international and national imaginaries so powerfully? Why did Hector's photo become so iconic?

As Ellen Kuzwayo recalled, "...suddenly on the lips of every child you met was Hector Pieterse, Hector Pieterse, Hector Pieterse! That young boy on that day, yes, he died. He was killed by the police. But overnight he became a hero and you had to ask: Who is Hector Pieterse [sic]?"¹²⁴ As James Sanders discusses in his book on South Africa and international media, there were other photographs that were taken that day in Soweto, and distributed in much smaller circulation, including a photo of two black policemen firing into a crowd (also taken by Nzima) and a group of powerful black youth toyi-toying¹²⁵ in protest by Bernard Magubane. In Nzima's Hector images, the people are young and black and read as victims, which placed them within a nexus of densely powerful signifiers imbued with considerable emotional currency in the global context.

Hector Pieterse is used to iconographically place June 16th prominently within the historical narrative of the struggle, and June 16th has become a key event in South African historiography. In the ensuing decades, Soweto has figured prominently in the history of the people's fight against apartheid, with Hector Pieterse was the visual embodiment of that fight. From that day, youth appeared in the center of struggle narratives and within visual chronologies depicted in political posters in new and

¹²³ Sam Nzima describes his lack of recognition, appreciation, and financial compensation for his famous photographs in the following brief interview: "History in a Snapshot," *Tr!bute*, June 2003, © Nothemba Media (PTY) Ltd., Rivonia, South Africa, 62-63.

¹²⁴ Ellen Kuzwayo interview on "You Kill One, You Kill All!" *South Africa's Human Spirit: An Oral Memoir of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. "Slices of Life" production script. Johannesburg: South African Broadcasting Corp., 2000, <http://www.sabctruth.co.za>.

¹²⁵ The toyi-toyi is a protest dance or march that was widely used in anti-apartheid demonstrations, and in protests today.

important ways. Even though there is a deeper history of both youth political activity and organized protests around language instruction in South African schools, 1976 was cast as the originary moment of youth involvement.¹²⁶

On the one hand, for many reasons, as a (series of) event(s), June 16th complicates notions of childhood, but it also strengthens their emotional force, as *victims*. The lifelessness of Hector's body, stained with blood, and Antoinette's expression of horror conveyed their suffering and anguish in terms that suggest their victimhood. But what about the strong, tall youth who carried Hector? Mbuyisa Makhubu was 18 years old at the time the photos were taken, which meant he fell into the "children and youth" category." He was repeatedly referenced as such, and in her testimony at the TRC on April 30, 1996, Mbuyisa's mother, Nombulelo Elizabeth Makhubu, referred to him as "a schoolchild" and told the Commission that he was writing his matriculation exams in 1975.¹²⁷

According to her testimony, Mbuyisa and his family "never got any rest" after the photograph was taken and police harassed neighbors and family members in search of him. Mrs. Makhubu recalled an encounter that she had with a policeman in which he referred to Mbuyisa as an "unsung hero." She replied by telling him that "according to my culture Mbuyisa is not a hero. He just did what was natural because we are our

¹²⁶ The political tension between English and Afrikaner manifested itself in both spatial and social separation, and included separate education systems. Pieter le Roux describes, "One of the cornerstones of Christian National Education was a commitment to a political philosophy which laid great stress on separateness. In the early years the battle was one for separate Afrikaner schools... M.C. Botha had planned a school boycott by Afrikaans children in the 1940s in order to enforce their demand for separate Afrikaans schools rather than the parallel medium the United Party government favoured." Even in the 1940's, the connection between language and ideology produced anxieties about mixing: "the fear was that, if 50 per cent of all teaching was in English, the Afrikaners who gained a proficiency in a world language would be tempted to anglicize. (Growing Up an Afrikaner Pieter le Roux, Burman and Reynolds, 195).

¹²⁷ As stated by Nombulelo Elizabeth Makhubu in her testimony in the Human Rights Violations Hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, Case GO/0133, Johannesburg, 30 April, 1996.

brother's keepers. According to our culture... it would have been a scandal for nobody to pick Hector Pieterse up from the ground. As far as we are concerned he was never a hero for picking up Hector Pieterse.”¹²⁸ In late August, Mbuyisa left the country before telling his mother “I don't know where I'm going to, but I am tired of running away.”¹²⁹

Mbuyisa's mother heard from others that he was in Botswana, and in June 1978 received a letter from him from Nigeria. Mbuyisa informed her that he was studying medicine at the Federal Government College in Nigeria, and that he had spent a lot of time in the hospital suffering from “every sickness in the book.” That was the last she heard from her son, but rumors concerning his well-being continue to haunt her. She heard stories that he was mentally ill, that his body had been found dumped on a beach, that he had been killed by Nigerian locals in retribution for stealing, that he was mentally unstable, sickly, but still playing football, and that he had been reported as missing. The uncertainty surrounding Mbuyisa's fate continues to cause a great deal of pain and suffering for his surviving friends and family members.

Mbuyisa Makhubu is a person who disappears, who can't speak for himself but continues to be spoken for through the widespread visibility of Nzima's photographs. His presence enriches and complicates the discussion of the black body in ways that have yet to be addressed in South African struggle historiography. Why are people unable to see or read into the image of a living person in this image? Why does Hector's dead body overwhelm and blot out the presence of the strong, living body which carries him?

The events of June 16th attracted unprecedented national and international attention, scrutiny, and condemnation as the apartheid state became more draconian in its

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

use of violence against the masses. Expressing a greater sense of impatience and urgency, many youth adopted a stance of increasing militancy and became more organized in their attempts to overturn the apartheid state. Unquestionably, the Soweto Uprising radically transformed the political landscape and resistance movement in South Africa and the world and galvanized a younger generation. The ANC distributed leaflets calling on young people to extend the “concerns and the constituency of the revolt.” Ideas from the Black Consciousness movement had also gained hold, inspiring and inciting many youth to action.

The ANC and PAC received a tremendous boost as an estimated 12,000 young exiles fled to their training camps in neighboring countries. Like Mbuyisa’s, their bodies would also have been living, strong, and potentially dangerous. But it was also incumbent upon them to keep hidden, for their own personal safety, that of their loved ones, and the security of the liberation movement. But why do these strong, living bodies remain in the shadows, or continue to be rendered invisible in spite of their presence in historical evidence? Perhaps it is because in becoming more threatening to the apartheid state, they gained power that also became more threatening to liberation leadership.

Could Makhubu’s strong, healthy body have functioned as a body double of sorts for another? Carrying the weight of this nationalist narrative in formation, Mbuyisa Makhubu may be best understood as a stand-in for the person who would, ultimately, carry the nation into a new democratic era. Jailed on Robben Island, Nelson Mandela was removed from the frame of this picture by a government that sought to silence him using virtually every available tactic in their arsenal. Though they stopped short of

executing, assassinating, or poisoning him,¹³⁰ the regime banned all pictures, quotes, and most visits with Mandela in an attempt to enervate his power. The living Mbuyisa was a good stand-in for the ANC leader: photographs of a strapping, young Mandela donning boxing gloves and standing in ready position are some of the last photo images in circulation. For decades after their respective disappearances, it was not known what either of these men looked like although their images were circulated widely in South Africa and abroad.

¹³⁰ All of which were possibilities that the regime explored.

Chapter 3

The Complex Grounds of Childhood and Children's Claims

1979: The UN International Year of the Child (IYC)

Less than two months after the Soweto Uprising, on August 5, 1976, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the year 1979 International Year of the Child (IYC). Timed to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child,¹³¹ many programs were planned in its observance. The key aims of the Year were to investigate the situation of children and develop plans of action in response to these findings, all leading toward the creation of a 'framework of advocacy' for children. Wealthier countries were to assist poorer ones in the process.¹³²

Regarded by scholar Michael Jupp as "the pinnacle of an international effort to promote the needs and rights of children and to provide an unprecedented level of services and support for the children of the poor,"¹³³ this initiative was the culmination of

¹³¹ That is, the most recent version. There was also the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924.

¹³² The total budget was initially set at \$4 million and was later increased to \$7.2 million. The Nordic countries in particular, contributed leadership, aid, educational materials of various kinds. The Italian government became one of UNICEF's most important donors (Chapter 15, 363). "Most UNICEF national committees capitalized heavily on the IYC."

¹³³ Jupp, Michael, "The International Year of Child: 10 Years Later," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science*, Vol. 37, No. 2, Caring for America's Children (1989, 31-44), 31.

decades of advocacy work, diplomacy, negotiation, and planning by dedicated networks of international groups and individuals.

The IYC was first conceived of by Canon Joseph Moerman, Secretary General of the International Catholic Child Bureau (ICCB) in Geneva, who faced many challenges in realizing his vision. Due to the excessive cost in UN resources and a presumably limited public attention span, the UN had just passed a resolution to cut back on the number of international years, decades, and anniversaries.¹³⁴ Thus the Year of the Child differed from earlier UN-sponsored years in several ways. Firstly, it was not to be as lavish as previous themes due to a number of factors including the global economic recession, perceived "international year fatigue", the potential for divisiveness if children's issues were to become overtly "politicized," and UNICEF executive director Harry Labouisse's insistence that resources remain directed toward the developing world which was UNICEF's top priority.¹³⁵ Secondly, while the basic goals of the IYC were declared internationally, participating countries were to establish *national* IYC commissions that would be tasked with determining their programs and activities of observance independently. This was seen as a way of both limiting costs and avoiding politics.

The International Year of the Child was, first and foremost, a call for an inquiry into the state of the world's children. Structured minimally from the top, national committees were urged to partner with community and nongovernmental organizations to account for the state of the nation's children, and to draw up plans of action to address their needs. One outcome of this money-saving, more localized approach was that

¹³⁴ "The Year of the Child," UNICEF 1979: 353.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 353-4.

countries were able to engage minimally with the aims of the IYC. South Africa was one of the countries whose official participation was minimal and amounted to little more than superficial gesture. A series of gold UNICEF coins were released to commemorate the occasion, as was a series of IYC-themed stamps in the “independent” homeland of Bophuthatswana. But on the whole, the apartheid government resisted—through both censorship and indifference—the goals put forth under the aegis of the International Year of the Child.

Conversely, on the international front, by almost all accounts, the Year of the Child was a huge success. In his summary report, Joan Bel Geddes noted that it “unquestionably blew into corners unreached by other Years... It was a landmark in the continuing saga of trying to elevate the children’s cause to the high table of international statesmanship”, and “it changed hearts and minds; it dented policies and programs; it left a vital residue of goodwill both for children and for UNICEF.”¹³⁶ Michael Jupp agrees:

“Never before has the cause of children received so much concentrated attention. Children were studied as they had never been before, playgrounds were constructed where there had been none, and family allowances were introduced in countries that had never had them. Children’s needs were included -- often for the first time -- in long-term political planning, and funding was provided for child oriented programs at an unprecedented level. Education, health, welfare, social insurance, and overseas aid budgets were all increased. Postage stamps celebrating childhood were printed. Posters depicting children’s issues were produced and widely circulated, and the media, both print and electronic, provided exemplary coverage of children. And, perhaps most important, adults began to pay attention to the children and give them opportunities to speak for themselves and to influence their own futures.”¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Ibid., 359-361.

¹³⁷ Jupp 1989, 31.

In focusing attention on children across the world, the IYC raised awareness of lesser-known issues such as child trafficking, prostitution, and drug abuse, often resulting in increased governmental funding for these at-risk children.

Thousands of new organizations were formed, studies conducted, programs implemented, and works published. Across the world, countries created new opportunities for children's self expression, and (re)opened discussions on the rights of the child that would culminate a decade later in the UN General Assembly's passing of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This momentum also generated more extensive and structured alliances across various sectors addressing children's needs, as doctors, researchers, NGO workers, educators, parents, and children themselves created new opportunities for dialogue and collaboration. By the end of 1979, there were 148 national IYC commissions, three times the most hopeful of projections.¹³⁸ UNICEF's income increased that year by 25%, bringing it to \$285 million. Its profile and prestige had never been higher.¹³⁹

1979: South Africa's "Year of Health"

The International Year of the Child did not gain much official traction in South Africa, however, as the apartheid government in a politically expedient public relations move officially declared 1979 the South African "Year of Health." This reframing of what could only have been an embarrassing focus on the acute suffering of black children within the nation's multiple borders strategically limited the state's public obligation to one area in which they were willing to provide paltry assistance: healthcare. In fact, I

¹³⁸ ANC, "The Year of the Child," 357.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

would like to argue that it is only through the lens of healthcare that young black children¹⁴⁰ were visible to the apartheid state. Moreover, their visibility was constructed as pathology: black children were seen as a health *problem* by a state which, from the beginning, largely ignored them. Later, when they grew older, they would most often come to be seen as dangerous delinquents instigating instability.

The government's primary concern was providing healthcare to members of the white population. The level of care that was available to them was, in fact, among the highest in the world at the time. For the black majority, however, the state's approach to healthcare was limited, localized, and of shockingly low quality. Characterized by a lack of facilities, lack of funds, shortage of medical personnel, a curative approach with little early diagnosis or prevention, unavailability of basic statistics, emigration of doctors, insufficient salary scales, and extremely inadequate mental and dental care, the healthcare available to black people was deficient in every imaginable way.

Shortly after assuming power in 1948, the Nationalist government ended the country-wide school feeding program, which had mainly helped black children.¹⁴¹ At the time of the International Year of the Child/South African Year of Health, pre- and post-natal care for black mothers was virtually non-existent. The same was true of early childhood education, with African children starting school at age 7 while white children started at 5 ½.¹⁴² “Infant classes were raised from 90 to 100, allowing 50 children per teacher per session instead of the 60+ for 4 1/2 hours a day.”¹⁴³ Diseases arising from

¹⁴⁰ As discussed previously, I purposely maintain a fluid and relational sense of who counts as a “young child.”

¹⁴¹ Initially serving only poor whites, it had gradually been extended during the Second World War to children of all races. (Wilson and Ramphele page 294)

¹⁴² “Our Children” African National Congress South Africa International Year of the Child 1979

¹⁴³ Ibid.

malnutrition-- namely kwashiorkor, pellagra, and marasmus¹⁴⁴-- were rampant and often deadly in black communities, while almost unheard of for whites. A 1978 study conducted by doctors from the South Africa Medical Research Council in Johannesburg found that “50% of deaths among Africans and coloured people occurred in the under five age group. The corresponding figure for whites was 7%.”¹⁴⁵ Evidence of chronic malnutrition among African children, not serious enough to cause them to suffer from kwashiorkor or marasmus but resulting in both physical and mental stunting, was also presented in this study.¹⁴⁶

Particularly in the rural areas in so-called “Bantustans,” or “homelands,” where non-laboring African children were supposed to be, there was a woefully insufficient number of health clinics and medical staff available to black people. This was starkly reflected in statistical indicators including the infant mortality rate and average life expectancy. One 1979 medical study placed black infant mortality rates as high as 40%.¹⁴⁷ The squalor of the homelands was especially obscene in a country so rich in natural resources and farmland: experts such as World Vision support director D. Cuthbert argued that there was no need for the malnutrition problem “of near crisis proportions” in South Africa as the nation produced “enough food to meet up to 112% of the optimum daily energy requirements of the whole population.”¹⁴⁸

Findings such as these were somewhat hard to come by, and often contested by government officials as being nothing more than biased propaganda.¹⁴⁹ When Dr. Nthato

¹⁴⁴ Marasmus was also known as “wasting.”

¹⁴⁵ SAIRR 1979, 564.

¹⁴⁶ SAIRR 1980 Vol 34, 560.

¹⁴⁷ from a 1979 article published in *World Medicine*, as quoted in SAIRR 1979, p 564.

¹⁴⁸ SAIRR 1981, 400. World Vision of Southern Africa opened a nationwide drive for funds to combat malnutrition three years before. SAIRR 1979, 565.

¹⁴⁹ SAIRR 1980, 560.

Motlana and Dr. Selma Browde predicted that 50,000 children would die “directly or indirectly of malnutrition in the rural areas of SA and a further 100,000 children’s lives were at risk,”¹⁵⁰ Minister of Health, Welfare and Pensions, Dr. L. A. P. A. Munnik, accused them of having political motives and of “only trying to place us in a very bad light in the eyes of the rest of the country in the world.”¹⁵¹ Similarly, Chief of Psychiatric Services of the Department of Health Dr P. Henning dismissed the findings of a team of 17 American psychiatrists (“a high number of needless deaths”, “neglect and abuse of black patients at some of the psychiatric institutions they investigated,” and that “apartheid was damaging to the mental health of all races in SA”) based on his claim that the group of researchers was connected to international anti-apartheid groups.¹⁵²

For black children, state healthcare support was mainly limited to localized feeding schemes and immunization campaigns, the bare minimum for increasing their likelihood of survival. Such initiatives may have succeeded in keeping more children alive, but their quality of life was still deplorable. In framing its limited references to black children to focus on the most basic of health issues, the apartheid government was able to keep the bar very low in terms of what they were willing to provide. Even that pittance was provided reluctantly, as revealed by Cape Director of Hospital Services Dr R.L.M. Kotze who claimed that “it would be wrong to leave all aspects of health services, the doing as well as the paying, to the Government.”¹⁵³ Fundamental to the homelands policy was the hope that these so-called “independent states” would eventually become financially independent.

¹⁵⁰ As quoted from the Rand Daily Mail, May 14, 1979 in SAIRR 1980 560.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² SAIRR 1979, 568.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

There is a long history of seeing children as a health issue -- more precisely, a *women's* health issue. This has had far-reaching consequences for women, children, and the societies in which they live. But at this particular moment in 1979, with the world's attention increasingly turned to apartheid and its abuses, South Africa's "Year of Health" campaign was arguably designed to prop up the status quo rather than to effect real change. The outreach activities designed to "make people aware of health" and thereby decrease the infant mortality rate not only shifted blame for African infants' deaths onto their parents (mothers)' ignorance of how to properly care for them, but also reinforced and reflected racialized power relations dating back to the colonial period which were consolidated in apartheid's policies promoting white superiority and segregation.

Without a doubt, the health problems faced by black children in apartheid South Africa were substantial and severe. But the negative construction of black children as little more than a societal scourge drew from and reinforced entrenched racist beliefs about the black body as diseased, unclean, and contaminating. It resonated with whites' deep-rooted historical anxieties about racial mixing and contact, hygiene, and the psychological degeneration of the urbanized "Native."¹⁵⁴

Laws such as the Group Areas Act, the Separate Amenities Act, the Immorality Act, and influx control and homelands policies provided an extensive legal apparatus for controlling black people and keeping them apart from whites (except of course when they were providing them with labor). Whites' fear and revulsion of contamination infused the mundane minutiae of the everyday. Black servants were expected to use specially designated plates, cups, and cutlery for eating and could not drink from the same water

¹⁵⁴ See Megan Vaughan, *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* (Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University Press).

fountain or sit on the same park bench as whites. On a daily basis, in dozens of demeaning ways, whites sought to diminish the intimacy of their interactions with black people, the spaces they inhabited, and the objects they came into contact with.

Because identifying, investigating, and publicizing information on the vital statistics of the majority population revealed the extreme inequalities of apartheid society, another state tactic was to simply not collect damning data. For instance, government-sponsored surveys rarely included the homelands, which were characterized by their lack of adequate healthcare, housing, employment opportunities, fertile land, educational facilities, etc. The South African Medical and Dental Council did not keep separate statistics for different race groups,¹⁵⁵ which effaced the blatant correlation between racial classification and suffering. When the numbers and expert opinions reflected poorly on the government, they simply cut off the source of the information supply as when the Minister of Statistics announced in 1980 that kwashiorkor would no longer be a notifiable disease in South Africa because of “unreliable” reporting “due to different interpretations of the diagnostic criteria in the field.”¹⁵⁶

As reported in the SAIRR Yearly Report for 1978, “countrywide statistics showing the incidence of malnutrition were not available, as this is no longer a notifiable condition.”¹⁵⁷ Four years later, a researcher from the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa would report that “Government figures are not given to overstatement, and yet even they suggest that over two million of the

¹⁵⁵ SAIRR 1979, 570.

¹⁵⁶ SAIRR 1980, 560.

¹⁵⁷ SAIRR, 1978, 467.

country's nine or ten million children are well under weight for age, and that several hundred thousand are at grave risk from malnutrition.”¹⁵⁸

Community groups and NGOs tried to fill in some of these gaps, most prolifically the South African Institute of Race Relations. It was founded in 1929, and produced a yearly report entitled *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa*. The organization’s leaders included liberals Leo Marquard¹⁵⁹ and Alan Paton. Its aims were to further inter-racial peace, harmony, and co-operation; to seek the facts, and make them known; to promote discussion and understanding; to oppose discrimination and injustice; and to work to further the social, economic, and political development of all communities.¹⁶⁰ In its publications the Institute affirmed that it “is not a political body, nor is it allied to or given financial help by any political party or government.” It further stipulated that “Membership is open to all, irrespective of race, colour, or creed, and within or outside South Africa.” SAIRR’s annual surveys drew from newspaper reports, scholarly articles, and interviews, presenting thematically organized overviews of education, the economy, business, legislation, employment, crime, demographics, health, welfare, and politics.¹⁶¹ It also included updates on government laws and policy. The information these volumes contained was used extensively by anti-apartheid activists as evidence of apartheid’s devastating outcomes.

With very little preventative care offered for Africans, communicable diseases were usually addressed only when they threatened to affect the white population, as in the

¹⁵⁸ Francis Wilson and Mamphela Ramphele, *Uprooting Poverty: the South African Challenge: Report for the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1989), 295.

¹⁵⁹ Who also, incidentally, founded the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) in 1924.

¹⁶⁰ “The Nature and Aims of the SA Institute for Race Relations,” published inside the South African Institute of Race Relations Annual Surveys.

¹⁶¹ <http://www.sairr.org.za/>.

cholera epidemic of late 1980-1981. With almost 2000 diagnoses and 27 deaths, a preventative campaign was implemented in all African secondary schools, rather atypically including those in the homelands of Transkei, Bophuthatswana and Venda.¹⁶²

As reported in the SAIRR annual survey for 1981,

State health policy was aimed at placing the responsibility for dealing with diseases like cholera firstly on the individual sufferers and, secondly, on to the so-called "Black National States" (and away from Pretoria). Other than attempting to prevent the spread of diseases to white areas, the department ... neglected to do anything about combating preventable diseases found in the African rural area. ... fear of the cholera spreading to white areas was the major factor in the massive press publicity that the disease had received.

Diseases affecting black communities were largely ignored by the state:

Cholera is a relatively minor disease, and far less important as the cause of death and illness than numerous other diseases....[such as] infantile gastro-enteritis, a major killer of infants in rural areas, [which] has received little if any attention because it poses no threat to the white population of South Africa.¹⁶³

The late 1970s brought significant economic change to South Africa, with a manufacturing industry that "now dominated the economy, using complex technology and requiring semiskilled permanent workers rather than unskilled migrant laborers."¹⁶⁴

With the rise of unemployment and the continuing squalor of the homelands, Africans especially felt their options shrinking. Between 1979 and 1984, newly elected P.W. Botha applied his policy of "total strategy" in response to the "total onslaught" he felt South Africa was under by revolutionaries determined to topple the state. With the reverberations of the Soweto Uprisings continuing to resound across the region, resistance was rising, both inside and outside the country, Botha's "total strategy" involved a two-pronged approach: cross-border raids were launched by the SADF to

¹⁶² SAIRR, 1981, 401.

¹⁶³ Ibid., as described by a contributor to the social science journal, *Work in Progress*, volume 16

¹⁶⁴ Nigel Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Segregation, and Apartheid* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 138.

stamp out the so-called “terrorists” in the neighboring frontline states while minor reforms were being put forth domestically in an attempt to mollify the masses.¹⁶⁵

As part of the “Year of Health” initiative, in March of 1979, Minister of Health S.W. van der Merwe announced a reorientation of policy, stressing the importance of preventive and promotive health care.¹⁶⁶ Although criticized by many opponents for being “socialistic”, some minor changes were instituted as part of the new National Health Service Facilities.¹⁶⁷ In 1980, Health Secretary Johan de Beer announced an increase in state spending on prevention and health promotion, which would account for 20% of the budget, up from “well below 10%” in 1975.¹⁶⁸ That year recorded incidents of gastro-enteritis and malnutrition “declined substantially and the mortality rate of 6.5% at Baragwanath hospital in Soweto¹⁶⁹ was the lowest... ever achieved.”¹⁷⁰ But the improvements did not last long: already in 1981, de Beer announced cuts in the government’s health budget, necessitated by “the emphasis on curative medicine [which] had led to health care systems which were too expensive for most people in South Africa.”¹⁷¹ Baragwanath Hospital was “severely overcrowded with some wards, designed for 40 patients, having as many as 125 in them.”¹⁷²

Casting black children as a health problem served several state purposes simultaneously. Inherently pathologizing, this construction buttressed a sense of distaste and distance toward black people on the part of whites. Given the deliberate

¹⁶⁵ Worden, 139

¹⁶⁶ SAIRR 1979, 562, from *Citizen* 5 March 1978.

¹⁶⁷ “These were the provision of the basic subsistence needs, health education, primary health care, the community hospital, the original hospital and the academic hospital.” SAIRR 1980, 558.

¹⁶⁸ SAIRR 1980, 556.

¹⁶⁹ Baragwanath Hospital served the black community of Soweto.

¹⁷⁰ SAIRR, 1981, 397.

¹⁷¹ SAIRR, 1981, 394.

¹⁷² SAIRR, 1981, 567.

underdevelopment at the heart of homelands policy, it limited state expenditure on welfare services for black children since the majority of them were located in these rural slums. It also deflected attention away from the full range of suffering experienced by black children by reframing its few references to them to focus on the most basic of health issues. Limited immunization campaigns and feeding schemes¹⁷³ provided good public relations material, both at home and abroad, for the denying publics who sought to ignore and downplay the brutality and abuse of the apartheid state.

Anti-Apartheid Responses to the International Year of the Child

The international currents of increasing awareness could not be entirely circumvented, however. If the South African government sought to deflect attention generated by the International Year of the Child away from the abuses of apartheid by offering a more narrow and affirming focus on its own self-styled initiative to improve the health of people in South Africa, the ANC and its allies used it just as effectively to build awareness and reiterate their uncompromising opposition to the apartheid system as a whole. The Year offered a powerful platform for the anti-apartheid movement, which had an excess of evidence of a nation in need when it came to the situation of children within its borders. Considerable groundwork had already been laid by the UN in the previous year when it passed the Convention Opposing Apartheid and proclaimed 1978 “International Anti-Apartheid Year.” First implemented in 1959, select UN International Years were established “to encourage international action to address concerns which have

¹⁷³ These were usually not provided in the homelands unless there was a disease epidemic which threatened the health of whites. SAIRR, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981.

global importance and ramifications.”¹⁷⁴ In 1979 the IYC helped focus even more global attention on South Africa, which was being referenced with increasing frequency in a variety of venues, invariably as one of the worst case scenarios for challenges facing children in the world at the time.

“Our Children” African National Congress South Africa International Year of the Child

The Women’s Secretariat of the ANC in South Africa responded with indignation on June 1, 1979, “on the occasion of the International Children's Day” with the release of a three-page statement entitled, “Our Children.”¹⁷⁵ Public statements such as this were often released to the press on important occasions to inform and remind an international public of the abuses and violations of the apartheid regime. It opens with an indictment of the “racist minority clique of Pretoria” for rejecting the global efforts to prioritize children and contriving:

A tactic aimed at diverting attention from the plight of our children... the regime is planning to "make people aware of health" throughout the year. They want to convince the world that the infant mortality rate, which ranges up to over 200 per 1000 amongst Africans will be reduced by the elite congresses that are being planned as part of the "celebrations". These will obviously do nothing to benefit African parents and their children.¹⁷⁶

The statement identifies the apartheid government’s manipulative attempt to reframe the focus of global and national publics to the age-old heading under which children have traditionally been most often relegated: health.

¹⁷⁴ www.unac.org/en/news_events/un_days/international_years.asp.

¹⁷⁵ www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/pr/1970s/pr790601.html.

¹⁷⁶ www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/pr/1970s/pr790601.html.

As a result of deep-rooted structural inequality resulting from centuries of disenfranchisement, violence, and oppression, the health problems faced by members of black communities were multiple, interminable, and devastating. But the ANC could not afford to allow the negative association of Africans with disease and other health problems in such racist and derogatory terms. As seen in the recurring reproductions of anti-apartheid literature, statistics reflecting the racialized disparity in illness, injury, malnutrition, infant mortality, life expectancy, and death rates was-- and still remains-- severely skewed against the majority population. Health concerns were far too often a matter of life and death in black communities lacking adequate amenities such as access to safe drinking water, sanitation, food, healthcare professionals, and clinics.

The women's statement solidly situates the deplorable health issues facing black children within a broader socioeconomic system which provides no protection for them. They must contend with the "Bantu" education system, designed to "produce only slaves for the white South African economy," the lack of legal prohibitions against child labor, the separation of family members resulting from "the arbitrary forced removals of our people from one area to distant and unknown so-called 'resettlement' areas", "the openly discriminatory and aggressive policies of the regime," and "the imprisonment of children... scores of our children, dozens of them below 10 years of age, who are languishing in fascist dungeons." The statement reiterates the ANC's nonracialist policies, referring to children "regardless of race, color, sex or creed" and calls upon women specifically -- "South African mothers of all races... to unite to fight for the preservation of the future of South Africa -- our children." Women's units in the external mission are enjoined to "intensify the struggle for the recognition of the plight of the

South African child by the international community,” and children in exile are also remembered.

In closing, the statement makes seven demands to the Vorster-Botha regime:

[to] provide all measures to ensure the right of the child to life; stop the massacre of innocent children; stop the arbitrary separation of infants from their mothers; stop the cruel exploitation of child labor; no child must suffer any form of discrimination because of race, color, sex, religion, political or other reason; unconditional[ly] release... all political prisoners and detainees amongst whom are children; [and provide] ...compulsory national education for all children for a better and secure future for all children.¹⁷⁷

Shortly after the release of this statement, the African National Congress of South Africa released a 38-page booklet of the same name, “Our Children,” out of its London office. It too sought to leverage the occasion of the International Year of the Child to build awareness and rally support for the anti-apartheid cause. It contained five main sections covering family life, the health of children, child farm labor, education, and youth and struggle. It utilized a wide range of strategies to inform and incite readers: impassioned appeals to end suffering and injustice, statistics, personal quotes and testimonies, photographs, and comparative analysis of the UN Declaration of Children's Rights and National Party policy and legislation.

In most ways, this document is not unique. It restates established positions and reproduces several of the photographs and statistical tables circulated in other ANC/anti-apartheid literature. It also calls out the government for its declaration of 1979 as "Health Year": “Considering its record as far as black children are concerned, the irony is obvious.”¹⁷⁸ According to the ANC, this record is one in which health issues cannot be excised from the broader oppressive rubric of apartheid as a system. The ANC argues

¹⁷⁸ ANC, “Our Children,” 6.

that it is not possible to view malnutrition in isolation from its sociopolitical context, particularly when that is its cause: “the main cause of malnutrition is poverty, in spite of what government propaganda may say to the contrary.” Under these conditions, children were lucky to make it through their infancy, as evidenced in the child mortality rates. The ANC pushed the global community to think through and past these critical first years to consider what kind of a life black children struggle to survive for.

The ANC thus attempted to wrest the framing of children’s health issues away from the South African government to place them firmly within the context of deeply damaging society. Every mention of children’s health problems is followed by an indictment of the apartheid state. In his forward, Secretary-General Alfred Nzo describes how the

‘underdog’ [black children of South Africa] are from the very first days of their lives faced with the grim prospect of having to struggle for their survival. This struggle plagues them throughout their lives.... a life and death struggle for national and social liberation, for freedom from oppression and exploitation and racist domination and arrogance... In southern Africa, the life of a child is in constant danger of being abruptly cut short either by disease or the bomb and the bullet of the racist enemy.¹⁷⁹

The insistence on the impossibility of pulling out a single issue or segment of the population undermined the very foundations of apartheid thinking, based as it was on the engineering of technologies and practices of separateness and compartmentalization. To truly address the deplorable situation of children in South Africa required nothing less than a complete dismantling of apartheid society. So deeply entrenched and multiple were the assaults on children that no single program or focus could take the problems away. As Botha’s regime was floundering in terms of its message and political strategy, and the criminality of the state was reaching new levels, the ANC was successfully

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 5.

staying on message, consistently arguing that the foundation of South African society itself was a threat to children's lives.

The ANC's "Our Children" booklet is a very strategic document with many aims. It is clearly targeting a global audience, informing, inciting, and reminding them of the international laws and agreements in which they are implicated:

The repressive regime of apartheid, a system that has been condemned as a crime against humanity, is able to survive thanks to the support it receives from the major capitalist countries of the western world. The ruling circles of these countries, especially in Britain, West Germany, United States of America and Japan, must bear a full measure of responsibility for the genocidal crimes of the apartheid regime of South Africa and its protégé in Zimbabwe -- the Smith-Muzorewa regime."¹⁸⁰

The publication functions as a petition for support in the well-established lexicon of humanitarian aid, translating the magnitude of the suffering and injustice wrought by apartheid into comprehensible terms, potentially powerful for Westerners unfamiliar with such living conditions: "[I]n the Bantustans and reserves... where there is no work, no proper medical facilities or any of the most essential requirements like water or food... it is estimated that two black children under the age of five die every 35 minutes."¹⁸¹ Aid is also solicited for the ANC's Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College school for exiles in Tanzania: "The African National Congress South Africa needs your support now to build and equip a school for South African students."¹⁸² And five demands are made of the apartheid regime: "privacy of the house from police raids, freedom of movement, abolition of the Pass Laws, Group Areas Act, "peace and friendship amongst all our people"¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 6.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 10.

¹⁸² Ibid., 33.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 13.

In addition to these outwardly directed messages, the ANC document speaks internally to its members, particularly its “young militants,” urging them to “fight for the attainment of a non-racial and democratic South Africa... side by side, throughout our lives, until we have won our liberty.”¹⁸⁴ They are advised to draw encouragement and inspiration from the collapse of Portuguese colonialism in Angola and Mozambique and the advances made by liberation movements in Zimbabwe and Namibia.¹⁸⁵ Still reeling from the events of June 16th, both the government and the liberation movement were inflamed as a result of the call to make the country ungovernable:

Hundreds of our finest sons and daughters rallied to the call of the ANC and its military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, determined to meet the racist terror with revolutionary armed force. Faced with determined and heightened resistance, the regime clamped down and banned all existing black anti-apartheid organizations in October 1977 and detained hundreds of young activists. During the past two years the repression has mounted steadily, with hundreds of youth and students facing detention, torture and long terms of imprisonment. Since 1976, over 10 young activists have been murdered in security police detention... more than 200 political prisoners now serving sentences on the notorious Robben Island are of school-going age.¹⁸⁶

Already in 1979, through the language of political mobilization, 1976 was being foregrounded as a watershed moment at the center of the movement; one which had turned the tide of history: “After 16 June 1976, South Africa would never be the same: our struggle for national and social emancipation had reached a new and higher level.”¹⁸⁷ With this document, the ANC placed the Soweto Uprising and the youth participants not just centrally but pivotally in the narrative of South Africa’s liberation, even before that liberation had been realized.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 36.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 12.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 35.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 34.

Produced as it was for the International Year of the Child in 1979, “Our Children” comes at an important juncture, and makes visible certain shifts and tensions in the constructions—and experiences-- of black South African childhood. The particular form that this production of history¹⁸⁸ took, of course, served the party’s own interests in a number of ways. Firstly, it allowed the ANC to claim the Soweto Uprising and its hero-victims (“our youth”) as theirs, an assertion that remains hotly contested in politics, public history, and historiography today.¹⁸⁹

Our youth have answered the call of the liberation struggle when they gallantly faced the guns, teargas, bullets and police who turned on them with all their fascist might during the uprising in 1976. Many of our gallant youth and children were shot at, killed, maimed and imprisoned. Thousands more have fled the country and have sought the African National Congress, the liberation movement that is leading the struggle of the people of South Africa. Thousands have swelled the ranks of Umkhonto weSizwe, the military wing of the ANC, so as to return to South Africa and face the enemy with guns and not with sticks, stones and dustbin lids, as was the case during Soweto.¹⁹⁰

The glorification and celebration of Soweto as the turning point¹⁹¹ was also used as an opportunity to control the youth and reign in their allegiances and future actions. While their militance is fêted, it is also feared. Thus while the ANC grants young militants a more expansive agency than much of anti-apartheid literature did at the time, it tries to contain it by pulling them into the ANC fold. This was done by maintaining a tense balance between acknowledging the agency and heroism of the youth, and harnessing that agency, managing it, and directing it in very particular ways: namely, toward established ANC aims through established ANC structures. These are delineated

¹⁸⁸ David William Cohen, *The Combining of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

¹⁸⁹ See discussion in previous chapter.

¹⁹⁰ ANC, “Our Children,” 12-13.

¹⁹¹ “The struggle for freedom in South Africa took on new forms after the massive protest by the black youth.” *Ibid.*: 30.

within the document and include the ANC party, its armed wing Umkhonto weSizwe, the ANC Youth League, and the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College school for exiles in Tanzania.

The document situates youth action within a tight tautology of an ANC genesis and triumph in the struggle. It traces the lineage of Soweto from the founding of the ANCYL in 1944 to the mass actions of the 1950s, to the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955, and the launching of the armed wing, Umkhonto weSizwe in 1961. This historicization further fortifies the existing ANC power structures by directing the South African youth back to its own existing leadership: “Among the founding members of the Youth League who tirelessly served the masses during this [earlier] stage of our struggle were men like Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu – who became outstanding revolutionary leaders and who champion the people’s cause to this day.” The Pan African Congress and Black Consciousness Movement could certainly have taken issue with this claim, having influential and iconoclast leaders of their own. The power of the youth is carefully tempered in the subtle shifts and tenuous distinctions between the constructions of child victims vs. youth militants.

Meanwhile, in South Africa, but outside of official government sanction, the International Year of the Child was utilized as a platform for launching several studies, publications, and nonprofit organizations. Groups and individuals opposing apartheid leveraged the campaign in a variety of ways to promote their cause. It also provided a welcome framework for drawing more of the world's attention and financial contribution to the struggle against apartheid taking place within national borders. The laying of this

groundwork would prove to be strategically useful in keeping dialogue and organization going during the tougher times ahead as repression worsened considerably.

Letter to Farzanah was first published by the newly formed Institute for Black Research¹⁹² in Durban in commemoration of the International Year of the Child. Banned almost immediately after it was released,¹⁹³ the book consists of 67 black and white photographs of South African children taken by Omar Badsha, a selection of recent South African newspaper clippings concerning children, and a letter to his young daughter Farzanah. As described in one of the reprinted articles from the *Sunday Post*, April 8, 1979, there is an emphasis on the child as “helpless, innocent, ignorant... the ultimate victim,”¹⁹⁴ although there are a few references to youth resistance.¹⁹⁵ The book includes a fair number of photographs, especially of *young* children, in squalid scenes of suffering. But the collection of images presents readers with children involved in a remarkable range of activities: working, playing, participating in religious observances, attending school, lounging in the sun, caring for other children, posing for the camera, visiting a health clinic, eating, being carried in the arms of a nanny, singing, begging, smoking a cigarette, picnicking, bathing, washing a car, and playing in the park. If their agency is foregrounded, it is certainly visible, particularly in the images of child workers.

In his introduction to the book, Andrew Verster notes that Badsha has a comfort with his subjects and is not “an intruder into their lives, but is welcome and at home with

¹⁹² Founded by anti-apartheid activist and sociologist Fatima Meer, the Institute was based in Durban and chaired by Advocate T.L. Skweyiya.

¹⁹³ This came at a time of heightened censorship in South Africa. In 1978, several publications by student organizations were banned, and there was an “escalation of bannings of student newspapers.” SAIRR 1978, 133.

¹⁹⁴ As reproduced in Omar Badsha, “Letter to Farzanah” [no page numbers] Signed: With love, OMAR, June 26, 1979.

¹⁹⁵ In the story of the 21-year-old youth Solomon Mahlangu’s execution and the account of student protests in 1976.

them.” Verster further notes that his photographs have “a straight-forward, honesty, a matter-of fact ordinariness if you like, a naturalness, an apparent artlessness that is refreshing. They neither moralize nor dramatize but simply give us the facts as he sees them. He leaves it to us to make of them what we will.” Within the context of Cold War politics with Thatcher and Reagan at the helm of the United Kingdom and United States, anti-apartheid publications were always trying to preempt their potential dismissal as propaganda. They wanted to be seen as objective, dealing in fact, evidence-based, and documentary, not biased, political, partisan, moralizing, or manipulative. This anxiety and its manifestation in what Verster describes as “apparent artlessness” in Badsha’s pictures have long framed understandings of photography, particularly documentary photography. Particularly within the context of increasing censorship and state propaganda, the notion that “a picture doesn’t lie” imbued photography with an authority that other forms of evidence lacked. It is no coincidence that it was used so extensively and effectively in the anti-apartheid movement.

Prompted to write his first child, Farzanah, because of a growing concern that “there isn’t enough time in which to teach you all that I know about our society,” Badsha wonders, “Is there something the matter with me? Why am I beginning to falter in my beliefs? Wouldn’t you grow up to distinguish naturally between right and wrong?” Badsha’s dilemma stems from the painful contradictions of every day life in the apartheid system:

You see we live in a society in which not a day goes by when we are not called upon to make decisions which tax our commitment and our principles. If we profess to live by our ideals and there is no escape from her situation. Either we follow the dictates of our conscience and remain free, or see ourselves being continuously stripped of our self-respect and dignity.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ Omar Badsha, “Letter to Farzanah” [no page numbers] Signed: With love, OMAR, June 26, 1979.

His aim in producing the publication is to “look beyond ‘the corrugated walls’ of the ghetto and discover the real people who live there. It is among the people that the source of our strength in the future lies, remember this advice and you would be able to face the future with confidence.”

Badsha was born in Durban to a Gujarati Muslim family, and became involved in political activism as a high school student in the 1960s. In the 1970s, after helping to unionize chemical workers, he began taking photographs “to document the historic moments that were unfolding before us... photographs which could be kept as a record of the liberation struggle and bridge the gap between what was officially being documented and what was the reality at that time.”¹⁹⁷ Responding to the priorities of the struggle to document and disseminate apartheid abuses to the outside world, Badsha was a founding member and chairperson of the Cultural Workers Congress, an affiliate of the United Democratic Front (UDF), and in 1982 helped establish Afrapix, “an independent photographic agency and collective which played a leading role in shaping the social documentary photography tradition and in creating a record of the popular struggles of the 1980s.”¹⁹⁸ In 1982 he would go on to head the photographic unit of the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa before editing an international traveling exhibition and volume entitled “South Africa: The Cordoned Heart.”

Badsha’s multiple and varied roles in the struggle provide a good example of the kinds of overlapping networks and connections that fueled the liberation movement. Within the context of apartheid’s surveillance, censorship, bannings, detention, and

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Omar Badsha. www.carnegie.org/reporter/08/backpage/omar_badsha.html.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

abuse, continuities can be difficult to map, but there are several individuals who resurface in various capacities and organizations who worked as advocates for the young.

The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (IDAF) was one of the more stable and prominent of these organizations. Based in the United Kingdom, the Fund defined itself as a “humanitarian organization [that] worked consistently for peaceful and constructive solutions to the problems created by racial oppression in Southern Africa.” Such solutions included the provision of humanitarian aid and legal representation to victims of racial injustice. IDAF also worked to document and disseminate evidence of “the truth about life under apartheid,” and prided itself on the factual accuracy of all of its information: “The Institute seeks the facts, and makes them known.... The Institute is not a political body, nor is it allied to or given financial help by any political party or government.” Of course, by extending membership “to all, irrespective of race, colour, or creed, and within or outside South Africa” the organization automatically positioned itself in opposition to the apartheid state. In addition, it was largely regarded as the voice of the ANC in exile.¹⁹⁹ Having been forced into exile itself, IDAF relied upon a global network of activists, researchers, journalists, and photographers who shared information and images, and drew from many of the same limited and often banned sources. All of IDAF’s publications were banned in 1978 by the South African board of censors.²⁰⁰

Relationships among organizations dedicated to advancing the anti-apartheid cause changed over time as various individuals and organizations were banned. Circuits for the transferal of money and other materials had to be kept hidden. Global and

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ SAIRR 1980, 288.

localized networks of activists, advocates, funders, members of the clergy, foundations, scholars, researchers, doctors, lawyers, parents, etc. came in and out of contact, and activists' work was often ad hoc, under-resourced, and carried out under psychologically straining, and even life threatening conditions. This presented a particular challenge to IDAF, who nonetheless appears to have been able to deflect the apartheid regime's persistent attempts to infiltrate the organization.

African journalists charged for obstructing police in the execution of their duties or for taking photographs of people could be arrested, and several reporters were detained by security police for questioning. At great personal risk, photographers produced images of what was happening in South Africa and managed to get many of them smuggled out of the country. Photographers like Omar Badsha and others at Afrapix supplied many of the IDAF images and had weekly meetings in Johannesburg to decide which pictures to send. All identifying information was removed about the photographer for his protection.

As part of its information service about the "nature and state of repression" in the region, IDAF produced traveling slide portfolios with images of apartheid-era South Africa and prepared scripts to explain what was being shown. IDAF's photo library contained some 45,000 images and documents about "life under and the struggle against apartheid in Southern Africa." IDAF also sponsored several traveling photography exhibits which often featured documentary-style photographs of children. Some of the collections were published and circulated internationally (most while being banned in South Africa). For instance, to commemorate the end of the UN International Anti-Apartheid Year of 1978 and the launch of the International Year of the Child in 1979, the

Belgian government requested from IDAF a traveling photography exhibit on children in apartheid South Africa.

The exhibition opened on March 21, 1979 on the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, and toured Belgium and other cities²⁰¹ internationally as part of IYC activities. In 1980, the exhibit was published in book form, *Children Under Apartheid: In Photographs and Text*,²⁰² by IDAF with the cooperation of the United Nations Center against Apartheid. It opens with the following statement: “The main victims of the apartheid system of racial domination in South Africa are children -- the children of the oppressed black majority.” It contains the usual overview of racial discrimination, mortality rates, poverty, inadequate health care, divisive school system, leisure, child labor, migrant labor, segregation, housing, bantustans, repressive laws, police brutality, and the penal system in apartheid South Africa. A year later, *Women Under Apartheid* was published, also derived from a traveling photography exhibit organized in cooperation with the UN Center against Apartheid. This book of 100 photographs shows “how African women under apartheid are oppressed as black people, as workers and as women. It shows their part in the struggle for freedom.”²⁰³

Internationally, the IYC created many opportunities for the dissemination of and engagement with the Declaration of the Rights of the Child. In 1959, UNICEF published the Declaration, asserting that "mankind [sic] owes the Child the best it has to give . . . the child, by reason of his [sic] physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards

²⁰¹ Paris and London, among others.

²⁰² In the middle of the decade there would be several publications featuring compilations of images created *by* (rather than taken *of*) children. The two genres do not always sit neatly alongside one another, as I will explore below.

²⁰³ *Women Under Apartheid: in photographs and text* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, in cooperation with the United Nations Centre Against Apartheid, 1981).

and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth." The Declaration further specifies that all children have the right to affection, love, understanding, adequate nutrition and medical care, education, full opportunity for play and recreation, a name and a nationality, special care if handicapped, be among the first to receive aid in time of disaster, learn to be useful members of society and to develop individual abilities, be brought up in a spirit of peace and universal brotherhood, and enjoy these rights regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national or social origin.

Even though the rights identified within it were far from being realized in most countries in the world, it was held up by child advocates as a model to aim toward. As Jupp has argued, while it is "not a panacea for solving the social, political, and economic problems of all the world's children... there is no doubt that human rights advocacy mobilizes public opinion, prompts academic research, gives rise to legislative solutions, and results in effective programming."²⁰⁴

Human rights scholars and practitioners have developed various ways of categorizing rights to distinguish among them.²⁰⁵ In his analysis of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (which was not ratified until 1989), Thomas Hammarberg identifies three categories of rights: provision ("the fulfillment of basic needs such as the rights to food, health care and education"), protection (including the right to "be shielded from harmful acts or practices" such as commercial or sexual exploitation and involvement in warfare), and participation (i.e., the right "to be heard on decisions affecting one's own

²⁰⁴ Jupp 1989, 43.

²⁰⁵ In their 1988 article "Assessing National Human Rights Performance: a Theoretical Framework," *Human Rights Quarterly* 10: 214 – 48, Jack Donnelly and Rhoda Howard delineate survival, membership, protection, and empowerment rights. In *The Age of Rights* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), Henkin separates civil and political rights from economic, social, and cultural rights. The former intrinsically reside within the individual while the latter are couched in terms of the state's obligation to its subjects.

life”).²⁰⁶ Another common way of identifying the major types of rights, and placing them on a hierarchy of necessity, is in terms of survival, protection, and development.²⁰⁷

Art and Advocacy and the Emerging Child's Voice

From the late 1970s, a lot of people were speaking on behalf of children – the “children are the future” framing came in with force and with great international sway, particularly as the possibility of freedom loomed larger on the political horizon. Much of this early advocacy work failed to acknowledge the agentic witnessing role of children, rather than only making them the object of it. But these roles were never settled nor simple. Revolving around universality and innocence, the discourses of childhood insist upon a kind of emotional resonance and sway of sentiment that presumably leads to a single outcome. The state’s neglect and abuse of children gained international attention with the Soweto Uprising, and images of those events would stay in circulation for decades to follow.

Children enforced school boycotts, worked in activist capacities, and through the late 1980s in particular, increasingly represented themselves and spoke on their own behalf. There was a general shift or addition to anti-apartheid publications from factual, documentary-style photographic collections, often depicting children’s suffering to collections to children’s self-expression, often including quotations and images from children themselves. But this shift to greater self-representation was always complexly mediated. Exploring how reopens the question of children’s agency in important ways.

²⁰⁶ As quoted in "The Convention on the Rights of the Child: United Nations Lawmaking on Human Rights," by Lawrence J. LeBlanc. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), xviii.

²⁰⁷ Jupp 1989, 42.

The anti-apartheid materials that circulated internationally in the late 1970's through the mid 1980's tended to be more focused on survival rights than the less crucial rights of development, and in particular, the rights of self-expression that were so prominently celebrated in much of the IYC activities in Western countries. In the context of the South African censorship and propaganda machines, photographs were proof. They were able to provide an indictment of apartheid conditions repeatedly denied by the regime's public relations officers. They were powerful tools in countering the state's propaganda. Children were frequent subjects of black and white documentary photography.

As previously mentioned, international attention and disposable income was limited, so calls for support through awareness-raising campaigns typically relied upon the most dire examples of death, destitution, and destruction to make their case strongly and imbue it with a sense of urgency. Every representation needed to serve its purpose of not only spreading awareness but inciting particular kinds of action, like the writing of checks, the pressuring of politicians, and the boycotting of South African goods.

While community-based organizations such as Molo Songololo (see Chapter 5) provided spaces and platforms for children to express themselves and communicate with one another, from the mid-1980s children's voices were being instrumentalized in strategic and complexly mediated ways, particularly in anti-apartheid materials intended for external consumption. One of the best examples of this powerful and prolific genre²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ Another example of a book in this genre is Clarice Smuts, ed. *Letters to Madiba, Voices of South African Children*. (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman (Pty) Ltd, 2002).

is the book *Two Dogs and Freedom: Children of the Townships Speak Out*.²⁰⁹ First published in 1986, the book contains a small collection of children's drawings and writings on the themes "In the Townships," "Our Parents Say," and "A New South Africa." Along with the traveling photo exhibits, children were creating their own representations of their lives and the violence and suffering that it entailed. The title of the book is taken from 8-year-old Moagi's declaration that "When I am old I would like to have a wife and t[w]o children a boy and a girl and a big house and t[w]o dogs and freedom[.] My friends and I would like to meat [sic] together and tok [talk]."²¹⁰ The publishers of *Two Dogs and Freedom* write that this collection "is what happens when children are asked to describe in words and pictures the issues affecting their lives in South Africa today. One finds here honest answers and the refreshing absence of ideological bias inevitable in adult interpretations of the same issues."²¹¹

Like documentary photography, children have been historically constructed as conduits of untainted truth. Much of this construction derives from romantic notions of children as intrinsically pure, honest, and innocent, ostensibly lacking the capacity for or interest in strategies or subterfuge. In the words of a former facilitator of children's art exhibits, a child is like "the forgotten tape recorder in a room," possessing the gift of total recall free from the corrupting interpretive tendencies of adults. This construction imbues children with a certain authority, which was capitalized upon in complex ways by anti-apartheid activists. This may be seen in the circulation of children's art exhibits both within South Africa and abroad, the publication of children's writings and drawings, and

²⁰⁹ *Two Dogs and Freedom: Children of the Townships Speak Out* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986)

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, back cover.

the use of children (sometimes very broadly conceived) as witnesses or evidence of the brutality of the apartheid state.

The highly mediated forms in which examples of children's self expression circulated globally tended to use these expressions for their universalist emotional power and/or as evidence. Almost always, the representation of children in both of these registers reproduced their subaltern status by casting them as objects or as victims within a framework that fetishized facts, just as documentary photographs were valued as evidence rather than as unique aesthetic expressions. Children's voices were similar to documentary photographs in the sense that both were imbued with an authority grounded in the presumption of their objectivity. This notion of children as existing in a pure, unformed space of pre-acculturation, pre-racialization, and pre-politicization needs to be denatured, however. If one focused on children as imaginative, they could just as easily be cast as unreliable. This particular construction tells us a lot about the particular time and place in which it held such currency. A consideration of the circumstances that led to the production of these drawings provides further illumination.

What circumstances led to the production of these drawings? How might a consideration of such offer a chance to write children back into the history? What is the nature of the power of a child's voice? Community-based activities generated a lot of children's drawings and letters, some of which were published as collections, often in their own handwriting in crayon. But were these really the purely-voiced products of children's unmediated thoughts? A former artist-activist that I interviewed offers a more complex understanding.

As an organizer and facilitator of the kind of workshops that generated these types of materials, she recalled that they “didn’t exactly tell [the children] what to draw, but the children observed” which pictures elicited the most positive responses. She recalled the “rawness” of their images, which were interpreted as being unperformed, sincere, truthful, and drawing on powerfully felt emotions.

People expected [children] to be reflecting the situation [in South Africa] in their [art] work. So there were all kinds of issues which came up about how the art of children was in a sense-- part of it was a reaction to what they had seen... what happened when the police came to the townships, and one child would do it out of substantive truth and reality. But one did have the feeling that other children were sort of seeing the kind of accolade that that sort of work got and then feeling that they needed to also.... That kind of space where they actually invented their own imagery and so on was very compromised by the ‘Come, and here we are facing the bullets.’ So it was very hard to judge what was real and painful in the child’s experience and what was sort of just a follow on from what somebody else had defined as a space that they were supposed to be thinking in.

Thus it seems that in contrast to the romanticized notions of the universality of childhood which cast children as transcending the need for narrative, they demand and deserve the same kind of textured, contextualized, and complex readings that are accorded to adults in anthropological and historical analysis. Paradoxically, to recognize the agency of children, we must acknowledge their ability to be manipulated.

This parallels one of the central issues of the two disciplines: the fantasy of the pure voice. Having access to a pure or direct voice is really a fantasy, because its always mediated. And with children it is *particularly* mediated, and particularly stifled and ignored. In apartheid South Africa, there are children who are speaking for themselves. But we can’t only think in terms of “What did the child say?” We have to read a child’s voice from a variety of different media, and from a broad context, and also recognize that it’s a voice that can be performed.

In apartheid South Africa, black people were systematically denied their individuality and subjectivity through an exhaustive array of legal, social, and economic structures: laws reifying their racial and ethnic identities, assignment to supposed “homelands,” jobs that clothed them in anonymous uniforms and assigned them new names, a substandard educational system designed to produce subservient automatons, and the myriad rules of petty apartheid in which a superficial glance at skin color was enough to dictate what they could do, where they could go, and how they would be treated. In addition to the triage-based system of anti-apartheid outreach that privileged the presentation of issues which most threatened the masses, there is a deeply structured propensity toward the genericizing depersonalization of anonymity which formed the backdrop of social relations in South Africa. In the two chapters that follow I will explore some of the implications and subversions of this phenomenon in the imagining of icons, the testimony of truth-telling, and the negotiation of new nationhood.

As I argue in Chapter 2, between the 1970s and late 1980s there was a historical shift in the representations of children found in South African political posters toward more agentive and subjective forms of self-expression. A representational shift may be identified in international anti-apartheid literature as well. As I will explore in the next chapter, within South Africa, international funding for children’s organizations increased in 1979 and years following the International Year of the Child. Most of the funds went into the establishment of new grassroots organizations concerned with early childhood education, the promotion of children’s rights, and alternative education that could provide opportunities for children’s self-expression and exploration of their own creativity.

These highly localized developments coincided with a gradually increasing recognition of children's voices in the global anti-apartheid movement. Within it, projects on the child's voice, subjectivity, and rights of self-expression were spreading and articulating a new stage in the children's rights movement which was beginning to recognize children as speaking subjects, rather than just objects of adults' advocacy.

Chapter 4

Visualizing Children: Images of Children in South African Political Posters of the 1980s

In 1948, the newly elected Nationalist Party²¹² of the Republic of South Africa officially instituted one of the most dramatic and pervasive forms of government oppression known in the late capitalist era. Literally meaning separateness, “apartheid” envisioned the division and total segregation of South Africa’s populace according to race. This repressive regime contained numerous contradictions, of which there has been a good deal of historical and anthropological analysis.²¹³

What has not been examined extensively is the significance of children in the apartheid system, as victims, agents, and observers, or the consequential constructions of children that they both shaped and were shaped by. Children were commonly understood in the following and often overlapping frames: 1) as extensions of women, 2) as victims, 3) as a social and political issue, 4) as an envisioned future, and 5) as agents. Childhood worked as a contradictory symbol of on the one hand, defenselessness and innocence and on the other, resistance, calculated strategy, and even violence.

²¹² Originally founded in 1914 by Afrikaners in Bloemfontein, the Nationalist Party ruled South Africa from June 4, 1948 until May 9, 1994.

²¹³ Heinz Klug, *Constituting Democracy: Law, Globalism, and South Africa's Political Reconstruction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Beinart, 2001.

One of the most powerful places in which this contradiction is evident is in the popular media form of political posters. Such posters were produced most extensively in the 1980s by various political parties, labor unions, and community organizations as part of the struggle against apartheid rule. South African political posters provide an important record of dominant images, experiences, frames, and grammars through which childhood has been conceived and remembered. As such they articulate consciously constructed histories of the struggle against apartheid. An inquiry into these articulations makes visible some of the gaps and tensions within the shared public memory of childhood posters helped document and produce. The contradictory images of vulnerable, innocent children and their stone-throwing, grenade-wielding, and politically mobilizing counterimages point to larger questions about the role of memory, the production of history, and issues of meaning-making and narrativity.

South African political posters of the 1980s provide a fertile field of representation for analysis. There is a rich patchiness-- both documentarily and conceptually-- to childhood. What does an exploration of political posters offer? Posters provide visual remnants of the institutional infrastructure that sought to address, treat, represent, memorialize, and analyze the children with whom I am concerned and thus contributed in important ways to the (very partial) public history of childhood in South Africa. Shared and contending knowledges of childhood are found in a wide range of fields and materials, and posters played an important role in reflecting, reproducing, and shaping constructions of South African children.

As a set, the body of posters I examine in this chapter²¹⁴ is but a shard of a fragment in terms of capturing the experiences, memories, and historical events of the period under consideration. What can posters tell us about the socio-political reality of the times they represent? Although the posters in question have been stripped from their original context these examples reflect important issues and widespread sentiments in regard to children and their positions within apartheid South African society. Moreover, within the themes of representation one can trace general historical shifts which require historical and cultural contextualization.²¹⁵

As Giorgio Miescher has argued, posters are “stored visual markers of past experiences,”²¹⁶ “a form of visual communication... [that is] part of a broader context of showing, perceiving and understanding.”²¹⁷ Their materiality fixes only selective aspects of their biographical lives, and with South African political posters unfortunately little has been recorded about the conceptualization process, production runs, areas of distribution, or responses to specific posters. As Miescher notes, “Posters are short-lived

²¹⁴ I looked through the entire collections stored at SAHA, Mayibuye, and AMAC, in addition to consulting three texts which came out of recent poster exhibitions: The Posterbook Collective, South African History Archive, *Images of Defiance: South African Resistance Posters of the 1980s* (Johannesburg: STE Publishers, 2004); *Struggle Ink: The Poster as a South African Cultural Weapon, 1982-1994* (Robben Island Museum Publication. Exhibition Catalogue, 2005); and *Upfront and Personal: Three Decades of Political Graphics from the United Kingdom Plus South African Political Graphics* (Cape Town: British Council South Africa, 2003).

²¹⁵ To fill this context, I have consulted evidence about the sociopolitical milieu of children in the late apartheid period. Written sources include the extensive material collected via the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings and final report; *Growing Up in a Divided Society*, a collection of activists' and academics' analysis of various facets of childhood in South Africa in the mid 1980s; comparative analyses of posters in Namibia (Giorgio Miescher) and Mozambique and Ethiopia (Berit Sahlstrom). I also conducted dozens of interviews with people who were involved in poster production. Contextualized readings cry out for a deeper exploration of the posters' receptions, which is beyond the scope of this paper.

²¹⁶ Giorgio Miescher and Dag Henrichsen, *African Posters: A Catalogue of the Poster Collection in the Basler Afrika Bibliographien* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2004), 9.

²¹⁷ Giorgio Miescher, “Posters as Source,” in Miescher and Henrichsen 2004: 137.

visual representations, made for very specific purposes at a certain moment of time in a specific place.”²¹⁸

Various media were used by both the Nationalist Party government and the resistance movement(s) during the late apartheid period, particularly in the 1980s and early 90s. Anti-apartheid political posters were part of a broader range of related media including t-shirts, pamphlets, murals, banners, posters, buttons, placards, graffiti, stickers, advertisements, newspapers, magazines, and peace parks.²¹⁹ These media have various and overlapping publics, and they were each a part of the visual field of resistance.²²⁰ Art and photography exhibits, radio, drama, and dance were also used to critique and resist the apartheid state. After almost two decades of debate, state-controlled television was introduced in South Africa in February 1976,²²¹ providing a new range of visual images for some (mainly white) people. Apartheid ideology was forced onto all members of South African society through a dense web of institutions including the media.²²² This coincided with the “deliberate state impoverishment and underdevelopment of townships and rural areas [which] ensured that resources for media production-- even such basic

²¹⁸ Ibid., 148.

²¹⁹ Peace Parks were built mainly in Gauteng townships in late 1985 after the July state of emergency which led to the erosion of essential services like refuse removal. Community members, especially youths, initiated beautification campaigns involving the clean up and removal of rubbish, mural painting, tree and shrubbery planting, and the creation of sculptures made from found objects, often inscribed with messages and imbued with symbolic meaning. The parks were typically named after exiled struggle heroes: for example Nelson Mandela Park (Mohlakeng), Oliver Tambo Park (White City), Sisulu Park (Orlando West), and Steve Biko Park (Mohlakeng). As Williamson documents, “It was clear to the state that the youth groups, in making the parks and calling them after leaders like Nelson Mandela, were reaffirming their cultural and political beliefs. On the pretext that the parks were being used as places to hide arms, the security forces systematically destroyed them.” Sue Williamson. *Resistance Art in South Africa* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), 89.

²²⁰ And the related non-visual fields including jokes, plays, songs, and poetry.

²²¹ James Sanders. *South Africa and the International Media 1972-1979: A Struggle for Representation* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000).

²²² The Poster Book Collective 1991. *Images of Defiance* was first published by Ravan Press in 1991 and was reprinted to commemorate the tenth anniversary of democracy in South Africa. Updated only with a new added preface by Nelson Mandela.

requirements as electricity-- were out of reach for most communities.”²²³ In spite of these limitations, grassroots activists found ways to speak out: “By producing their own media, however unsophisticated, organisations claimed their right to be heard.”²²⁴

“The pen as panga, the paintbrush as sword...”²²⁵

Although they were part of the anti-apartheid struggle as early as the 1950s, the 1980s was the golden age of poster production in South Africa. Posters were usually produced in collective processes in community-based organizations. Posters were designed to elicit and harness an emotional response geared toward achieving both concrete and abstract ends. For instance, posters could inform workers and community members of a planned strike or they could seek to inspire their viewers to embrace the ideal of a non-racial South Africa. They also served as memorials for the dead and calls to action. As former poster producer Lionel Davis has argued, the influential Black Consciousness Movement (BCM)²²⁶ advocated the “concerted effort to use and encourage all forms of art not only as a tool for uplifting the downtrodden masses, but as a political weapon in our struggle against apartheid.”²²⁷

In terms of poster production, the basic questions of who, where, when, and even why are often answered only partially at best. Language choice provides clues about intended audience. Most posters were created through a collective process, and many

²²³ Ibid., 2.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ A panga is a traditional weapon, similar to a machete. This line is from the poem, “Inheriting the Flame,” by Malika Lueen Ndlovu, published in Graham Falken, ed., *Inheriting the Flame: New Writing on Community Arts in South Africa* (Cape Town: Arts and Media Access Centre (AMAC), 2004), 9- 11.

²²⁶ The Black Consciousness Movement was a grassroots anti-apartheid political movement established in the late 1960s and led by Steve Biko.

²²⁷ Lionel Davis “Posters for Liberation: A Personal Perspective,” in Graham Falken, ed., *Inheriting the Flame: New Writing on Community Arts in South Africa* (Cape Town: Arts and Media Access Centre (AMAC), 2004), 23- 31.

producers were operating underground at the time of their production. These factors made it undesirable and unsafe for producers to assert their authorship as individuals. Posters are rarely dated by year, complicating attempts to read across them closely for subtle chronological shifts. Such knowledge is not lost, but is contained within experience-based memories of those who produced, distributed, and viewed the posters. It is also important to remember that the United Democratic Front (UDF), Congress of South African Trades Union (COSATU), the African National Congress (ANC), and its affiliates, issued the majority of posters both produced and preserved, so not all political positions and organizations are represented by the collections available.

For the contemporary scholar, posters offer a rich field of inquiry because they exist simultaneously on so many levels: the aesthetic, political, material, social, and most importantly, communicative. Anti-apartheid posters, particularly those produced in solidarity or in exile abroad, brought to wider global attention the private suffering of the majority of South Africans, who were non-citizens in their own country. The ultimate goal of a poster is to make a lasting impression and imprint the image on the viewer's mind, lodging it in memory. Therefore, posters typically relied upon standardized visual conventions and messages. By definition, posters are intended for public consumption and typically work within familiar repertoires of imagery and messages. Their success often depended on capturing the shared values and common experiences of a viewing public.

Like any other source, posters allow for the possibility of multiple readings and can be analyzed from many angles: in terms of the circumstances of their production, aesthetics, iconography, distribution, and reception. Clearly, there is a range of viewing

techniques for different people related to any number of factors, including knowledge, experience, nationality, race, class, and gender. In an international context, for instance, images whose socioeconomic dimensions would be both familiar and understood in South Africa might be read differently but toward a similarly anti-apartheid end.

In some ways, posters interrupted the “fictions of the normal,” as Carolyn Steedman describes,²²⁸ as a counter-hegemonic form of resistance that sought to persuade those who would disagree over to their side. But in other ways posters maintained the status quo. Posters were produced within particular landscapes of social relations the makers were engaged in trying to change. This required a certain level of self-conscious and strategic positioning *vis a vis* one's intended audience. Attention to emotions felt, expressed, and remembered provide clues about the process of meaning-making at multiple registers. An examination of both their form and content offers insight into people's interests and agendas during the period under consideration.

Production process

As crucial tools in the struggle, many political posters were immediately banned, and possession or distribution could result in fines, banning orders, and detention. In the rhetoric of the day, political posters were seen as instruments of the people and for the people, and provided the viewing public with powerful messages serving multiple functions. Material conditions of production were far from ideal and ever hampered by the limitations of equipment and materials. Activists often had to work under conditions of secrecy due to increasing censorship and repression, and often under immediate deadlines. Very few had skills or experience in poster production, so those who did were

²²⁸ Steedman, 1985, 6.

always in demand. Most posters were made using simple silkscreen technology. Fortunately posters could be mass produced relatively affordably, and producers were resourceful in their efforts to procure supplies. While it is important to recognize the artistic and aesthetic contributions of South African political posters, one must also remember the very real limitations on artistic expression and development. For example, poster makers did not always have the luxury of choosing something as basic as ink color. The most common technique in the early '80s was silkscreening, which could be done for relatively little money, and enabled poster makers to do short runs for publicizing local events.

There were two main centers of poster production in South Africa. In Johannesburg, the Screen Training Project (STP) was inaugurated in November 1983 by a small collective of part-time volunteers. Earlier that year, the United Democratic Front (UDF), an umbrella organization of church and civic groups, sports teams, student organizations, and trade unions was formed as a "united front" to fight apartheid oppression. With UDF backing, STP served as a community center that was committed to training local organizations for media production. Members of the security police visited the workshop, and in 1984 confiscated several posters. They also banned a t-shirt that had been produced at an STP workshop, and repeatedly detained one of the members.²²⁹ Under such conditions of fear and harassment, STP went underground and began operating covertly out of secret offices.

The other main printing facility was the Community Arts Project in Cape Town (CAP), which was started in 1977 as an informal community of artists. Developing out of a handful of artists who had attended the Culture and Resistance Festival in Botswana

²²⁹ The Posterbook Collective, 2004, 4.

in 1982, the CAP Media Project began as a bare-bones operation for simple screen printing. They also were committed to workshops and training, and maintained an open-door policy that strove to be non-partisan.²³⁰ CAP successfully organized several off-site workshops in the neighboring townships of Khayelitsha and even in rural areas in the Eastern Cape. They also produced a lay person's guide to media production, *Print it Yourself: A Low Technology Media Handbook for Organisations*.²³¹ CAP was not targeted by the police as much as STP, and hosted several community days, dance and drama workshops, and various forms of adult education.

The Representational Range of Children in Political Posters²³²

What are the dominant images of childhood in South African political posters? I have identified five main interrelated and at times overlapping registers in which children appear: 1) as extensions of women, 2) as victims, 3) as a social and political issue, 4) as an envisioned future, and 5) as agents. These standardized uses provide clues for exploring the ways in which social conventions of childhood were reflected in popular and institutionalized understandings. The South African "poster child" is a polyvalent figure, full of contradictions, complexities, and tensions. In what follows I will briefly explore each of these themes to survey the iconography of childhood and trace the historical shifts in their representative range through the 1980s and early '90s.

²³⁰ Davis, 2004, 26.

²³¹ Grassroots Education and Training for the Community Arts Project, *Print it Yourself: A Low Technology Media Handbook for Organisations* (Cape Town: Cape Town Community Arts Project, 1990).

²³² What follows is largely my own content analysis, which is at times informed by specific memories or perspectives of poster producers I interviewed, or secondary sources I have read. Such cases are duly noted.

1) ... and Baby makes Woman

The single most common image of young children in South African political posters of the 1980s is that of a tiny black infant, shrouded in a blanket and secured firmly to a mother's back. Historically, the administrative pairing of babies with women by the Native Affairs Commission had many political and practical implications for both parties. It was typically read by local child advocates in the 1980s as an indication of a breakdown in the family unit resulting directly from the policies of the apartheid state, particularly the migrant labor system, the Urban Areas Act, the Group Areas Act, and the “dop system,” in which farm workers were partially paid in alcohol.²³³ While the ubiquitous image of a mother strapped with her baby bundle perseveres through the period under examination, and even today in representations of Africans in general, one can map historical shifts in representative variation.

The attached baby is presented as an extension of the woman herself, almost like an extra appendage. The emphasis in these earlier images from the late '70s to early '80s is not on the baby but the mother whose womanhood is visually established through its presence. An interesting example of this was relayed to me by CAP graphic designer and poster producer John Berndt,²³⁴ who first informed me that the Congress of South African Trade Union (COSATU) logo originally featured three adult figures: two men and one woman.²³⁵ The problem was that viewers didn't recognize the woman as female, so a baby was added to her back to make her identifiable as such. Thus a baby on the back was not just central to a woman's identity but actually constituted it, at the very least in a visual sense.

²³³ Pamela Reynolds and Sandra Burman, ed., *Growing Up in a Divided Society: The Contexts of Childhood in South Africa*. (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986).

²³⁴ Interview with John Berndt, August 2005.

²³⁵ As recalled in the Special COSATU Tenth Anniversary Edition, *Ten Years of Workers' Unity and Struggle* vol. 4, no. 6 (1995), the winning logo design originally depicted three *males* marching alongside a wheel, which was amended after objections to include the woman worker with a baby strapped to her back. <http://www.cosatu.org.za/shop/ss0406-3.html>.

A poster entitled, "Women Unite" illustrates this constitutive relationship in terms of composition. In the foreground of the poster sits a larger-than-life toddler, dominating the visual field. With open mouth and beseeching eyes, he seems to be pleading for something. Graphically nestled under his chin is the much smaller super-imposed image of a mother and baby. The two of them are unhappy and suffering-- with furrowed brow, she appears anxious and tired as she clutches her crying baby. The viewer is not left to wonder or speculate about the reason for this suffering-- the shack structure beside them represents the poverty and desperate living conditions that define and destroy their lives in apartheid South Africa. A hopeful red sun is rising, however, toward the inspiring injunction "Women Unite!" As the text informs us, "The need for unity is the need for People's Power. It is the power against starvation, removals, resettlement, and disease. Forward to Year of Women!" It is noteworthy that in a poster about the Year of Women, a child dominates the visual frame and is duplicated while the woman only appears once and as almost a detail.



Figure 4-1 "There Shall Be Peace and Friendship"

Under apartheid, children were cast visually, legally, and through social practice and living conditions as the responsibility of women. As such, children were often exposed to the same dangers as their mothers.²³⁶ This pairing resulted in risks to both when women found themselves in perilous circumstances, as we can see in the striking and simple poster, "There Shall be Peace and Friendship." The stark single black ink evocatively renders a barricade with angry masses, fire, and a member of the South African security forces or police aiming a gun at a fleeing mother and baby. There is a striking disjuncture between the suggestive images of violent confrontation in familiar township scenes and the yet unrealized final demand of the Freedom Charter. This simple but powerful poster also resonates with images shot and circulated by

²³⁶ Ethnographic accounts show that young children have been the primary responsibility of their mothers prior to apartheid and even colonialism. The great impact of apartheid policies, however is arguably in the break up of the family unit via the migrant labor system, particularly the 1913 Land Act which dispossessed black South Africans of their land. Women, children, and male elders were left largely destitute in the rural areas, and mothers were barred from joining their husbands at the mining hostels or in urban areas. Monica Wilson, Schapera, Comaroffs, Krige, Gluckman, Kidd.

documentary photographers in their attempts to record and expose the highly censored realities of South African townships in the 1980s.²³⁷

While a baby is usually sufficient prop for female figures, men typically hold a tool to identify themselves as particular kinds of laborers. A survey of United Democratic Front (UDF) posters reveals a marked historical shift in terms of visual representation. It is not until the mid 1980s that child(ren) are inserted into the familiar ranks of strong adult laborers below the UDF banner. Perhaps inspired by Socialist iconography,²³⁸ these figures convey a sense of strength, commitment, dignity, and inclusivity. The insertion of the child coincides with increasing authoritarianism²³⁹ of the regime in regard to banning, restrictions, and the use of force, and an emergent discourse around children's rights.

Significantly, it is almost always the woman who touches the child in the posters, and almost always in the same way.²⁴⁰ One arm curves around the young person's shoulder in a protective embrace, connecting the adult woman with her child. Here the child is an extension of the woman figure, but in a more autonomous way than the small baby-lumps or faces that peer out of blankets from their mothers' backs. The infant is almost always physically connected to the mother, perhaps echoing the umbilical

²³⁷ Such images were most frequently captured by documentary photographers. The connection between documentary photography and poster production could constitute a dissertation in and of itself. Many photographers, for example members of the photographers' collective Afrapix, worked directly with poster producers and provided photographic images to help document apartheid abuses. Photos were sometimes incorporated into posters in various ways (largely depending on technological capabilities).

²³⁸ Victoria Bonell, *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters Under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). John Berndt insightfully pointed out that it is difficult to trace the influences of some of the images used in South African Posters. At CAP, where he worked, files were kept of images and many photos, drawings, and stencils were reused. Some of the poster designers may have drawn from international iconographies, but it is difficult to prove. Berndt, for example, remembered being inspired by some of the simple stencil work exhibited in the student protests of 1968 in France.

²³⁹ Facilitated by the start of the State of Emergency in July 1985.

²⁴⁰ An exception to this trend can be found in the series of COSATU calendar pages featuring paintings of women with their babies and agricultural tools.

dependency originating in the womb. On the one hand, this dependency was reinforced and reified by an apartheid state whose policies systematically separated black male laborers from their wives and children. But this same system also led to the separation of black mothers from their children when they sought work in white homes (often caring for white children instead of their own) as domestic workers.²⁴¹

While the male workers (miner and labourer) gaze upwards and outwards (into a future of freedom?), the woman's line of vision seems perpetually snagged on the child next to and below her. The men's arms are also raised up and extend out from themselves: the miner on the left raises his arm in the familiar clenched-fist salute while his comrade mans the helm of their procession holding the UDF banner, tilted forward, waving above their heads. Upon close inspection, one can see that the woman's free arm is also raised as she points forward, as if instructing her little one. In this image, the woman is always cast in reference to her charge. Her stance, future, and very personhood is mediated by a child, to whom she is bound physically as mother, protector, teacher, and guide. There are rare examples of UDF posters in which a man also looks down at a child, but he is not physically linked to her.

²⁴¹ On August 9, 1956 some 20,000 South African women marched to the seat of government at the Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest the tightening state control. Proposed amendments to the 1950 Urban Areas Act would have required “registration of [women’s] service contracts, and a compulsory medical examination for all African women town-dwellers” as a means of limiting women’s movement.



Figure 4-2 UDF: Unban the ANC!

In terms of composition and line, the three figures' arms, tilted heads, and gaze fill the composition with outward extending lines that radiate upward. It is only the mother who looks down. She is also the only figure to be composed of softer lines, as can be seen in the curve of her neck, the crook of her embracing arm, and the waves of her head scarf. But through instruction, she has performed her maternal duty well. The young girl has already learned and even mastered the forward-looking angular gaze, stance, and raised fist salute of the men who frame her.

In the late '80s and especially early '90s, a shift occurred in poster representations of women in terms of both image and text. Visual depictions became more inclusive of other aspects of womanhood and in some instances the woman was able to shed the baby from her back. This corresponded with increasing emphasis on realizing the goals outlined in the Women's Charter (drafted originally in 1954), and higher visibility of women's achievements *vis-a-vis* political posters celebrating Women's Day and those

featuring specific female activists. Also indicative of these shifts in discourse, and the heightening anticipation and expectation of freedom on the more immediate horizon is the insertion of women's issues into debates around the political struggle for universal human rights. “Maternity Rights for All!”²⁴² depicts the conventional representation of “woman” with blanketed extension, but here the infant does not solely define her as a person or her status.

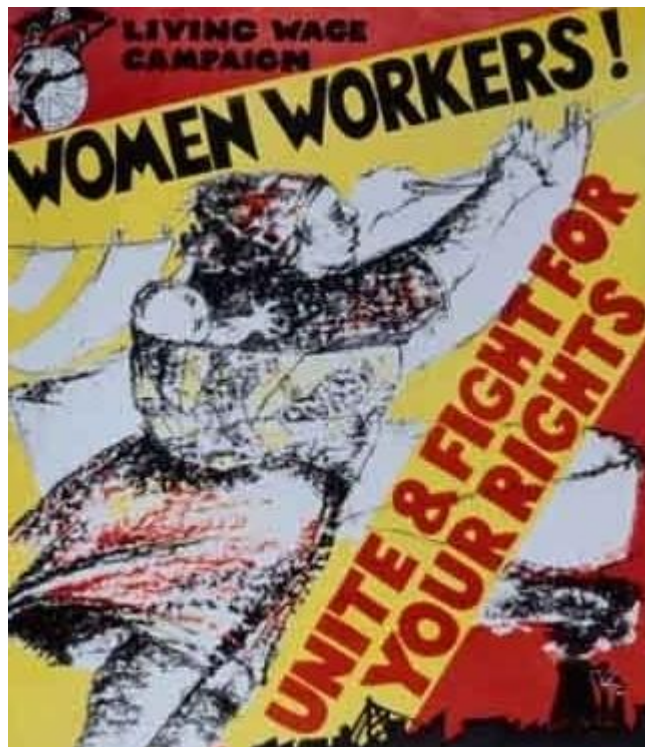


Figure 4-3 Women Workers Unite for Maternity Rights!

The representational range of her identity has been extended ever so slightly to include another facet of her personhood: that of a paid labourer. Another way in which black women were identified through their relationship to children may be seen in the figure of the domestic worker, often forced to leave her own children in order to care for those of her white employer. She is typically conceived of and treated as a “girl” even as she

²⁴² COSATU, “Maternity Rights for All!” (Johannesburg: Gardens Media Group/CAP, 1988).

takes on a significant portion of the “madam's” child rearing and domestic responsibilities.²⁴³ In this poster the domestic worker's identity is once again conferred through her relationship --premised on subservience-- to a child. She is busy hanging clothes, presumably in her capacity as a domestic worker. The baby on her back could be her own, or her employer's child and thus part of her labor responsibilities. COSATU's Living Wage Campaign²⁴⁴ in the late 80s included agitating for 6 months of paid maternity leave. Initiatives like these put women on the political map of struggle and negotiation in more concrete ways than they had typically experienced prior to this period.²⁴⁵

As the figure of the woman is represented in a broader range of jobs, the baby on her back appears also as a burden, weighing her down as she labors. Thus the prevailing theme of children as extensions of women dovetails with the notion of children as a (gendered) social issue. The ambiguity of black women's position in society is apparent in two posters that depict them as victims of multiple forms of oppression. In the COSATU-sponsored South African Domestic Workers' Union²⁴⁶ poster, six arms is not enough to manage the overwhelming workload of the female South African domestic

²⁴³ Even today, women domestic workers are often referred to as “girls,” in keeping with racist assumptions equating black women with children.

²⁴⁴ The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was launched in November-December of 1985 in the face of increasing repression by the state. The National Minimum Living Wage Campaign followed two years later. Relying on “mass regional rallies, local, regional and national structures... and mass media,” key demands included: “a living wage for all workers; a 40-hour week; job security; March 21 and June 16 as paid public holidays; six months maternity leave; the right to decent education and training; and an end to the hostel system.” Naledi Rob Rees, “A Challenge from the Past,” in COSATU 1995. <http://www.cosatu.org.za/shop/ss0406-9.html>.

²⁴⁵ As Shafika Isaacs writes, “Cosatu's struggle for gender equality has been waged on many fronts - against the bosses and the apartheid government, and within Cosatu itself.” She also notes that of all the COSATU affiliates' campaigns “around issues affecting women workers on the shopfloor... the struggle around parental rights and childcare have made most progress.” Shafika Isaacs, “No Woman, No Cry, Zabalaza,” “A Challenge from the Past,” COSATU 1995. <http://www.cosatu.org.za/shop/ss0406-16.html>.

²⁴⁶ The South African Domestic Workers Union (SADWU) was launched in Cape Town on November 29, 1986.

worker. Pointedly, it appears that it is her child that winds up neglected, as she lacks enough arms for him. Domestic workers earned some of the lowest of South African wages, and received no sick pay, maternity leave, unemployment cover, or pensions.²⁴⁷

In an early 1990s ANC election poster, the uniqueness of black women's social position is revealed by the itemized list of burdens she must bear, and ultimately (by voting for the ANC) free herself from: women's (in)equality, lobola [bridewealth], rape, wife abuse, childcare, low wages, less education, housework, and tradition. This poster presents a striking break from the standard narrative of women's roles in society by exposing childcare as an obligation that effectively holds women back and keeps them unequal. Under apartheid, there were very few jobs legally available to women, which greatly limited their freedom.

2) Child as victim

Often still coupled with mothers, children appear in South African political posters as the primary victims of apartheid. When it comes to the perpetrators, posters feature concrete images of South African Defense Force soldiers and policemen (or the after effects of children's suffering at their hands), but also an abstract enemy-- the apartheid state as manifested through the structural violence of poverty. When people are represented visually as victims, they appeal to the viewer to feel and to help. Victimhood is marked by visible signs of suffering. For children these most often appear in the form of tears, expressions of physical pain, and a graphic positioning within poverty and

²⁴⁷ As described in "COSATU Affiliate Profiles," COSATU 1995. <http://www.cosatu.org.za/shop/ss0406-9.html>.

squalor.

As the editors of *Social Suffering* write in the introduction to their volume, “what we represent and how we represent it prefigure what we will, or will not, do to intervene. What is not pictured is not real. Much of routinized misery is invisible.”²⁴⁸ In the international context, the conditions of everyday life of South Africans were spectacular. Children occupy a central, powerful place in the international imaginary and their suffering provided compelling evidence of the inhumanity and brutality of the apartheid regime. As part of the broader phenomenon of the visual feminization of poverty, women and children were presented as the main victims of apartheid, often depicted amidst the squalor of an informal settlement. In the world community/global village, images of their suffering served not only as evidence of wrongdoing but also as a call to action, conveying a sense of immediacy predicated on the idea that children should never suffer. These images are repetitive and standardized, and appeal to a basic humanism that should need no translation (or so the argument goes).

International organizations devoted to addressing and alleviating the suffering of children, such as Save the Children and the Children's Alliance took a special interest in South Africa in the 1980s and were major (re)producers of these images in the international context. They had access to extensive financial resources, much more sophisticated production processes than those available in South Africa, and an institutionally established agenda that framed their messages and advocacy work within a broad global context.

It is important to note however that women were not only portrayed as victims in

²⁴⁸ Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock, eds, *Social Suffering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

South African political posters. An important exception, which sometimes includes babies, may be found in depictions of women with AK-47s. The convention which placed them in the hands or on the backs of women soldiers may be traced back to other liberation movements in neighboring Southern African countries, and the South in general (especially Nicaragua) where women freedom fighters were more common.²⁴⁹ Most of the posters featuring women with AK-47s were produced outside of South Africa, and for international distribution.²⁵⁰

Late 80s ANC struggle posters, and those created by artists in international contexts tended to portray strong women, including combatants. As Carolyn Wells has argued, “Posters that demonstrate the role of women combatants thus grant women political equality and are therefore the most threatening to conventional concepts of male dominance and female passivity. In posters there is frequently an attempt to mitigate this threat to tradition by showing a woman simultaneously holding a gun and a baby.”²⁵¹ Women with guns make a powerful visual argument (even though it might not be realized on the ground) about women's equality. But as I will explore further, in South African posters produced in South Africa, it is usually men holding or carrying the guns, and they are typically the enemy. The most common representation of a gun is as an extension of a malevolent, if powerful force.

3) Children as important social issue

In addition to appearing under the headings of maternity rights within the struggle for fair labor practice, children encapsulated critical issues of major significance on the

²⁴⁹ As Miescher and others have shown, images of armed women, sometimes with a child, were very popular in Namibian political posters before independence. The AK-47 is itself a powerful symbol of resistance, power, and often socialism, and worthy of deeper investigation than I have space for here.

²⁵⁰ Interview with John Berndt, August 2005.

²⁵¹ Carolyn Wells quoted in Giorgio Miescher, Lorena Rizzo and Jeremy Silvester, eds., *Posters in Action: Visuality in the Making of an African Nation* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2009).

political landscape of struggle, particularly concerning their education and detention.²⁵² Adults and young people organized and agitated around critical policy issues affecting mainly black children, and organized forums to debate and discuss children's issues. They also participated in events such as community days and children's festivals, which often highlighted interracialism amongst children. As the state responded with increasingly draconian and repressive measures against black communities, the life circumstances of black children worsened and gained prominence as one of the few issues around which people could organize and congregate. As Lionel Davis recalled, within the climate of censorship, banning, and heavy restrictions, events that addressed children's concerns provided a welcome opening for adults to publicly organize and meet with one another.²⁵³

The premise of the apartheid system was the social stratification of South Africans along racial lines, and education was used by the government to promote its ideology. In the post-Soweto context of continuing Bantu education and pervasive school boycotts, education was a contentious and difficult issue. As I explore in greater detail in Chapter 5, many community-based informal alternatives cropped up to fill the gaps of the collapsing Bantu Education system. Children's images often featured in posters advocating the boycott, protesting the presence of troops in schools, and

²⁵² And there is a sizeable literature on education and apartheid, including: Saleem Badat, *Black Student Politics: Higher Education and Apartheid from SASO to SANSCO, 1968-1990* (New York: Routledge Falmer, 2002); Ann Harries, *The Child is Not Dead: Youth Resistance in South Africa, 1976-86* (London: British Defense and Aid Fund for Southern Africa and the Inner London Education Authority, 1986); Kallaway, Peter, ed., *Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans*, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1984; Peter Kallaway, ed., *The History of Education Under Apartheid, 1948-1994: The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall Be Opened* (New York: P. Lang, 2002); Peter Kallaway, ed., *Education After Apartheid: South African Education in Transition* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1984); Jeremy Seekings and Nicoli Nattrass, *Class, Race, and Inequality in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Freda Troup, *Forbidden Pastures: Education Under Apartheid* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund, 1976).

²⁵³ Interview with Lionel Davis, August 2005.

fundraisers for daycare centres.

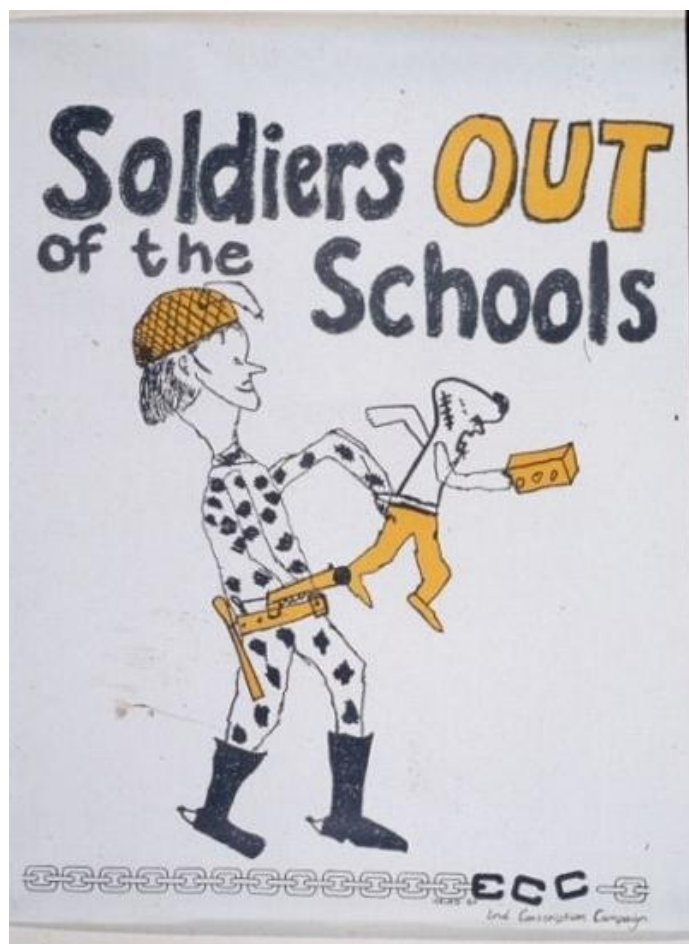


Figure 4-4 Soldiers Out of the Schools



Figure 4-5 Support Our Children

For parents, one of the most painful aspects of the apartheid state's treatment of black children was the increasing practice of detaining children and youth in jail, often without trial. The apartheid government utilized the extensive institutional network of the state to punish and control the children and youth it claimed were threatening national security.²⁵⁴ Under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act, the state had the power to detain anyone indefinitely without trial. The judicial system was thus complicit in the detaining of perceived “troublemakers,” most of whom never received due process under law. Images (both artistic and photographic) of children and youth were seized upon by

²⁵⁴ As Max Coleman noted in his submission to the TRC's Special Hearing on Children and Youth, “The major weapon was detention without trial and we estimate that at least 80,000 detentions have occurred from 1960 right up until 1990.” Children made up a significant percentage of the prison population: “At times, during the years of greatest conflict, children under the age of eighteen years of age represented between 26 per cent and 45 per cent of all those in detention. All the available figures indicate that the largest number of children and youth was detained between 1985 and 1989, during the two states of emergency. Of 80,000 detentions, 48,000 were detainees under the age of twenty-five.”

international advocates who reproduced them in posters and other kinds of anti-apartheid literature as indicting evidence of the criminality of a human rights-violating regime.

Apartheid laws offered little to no protection for children, even in regard to their detention in jails. The common law age cutoff stipulated that only children younger than seven could not be held responsible for their criminal conduct. In 1960, the Children's Act, No. 33 reinforced the legality of incarcerating children when it included a police cell in its definition of "a place of safety." Child prisoners could either be unconvicted or sentenced, transferred from a reformatory, or accompanying their mothers. Children could be held in the more numerous and readily available police cells or in adult penal facilities, and in both places there was little difference between the treatment of adults and children. Solitary confinement, meal deprivation, and excessive use of corporal punishment were used against detained children and allowed by law in cases involving viciousness or cruelty.²⁵⁵ The emotional, physical, and mental harm suffered by children detained in prisons and police cells was extensive.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ Fiona McLachlan, "Children in Prison," Burman and Reynolds, 1990: 357.

²⁵⁶ Even babies were not immune from the affects of incarceration. As Max Coleman testified in the TRC, pregnant women were detained and some gave birth in detention. Nursing mothers were not always allowed to bring their babies with them and some mothers were separated from their young babies. It must also be remembered that some detentions ended in death. One outcome of political sentencing was execution, which also applied to youth between 16 and 25 years of age. The state consistently covered up deaths by listing them as suicide, so it is impossible to know exact figures for the rates of death in detention. Between 1963 and October 1985 eighty-three people were publicly listed as having died in detention. The systematic use of torture in South African jails and police stations during apartheid was extensive. Children and youth were most frequently targeted by security forces while in detention. Youth were frequently placed in jail cells with criminal inmates who were encouraged by security forces and police offers to assault them. The proliferation of gangs in the prison world often held dangerous consequences for the young in particular. Many youth suffered assaults, theft, stabbings, and rape while held in criminal cells. In particular see Special Hearing on Children and Youth, Prisons, and Human Rights Violations Hearings in The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, *Volume Four, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report* (Cape Town: CTP Book Printers (Pty) Ltd., 1998).



Figure 4-6 Release all Detainees

Images of pitiable young detainees featured in both the national and international visual landscape, and organizations lobbied extensively on their behalf. Some of the graphics employed include an abstract drawing of children with hollow eyes from the Detainees Support Committee (DESCOM), squeezed behind bars like animals looking scared but still thinking of freedom (“Take forward their Fight), an injured and gaunt looking mother with her young baby (Detentions Won't stop us!), or the range of scared, sad, frustrated, and freedom-craving children of Molo Songololo's²⁵⁷ appeal. Posters were designed to increase public awareness by informing them of the hidden suffering of incarcerated children and their families. Textual language was typically limited as posters relied on the power of the visual to elicit empathy, and a compassionate response

²⁵⁷ Molo Songololo is an NGO and trilingual children's magazine (English, Afrikaans, and isiXhosa) that was launched in 1980 to work with children in informal settlements outside Cape Town. See Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion of this organization.

that would lead to action. An underlying universalist moral mandate underlies these posters, erasing any need for contextualization, and assumes that viewers-- regardless of their identity-- would share a sense that jailing children was unacceptable.

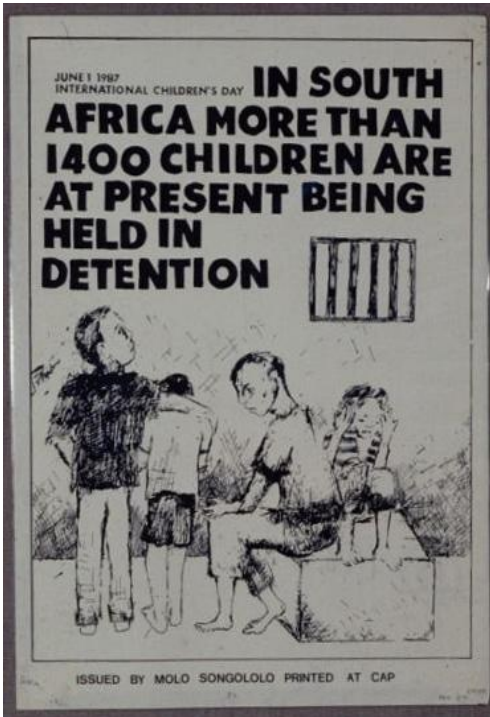


Figure 4-7 Release Children Detainees

Conditions of incarceration have long served as an international measure of human rights abuses within international discourse on human rights. The abuse and imprisonment of children at the hands of a network of state-sponsored institutions provided strong political and even policy grounds on which to force governments abroad to oppose or intervene in South Africa. But there was also a groundswell of local organization around the issue of child detention by concerned and affected family members and advocates. For instance the Soweto-based Parents of Detainees Support

Group not only lobbied against the state but, along with other organizations such as the Black Sash, actively documented its abuses.

4) Children as the future

It has become trite to repeat the bromide that children are the future, but this was a powerful conceptual metaphor in the 1980s and 90s and appeared as a recurring theme in South African political posters. As the transition to democracy became a greater possibility, these images became more common. When depicted in happy families or groups, children often appear as a normalizing presence that conveys the hope for an ideal but unrealized future. In posters advertising festivals, community days, and other social events, their visual presence is used to show inclusivity of all. Another common trope is that of the family scene. Often rendered by children themselves through drawings, happy families were meant to inspire hope and renew commitment to an ideal future of happiness, security, and safety.²⁵⁸ Sanguine images almost always represented an unrealized future since politically there was little to celebrate under the apartheid regime.

²⁵⁸ Interviews with various poster producers. 2004-2005.

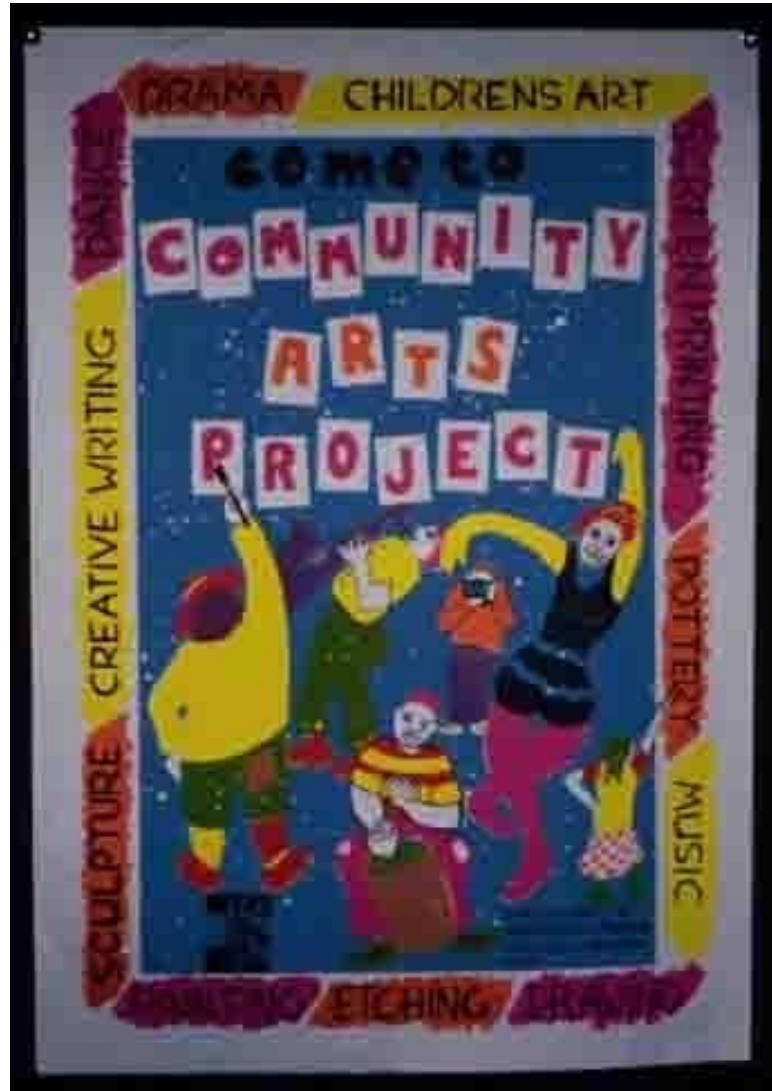


Figure 4-8 Community Arts Project



Figure 4-9 Children's Day Celebrations

After being released from prison in 1990, Nelson Mandela, himself a powerful icon of the future in the 1980s and '90s appeared in posters with children. As the father of the nation he is known for his love of children. It is, of course, common for politicians to do a fair amount of baby kissing, especially in campaign years, but children are part of his identity past and present in a deeper way. He institutionalized the connection by forming the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund and after his term as president focusing his legacy on children as the future.

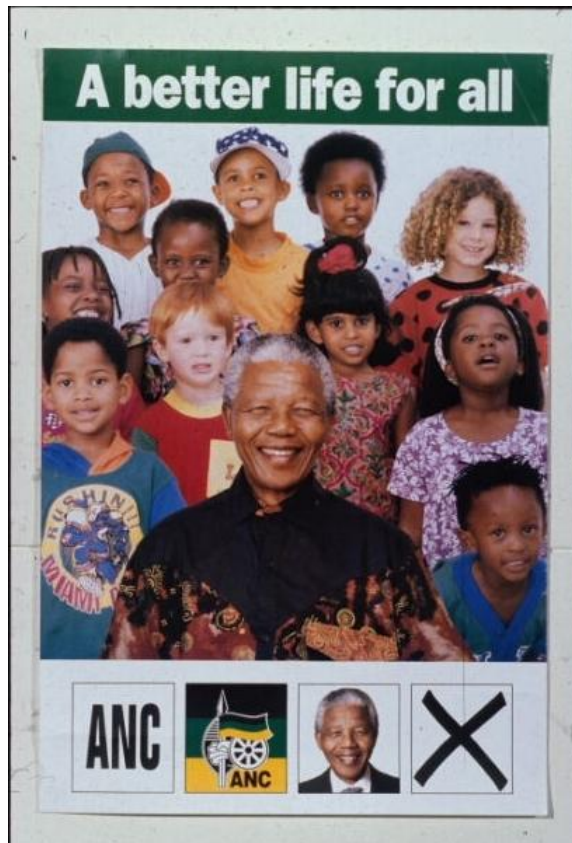


Figure 4-10 ANC Election Poster

5) Child as agent

From the late 1980s through the early 1990s, in many of the posters, particularly those produced by the Community Arts Project (CAP), children appeared as agents. The trope of child as agent marks a significant shift in representations from the four forms previously discussed. This development has much deeper historical precedents than the last few years before the transition, of course. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the UN in 1989, was the culmination of a long process of discussion and negotiation that had its origins in the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924. This was followed by the UN adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959. The Soweto Uprising of 1976, followed by the International Year of the

Child in 1979, put children on an international map of priorities and established a more prominent framework for advocacy that intersected and overlapped locally, nationally, and internationally.

In the decade which followed, however, international attention was focused on children's rights in an unprecedentedly concerted way.²⁵⁹ Internationally, concern for children was figuring more centrally in the international human rights discourse and continues to increasingly manifest itself in international policy. These discussions attracted significant attention and additional resources from advocates working within and on South Africa just as the dismal situation for children under apartheid fueled local and international discussions about children's rights. Discussions, debates, and planning around the proposed UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (which came to force in September 1990) galvanized grassroots and non-governmental organization (NGO) activism, and penetrated policy making in many places.

In my first four modes of representation, South African poster children are represented largely as “pre-adults” passively waiting to be filled by the teachings of their elders and their experiences in the future. Rarely are they depicted as social actors with interests, strategies, and worldviews that impact their communities and the people around them. The impact of global discussions about children's rights and the grassroots activism on children's issues within South Africa in the late '80s and early '90s interrupt this framework. Particularly in the 1990s, as the hope for a democratic South Africa appeared as more and more of a possibility, there was an explosion of posters emphasizing the rights of two previously ignored or underrepresented groups: women

²⁵⁹ Lawrence LeBlanc, *The Convention on the Rights of the Child: United Nations Lawmaking on Human Rights* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), xv.

and children. As discussions around children's autonomy and rights took hold, children's issues were featured in posters depicting the Declaration on the Rights of the Child and other topics pertaining to child welfare.

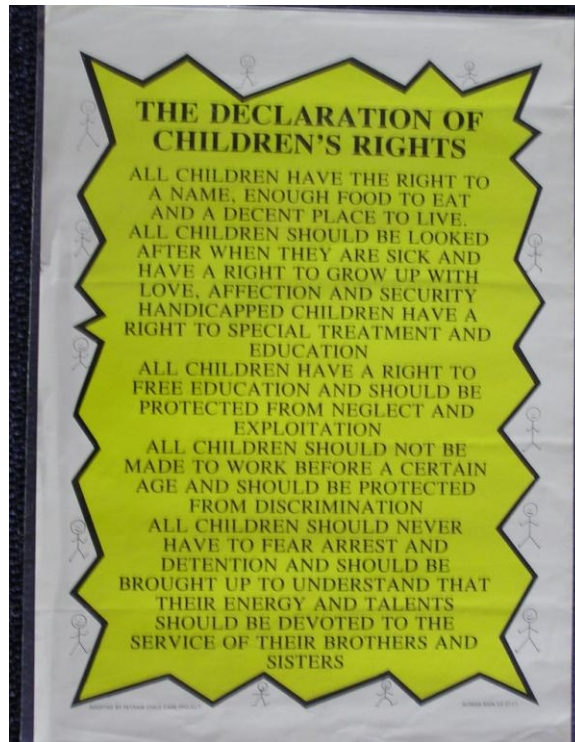


Figure 4-11 Declaration of Children's Rights



Figure 4-12 International Children's Day

In these later posters children appear as agents of various forms: as producers, observers, witnesses, and target audience members. As artists they produced drawings that were frequently featured in posters, books, and exhibitions, arguably serving as cultural workers and agents of change and effectively articulating their hopes, fears, and desires through visual language. Children were also addressed directly as viewers in posters advertising children's festivals, community days, concerts, and workshops.

While national and international agencies and organizations were publicly shaping, reproducing, and policing constructions of childhood that fit into their agendas, children themselves were also engaged in varying degrees in South Africa. Members of various community-based children's organizations, took part in activities in community centers, produced their own artwork, and talked with one another about their rights and responsibilities, dreams for the future, and what it meant to be a child.

Images of Youthfulness: Examples from the End Conscription Campaign (ECC)

Appeals to the essential, universal, and fundamental qualities of childhood assert a rudimentary immutability and invariability that supposedly (or are supposed to) transcend specificity of circumstance. Discursively, these are the parts of childhood that are perceived as being before culture and beyond history. In late apartheid South Africa, the powerful concept of childhood was stretched and shaped in complicated ways. Much of this derives from the fact that children and youth are often paired conceptually and practically. Although consensus is often presumed about what childhood is or should be, there is a plasticity of possibility that was exercised by actors drawing upon the shifting

and highly contested associative attributes of the overlapping and interrelated category of youth.

Images of white young people in locally produced political posters usually depict youth as opposed to children, who are almost always male and connected to the military. For decades both Afrikaner and English youth had been socialized according to dominant ideas of social order premised on the notion of white supremacy. From a very early age, young white boys were militarized at holiday camp veld schools. As Kenneth Grundy described in his 1986 book *The Militarization of South African Politics*,

Some students attend two-week camps during holidays. There, school teachers who also double as military officers subject them to a routine of activities resembling what they can expect in the SADF. Even before senior high school, youngsters in the Transvaal are urged to attend voluntary week-long veld schools ostensibly for the purpose of environmental education and outdoor survival techniques... Elementary school students and even nursery school children (ages three to six) are taken for visits to military installations.²⁶⁰

White children were also militarized through institutions such as the Voortrekkers,²⁶¹ the Afrikaans equivalent of the Boy Scouts, and Cadets.²⁶² Through such organizations many acquired basic military training and orientation, which was in some areas even extended to “Coloured” and Indian children:

Cadet detachments have been set up in white boys’ secondary schools, and, since 1976, the cadet program has been directly under the control of the SADF. Some 170,000 boys in 1983 were provided paramilitary drill and training, and were psychologically prepared for national service. This is compulsory for white boys in all government schools, and compulsory cadet training is planned for white girls. Cadets are encouraged to enlist in the Permanent Force (PF) upon

²⁶⁰ Kenneth W Grundy, *The Militarization of South African Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 1986), 59. Some girls attended veld schools as well. Julie Frederikse, *A Different Kind of War: From Soweto to Pretoria* (London: J. Currey, 1986), 9.

²⁶¹ See Allen Warren, “Citizens of the Empire: Baden-Powell, Scouts and Guides, and an Imperial Ideal,” in John MacKenzie, ed., *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Dover, N.H.: 1986), 232-256 on the origin of the Voortrekkers in South Africa.

²⁶² Grundy 1986: 59-60.

graduation... Officers and NCOs regularly visit schools (including schools for Coloured and Indian children)...

These activities were coupled with broad-based indoctrination reinforced with racist state propaganda. As Reynolds testified in the TRC's Special Hearing on Children and Youth, "Fear of the 'other' was implanted in children under the guise of an imminent 'Communist' plot, articulated through slogans such as 'total onslaught'. All this contributed to a situation in which most white males concluded that it was their obligation to serve in the armed services."²⁶³ He attributed the lack of white resistance among the youth to "the system of patriarchy, whereby the young were kept under control by their elders, their cultures, institutions and state systems."²⁶⁴

There were, however, a minority of white youth who joined the struggle against apartheid and formed their own resistance organizations, including the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) and the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). Some joined existing political organizations such as the ANC or UDF.²⁶⁵ In 1967, the state introduced compulsory military service for white males. Within South Africa, there was little organized opposition until 1983,²⁶⁶ when the Black Sash civil liberties group called for the abolition of compulsory conscription. The ECC was formed that year as a coalition of various student, religious, women's and human rights groups who organized an extensive ongoing public relations campaign that utilized posters, mass meetings, press conferences, festivals, and concerts to agitate against enforced conscription.

²⁶³ See the Special Hearing on Children and Youth in The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, *Volume Four, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report* (Cape Town: CTP Book Printers (Pty) Ltd., 1998), 257.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ They too were targeted by the state, forced underground, and into exile with devastating consequences.

²⁶⁶ But South African refugees living in London established the Committee on South African War Resistance (COSAWR) in 1978. L. Berat, "Conscientious Objection in South Africa, Governmental Paranoia and the Law of Conscription," *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* vol. 22, no.1 (1989).

Many of the white youth were traumatized by their involvement in defence force activities, and those who resisted faced social ostracism and legal action. Many were condemned as traitors to the nation and faced criminal charges of six years' imprisonment if they did not flee their country. At the forefront of this resistance and documenting its efforts with a powerful and illustrative poster campaign was the ECC. Unlike most anti-apartheid organizations, the ECC primarily targeted a white South African audience using a two-pronged approach: to educate and empower white youth about alternatives to conscription, and more frequently, to evoke fear and/or sympathy in (largely white) viewers regarding the damaging consequences of military involvement. The ECC's collection represents the bulk of visual images of white children and youth that I encountered in my exploration of political posters. What is most interesting for my purposes here is the ECC's repetitive emphasis of the youthfulness of the white conscripts it features. As Sandra Burman argued in 1988, "childhood and its related words have meant very different things at different times ... They carry with them a range of hidden connotations and assumptions, and ... they are categories which are manipulated in South Africa for administrative and political purposes."²⁶⁷ In the poster entitled "Another Young One," two human figures are represented without any physical indication of their age. The plump pink hand seems distorted as its fingers curl unnaturally and unevenly to grip or tap the young man on the back, selecting/sentencing him to unknown horrors. The starkly contrasting colors of black, white, and pink are lurid and unsettling.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ Emile Boonzaier and John Sharp, eds., *South African Keywords: The Uses & Abuses of Political Concepts* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Philip, 1988), 167.

²⁶⁸ Might these fingers suggest another image? Possibly of the Grim Reaper, who also comes faceless and shrouded in black at the moment before one's death. Thanks to Farzanah Badsha for her insightful and humorous suggestion that this depiction could be a reference to P.W. Botha and his wagging finger.

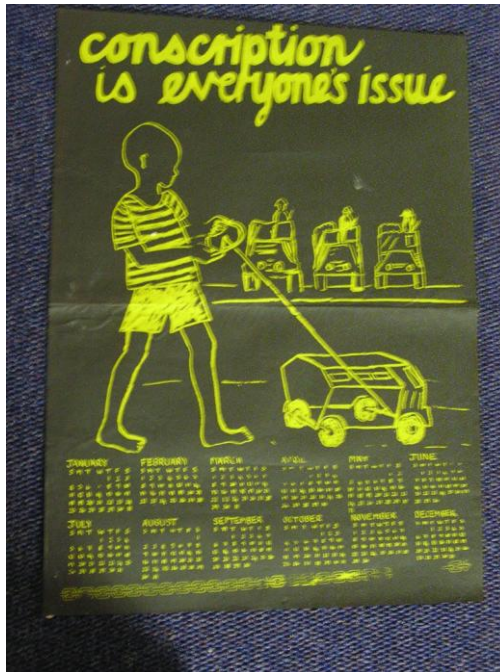


Figure 4-13 Conscription is Everyone's Issue

The stark and simple “Conscription is everyone's issue” calendar focuses on one kind of person to underscore a larger argument about conscription (and arguably, the apartheid military in general): a child. Suggesting the dangers of children's exposure and potential internalization of violence witnessed in townships at the hands of the SADF, the ECC reiterates a familiar argument about the tragedy of lost childhoods. Under the brutal circumstances of apartheid even children's play takes on a violent tenor. Interesting to note here is also the use of child art to convey simple truths. This poster reproduces themes explored in other ECC posters: the SADF is the enemy, and the victim is a male child/youth (which in turn causes larger familial and social suffering as well).

The ECC’s 1987 poster, “Botha's ek Gatvol” (I've had enough), shows a black and white photograph of a young man has been reduced to child-like status as a result of ostensible despair. He has abandoned his beret beside him in a sense of defeat and hangs

his head abjectly. The soldier here is rendered in a way that emphasizes his slight frame, as he bends into an almost fetal-like position, invoking a return to infancy. Inverting the usual military dogma of turning boys into men, the ECC implies that the SADF takes young people and breaks them down into children. ECC posters directly counter other core positions of the state (17 year olds are fit to be soldiers, conscription is a duty, the military provides opportunities for training, discipline, comradeship, etc.) by appealing to romantic ideals about the innocence of youth.

Extending this counter image, ECC political posters interrupt the nationalistic narrative in another powerful way. In ECC posters, people holding guns are typically rendered as victims. Rather than appearing as symbols of strength, power, or virility, in the hands of children and youth, guns seem to enervate them spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically.

A large part of the envictimization process involves emphasizing the childish qualities of the victim so as to heighten viewers' sympathetic and empathetic response. The ECC sponsored "Art for Peace" exhibition poster features a young male toddler sitting in sand, but the otherwise sanguine image of childhood play and innocence has been marred by the insertion of an airborne hand grenade and the triple striped military insignia of a soldier's uniform onto the composition. Once again, the color choices are striking and unnerving. The boy's image has been washed in red portending a possible bloody demise in battle, and the sand is an eerie greenish-blue.

In the 1980s, under the Internal Security Act and state of emergency regulations, the apartheid government banned all political organizations, including the many student and youth organizations often based in schools. Possessing or distributing their literature

(including posters) was also declared illegal. As black youth became increasingly politicized in the late 1970s and '80s, schools served as centers of resistance to apartheid and were consequently targeted by the state. Schools were the sites of mobilization, intimidation, political influence, and harassment as police occupied schools. As reported in the final report of the TRC, "In large-scale and often arbitrary police action, thousands of children, some as young as seven years old, were arrested and detained in terms of South Africa's sweeping security and criminal legislation. Sometimes, entire schools were arrested en masse."²⁶⁹

State propaganda and militarism are illustrated in the visual fulfillment of P.W. Botha's injunction that "Our educational systems must train people for war" by a young boy decked out in helmet, raincoat, and gun. His bodily stance conveys a sense of enthusiasm and readiness that seems to belie his facial expression. "Soldiers out of the Schools," condemning the presence of the SADF in schools, uses an actual drawing by 13 year old Victor²⁷⁰ who acts as witness to the victimization of a child in the hands of a soldier.

²⁶⁹ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, *Volume Four, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report* (Cape Town: CTP Book Printers (Pty) Ltd., 1998), 260.

²⁷⁰ Originally published by The Open School in a collection of child drawings and writings entitled *Two Dogs and Freedom: Children of the Townships Speak Out* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986). This book is the result of a project of The Open School, a cultural education program that ran a variety of workshops for young people.

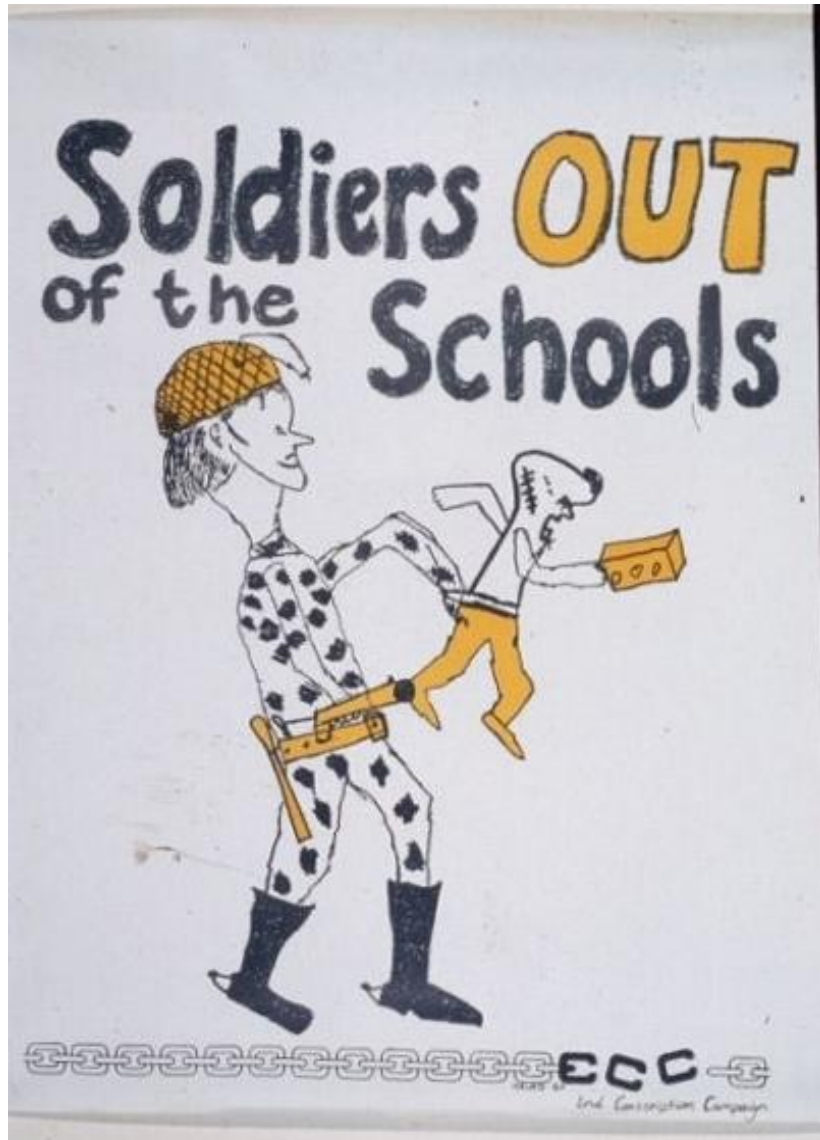


Figure 4-14 Soldiers Out of Schools

Chapter 5

Molo Songololo: A Magazine for All Children

In 1979, four community organizers working in Crossroads, an informal settlement outside of Cape Town, planned some activities around children's rights awareness in observance of the International Year of the Child. Nomhle Ketelo, Caroline Long, Nomhi Mtwecu, and Barbara Strachan wanted to hear from children themselves about the issues and topics most pertinent to their lives, and organized several workshops in which children were invited to draw, write, and talk about their experiences and learn about their rights. The women amassed a sizeable collection of children's drawings and writings from these gatherings, and initially contemplated publishing them in an anthology, but instead opted to establish a low-cost serial magazine for children that would provide an ongoing space for their reflections and dialogue with one another, in addition to entertaining educational materials.

In March 1980, the first issue of *Molo Songololo* (Hello Centipede)²⁷¹ was released with the motto, "A magazine for all children." The serial was published somewhat sporadically between March 1980, and 2002. Between those years the

²⁷¹ My analysis of *Molo Songololo* is based on a close reading of the 42 issues that are available in *Molo Songololo's* archives and my own personal collection. Through the years of its production there were changes and irregularities in its format and especially in the frequency of its release, affecting the numbering system in some cases. Of note is the shift, some time after publication of the November 1987 No 56 edition from the subtitle "Number" to "Issue." I have referenced the editions using the terminology on the individual magazine covers. There are also two different issues labeled "Issue 68". The second one is mislabeled. Information on editorial staff was not included within the publication

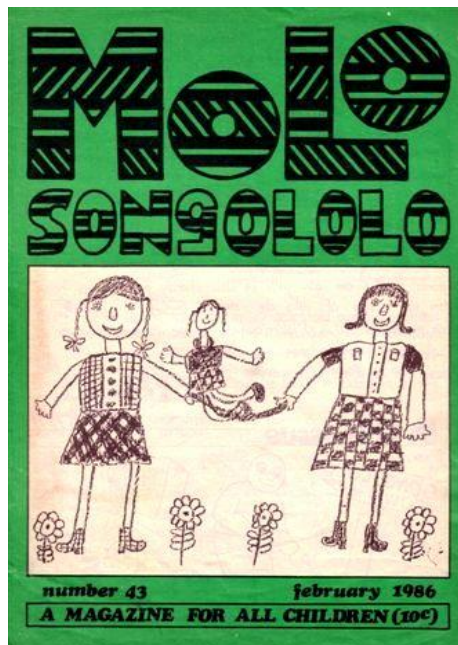
distribution grew from approximately 2500 copies to 55,000.²⁷² It featured children's drawings, letters, and poems, providing a platform for a wide range of expression. Primarily distributed in the urban and peri-urban areas of the Western Cape, *Molo* was oriented around valuing children's subjectivities as individuals. On a very limited budget, it encouraged their creativity and self-expression in a variety of ways that provided a radical alternative to the Bantu Education system. Through the pages of this magazine, children were encouraged to explore and exercise their individuality, creativity, and curiosity, and to express themselves through art, writing, cross-cultural communication, play, and, perhaps most subversively, hope. The pressing political concerns of the day were acknowledged in a similarly broad range of registers: through direct address via the character of Molo, in children's own first-hand accounts of their lives, in cartoons and stories, and in the magazine's requests for children's thoughts and observations about the issues in their communities.

Most issues of *Molo* featured a child's drawing on the cover, attributed to the artist, and selected from the submissions received.²⁷³ One *Molo* reader from the time explained to me that although her artwork was never featured on the cover of the magazine, the very idea that it *could* be was a source of tremendous excitement to her, and broadened her own dreams for the future. She equated the personalized acknowledgement that a child could receive by being featured in print with the attainment of a certain level of celebrity—something that had only ever seemed possible for whites

²⁷² Interview with Patrick Solomons, October 2006.

²⁷³ While some issues of the magazine included more specific requests for children's responses to particular questions or issues, *Molo* also reiterated its interest in all kinds of submissions: "Molo would like a cover!! Can you send Molo a drawing for the cover next month? You can draw anything you like. Ask your friends to draw also, then send your drawings to Molo Songololo..." *Molo Songololo*, March 1983, No 21, 3. Later, in the late 1980s, *Molo* sometimes published photographs of children from the Cape Flats areas in everyday scenes.

in her experience. The children's drawings that graced the cover and inside pages featured subjects ranging from sanguine scenes of smiling schoolgirls and flamboyant flowers to images of violence, suffering and hardship. The beloved centipede Molo was also a common theme. In the very late 1980s black and white photographs of children were sometimes used. The lack of staff (including editorial) attribution is noteworthy for several reasons. On the one hand, not publishing their names was a protective measure that community workers often took to keep the police at bay. It also points to the many fluctuations in staff



**Figure 5-1 *Molo Songololo*,
February 1986, No 43, cover**

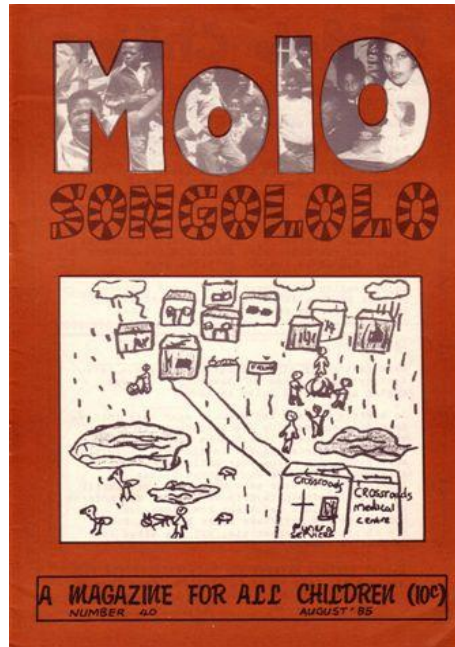
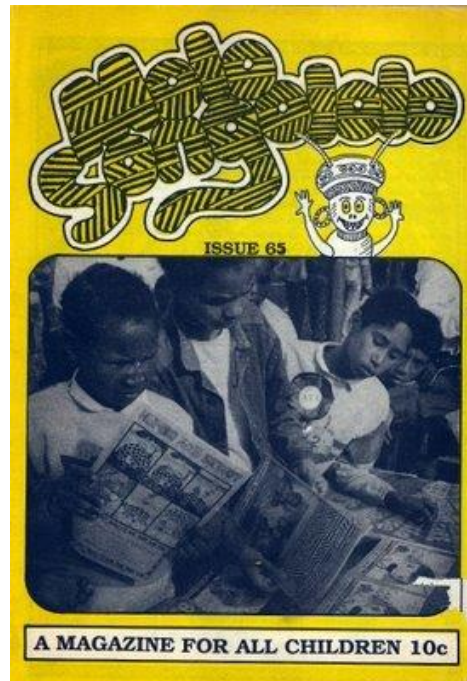


Figure 5-2 *Molo Songololo*, August 1985, No 40, cover



Figure 5-3 *Molo Songololo*, November 1980, No 6, cover



**Figure 5-4 *Molo Songololo*,
Issue 65, cover
[circa December 1989]**

Each issue opened with a letter from the friendly songololo, Molo in usually three languages, greeting readers, introducing some of the themes in the current edition, announcing any scheduled community events, and (increasingly through the mid-late 1980s), commenting on current events and issues of concern, such as forced removal and the detention of children.

Hello children

Hello children

Molo is happy to be with you again in the New Year. It is a long time since you received your last magazine. Hope you like the new-look Molo Songololo. In this issue you will find lots of interesting stories and letters from children. The ABC chart will help you with your spelling and word-building. So be sure to do the exercises.

At the moment Molo is very worried about all the people still in detention. Especially those who are on hunger strike. They are not eating any food in protest against their detention. Some of them have been in detention for almost two years and have not seen their children and families. Molo feels it is unfair and that they should be released immediately.

Liewe Maatjies

Molo is baie bly om in die nuwe jaar weer met julle te wees. Dit is 'n lang tydjie nadat julle jul laaste uitgawe ontvang het. Hoop julle hou van die nuwe Molo Songololo.

In hierdie nuwe uitgawe sal julle baie interessante stories asook briewe van die kinders vind. Die ABC kaart sal julle besig hou met spel en woordbou. Moet nie vergeet om die oefeninge te doen nie.

Op die oomblik is Molo baie bekommerd oor die mense wat in detensie is, vernaam daardie wat op 'n honger-staking is. Hulle eet nie kos nie omdat hulle teen hul detensie protes. Som van hulle is in detensie vir meer as twee jaar ensien nie hul families en kinders nie. Molo voel dat dit baie onregverdig is, en dat hulle onmiddelik vrygelaat moet word.

Bantwana Abathandekayo

U Molo uvuya kakhulu ukuba nani kulo nyaka. Lithuba elide sele nafumana imagazini yenu. Ndiya qonda ukuba niya kumthanda umolo wethu omtsha. Kwesi siphumo sethu niya kufumana amabali neleta zabantwana ezinomdla kakhulu. Itshathi ka ABC izakuni nceda ukupela nokwakha amagama. Khupha isithukuthezi ngoku yenza lomsebenzana.

Khona ngoku u Molo unexhala labantu abagcinwe ekuvalelweni. Ngakumbi ngaba basekungwayimbeni kokutya. Abatyi ngokuba be chasa uvalelo lwabo. Abanye

sele mevalelwe iminyaka emibini. Abaka boni abazali okanye abantwana babo.

U Molo uvakala eno sizi kakhula futhi esithi kufuneka bekhululwe msinya.

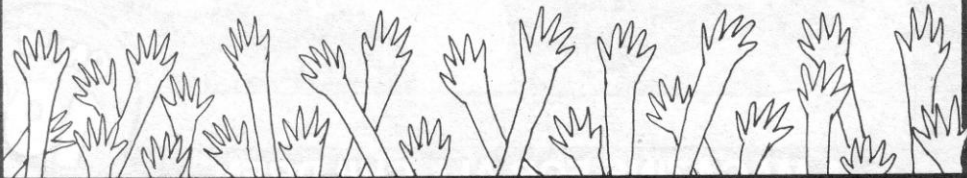


Figure 5-5 Molo Songololo, February 1989, Issue 62, 2

Magazine staffers recognized that children took a great deal of pride in seeing their own names and contributions in print, which is why each issue also featured an acknowledgements page with a list of the names of each child who sent in a submission to the magazine.



Figure 5-6 *Molo Songololo*, August 1985,
 No 40, 19



Figure 5-9 Molo Songololo, 1983,
No 25, 18



Figure 5-10 Molo Songololo,
August 1982, No 17

A selection of these letters, drawings, and jokes was published in every issue, usually as direct reproductions in the authors' original handwriting. Letters in all three languages were published, mistakes and all. The content of the letters centered around some common themes. Children typically wrote in with basic introductions that could include their age, area of residence, school; descriptions of family, friends, teachers, and pets; their love of Molo Songololo; pleas to publish; their likes and dislikes; and requests for advice with problems ranging from disagreements with friends to the daunting challenges of how to avoid gang violence or move forward after being forcibly evicted from one's home. Children also expressed their sympathy and support for those who were suffering whom they had heard of or read about in previous issues of the magazine. Some children sent in jokes, or playful questions to the character Molo.

A survey of available numbers of the magazine shows that children were not only aware, but opinionated and concerned about political issues in their country. The letters and writings *Molo* published reveal that children's attention to political matters was integrated into their daily lives, thoughts, and activities—not part of a forbidden or unrecognized realm that was outside of their purview, that only adults explored and introduced. Unlike the majority of publications that printed children's art and/or writing, *Molo* provided a less constrained space for children to present their thoughts on their own terms. Shattering adult fantasies about children's isolation from, incomprehension of, and disinterest in "the political," these forms of self-expression reveal that "the political" was enmeshed in children's everyday lives in a range of complicated ways. Consider, for instance, Lee-Anne, who wrote in the August 1982 issue, "Hallo Molo. I feel sorry for

you and I would like to know how you turned into a worm. I also feel sorry for Crossroads because police disturbs [sic] the people and they are very cruel.”²⁷⁴

²⁷⁴ August 1982 Number 17

Letters to Molo

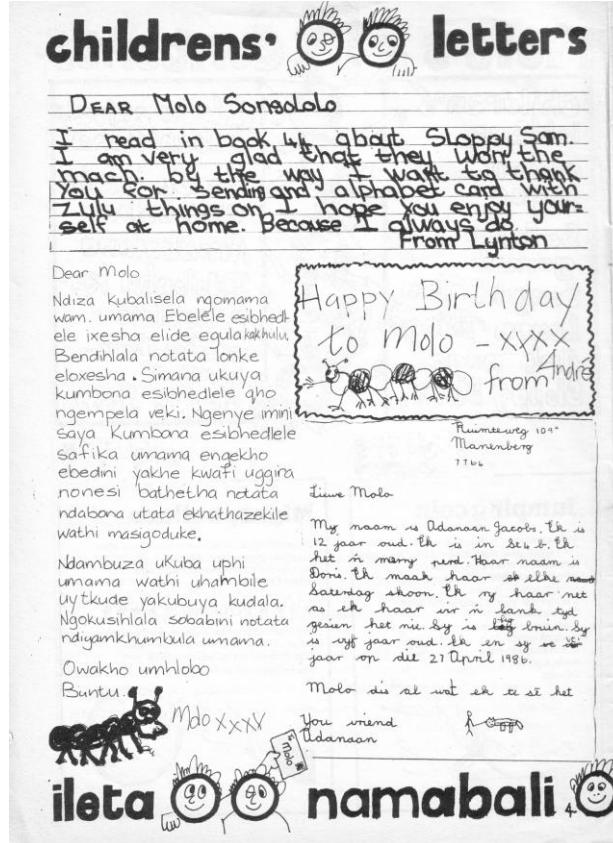


Figure 5-11 Molo Songololo, April 1986, No 45, 4

LETTERS TO MOLO

Dear Molo,

I am glad I have met Molo Songololo. I enjoyed myself and I can never forget you. You are so kind and very friendly. I read Molo's book over and over because it is lovely to read. I tried to draw the pretty pictures but I can't. My father loves Molo's books he even read it if he got nothing to do.

from your
sincere
Dionesia Willis
10 yrs. old.

Dear Molo

My name is Uta Wessels
I live in Grenadendal.
I like to read your magazine
We first lived in Cape Town
now we live up country.

We have pigs, sheep, cows and
calves. Molo must come and
visit our animals.

I am nine years old and I
am in std. two I am in an
Afrikaans medium school. In
Cape Town I was in an
English medium school.

But our home language is
English.

Hallo Molo,

My naam is Beverley en
ek is twaalf jaar oud. Die naam van
die skool wat ek bywoon is die klooster
van die Heilige kruis. Die skool is in
Maitland. Ek is in std. 5 en daar is een
en twintig kinders in my klas. My
stokperdjie is lees en ek hou baie
van die Molo Songololo want dit is
baie interessant.

Beverly




RHONDA

Juliana Flowers
11 jaar oud
St. J. C.



Figure 5-12 Molo Songololo, [undated] Issue 18, 4



Dear Molo Songololo
 My name is Natasha. My Surname is Roux. I am 9 years old and I Live at St Philomena's. I don't like people which kill smaller children in class one and other standards to be killed by big people. They don't like people to live a long happy time and enjoy their time. It is nice to have a happy long life. In Durban there are many Strangers. From Natasha Roux Durban 9a Ripon Rd.

Liewe Molo. Dit is die tweede keer dat ek aan jou skryf. Ek hou baie van jou stories in jou boekie. My gunsteling storie is Bobo-the friendly little boy. Molo ek is nege jaar oud. Ek het net verjaar die 20ste September. Ek voel jammer vir die mense wat so swaar kry en ook vir die mense wat in die tronk is. Dankie dat jy my friend is. Jy moet moer bly van Jamine.

Liewe Songololo
 My naam is Romona van den Heever. Ek is in st. 4 en twaalf jaar oud. Ek het een broer hy is 4 jaar oud en ons woon in Steinkopf. Ek het dit baie goed toe julle hier was. Ek was by die danagroep en ek wil net vir Pitsa se dat dit my regtig goed gedoen het. Ek hou baie van die boek maar ek wil graag hê dat julle meer wiskunde moet in die boek sit. baie van ons het probleme met wiskunde. My onderwyser se naam is Mv. May Gloete. Ek is baie lief vir dans, swem en tik.

Things that make me sad
 There are various things in life which make me sad. A few examples are like when a family goes out to enjoy themselves and suddenly they are robbed and killed by a group of savage gangsters. Then there are also the people and children in distant countries who have no food or shelter. Another example is when seventeen babies got injected with a needle contaminated with the aids virus. All these and other tragic things which happen in life makes me sad and hurts me very deep inside. I also get sad for domestic things when my mother's car breaks down a certain time before we go on a special outing. I also get sad when things don't go the way I want them to. Another thing which makes me sad is that I don't get much attention because my mother works during the day.
 — Kurt Johnson.

I Love Molo

Dear Molo
 I would like South Africa to be a Home for every One. I would like the Blacks, whites and coloureds to be like a family. The people must stand together as one. We are all south Africans.

Figure 5-13 Molo Songololo, [circa December 1989], Issue 65, 4



Most people who strike are the workers they will organise something for the strike so that when it's a strike day they would not just stay at home doing nothing they will organise a demonstration and make posters and pamphlets that request to join the strike.

The strike is good for people and workers because they make their demands you must be careful if it's a strike day maybe you are going to school and you don't know anything about the strike you are a lone person. There will be some police who know about the strike maybe they see you, they will take you to jail they will say you are taking part in the strike.

DEAR MOLO
 Igama lam ngu Zandile Ngumela. Nalipanda e Mathisi S.A school hambi bangwa kesine Nalipandawa ngu-musi Helman. Uthabala wethu ndiyamthanda, phufu sonke e gumshini lethu lokuphukela siyamthanda, ngakumbi xa esibetho ucinke asthikho kakhulu. Aba hlobo bam esikhawini ngu: Gq. Gqana sia, Mame "kwa" kungu no Phungya. Nalipandawa ukuba ndiyabona i-nwazi-yan ku Molo Songololo.
 Zandile Ngumela.

My name is Ruth Mhlwili. I am 13 years old and in Std. 5. The name of my school is Siwive Primary School. It is the first time I'm writing to you. I want to tell you about two students. The boy is Sandile and the girl is Thobeka. Sandile and Thobeka go to different schools. But they have one thing in common. They all come bottom of the class. Their classmates tease and make fun of them. Their teachers think they are stupid and that they are born that way. But people who say this are often wrong. And children who tease are wicked.

Sandile's father is unemployed. Sandile often goes to school hungry. His brain cannot concentrate on work. His tummy is rumbling and aching for food. Thobeka has problems at home. She fights with her mother and her step father often beats her. She doesn't have anyone to talk to. There is nothing wrong with her brain! But her heart is sore and she can't work properly. I think this story is important to the students.

Molo
 Gailie

Figure 5-14 Molo Songololo, [circa December 1989], Issue 65, 5

In the “total onslaught” period of the early 1980’s, the leadership structures on both sides of the struggle seemed to be faltering. Botha’s bungling attempts to stabilize the South African economy and political situation kept failing, with each new tactic seeming only to further incense the masses he sought to suppress. Evening more threatening was the loss of white control in the bordering states. To the immediate north of South Africa, black nationalist freedom fighter Robert Mugabe was elected president of a newly independent Zimbabwe in April 1980 on a platform of majority rule. Mozambique and Angola had already gained independence in 1975, and the resistance movement in Namibia was building. These were tumultuous times to say the least.²⁷⁵

There were many outcomes which arose from this atmosphere of confusion and upheaval. Gun sales skyrocketed as whites’ confidence in the state’s security measures plummeted. The militarization of white youth was buttressed through expanding cadet programs that provided military training and inculcated apartheid ideology.²⁷⁶ In 1981, the de Lange Report on education was published. It recommended extensive reform, including the creation of a single educational authority for all races. Botha refused to abandon this crucial cornerstone of the apartheid system, but reluctantly allowed for multiracialism in private schools, and relaxed some of the petty apartheid laws in an unsuccessful attempt to assuage black anger. The few crumbs of reform that Botha tossed to the black majority were taken as insults, and served only to further fuel the fires

²⁷⁵Nigel Worden. *The Making of Modern South Africa: Third Edition*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Inc. 2000), 139. (Worden, 139).

²⁷⁶Beinart, 245.

of freedom-fighting. Lifelong activist Sally Motlana said it best: “We don't want our chains made more comfortable. We want them removed.”²⁷⁷

With many of the political leaders in jail or in exile, more localized forms of organization and leadership emerged. Grassroots collectives, including alternative presses, civic groups, and women’s, youth, and interest-based organizations proliferated, popping up not only in the cities, but also in rural areas. This period of mass mobilization galvanized many, including parents and congregation members, who had been somewhat reluctant to become involved in politics before.

Local distributions of power were being challenged, with so many of these groups being led by women and youth, traditionally subordinate²⁷⁸ to adult men in the realm of politics. Both groups were particularly well positioned to lead the actions and agendas of the grassroots movement, based, as they were, largely at home. School boycotts were still in place and schools were still being burned. The Congress of South African Students²⁷⁹ attracted members (whether the pupils were attending classes or not) and began reaching out to workers. Various unions in the labor movement enjoyed the support of youth and community organizations as their membership numbers swelled.²⁸⁰ Stay-aways and consumer boycotts strengthened workers’ negotiating power as they rebelled against their atrocious wages and working conditions.

²⁷⁷ *Every Step of the Way* 1981: 215. (funded by the SA Ministry of Education)

²⁷⁸ This is reflected in myriad ways including the omnipresent maintenance of women and youth as peripheral or secondary categories of concern and participation.

²⁷⁹ Following the philosophical insistence on refusing white domination of their leader Steve Biko, black students formed SASO in 1970 as an alternative to the white-dominated (but theoretically multiracial) NUSAS. As a result of bannings of student organizations and Student Representatives Councils, detention of student leaders, and divisions within these organizations, there was a fair amount of disbandment and reorganization, particularly through the 1980s.

²⁸⁰ “FOSATU and CUSA unions membership exploded from 70,000 in 1979 to about 320,000 in 1983.

Meanwhile, still reeling from the state crackdown following the Soweto Uprising, leaders of the liberation movements were trying to maintain momentum and unity in the face of mass detentions, bannings, and cross-border raids on some of their bases in exile. The state stepped-up security measures, repeatedly opening fire on demonstrators, terrorizing the townships, and brutally torturing detainees. As active, observant, and contributing members of their communities, children were increasingly exposed to the state's intensification of violence that developed within Botha's "total strategy," in which children in growing numbers were targeted for detention, interrogation, and abuse. Their submissions to *Molo Songololo* reflect this awareness and engagement, and the escalation of violence that occurred under Botha's "total strategy," in which children were increasingly targeted for detention, interrogation, and abuse. The magazine was also responsive to the escalation of violence, and drew readers' attention to a range of political issues and events, making special mention of any that involved young people. See for instance the following statement from police shooting victim Shamier Ismail:



Birds are free, why can't we also be like that.



September 6 will always be remembered by the people of Cape Town. On this day more than 20 people were killed and hundreds injured by the police. Molo interviewed Shamier Ismail to give you an idea of what happened on September 6.

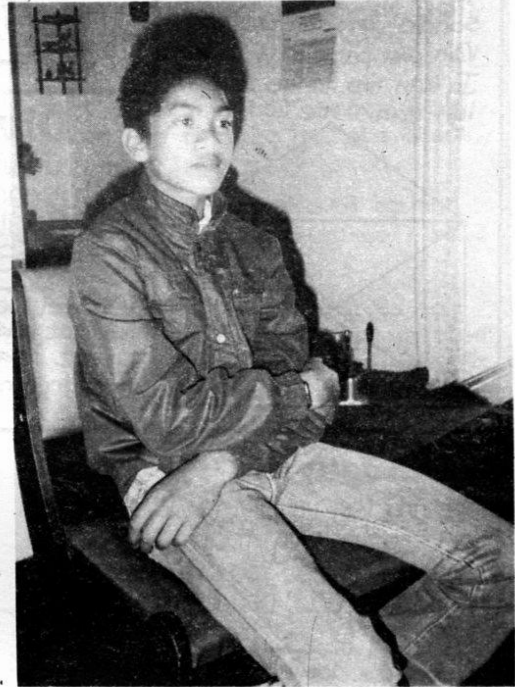


Shamier Ismail, a std.5 pupil from Michell's Plain was shot by police with birdshots. This is what Shamier had to say of what happened that day.

"I got up the morning and dressed myself. Then I asked my mother if I should go to school. She said no. We had breakfast and my mother told my brother, sisters and I to stay indoors. We played games and I fed my pigeons and budgies. Later that afternoon, I went outside to join my friends.

We played for a while and then went to the corner. We watched the burning of tyres at 'White House' (an open field on the other side of the road from where Shamier lives) While we were standing on the corner, the police arrived. They drove onto the pavement, jumped out of the van and shot at us. They went on shooting as I ran around the corner. It felt like many needles piercing me. I was very scared and ran home.

There was blood all over me. My mother got such a shock when she saw me. While she was looking at my wounds my elder sister phoned the Crisis Centre. They arranged for me to see a doctor, who then removed the birdshot pellets with a tweaser. My family was very upset because they thought I was going to die.



The police should be there to protect us, instead they shoot us. I am very scared of the police now. I fear they might shoot me again. Apartheid is not fair. Birds are free, why can't we also be like that?

When Molo spoke to Shamier, he still had two birdshot pellets wedged in him. One in his upper right forehead and one just below his collarbone. He hoped to have it removed soon as it started to swell.



Figure 5-15 Molo Songololo, [circa December 1989], Issue 65, 11

The state's intensification of forceful suppression of anything resembling opposition—especially after the national state of emergency was declared in 1985—is reflected in the content of the magazine, most jarringly in the instructional cartoon below.



Figure 5-16 *Molo Songololo*, [circa December 1989], Issue 65, 14



Figure 5-17 *Molo Songololo*, [circa December 1989], Issue 65, 15

Here children are informed about the dangers of teargas and instructed on how to respond if they are fired upon. “Teargas Buster” depicts a young person wearing and carrying protective gear in case of what was all too regularly the inevitable at demonstrations, funerals, and skirmishes between youth and police. The discordant juxtaposition of the matter-of-fact presentation on “What you can do when you have been teargassed” against frolicking centipedes wishing children enjoyable holidays reveals the varied and unstable grounds of childhood during *Molo Songololo*’s production. In these last decades of apartheid, the inner contentions and instability of children’s lives contradict the existing categories for understanding children in operation. By attempting to fill in the space between, they render the gaps more visible and confirm the impossibility of the position of children in the dangerous and unpredictable everyday circumstances of apartheid in which they dwell.

Children and politics

Local issues were addressed in overtly political appeals which presented portrayals of powerful and proactive children asserting themselves in their families and communities. Most editions asked for children's responses to a particular issue, such as the forced removals in Crossroads,²⁸¹ drugs, homeless street children, or the detention of children and other political prisoners without trial. Children's answers were printed in the subsequent edition of *Molo*. In addition to providing children with a platform to speak, *Molo Songololo* kept readers (who also included many parents) apprised of new developments. Stories and drawings presented key political issues of the day, and urged children to form and share their opinions, such as in the following story about a bus boycott:

²⁸¹ Between 25 May and 12 June 1986 around 60,000 people were forcibly removed from their homes in squatter camps at Crossroads and surrounding areas in Cape Town. As seen in Lee-Ann's letter, however, residents had endured police abuse and harassment for years before their homes were razed and they were forced to leave.

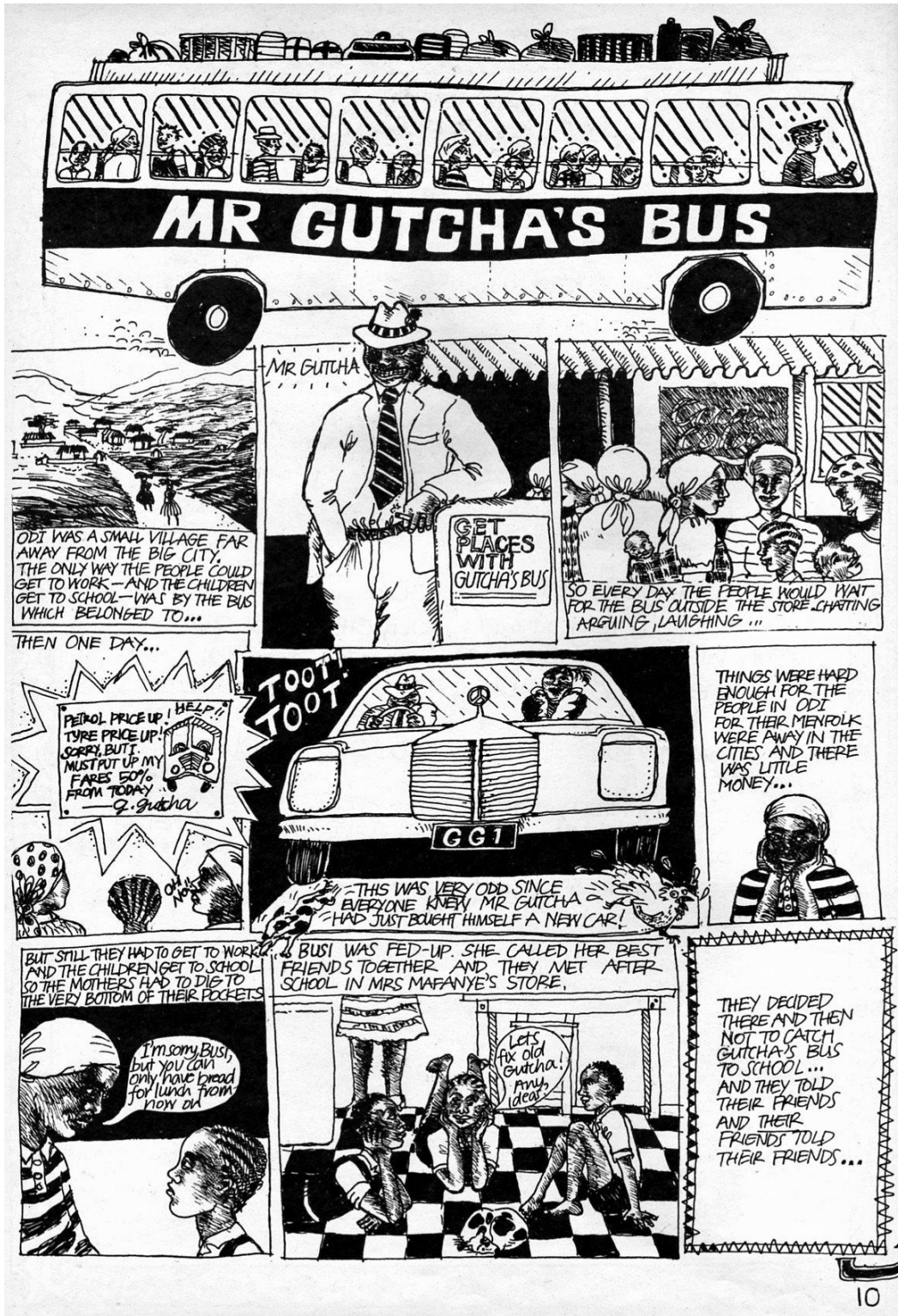


Figure 5-18 Molo Songlolo, August, 1982, No 17, 10



Figure 5-19 Molo Songololo, Aug 1982, No 17, pg 11

The story of Mr. Gutsha is entertaining and informative, and foregrounds the fact that while children are often the first to suffer, they are also sometimes the first to act, as the students of Soweto proved. This agentic representation of children addressing political and economic matters on their own terms would have both reflected and encouraged children's participation in the events affecting their families and communities. In this way children were often important conveyors of information, particularly for non-literate adults and their families and communities. Throughout the 1980s, consumer boycotts were declared on a number of goods. The Congress of South African Students COSAS was pivotal in bringing together previously divided constituencies, namely workers and youth. In 1982, COSAS adopted the theme "student-worker action."

In 1983 a 'tri-cameral parliament' was proposed by the apartheid government in an attempt to divide the black majority and mollify the masses. It would establish two new parliaments for Coloured and Indian people, while Africans' concerns would be handled by their respective homeland authorities. A whites-only referendum approved the plan, which only served to unite the opposition and strengthen their commitment to the struggle.²⁸² In August of that year, thousands of delegates of all races came together at a mass rally in Mitchell's Plain. Five hundred seventy-five organizations, including trade unions, sporting bodies, community groups, and women's and youth organizations were represented and declared their commitment to a newly formed "United Democratic Front" (UDF) that would organize and agitate until it achieved a free South Africa based on the will of the people.²⁸³ As an umbrella organization often lacking clear leadership,

²⁸² Beinart 2001: 229.

²⁸³ Thompson, 228-229.

the UDF's very patchiness was in many ways its strength, for it allowed for a greater flexibility and inspired collective action on a more micro level. In many cases, this attracted new activists with more local agendas than the established political organizations could always address.

Another highly political cartoon, "The Chips Factory," may be found in a May 1985 issue. By this time, school boycotts had successfully halted the Bantu Education System by closing down the schools and preventing students from attending. The Mr. Chips cartoon was circulated at a time when unions and community organizations were joining forces, and children were becoming increasingly involved, prominent, and powerful in resistance activities. Children would have been important participants in such boycotts since they were often tasked with doing family shopping, mainly in the form of "errand running."²⁸⁴

Molo Songololo faced challenges in bringing within the same frame at times competing models of political campaigning in which children had already been directly involved: the Soweto Uprising seven years before, school and consumer boycotts which followed, the rise of the trade union movement, and models of opposition struggle that may have been experienced by children through events in their townships and neighborhoods or experiences of adult members of their households. The participation of the young in a range of organized resistance activity (in addition to less politically motivated forms of disruption, surveillance, and control) were at times in tension with the activities (political and otherwise) of adults.

²⁸⁴The question of how children, as primary and secondary consumers figured into boycotts is worthy of much greater attention than I have been able to devote to it here. Many young adults that I spoke with remembered the two "Black Christmases" that were called in which people were urged not to observe the holiday but to use it as a platform for mourning the deaths of struggle martyrs.

Again, there was the challenge of repositioning the entire problematic of schools and education, signaled by the bus boycott and the readiness of children to stay away from school as pieces of political action, in the context of broader and differentiated struggles involving workers and unions (as signaled in “Chips Factory”). In these ways, *Molo Songololo* found a logical and potent position within the UDF movement and campaign from 1983, not only calling children to the broader struggle but also increasing the range and velocity of circulation of texts reflecting the extraordinary diversity of acts, and actors, in the struggle, while finding active ways of mobilizing under the surveillance of the state.

The Chips Factory

A long time ago Molo lived in a small village high up the mountains. In the village was a chips factory. It belonged to Bad Bear. Bad Bear was called so because he treated people very badly.



Most of the village people worked for Bad Bear. Molo's Mother also worked for Bad Bear in the factory.



Molo got very excited when his mother told Molo that he must also go and work at Bad Bear's Chip factory.



Molo was very excited. This means Molo don't have to go to school. Early the next morning Molo went to work.



At first, Molo find the work very interesting. Packing chips into little packets.



But after a few days things started to change.



Bad Bear made them work hard and paigt them little money.



Figure 5-20 May 1985 Number 38, 12

Crucially, *Molo* was established from the start as a trilingual children's publication. As evident in the extensive set of laws and mechanisms used by the state to control and limit which languages were spoken by whom (including the establishment of so-called "tribal" Bantustans, or "homelands," the regulation of townships into ethnically delineated "zones," and the imposition of Afrikaans to the exclusion of English in black schools), the apartheid state applied the technique of "divide and rule" at every opportunity. For a white or "Coloured" child to learn isiXhosa²⁸⁵ was to subvert apartheid's supposed tautological links between language, culture, ethnicity, and "homeland," and cross the color line in ways that the state sought to obliterate through policy and practice. Furthermore, the equal emphasis given to Afrikaans and isiXhosa in *Molo* underscored the magazine's position that all children were equal, regardless of race or mother tongue. English was used more than isiXhosa and Afrikaans, but the trilingualism of the magazine extended to educational pages teaching basic vocabulary and activities designed to improve children's fluency in all three of the languages.

²⁸⁵ According to Director Patrick Solomon, the isiXhosa lessons were particularly popular in progressive white schools.

Learn to speak to all your friends
 Leer om met al jou vriende te praat.
 Funda ukutheta nezihlobo zakho

Hello! My name is _____
 What is your name?
 I live in _____ where
 do you live?

Hello! My naam is _____
 Wat is jou naam? Ek woon
 in _____ waar
 woon jy?

Molo! Igama lam ngu
 _____ Ngubani
 igama lakho?
 Ndihlala e _____
 Uhlala phi?

Translate the conversation between Sam and his friend into English.

<p>Molo Sam!</p> 	<p>Unjani Sam?</p> 	<p>Ndiphilile, unjani wena?</p> 
<p>Goeie dag Sam!</p> <p>-----</p>	<p>Hoe gaan dit met jou?</p> <p>-----</p>	<p>Dit gaan goed en met jou?</p> <p>-----</p>

Figure 5-21 Issue 65, pg 11

Another way in which children's intercommunication was facilitated was through the matching of penfriends. In a country in which it was nearly impossible for black people to secure the necessary permits and passports to travel abroad--not to mention the prohibitive amount of money required-- *Molo* provided opportunities for children to write to both local and international penfriends, enabling them to communicate across color, class, and culture lines.

Dear Songololo.

I am a 14 year old boy who likes soccer. I would like to have a pen friend of 14 to 15 years who is also interested in soccer.

Lyewellen Ngcelwane
NY 75 No 7
Cape Town
Guguletu

In a few earnestly crafted, rough sentences in this 1980 edition,²⁸⁶ Lyewellen effectively undoes decades of apartheid legislation. He is not thinking in the ways that the apartheid state has structured him to think. In soliciting a connection based on shared interest and mutual respect-- soccer fan to soccer fan-- he transcends the racialized divisions upon which his oppressive society is based. Mark goes even further, specifically seeking out the opportunity to improve upon his isiXhosa by connecting with a future friend beyond the parameters of his own racial identification.

Dear Molo Songololo.

My name is Mark. I am 13 years old. I like poetry and limericks. I would like to have a pen friend of my age that speaks Xhosa. I speak English and Afrikaans. Here is one of my limericks.

My name is Mark
I like to play in the park

²⁸⁶ November 1980 Number 6.

On the swings
Doing different things
And the dogs bark.

Your dearpen friend
Mark Brown
19 Wagner Rd.
Steenberg
7945²⁸⁷

Cross-cultural communication was not only limited to the written realm. Molo, sometimes in partnership with another organization called Grassroots, also organized visits to communities which brought children not only into contact with one another, but into new community, educational, and domestic spaces. These outings provided children with a chance to connect with other children and see how each other lived. Molo staffers, sometimes partnering with other local organizations such as Grassroots, organized visits and workshops that brought children of different “races” (and therefore different areas) together. In almost all of the magazines, a specific township or community was featured in a two-page spread sometimes entitled “Voices from the Children of the Cape,” often with photographs, drawings, letters, and quotes from both the child hosts and visitors. A map was typically included to show readers where on the Cape Peninsula the featured area was located. The political subversiveness of this kind of activity cannot be overstated. Transgressing the multiple layers of apartheid’s apparatus of segregation, participants not only crossed color, culture, language, and class lines, but they disseminated the humanizing lessons they learned to all of those who came into contact with the magazine. Writers were often self reflexive about their assumptions and ignorance before experiencing new places and people firsthand, making visible the outcomes of so-called “separate development” while working to undo them.

²⁸⁷ November 1980 Number 6

Grassroots recently visited a few tiny rural towns in the Western Cape. They were very upset about the conditions they saw children living in. This is what they told Molo . . .

"We found this small huddle of children in front of their tiny shack. The children were using sacks to protect themselves from the icy wind.

One of the little girls told Grassroots "I am hungry. My mother went to work maybe she will come home with some food" The children also said that they did not have much energy to play and run around as they do not eat properly.

Their mothers work in town for only R20 a week and only return home at night. Their fathers travel far distances to look for work and only visit some weekends

The children of Victoria West do not go to school or have anyone to look after them during the day."



Children Suffer in Victoria West

Molo feels very sad that children have to suffer like this. There is a lot of food and money in our country, yet thousands of children go hungry and do not have decent homes to live in.

Do you think it is fair that children have to suffer like this ?

Write and tell Molo what you think of the situation."



Figure 5-22 Sept-Oct 1983, Number 25, 3

These visits helped to instill a sense of civic responsibility that extended beyond the immediate confines of readers' schools and neighborhoods. Children were informed about the forced removals at Crossroads, for instance, and asked to write in with their opinions about what should be done about it. In another issue²⁸⁸ they were asked to vote on their favorite design for a Molo Songololo badge (button) that they could wear.

Most editions asked for children's response to a particular issue, such as the forced removals in Crossroads,²⁸⁹ drugs, homeless street children, or the detention of children and other political prisoners without trial. Children's answers were printed in the subsequent edition of *Molo*. The heightened oppression and use of force by the state—especially after the national state of emergency was first declared, is clearly reflected in the content of the magazine. There are many more references to violence during this period by the children and the magazine producers, through the early 1990s. For the few years that *Molo* was published after the transition, content focused on social issues that included the violence of bullying and abuse, but not that of state agents. This reconfirms that the apartheid state was one of the greatest threats that black South African children faced in the tumultuous decade of the 1980s.

With desperately needed outside funding and relative immunity from state surveillance and harassment, *Molo* was at the forefront of the nascent children's rights movement in South Africa long before such ideas were publicly prioritized and promoted by the liberation movement. With its emphasis on younger children (i.e. primary school learners) versus youth, *Molo Songololo* was at the vanguard of addressing children's

²⁸⁸ 1983 number 25, page 3.

²⁸⁹ Between 25 May and 12 June 1986 around 60,000 people were forcibly removed from their homes in squatter camps at Crossroads and surrounding areas in Cape Town. As seen in Lee-Ann's letter, however, residents had endured police abuse and harassment for years before their homes were razed and they were forced to leave.

rights and responsibilities, providing/ fostering opportunities for their self expression, child-to-child dialogue, and subversively challenging the state's apartheid strategies of divide and rule.

Chapter 6

“Talking about things that hurt us”: Constructions of Childhood in the TRC

Molo Songololo was not only an important source of children’s written expressions on the trials of childhood in an age of violent struggle against apartheid, it also initiated a period in which children were encouraged to express their thoughts, concerns, and opinions for others. In May, 1997, an 11 year old girl wrote a letter to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to express concern that “children should be able to talk about things that hurt us... What I am trying to bring out is that it is necessary for children to speak, because children have opinions and feelings too.” Rudie Lee Reagan’s letter to the TRC was especially poignant in that it located important questions regarding how this official process of revisiting the horrors of apartheid would engage the experience, knowledge, and memory of children.

To the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

My name is Rudie Lee Reagan, I am an 11 year old primary school pupil. I have heard about the Special Children’s Hearing that will be held in Cape Town. I have also heard that children under the age of 18 cannot speak. I think this is very unfair and also stupid. Children over the age of 18 are not even children. I know that if a child was ten eight years ago they will be 18 now. The Truth Commission is violating the rights of children under the age of 18 so to speak. I do understand that the Truth Commission is trying to protect some children from having to go

through all that pain and hurt again, but there are some children who would like to testify and see the perpetrators brought to justice. Children whose parents have been killed should be able to tell the Truth Commission how this has affected them. Speaking from a child's point of view, I think it would be very interesting to hear what children think should be done.

Last year was the first time I heard about a young boy. His name was Stompie Mokesi Siphe [sic]. He was 13 [sic] years old. He had an opinion, he fought for it and in doing so lost his life. He was against racism and wanted to be equal. That really made me think. He was so young, but at such a young age he knew what was right and what was wrong and he fought for what was right and people listened to what he had to say. He made a difference in our country and by listening to children with similar experiences could help us to do the same. For instance, dealing with sexism. Apartheid is now gone because of children like Stompie, but I have been trying to get into a soccer team for two years, but I have not been able to, because I am a girl. That makes me mad. Listening to children will help deal with issues like this.

The main point is, children should be able to talk about things that hurt us like sexual abuse and violence. It will also be interesting, because it is about our countries history and we are not learning about this in schools. What I am trying to bring out is that it is necessary for children to speak, because children have opinions and feelings too.

From a very concerned 11 year old,
Rudie Lee Reagan.²⁹⁰

This remarkable submission to the TRC exposes the fissures and shaky ground in which contemporary South African social relations are embedded. Reagan challenged the temporal framing of the Commission, pushing open the period under review to recognize the ways in which apartheid's inequality extends into the present and future, and argued that children must be involved if such matters are to be appropriately acknowledged and addressed. Invoking the consequential actions of Stompie Seipei, another child who "made a difference," Rudie Lee Reagan asserted the centrality of children in South Africa's history and contemporary society. In reclaiming the kind of powerful

²⁹⁰ Truth and Reconciliation Commission Youth Hearings Submissions—Questions and Answers. 22 May 1997. Letter from Rudie Lee Reagan. Athlone, Day 3 of the Special Hearing on Children and Youth. <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/special/children/reagan.htm>.

positioning that Stompie achieved, Reagan looked beyond several key categories upon which the Commission's work was based: before/after apartheid, children/adults, and victims/perpetrators.

Reagan's letter put forward a series of extraordinarily difficult and complex issues pertaining to childhood. In the struggles to settle these questions, the main aim of the TRC (namely to establish a new moral order based upon reconciliation and truth) proved inadequate for accommodating the experiences and convictions of children and the adults who were associated with them or working on their behalf. Rather than creating clarity, coherence, or consensus, the TRC proved the unsettled grounds of childhood on a number of fronts including the definition of childhood, the child's voice, children's rights, the complex figure of Stompie Moeketsi Seipei, and the future of children in post-apartheid South Africa.

South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission

In 1995, the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa. The mandate stipulated that the Commission should provide "as complete a picture as possible of the nature, causes and extent of gross violations of human rights committed during the period from the 1st March 1960²⁹¹ to the 10th May 1994... to establish the truth in relation to past events as well as the motives for and circumstances in which gross violations of human rights have

²⁹¹ On March 1, 1960, in what came to be known as the Sharpeville Massacre, police opened fire on peaceful protesters who had organized to demonstrate their opposition to the Pass Laws. This legislation required Africans to carry passbooks at all times and to secure proper authorization for traveling, working, and living outside of their designated "homelands," or Bantustans.

occurred.”²⁹² The Commission met for the first time on December 16, 1995. The 3,500 page final report of the hearings was submitted on October 19, 1998.

Structurally, the Commission was comprised of three committees: the Human Rights Violations Committee,²⁹³ the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee, and the Amnesty Committee. Participants were divided into two categories: perpetrators and victims. These categories were operationalized largely in mutually exclusive terms, and often failed to accommodate the shades of coercion, force, desperation, and miscommunication that defined many peoples’ lives during the apartheid era. This structuring binary proved to be particularly inadequate when it came to understanding the complex and contradictory nature of children’s lived experience during the apartheid years.

Like all truth commissions, the TRC was borne of political compromise, and the limits it imposed on its self-described process of nation-building were controversial. Critics pointed to the exclusion of events before or after the stipulated time frame, and experiences of violence and suffering that did not qualify in terms of the Commission’s narrowly defined “gross violations of human rights.”²⁹⁴ Still others opposed the possibility of amnesty for torturers and killers.²⁹⁵ Since the highly publicized hearings in

²⁹² No. 34 of 1995: Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, 1995, from the Office of the President, No. 1111, 26 July 1995.

²⁹³ In addition to the hearings and investigations of these committees, the Commission also held a series of special hearings from August 1996 through July 1998 to provide a more thorough and specific investigation of past human rights abuses organized around themes such as Women, the Media, Chemical and Biological Warfare, and the Trojan Horse Massacre.

²⁹⁴ Section 1 of the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, No. 34 of 1995 ("the Act") defined “gross violations of human rights” as: “(a) the killing, abduction, torture or severe ill treatment of any person or (b) any attempt, conspiracy, incitement, instigation, command or procurement to commit an act referred to in paragraph (a) [Any violation of human rights] which emanated from conflicts of the past and which was committed during the period 1 March 1960 to the cut-off date (10 May 1994) within or outside the Republic and the commission [of the violation] was carried out, advised, planned, directed, commanded or ordered by any person acting with a political motive.”

²⁹⁵ The most prominent of whom were members of Steve Biko’s family.

South Africa, truth commissions have become the preferred mechanism for confronting systematic human rights abuses, and the TRC has emerged in many ways as a viable international model. But the TRC, like much of the recent work on reconciliation, assumed that truth facilitates recovery and often failed to account for the renewed pain and suffering that truth commissions can cause for those who participate in them.

One of the most damaging realizations about the limits of the TRC surfaced in regard to dissatisfaction about much of the “truth-telling” in amnesty cases. Despite institutionalized attempts to ensure full disclosure,²⁹⁶ many of those who applied for amnesty in South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation are believed to have lied or refrained from telling “the whole truth” in their testimonies. Initially portrayed as something of a panacea for apartheid’s ills, celebrationist responses have now made way for a wave of more critical analyses as the struggle over how to understand the past and how to address its manifestations in the present continues. Dissatisfaction with the perceived impotence of the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee has been particularly pronounced within the poor majority population as the legacies of apartheid endure.

Although committed to providing “victims” with the opportunity to “relate their own accounts of the violations of which they are the victims,”²⁹⁷ the TRC was engaged in particular kinds of memory-making as part of its production of truth, namely the creation of new and shared notions of responsible selves. Asmal, Asmal, and Roberts have argued that “shared memory, in the intended sense, is a process of historical accountability.”²⁹⁸

²⁹⁶ “Full disclosure” was one of three minimum requirements for receiving amnesty from prosecution. Crimes also had to be politically motivated and proportionate to the intended aim. The TRC conducted investigations to augment the procedural findings.

²⁹⁷ No. 34 of 1995: Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, 1995, from the Office of the President, No. 1111, 26 July 1995, “Objectives of Commission.”

²⁹⁸ Asmal, Asmal, and Roberts, 10.

As an institution the TRC defined an official structure for managing the history of trauma, complicity, and reconciliation, and considerably shaped individuals' and groups' attempts to come to terms with their pasts in both anticipated and unexpected ways. Children and youth themselves, and issues around children and youth proved to be some of the most challenging/unruly/difficult to contain. As participants and observers, they brought their own frameworks of understanding into the process, and within a complex and shifting web of power relations, struggled to bring these understandings to bear on the process.

One of key findings was that young people were the main targets of violence, but also important agents. Moreover, the Commission found that “the majority of South Africa’s children [were exposed] to oppression, exploitation, deprivation and humiliation.”²⁹⁹ While several people who were or would have been considered “youth” testified about human rights violations they experienced, and some even applied for amnesty, the Commission identified that the experiences of young people during the period in question had not been adequately addressed, and therefore established a Special Hearing on Children and Youth. Another related area of concern that was identified for a special hearing was Winnie Mandela and the MUFC. Both special hearings were designed in an attempt to get at the “whole truth,” but this was never achieved because an even more unsettled question of the extraordinarily destabilizing central question of childhood proved unresolvable.

The omnipresence of children made accounting for violence extremely difficult. It was hard to face the unthinkable horrifying experiences of so many children during this period. But what made it most impossible to establish a consensus on singular definitions

²⁹⁹ Vol. 4, Truth and Reconciliation Commission South Africa Report, 251.

of both violence and childhood was the insistent, persistent participation of children themselves. It is paradoxical that young people's refusal to stay in the margins, to be silent, or to allow themselves simply to be spoken for, rendered impossible any settling of what childhood is. Contrary to the aims of the TRC to build consensus and unity, it may be that the realization of freedom, recognition, and rights can only be attained by refusing stabilization and definition.

The Special Hearing on Children and Youth

South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 1997 Special Hearing on Children and Youth was astonishingly brief, given the scale of abuses that they suffered. Hearings in Durban on May 14, Cape Town on May 22, Johannesburg on June 12, and Pietersburg on June 18 were rushed and markedly under-attended. Not everyone who had been scheduled to speak was able because of time constraints. The Special Hearing was linked to the larger project of nation-building through the common trope of children as the future: focusing on apartheid's impact on children and youth was self-consciously done to establish "a human rights framework for children and young people in order to ensure that they be given the opportunity to participate fully in South Africa's new democratic institutions"³⁰⁰

There was a concern that potential child participants under the age of 18 might be subjected to further trauma and intimidation through direct participation in the formal TRC hearing process. The Commission organized meetings and workshops in order to consult with international and South African NGOs on this issue, and ultimately decided

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 248-249.

to limit testimonies to those 18 years or older. Younger children were included in data collection and were represented by professionals working on their behalf. Children also participated in the Special Hearing in a range of creative ways which included presenting plays and performing in choirs at the hearings, and telling stories and creating drawings in closed sessions led by trained adult facilitators to reflect their experiences. As stated in the final report:

Over the years, children and young people were victims of and witnesses to of many of the most appalling gross human rights violations in South Africa's history. The effects of exposure to ongoing political violence may have had serious effects on the development of many of these children. It was, therefore, considered imperative that the trauma inflicted on children and young people be heard and shared within the framework of the healing ethos of the Commission.³⁰¹

While the Special Hearing was intended to provide an important first step toward “establishing a human rights framework for children and young people,”³⁰² the low turnout at this hearing indicated to expert witness Dr. Magwaza the message that “we still don't take the children seriously.”³⁰³

The Mandela United Football Club

On June 12, 1986, when the apartheid government declared a national state of emergency it unleashed “a reign of state terror against anti-apartheid activists in the vain hope that this would break the mass struggle.” In less than a year, more than 30,000 people had been detained under emergency regulations.³⁰⁴ As violence escalated across

³⁰¹ Ibid., 248.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ www.doj.gov.za/trc/special/children/youthdbn.htm.

³⁰⁴ Rob Davies, Dan O'Meara, and Siphon Dlamini. *The Struggle for South Africa: A Reference Guide to Movements Organizations and Institutions* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1988), 3-4.

the country and in township areas in particular, suspicions and accusations of “selling out” wreaked havoc on communities and kin networks. It was in this context that the Mandela United Football Club (MUFC) was established in April 1987 by a group of young Sowetan men and Winnie Mandela. She provided money, tracksuits, occasional accommodation in her home, and leadership.

Led by 38-year old “coach” Jerry Richardson, members served as bodyguards and community vigilantes who terrorized some members of the community and pressured other young people to join them. Accompanied by Mandela, members of the pro-ANC group regularly attended funerals and political rallies together, wearing matching tracksuits. The MUFC’s “disciplinary committee” and other club members regularly targeted supposed sellouts, who included not only those accused of being police informers, but also those who did not support the ANC. Meting out brutal acts of violence as justice, football club members allegedly acted under Winnie Mandela’s command.

In April 1987, while still incarcerated, Nelson Mandela ordered the MUFC to disband as a result of the reports he had heard from community leaders about the violent activity of its members. Despite his attempts to intervene, MUFC activity escalated in the next two years, and led to many human rights violations including the abduction and torture of Peter Makanda and his brother;³⁰⁵ the murder of Vincent Sefako;³⁰⁶ a police raid on Jerry Richardson’s house which culminated in the killing of three activists;³⁰⁷ the abduction and disappearance of Lolo Sono and Siboniso Tshabalala;³⁰⁸ the murder of

³⁰⁵ May 1987.

³⁰⁶ November 15, 1987.

³⁰⁷ November 9, 1988.

³⁰⁸ November 13, 1988.

Kuki Mosocu;³⁰⁹ the abduction and assault of Stompie Moeketsi Seipei, Kenneth Kgase, Thabiso Mono, and Gabriel Mekgwe;³¹⁰ the murder of Stompie Seipei,³¹¹ and the murder of Dr. Abubaker Asvat.³¹² Along with this string of murders and assault, community leader Reverend Paul Verryn was falsely accused of having sexually molested four youths;³¹³ angry students from Daliwonga high school attacked and burned Mandela's home in retaliation for MUFC abuses;³¹⁴ a "Crisis Committee" of community leaders in the anti-apartheid struggle was established to address the tensions caused by the MUFC;³¹⁵ and the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM)³¹⁶ issued a formal statement distancing itself from Mrs. Mandela.³¹⁷ It was a tense and tenuous time. Unofficial negotiations had begun around Nelson Mandela's release from prison,³¹⁸ press restrictions were relaxing, and international attention was turned to the events occurring in South Africa. For the resistance movement, it was not a good time for bad press.

As a result of these activities, in May 1990 Justice O'Donovan (whose impartiality has been called into question) of the Rand Supreme Court charged Madikizela-Mandela with four counts of kidnapping and four charges of assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm. He cleared her of involvement in the murder of Stompie Seipei, accepting her claim that she was not in Soweto but in Brandfort at the

³⁰⁹ December 18, 1988.

³¹⁰ December 30, 1988.

³¹¹ December 31, 1988.

³¹² January 27, 1989.

³¹³ Winnie gave an NBS interview on February 1st, 1989 alleging that Reverend Verryn sodomized black youth who had taken shelter in his manse.

³¹⁴ July 19, 1988.

³¹⁵ By early August, 1988.

³¹⁶ Formed in 1988 after the United Democratic Front and other organizations were banned, the MDM included ANC and UDF supporters and was linked to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

³¹⁷ February 18, 1989.

³¹⁸ At F.W. deKlerk's behest, Nelson Mandela agreed to be released on February 11, 1990 after 27 years of incarceration. He insisted that deKlerk's government negotiate with the ANC structures rather than with him as an individual.

time. In her May 1991 appeal, “Judge Stegmann ruled that Winnie was ‘a calm, composed, deliberate, and unblushing liar’ and found her guilty on four counts of kidnapping and of being an accessory to the assaults. She was sentenced to five years in prison on kidnapping and one year for her role as accessory.”³¹⁹ Two years later her six-year sentence was reduced to a two-year suspended sentence with a fine of R15,000. In September 1997 she appeared for an in-camera hearing for the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s investigation into human rights violations surrounding the MUFC. Madikizela-Mandela requested a public hearing to clear her name, and in late 1997 and early 1998, a public special hearing of the TRC was held, commonly known as “the Winnie Hearing.”

The Special Hearing on Winnie Mandela and the Mandela United Football Club

According to several truth commissioners and commentators,³²⁰ the “Winnie Hearing” received more media coverage publicity than any other. It has also been written about by in several academic books and Commissioners’ memoirs.³²¹ This is likely because in few other TRC hearings is the tension between a complete picture and “the truth” as visible and irreconcilable as the TRC’s investigation of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and her Soweto-based Mandela United Football Club. Faced with the impossibility of establishing a shared memory of the events surrounding the Mandela

³¹⁹ Martin Meredith. *Coming to Terms: South Africa’s Search for Truth* (New York: Public Affairs, 1999), 255.

³²⁰ Ibid., and Alex Boraine, “A South African Tragedy: Winnie Madikizela-Mandela,” *A Country Unmasked: Inside South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, (Cape Town; New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died that Night*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003); Antjie Krog, *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa* (New York: Times Books, 1999); Wendy Orr, *From Biko to Basson*, (Saxonwold, South Africa: Contra Press, 2000), 303-323.

³²¹ add from above.

United Football Club and its matriarch Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, the TRC sought not so much to establish a shared memory of a singular past, but rather a new moral order premised upon a shared perception of violence. And yet, as the Commission's proceedings showed, the unsettled and often painful and contentious nature of experiences and memories of violence resist such consensus. Further complicating contemporary attempts to account for apartheid violence is the unsettling omnipresence of young people.

Through amnesty applications and Human Rights Violations hearings, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela and her Soweto-based Mandela United Football Club members were implicated in a range of violent activity. Beginning on November 24, 1997, the TRC held a special nine-day hearing entitled "A Human Rights Violation Hearing into the Activities of the Mandela United Football Club."³²² As described by TRC advocate [lawyer] Hanif Vally, TRC findings were based on three factors: an in-camera Inquiry, the public testimony of Mrs Madikizela-Mandela, and independent corroboration and investigations.

In their attempts to excavate the many perspectives and experiences of those involved in or affected by the violence that surrounded Madikizela-Mandela and the MUFC, the Commission spent nine days listening to and questioning dozens of witnesses. Myriad documents were referenced to collaborate, dispute, or further probe these testimonies. This hearing was not so much an accounting for the violence of the

³²² Commissioners: Faizel Randera, member of the Human Rights Violations; Hlengiwe Mkhize, Commissioner and the Chairperson of the Reparations and Rehabilitation Committee; Dumisa Ntsebeza, Commissioner and Head of the TRC Investigative Unit; Alex Boraine, Deputy Chairperson of the Commission; Yasmin Sooka, Commissioner and Deputy Chairperson of the Human Rights Violations Committee; Khoza Mgojo, Commissioner and member of the Reparations and Rehabilitation Committee

past or uncovering the truth as its commissioners claimed or even intended it to be, but rather a struggle to come to a shared understanding of the relationship between violence and responsibility. Refusing resolution, the question of childhood undid these attempts time and time again. In the TRC, what made particular acts, attitudes, and circumstances more acceptable or understandable when they involve the harming of others? As conflicting situational logics clashed within a larger discourse on the past and its meaning for the present, contested conceptualizations of violence were constantly unhinged by the presence of young people as both victims and agents, and complex combinations thereof, in the events under consideration.

Individual attempts to order events from the past held a variety of valences with the Commission's overarching goal of producing a new and democratic society by promoting "national unity and reconciliation in a spirit of understanding which transcends the conflicts and divisions of the past".³²³ The new moral order as described in the Constitution states that "the pursuit of national unity, the well-being of all South African citizens, and peace require reconciliation between the people of South Africa and the reconstruction of society."³²⁴ This was impossible for a number of reasons, including the absence of significant socioeconomic change for the vast majority of South Africans, but also because children would not go back to their place. An exploration of the ways in which participants utilized or managed the complicated setting of the most highly publicized of the TRC hearings reveals a messier picture of the past than the Commission's mandate could accommodate. Tensions between individual

³²³ No. 34 of 1995: Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, 1995, from the Office of the President, No. 1111, 26 July 1995, "Objectives of Commission."

³²⁴ No. 34 of 1995: Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, 1995, from the Office of the President, No. 1111, 26 July 1995. Chairperson Archbishop Desmond Tutu also quoted similar passages from South Africa's Constitution in his opening remarks.

understandings and the claim of a broader TRC endorsement of truth and reconciliation surface in the negotiations, contestations, and attempts to construct one's own voice within an uneven playing field of power.

Within the special hearing on the MUFC, debates were waged about the definition of violence and how to explain and evaluate violence when it involved young people. Thus, the struggle to create a new and shared understanding of responsible selves through the process of this hearing remained unrealized because the question of childhood refused to be resolved. Because the definition of childhood could not be resolved, the definition of violence could not be resolved. In addition to the participants themselves, various individuals including members of the public, the media, and past and current governments tried to remake the process for their own purposes, often via strategic manipulations of the concept and meaning of childhood. Debates in the MUFC special hearing on children's roles and the ramifications of these roles made visible not only the dangerous politics of violence in the late 1980s, but also the volatile contemporary politics of talking about this violence.

During the Special Hearing on the Mandela United Football Club, understandings of violence were hotly contested. Participants in the hearing could not agree upon the terms on which to define "participation" in violent activities. The presence of children and youth in and around these activities redrew the terms and raised the stakes of what counted as "participation in violence" and who counted as a child, youth, or adult. Within the debates in this hearing, the designation of being deemed a "youth" came with a powerful ambiguity that allowed advocates, Commissioners, and various witnesses to

manipulate their use of language and the implications that accompanied being cast outside or inside of particular constructions of childhood and adulthood.

Specifically, adults who were present in situations in which children were being subjected to violence were seen as having a much broader responsibility and culpability for the violence itself, the presumption being that it is the role of adults to protect children. Children who were in situations in which they witnessed violence were typically not held accountable or expected to intervene in violence. For adults, witnessing violence implicates. For children, witnessing violence victimizes. In an ideal world, this set of double standards has tremendous ethical force and appears to be grounded in basic logic. But such frameworks of understanding quickly crumble in the context of apartheid South Africa, because children were experiencing, witnessing, and taking actions that are ideally reserved for adults. Adults' power to shield and protect both children and themselves from harm were doubly undermined—in the first instance, by the violence of apartheid, and in the second, by the presence and participation of children in violence.

Likewise, in evaluations of violence, the presence of children as targets amplifies violence. The presence of violence in situations involving children amplifies the child-ness—read as vulnerability—of the child(ren) or youth involved. Society's social fabric further unravels with children's insertion of themselves into these evaluating frames, complicating the unresolvability of both childhood and violence even further. Some children argue that their very exposure to, and enactments of violence amplify their adulthood, while their advocates often stress their victimization (regardless of whether they are on the receiving or giving end). Certainly, the TRC fit into this program, in

particular with its identification of young people as victims. Still others would take pride in their command and use of force as legitimate targets of the state engaged in resistance activities aimed at toppling its power. Again, the boundaries between childhood and adulthood are adroitly crossed and muddled for those deploying the plasticity of youth. Nowhere can the convoluted contours of conceptualizations of childhood and its relationship to violence, and violence and its relationship to childhood be observed than in the Special Hearing on Winnie Madikizela and the Mandela United Football Club.

The presumed moral imperative that children should not encounter violence was fundamentally, inescapably at odds with the circumstances of apartheid. Apartheid drew children into acts of violence in such a devastatingly vast range of ways, and they responded in a wide range of ways as well. The experiences of children and youth completely destabilize the Commission's attempts to settle any of the big questions upon which it sought to build the new nation. The impossibility of childhood in apartheid South Africa could not be resolved through this formal process, or arguably through any memory-work premised on singular, stable positionings of subjects in rigid and mutually exclusive categories. In refusing to allow *these* truths to be silenced, children and youth struggled to stay visible within the production of history in which the state was engaged by using the TRC to show the complexity of their suffering, their heroism, their responsibility, and their agency in ways that force acknowledgement of the uncomfortable and unthinkable realities they experienced. To keep their experiences from disappearing, or rather being disappeared, as in the case of Mbuyisa Makhubu, an open space must be held open that can accommodate the duality of children's roles as targets and agents of violence, and the many shifting gradations and overlap in between.

Over the course of the nine-day special hearing, several witnesses gave testimony about Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's participation in physical assaults. Their experiences included directly experiencing, witnessing, hearing about, and observing the results of torture and severe ill treatment at the hands of Madikizela-Mandela and/or members of the MUFC. For example, Phumile Dlamini testified that when Mrs. Mandela heard about her relationship with her lover, a man called "Shakes," "Winnie herself started assaulting me with claps and fists all around my body, and I was three months pregnant at the time by Shakes."³²⁵ Her driver, John Morgan described how she initiated the assault on Stompie Seipei, Kenny Kgase, Thabiso Mono, and Gabriel Mekgwe: "The first person who started assaulting was Winnie Mandela and assaulting Stompie Seipei, and the others followed as well, assaulting the rest. They would leave them and throw them right in the air – and they called that system a jet something, and they will let go of them in the air and they will drop down on the floor. I was present, I eye witnessed all this... they were assaulted continuously."³²⁶ After the attack, Morgan reported that "Stompie's face was like a pumpkin, and his hands were so swollen that he could not lift a cup of coffee."³²⁷ Xoliswa Falati substantiated this account as well:

She actually started to hit Kenny, she said Kenny must stand up. And then [s]he asked questions why are you submitting to a white man?³²⁸ Then she started to hit Kenny and saying that you are not fit to live... then she started hitting them. Hitting Kenny with the right fist. That is why Kenny had this blue eye... She hit the others, she hit Kenny and then when Kenny tried to block the fist, then the other comrades at Mandela's place, that is the Football Club, held Kenny on both hands so that he couldn't block from the fists of Mrs. Mandela.³²⁹

³²⁵ pg. 27/102, Day 1

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ The "white man" is Reverend Paul Verryn, accused by Falati at the time of sexually abusing Kenny and other young men who took shelter in the Methodist manse where he lived.

³²⁹ pg. 48/86, Day 2

Drawing upon the prominence of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela in violent activities, these witnesses offer a picture of a participation that is unambiguous and uncompromising. Further proof of the violent activity is read on the battered bodies of the victims. For example, Bishop Storey was told about these particular assaults by the victims themselves, and observed their condition:

In the car the two of them volunteered the following information: they never wanted to go back to the Mandela house, that they were badly beaten and the phrase that sticks with me is the phrase: ‘Our eyes could not see for a week’... They were also assaulted by Mrs. Mandela herself and... Jerry, who they said is the worst of them all.³³⁰

Despite such unequivocal testimony, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela denied all accusations of direct involvement in violent acts. Reacting with indignation and aggression, she typically used inflammatory words like “ridiculous,” “ludicrous,” “preposterous,” “nonsense,” and “hallucination” to describe the claims made against her. She also frequently answered with statements of, “I don’t know,” “I had no idea,” “I have never seen them,” “I don’t know that person,” and “I know nothing about it” when questioned by lawyers. As the testimony continued, her denials become increasingly vehement and personally insulting, such as when she exclaimed, “As far as I am concerned, Katiza [Cebekhulu] is a mental patient.”³³¹

Although Madikizela-Mandela largely managed to deflect the accusations that she participated in acts of violence, the testimony of other witnesses stimulated an examination of a wide range of degrees of complicity. Because multiple people were usually involved in the human rights violations in question, this issue was of great consequence. The main tension was between perceptions of perpetrators as those directly

³³⁰ pg. 36/37, Day 3

³³¹ pg. 11/118, Day 9

involved in acts of violence, and a more comprehensive notion of violent activity as a range of actions--or even the failure to act-- resulting in harm and hurt. Witnesses attempted to both distance themselves from violent activity and conversely, to argue for the implication of Madikizela-Mandela in cases of limited involvement such as commanding others to punish. When it was in their vested interests, witnesses who had helped or enabled an assault or murder to take place often rejected the claim that they *participated* in the attack.

Here too the limits of the Commission and any given commissioner's attempted interventions may be seen. As a mechanism for a particular kind of knowledge production, the TRC was limited. Witnesses brought their own perceptions into the TRC process and were not always receptive to the rational arguments, appeals to humanity, and interrogation of evidence utilized by other participants. They often had direct vested interests in maintaining their perspectives, and could be extremely resilient in doing so.

The engagement between conflicting frameworks of understanding took place within a nexus of complicated power relations. Expertise, past associations, rumors, credentials, and personal relationships were some of the factors that helped to produce participants' authority. Some witnesses, such as Albertina Sisulu and Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, brought a certain level of authority with them into the proceedings as a result of their commitment to and sacrifice for the struggle. Others, such as Paul Verryn (also known for his sacrifice and dedication) and Thami Hlatswayo were able to construct positions of authority for themselves through the presentation of compelling, convincing testimony. The commissioners sought to control the ways in which this authority was constituted with varying degrees of success, emphasizing not just the credibility of

witnesses' testimony (although this was very important) but also their adherence to the new moral order espoused by the Commission itself.

In seeking to explain Madikizela-Mandela's uncooperative response to the Crisis Committee's attempts to intervene in the MUFC, Reverend Chikane offered the following analysis of her behavior:

You know the reaction of Mama on these particular issues was for me like a person who is under siege, who felt everybody else around here were [sic] enemy, including from time to time the Crisis Committee when you dealt with very difficult issues that it looks like you are turning against me as well and so the reaction was to say you know you are talking like you know the system as such rather than you know deal with the issue and in my opinion that was communicated from time to time we were very concerned about it and that the football club was no good news for the Mandela name in general. (8/79, Day 4)

But is the argument that violence was a result of "the times" an adequate explanation to "promote national unity and reconciliation"? Does it foster a "spirit of understanding" which can "transcend the conflicts and divisions of the past"? Does it prevent repetition of such acts in the future? The commissioners themselves seemed to wrestle with these issues. Attempts to calculate the variables of political motivation, proportionality, and historical context were fraught with unresolved tension and disagreement. Commissioner Ntsebeza described his own ambivalence in accepting the violent activities of Mrs. Madikizela Mandela in his closing comment:

Your perception is that you are a victim of a huge plot by the government security forces because on their own evidence, they came here and they admitted having infiltrated informers into your household, that they organised a huge campaign to discredit you and your organisation and possibly your husband as he then was. But in the midst of all this (indistinct) web of deceit, treachery and betrayal you are possibly all by yourself, harassed by the State machinery and not having any benefit of political support from structures that were in existence at that time and you would like us to understand that to be the necessary backdrop against which all these things were happening, that if there is any error it was an error of judgment on your part in not having been able to realise the type of people who were around you, and that the tragedies that followed were consequence thereof.

That is where I want to depart from because for me it is the best case scenario.
(114/118, Day 9)

Was an argument for “the times” a “best case scenario” or a failure to meet the challenge of finding and facing the truth for the purposes of creating a new moral order? Only in regard to the ever-shifting and relational extreme ends of violent activity did a sense of consensus coalesce. Witnesses constructed meaning for themselves and their actions within intricate webs of remembering and forgetting that reflected their vested interests as actors. Within the struggles to reach consensus about what constitutes and explains violence, there was a resurfacing sense of the unjustifiable nature of violence against children.

Sometimes commissioners and their legal representatives struggled to elicit particular responses from witnesses like Xoliswa Falati.

MR VALLY: Archbishop, I was hoping for some expression of regret in her part which led to the events where Stompie and three other youths were severely assaulted. Do you feel any regret for your actions which led to Mr. Seipei’s death?

MISS FALATI: She must feel, she Mrs Mandela must feel.

MR VALLY: I’m asking you the question ...[intervention]

MISS FALATI: I’m telling you where to point that question to.

MR VALLY: I’m asking you the question Miss Falati. (60/86, Day 2)

Once again, Falati rejected the terms set out by the TRC. In a direct challenge to the Commission’s endorsed perspective of the events surrounding the murder of Stompie Seipei, she insisted on her own point of view, situated within the context of a broader history of investigations into these events. Falati insisted on presenting her guilt in relation to Madikizela-Mandela. In her view, if Madikizela-Mandela was not responsible

for Seipei's murder, *she* certainly was not prepared to accept responsibility: "my answer to her is she should apologise, not by paying any amount of money³³² but simply apologise to me and be grateful about the fact that I served sentence on her behalf."
(67/86, Day 2)

This struggle between Falati and Tutu is interesting for many reasons. First, it exposes the different historical frameworks utilized by various participants to understand violent activity of the past. It also demonstrates the ways in which witnesses brought their own presumptions and agendas to bear within the hearing process, despite the TRC's attempts to control, manage, and define these agendas. Despite considerable power differentials, many witnesses were quite savvy in negotiating their relationships with the Commission for their own ends. When Falati refused to apologize, the struggle for a new moral order in this instance remained unresolved.

In marked contrast to Falati's testimony is that of Bishop Paul Verryn. Although he was at one time accused of sexually abusing Stompie Seipei and several others, Verryn was as far from committing human rights abuses as one could imagine. On his own accord he apologized to Seipei's mother for not anticipating and preventing the events that culminated in his murder.

I see that Mrs Seipei is in the audience here today, and the thing that has been most difficult for me is that, having heard the allegations, I did not remove him from the mission house and get him to a place where he could be safe, and I think that if I had acted in another way he could be alive today. And so I want to apologise to Mrs Seipei for my part in that.

As the ultimate fulfillment of the TRC's attempts to construct a new and democratic society based on reconciliation and broad definition of participation in and responsibility

³³² See discussion of the MUFC on page 3.

for acts of violence, Verryn accepted responsibility for events that he was not directly a party to. The gesture was powerful on symbolic and personal levels, and within the economy of emotions of the TRC Verryn emerged as a kind of hero- the embodiment of the TRC's ideals.³³³

In contrast, Madikizela-Mandela in many ways embodied the limitations of the TRC's ability to influence witnesses. In an extremely controversial move at the end of the hearing, Chairperson Tutu explicitly asked her to apologize, imploring,

There are people out there who want to embrace you. I still embrace you because I love you and I love you very deeply.... I beg you, I beg you, I beg you, please. I have not made any particular finding from what has happened here. I speak as someone who has lived in this community. You are a great person and you don't know how your greatness would be enhanced if you were to say sorry, things went wrong, forgive me. I beg you" (118/118, Day 9).

On what many regarded as an unconvincing and superficial level,³³⁴ Madikizela-Mandela conceded, addressing the families of Abu-Baker Asvat and Stompie Seipei specifically.

I will take this opportunity to say to the family of Dr Asvat, how deeply sorry I am. To Stompie's mother, how deeply sorry I am. I have said so to her before a few years back, when the heat was very hot. I am saying it is true, things went horribly wrong. I fully agree with that and for that part of those painful years when things went horribly wrong and we were aware of the fact that there were factors that led to that, for that I am deeply sorry" (118/118, Day 9).

At the end of her hearing, Winnie herself appeared to inhabit a particular construction of childhood. At first, she petulantly refused to accept any responsibility for the tragic events under investigation. But after Chairman Desmond Tutu begged her, Winnie took on the mantle of childhood, referred to him as "the father I have always known," and repeated his words before leaving the table. She thus remained in the space

³³³ Alex Boraine, *A Country Unmasked* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press), x.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, Meredith 1999; Antjie Krog. *Country of My Skull: Guilt, Sorrow, and the Limits of Forgiveness in the New South Africa*. (New York: Times Books, 1998), 339.

of ambiguity, uncertainty, and unsettledness, which is not really, only, or simply marginal, but in fact derives secret power from its elusiveness and plasticity.

Interpretations of this exchange varied, but it seemed that most media and TRC interlocutors found Winnie's apology to be lacking in sincerity. Commissioner Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela mourned the hearing's outcome, and recalled observing Madikizela-Mandela's "triumphant smile... [and] imposing power" as she made a show of embracing Stompie's mother in front of rolling television cameras, but saw in Mrs. Seipei's "humble smile" "a symbol of impotence."³³⁵ Gobodo-Madikizela was right about her namesake's power. While many in the media reported that Winnie's power had been diminished and her name forever tarnished, she temporarily retreated and returned to her base—the disempowered, disillusioned poorest of the poor—many of them from the Soweto generation and younger.

In fact, it is Winnie, "mother of the nation," mother of Zenani and Zindzi, South Africa's first formally trained black social worker, and matriarch of the MUFC who, perhaps more than any other, recognizes children's power. She has proven her ability to harness some of this power to meet certain aims. But because children *are* so powerful, she never has had complete control. Winnie emerges as the one with the most complex understanding of children and constructions of childhood, although she used this understanding in devastating and destructive ways. She, as the one in the trenches in ways that most of the older leaders could only imagine, knew firsthand the power of children. Children and youth were the vanguard of the struggle when most of the older leadership was detained or in exile. As a liberation leader, community organizer, child

³³⁵ Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died that Night: a South African Story of Forgiveness* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003).

advocate, and international spokesperson, she understood the powerful and multiple ways that constructions of childhood could be mobilized. Paradoxically, in her attacks on Paul Verryn, Winnie deployed this understanding with devastating affects, capitalizing on the construction of the child as a vulnerable innocent in need of protection while simultaneously drawing upon the potency of children's power to torture and kill.

As a social worker who established creches, clinics, and feeding programs for the poor and suffering, she also knew firsthand about the vulnerability of children to not only physical acts of violence, but to the structural violence of apartheid. Continuously harassed by security forces, she was known to march into police stations shouting and throwing things, demanding the release of detainees. As a regular attendant and organizer of funerals of slain youth, Mrs. Mandela witnessed the manifold ways in which children and youth were targeted and harmed by the state. But Winnie recognized that children could also be police informers – “sellouts” with whom any form of association could be dangerous or even deadly. She herself had been targeted and attacked by schoolchildren when Daliwonga high school students set her house alight. Winnie also targeted children, subjecting them to brutal acts of violence and torture, and sometimes even death. As a mother, she was unable to protect her own children as she would have liked, and leaned on them for support in the absence of her husband.

Not coincidentally, Winnie remains most popular with the youth, and has been very vocal in her criticisms of the ANC establishment. This tension was controversially manifested on June 16, 2005 at a Youth Day rally. When she arrived quite late into the program, attendees broke into song to welcome her as she walked down the aisle to take her seat on the stage. Before doing so, she approached President Thabo Mbeki to greet

him. Apparently irritated by the interruption she and her supporters had caused, he rebuffed her overture and in blocking her embrace, knocked her cap off onto the floor. In most reports, Mbeki was the one who came across looking badly, and the incident seemed only to increase her popularity and strengthen her position, already powerfully rooted in the unsettled margins.

Contending Definitions of Childhood: “Children over the age of 18 are not even children”

Throughout the MUFC Special Hearing, the definition “childhood” and “children” was repeatedly probed. What is significant about this debate and what does it tell us about understandings of violence in the past and in the hearing proceedings (and the tensions therein)? In 1995, South Africa ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This convention defines a child as less than 18 years of age. According to the TRC Special Report, however, in South Africa “by far the largest category of victims to report to the Commission fell into the thirteen to twenty-four age bracket.” For this reason, the internationally sanctioned periodization of childhood ending at 18 was not useful for the particular needs and circumstances of thinking about violence and youth in South Africa. The demographic determinates of this definition of the often couple “children and youth” was deemed more appropriate in certain contexts, but not in others (for instance, the age cut offs imposed in the Special Hearing on Children and Youth). Such vacillations reveal the plasticity of such unsettled categories, making visible the strategic interests therein.

Mr. Joseph, advocate for Katiza Cebekhulu, repeatedly and unsuccessfully tried to force his colleagues to stop using the term “children” in reference to his client and three

others of the ages 17 or 18, 20, and 29. Aside from being integral to his argument that the men were abducted against their will since they would have been able to defend themselves against the sexual advances of Reverend Verryn, this debate has a deeper significance. Childhood, and being defined as such animated one of the key conceptualizations of violence in this hearing. Perpetrators whose victims were children were cast as all the more guilty, their violence all the more excessive and heinous. Also, defining people as children meant they were not in a position to protect themselves and it was adults' responsibility to protect and care for them. Childhood status was used to highlight victimization.

Thus the debates which animated "the Winnie hearing" were in fact much larger than the legal wranglings of lawyers attempting to defend their clients, and much larger than an investigation into human rights abuses in a particular historical and geographical location. As Mr. Cachalia articulated in his closing remarks, "this doesn't affect Mrs. Mandela. This affects us and it affects our future in the democracy in this country." He went on to suggest that those convicted of gross violations of human rights should not be allowed to hold public office. Although the new government of South Africa did not endorse a policy of lustration, Mr. Cachalia's reflection of how to deal with the violence of the past illustrates that such struggles are not about the past, but the future.

The Child's Voice: "Speaking from a child's point of view..."

It is remarkable how strong the conventions are that overwrite understandings of childhood. But even more remarkable is that a letter from a child can call of them into question, laying bare the fundamental contradiction of the Commission's attempts to acknowledge and celebrate the contribution of young people in the struggle, and the

horror of what those contributions so often looked like. With the increase of violent conflicts premised on intolerance of difference, post-authoritarian societies have relied upon experts of various ilks to develop new and more sophisticated mechanisms for acknowledging and addressing past wrongs. Experts on international human rights, refugees, emerging markets, healthcare, and constitutional reform (among others) have carved out particular gambits of expertise in cooperation and competition with one another.

The recent proliferation of “victim” testimony has been an influential force in policy making, international law, journalism, and the work of NGOs. Survivors of trauma and mass violence are increasingly insisting upon the legitimacy and even ultimate authority of their particular ways of knowing, posing a unique challenge to more traditionally constituted forms of authority that have centered around training, accreditation, and access to resources and positions of influence and power.

Within the context of South Africa’s complex processes of social and political transformation, a range of new voices are increasingly encroaching on the exclusivity and power of “expert” analysis. Rejecting the term “victim” for its pathologizing implications, many of apartheid’s survivors have called into question the vocabulary and ways of knowing utilized by experts. They have also contested the recommendations of government officials, artists, architects, and urban planners concerning new and old monuments and memorials. Within and surrounding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, some have challenged government policy on reparations and reconciliation, the TRC’s process of addressing their problems, and the psychoanalytic models that have been used to treat those traumatized by violence. Indigenous people across the region

have joined in struggle to hold former colonial powers accountable for their acts of violence and land seizure, and to be compensated for the wealth of resources extracted from their land. The Khulumani Support Group has responded with creative and exciting ways to these issues, using drama, community forums, activism, and civil action litigation to address the wrongs of the past that continue so uninterruptedly in the present.

Across the globe, children are increasingly carving out and extending the surface area of their authority, an authority grounded in many of the very attributes which have been used historically to silence them. In its capacity to turn the TRC apparatus on its head, Rudi Lee Reagan's incisive letter shows that "speaking from a child's point of view" can be one of the most powerful positions from which to speak. Invoking her own first-hand knowledge, life experience, and child's perspective, to place herself at the epicenter of authority, Reagan establishes an expertise of experience that cannot be matched by any of the Commissioners or expert witnesses gathered and showcased. Even in absentia—for Reagan was not even present at the hearings, it is even more remarkable that a letter from a child can call prominent people into question.

Stompie Moeketsi Seipei: "He made a difference in our country..."

Within the intersection of the two Special Hearings discussed above, the extraordinary difficulty of children and apartheid emerged in the complex figure of one remarkable boy, Stompie Seipei.

"Is he a child or is he a person?"

"Stompie" Moeketsi Seipei was born in 1975 in the small settlement of Thumahole, outside of the town of Parys in the conservative and Afrikaner-controlled

Orange Free State. His mother, Joyce Mananki Seipei, struggled to raise him and his younger sister because she was very poor. Because of his small stature, he was given the nickname “Stompie,” Afrikaans slang for ‘cigarette butt.’ As his mother recalled in her testimony at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Durban Human Rights Violations Hearings,³³⁶ he was first taken by the police in 1985 at the age of ten for suspected involvement in a bottle store³³⁷ robbery. He achieved notoriety as the country’s youngest political detainee. The following year, 1986, police entered the Seipei home and demanded that Stompie’s mother reveal his whereabouts, asking, “We don’t know[–] is he a child or is he a person? Why do you let him go into politics?”

On July 9th of that year, members of the Special Branch Police intercepted Stompie on his return home from the shop where he had gone to buy bread. They told his mother that he should collect warm clothing and took him away. She reported to the TRC that he was detained in several prisons including those of Sasol, Leeuhof, Heilbron, Koppies, and Potchefstroom. He returned from the later on June 25, 1987 only to leave Thumahole for Johannesburg in an attempt to evade the constant police harassment and persecution. Like many young people who were involved or thought to be involved in the struggle against apartheid, his well-being and survival could only be secured by fleeing his home so that police could no longer find him.³³⁸

But Stompie soon returned from Johannesburg to attend the funeral of a Comrade

³³⁶ in her testimony at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Durban Human Rights Violations Hearings on May 8, 1996.

³³⁷ Bottle stores were state-owned and the only places where bottled beer (as opposed to umqombothi, or traditional beer) could be purchased. As such, they were often targeted by anti-apartheid activists, particularly youth for vandalism and destruction.

³³⁸ Activists were often forced to leave home to protect their family members, who were regularly targeted for harassment, interrogation, detention, and abuse. In the context of an increasingly criminal state that subjected thousands of people to torture, it was better not to know the whereabouts and activities of activist family members and associates.

named Master Nakede. He was arrested again in 1988 and sent to Koppies. On December 1st, 1988, he appeared in court in connection with charges of burning “green beans,” or municipal cars. Stompie’s mother traveled to Johannesburg to find him. Almost six weeks later he failed to appear for his next court date. It was after that that Mrs. Seipei was first told of his death by a lawyer in Parys. She recalled being “puzzled,” since Stompie’s friends claimed that he was still alive. She continued to hear contradictory reports and spent several weeks searching for her son or any information about his welfare and whereabouts.

Initially Mrs. Seipei didn’t “feel anything” that would indicate Stompie might be dead. But after her unsuccessful searching she fell in some water which indicated to her that her son was no longer living. Finally, on January 30th 1989, apartheid opponents Bishop Peter Storey and Minister Paul Verryn came to visit her from the Johannesburg Methodist Church. They told her that Stompie and his friends had been taken from the manse on December 29th, 1988 to Winnie Mandela’s house. They had not been able to find him since or determine if he was alive or dead. But his friends had reported that “his brain was leaking.” The ministers advised Mrs. Seipei to cooperate with the police if they visited advising her, “they are the only people who can help you.”

The police arrived on February 13th 1989 and took Mrs. Seipei to Diepkloof Mortuary in Brixton outside of Johannesburg to identify her son’s body. Although it was badly decomposed, Mrs. Seipei knew it was Stompie because, as she said, “your son is your son.” She recognized his scars and birthmarks, and the similarities between their hands and legs. She also identified his new shoes and hat. On the drive back to Thumahole, the police officers disputed her claim that the body she had identified was

that of her son. The following day they picked her up again, and reported that two doctors had determined that it was not Stompie. This was just the beginning of Mrs. Seipei's painful and often public struggle to ascertain the truth about what happened to her son. In the process, Stompie attained iconic status. As a child activist, an accused informer, and the victim of assault and murder, he has come to symbolize different things to different people in ways which reveal much about the past and the (re)writing of the past in South Africa.

Who was Stompie?

Stompie Moeketsi Seipei was a local political hero. Known for his oratory skills and charisma, he was able to recite the entire Freedom Charter from memory. As a ten-year old, the youngest detainee of the apartheid regime, provided the kind of damning evidence members of the anti-apartheid movement at once condemned for its existence, and capitalized upon for its power to indict the criminal regime. Stompie was the son of Joyce: beloved, irreplaceable, and intimately known. As she would continuously assert, a mother knows her son. They shared a deep and spiritual bond. To Joyce Seipei, every contour of his body was memorized and familiar, recognizable despite decay and disfigurement. Stompie was a victim of the Mandela United Football Club; a casualty of the regime's prized and celebrated "black-on-black" violence;³³⁹ a suspected sell-out, *impimpi*, *askari*; a vulnerable black youth caught in a dangerous world where politics, crime, and violence intersected with deadly consequences.

³³⁹ TRC investigations and testimony revealed that the apartheid state played a key role in fomenting much of this violence, particularly in the early 1990s in the Bantustans and especially KwaZulu Natal, by instigating conflict and arming vigilante groups. Such activities were referred to as the "Third Force" and were cited by government officials as evidence for why black people should not be allowed to vote and were not capable of governing an independent South Africa.

Stompie was yet another abandoned, unidentified black body: pulverized flesh decomposing beside a dump where his broken remains were abandoned, each mark of injury evidence to be read by forensics experts. According to their reports, his body was maggot-infested, with two penetrating wounds, internal bruising, a fractured collar bone, stab wounds to the throat, and collapsed lungs. They confirmed that he had been severely battered and heavily beaten, and found blood in his stomach. But Stompie lives on as an icon of the struggle, a symbol, representing much more than himself and his story.

What are the versions of Stompie and what do they suggest about the broader historical milieu? About how black children appeared on the radar of national attention? About how childhood has been constructed in South Africa, with all of its specific contingencies and generalizations? How history and narrative are used in different ways, to serve differing interests and agendas, and with consequences that impact the living and the constructions of the dead? About the extraordinary indeterminacy of everyday life for Africans and about how apartheid succeeded time and time again in making people turn on one another?

How can we understand the existence of these six Stompies? Why can't they coexist in remembered renderings and reconstructions as they must have in the multifaceted living Stompie? In his testimony, Bishop Storey spoke to the power and the pain conveyed through Stompie and the multiple narratives surrounding his tragic fate:

The truth about Stompie's death has been trimmed to suit political interests. To dispel this suffocating fog of silence and lies is very important for the future of this country. This week for the first time, there is a probing beneath the surface of the skin of South Africa's shame. The primary cancer will always be and has always been apartheid. But secondary infections have touched many of apartheid's opponents and eroded their knowledge of good and evil. And one of the tragedies of life is, it's possible to become that which we hate most—a

ruthless abuse of power and a latitude that allow our deeds to resemble the abuses we fought against.

Beyond its normal horror, Stompie's death wasn't merely a political tragedy, it was also a moral tragedy. It has done things to people... we need not only to be liberated in this country, but we need to become human.

In following the thread of the figure(s) of Stompie Seipei, to consider his double valence as victim and (accused double) agent/activist, and the ultimate incompatibility of the victim/perpetrator binary within the TRC, the fact that the victim/perpetrator categorization does not map neatly on to the child/adult distinction in apartheid South Africa is something more than unsettled—it unthinkable, unbearable, in spite of all evidence to the contrary. In its (incomplete) ordering and structure, the TRC really struggled to accommodate the individuals and experiences that brought violence and childhood so uncomfortably and devastatingly together. In their discussions, there is a flattening of temporal shifts and changes, of dimensionality, of contradiction, of context, and of subjectivity. This is especially profound in the key figure of Stompie, who refuses to be laid to rest, and continues to wield his strength and influence in spite of the multiple layers of his subalternity as a child who was also black, poor, rural, accused, and small. More than just a pawn that was used, Stompie was a person.

Children as Agents and Social Actors: “what children think should be done”

Within the economy of meanings surrounding contested explanations of violence, crimes lacking a political motive were intolerable as opposed to violence committed as part of the struggle. The question of “proportionality” could override the space between political and criminal acts of violence, casting crimes with political motives criminal

because of their excess. Several of the witnesses in this hearing applied for amnesty, and although it could not be granted in the special hearing process, unresolved conflicts over the proportionality of acts of violence to their objective figured prominently in commissioners' lawyers, and witnesses' accounting of past violence. The presence of children amplified the greivousness of adults' violence. These frictions reveal an underlying debate about what constitutes excessive use of force and what constitutes violence itself. For example, Advocate Kuny challenged Mrs. Madikizela-Mandela's description that nothing "serious" had happened to a victim who had been 'clapped': "A clapping, Mrs. Mandela, in my language, is an assault, but I will not take that any further."³⁴⁰

One of the greatest challenges to navigating the painful terrain of young people's involvement in the struggle is the contradiction between embracing a moral framework that refuses to equate the actions of those defending apartheid with those who fought against it, and the desire to disavow the legitimacy of violence in the lives of children. Kader Asmal, ANC negotiator in the South African transition to democracy argues: "There was no moral similarity between the goals, instincts, basic values, or even the tactics of those who fought to end apartheid, when measured against the values and conduct of those who struggled to uphold it."³⁴¹ The Commission also subscribes to this view, and although "obliged by statuette [*sic*] to deal even-handedly with all victims... this does not mean... that moral judgment was suspended or that the Commission made

³⁴⁰ pg. 81/118, Day 9

³⁴¹ Kader Asmal, Louise Asmal, and Ronald Suresh Roberts. *Reconciliation Through Truth: A Reckoning of Apartheid's Criminal Governance* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1997), 6-7.

no distinction between violations committed by those defending apartheid and those committed to its eradication.”³⁴²

On the one hand, as exemplified in the “Winnie Hearing,” TRC commissioners operated from the belief that children should not be subjected to violence.³⁴³ On the other, the Special Hearing on Children and Youth was organized at least in part to recognize and honor the contribution of young people to the struggle against apartheid. The gap between these two aims is peopled with the many young people who took up arms of various kinds, and acted as perpetrators of violence themselves. They were the main targets of state violence, but also powerful political players and agents of violence. But the Commission struggled to keep both of these positions in play simultaneously, often relegating young people to positions of victimhood, or even worse, silence, as in the case of 11-year old Rudie Lee Reagan.

While such a distinction is important as a necessary point of departure for reflecting upon South Africa’s past, it has often been applied with little sophistication. Without a doubt, the fight against apartheid was as morally and politically justified as apartheid was repugnant. However, the Commission insisted that the legitimacy of the cause does not confer an automatic legitimacy to all of its participants or all acts undertaken to promote it. In their fight for freedom, activists were capable of committing abhorrent acts of violence that were unnecessary and excessive.³⁴⁴ There is no objective or agreed upon formula for evaluating the complex web of wide-ranging registers of

³⁴² Truth and Reconciliation Commission. *The Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. “Summary and Guide to Contents” and Selections from “Volume One.”

³⁴³ This principle is codified in South African law in Section 28 of the Constitution: and in the International Declaration of Children’s Rights.

³⁴⁴ As documented in the ANC submissions on the detention camps for suspected government collaborators.

motive, objective, context, and proportionality of violence in the apartheid era.

Explanations of violence in the MUFC hearing highlight tensions between attempts to maintain a complex understanding of the nexus of factors that determined violent action and a more simplistic tendency to stop at identifying a political motive for the act.

But how do children fit into this moral grid? Their capacity for politicization can be neither assumed nor dismissed, and varies considerably according to age, influences, and experience. The perception that children lack the capacity for political consciousness or thought has rendered them invisible in much of contemporary South African historiography.

The public motive given by Winnie for Stompie's removal from the Methodist manse was that he was a vulnerable child in need of protection, having been preyed upon by a sexually deviant adult. The internal understanding of some may have been that he was a sell-out, thus extremely dangerous and needed to be eliminated. But after his body had been brutally battered, Stompie was even more dangerous to the movement; to Winnie Mandela's personal offshoot of it, the controversial MUFC; and to her individually.

When news broke of Stompie's disappearance, there were multiple publics ready to pounce on the story and use it to push forward their agendas. Through the activities of the "Third Force," the apartheid state was involved in covert destabilization on a massive scale. Arming vigilante groups and Homeland authorities, the state was fomenting so-called "black-on-black" violence that threatened to plunge the country into a war of complicated and contrived factionalism. Many of the black leaders in the homelands were more than willing to resort to violence as a means of holding onto their power.

Vigilante groups fought for control of communities and for preference in the mines. The “People’s War” called for by the exiled ANC leadership both fueled and reflected the frustrations of a black majority fed up with the injustice of apartheid and the violence being unleashed in townships and rural areas alike. International pressure was at an all-time high as divestment campaigns and boycotts exacerbated South Africa’s flailing economy, and helped push the more moderate F.W. deKlerk to the negotiating table.

For Nelson Mandela, it was an incredibly lonely period. He was devastated to learn of the Daliwonga high school students’ arson attack on his home, and the destruction of family photos and mementos that had been kept there. He was extremely worried about the reports of unrest and violence that Winnie and her football club were involved in. Plus, he was suffering from tuberculosis (which had not yet been diagnosed,) and was trying to resist cooptation by state negotiators who would have him abandon ANC party structures and protocol to advance his own agenda, diluting his mass following with the help of their propaganda machine.

The timing could not have been worse for the liberation movement. It was a public relations disaster for the leader of the liberation movement’s wife, Winnie, to be identified as a torturer or murderer of children, and the ANC knew it. It was particularly damaging as it fit into the “black-on-black violence” paradigm that the apartheid regime had worked so diligently to disseminate as a lens for understanding the South African political situation. With international attention turned toward South Africa in anticipation of a negotiated settlement, ANC and UDF leadership scrambled to reign in a defiant Winnie, described by Frank Chikane as someone who seemed to feel she was under siege.

One of the factors that helped to speed up Mandela's release was his ill health. As an apartheid government official is rumoured to have said, "the only thing more dangerous than a free Mandela is a dead Mandela." Similarly, Stompie was more dangerous to Winnie dead than he ever could have been alive, even if he *had* been an informer. This miscalculation, or misguided attempt to cover up an interrogation taken too far clearly had devastating consequences for Mrs. Mandela's political career. It is claimed that (among others), the issue of Stompie's torture and murder created an irreparable rift between Winnie and Nelson, whose marriage did not survive for very long after his release. Her association with the events surrounding Stompie's abduction and death did damage her political future, although her iconic status and grassroots campaigning significantly solidified and extended her widespread popularity amongst the poorest of the poor, and was twice elected President of the ANC Women's League in 1993 and 1997 in spite of her criminal convictions.

If Winnie had applied to the TRC for amnesty, she could have done so on the grounds that Stompie was dangerous to the movement and to herself because he was an informer. Then the question would have been if killing him was an act of excessive proportions. Considering the horrific suffering that he experienced being brutally and repeatedly assaulted and tortured in the last few days of his life, the answer seems clearly to be yes, because of *how* he was killed. But not *that* he was killed.

The problem that Winnie exposes is that in the 1980s chaos of the late apartheid period, a 14 year-old boy *could* be life-threateningly dangerous, and according to the systems of surveillance and justice of the day, deserving of death. The TRC's failure to acknowledge this frontally renders it impossible for Winnie to provide a sincere apology.

Because she too does not bring this painful reality to the surface (choosing instead to spin a sensational story of sexual assault as subterfuge), Winnie can only emptily echo Tutu's entreaty.

The Commission repeatedly overwrote the experience of children as victims, despite evidence that problematized such simplistic categorization. Of course this is enervating, because the young people who chose to act out against the state—whether by throwing a rock, singing a freedom song at a protest or funeral, sending a letter to a children's magazine or the chairperson of the country's truth and reconciliation commission, or leaving the country to join the MK in exile—also want and deserve to be proud of their power.

“Apartheid is now gone”: The future of children in post-apartheid South Africa

Many schools, homes, communities, and lives were destroyed in the chaos and turmoil of the late 1980s. But many new opportunities arose, particularly for young people and women. In complicated ways, Winnie remains aligned with the (former) youth of the liberation movement, especially those attempting to hold open the power they created by refusing old structures, and who continue to clamor for the freedoms promised during the struggle, refusing to be silenced. She is a survivor who has been pushed outside the inner circle of political leadership for reasons both tragic and shameful, but continues to use that which would disempower others to buttress her own standing and influence, revealing the utility of the unsettledness of childhood through not

only her use of different constructions, but her ability to harness the power yielded by the spaces between them.

Within the context of South Africa's complex processes of social and political transformation, a struggle has been waged over not only how to understand the nation's past, but how to address its manifestations in the present. Playing a particularly important role in these processes, the TRC offered its dream for a solution in the concept of reconciliation premised on truth. These truths proved to be particularly elusive in the Special Hearings discussed above because of the destabilizing involvement of young people in violence, in the capacity of both victims and perpetrators.

In the MUFC hearing, Stompie appeared through the testimonies of a range of people who had different relationships with him, but largely/only within the flattened register of a passive victim. If he was a police informer, as Winnie Mandela claimed that she feared, he might have been cast as more of a perpetrator. But in the nine-day hearing, the Stompie that emerged was a far cry from the brave and powerful activist invoked by a fellow child herself, who also actively resisted being cast as disempowered victim. In the period from the 1970s to the present, around the world authentic voices come to displace expert voices. In surfacing unwanted truths, the Special Hearings discussed above were right in the middle of these contestations and remappings of authority.

Myths and Icons

Myths and icons have a tendency to blot out the details of everyday life, reframing history on a simultaneously grander and simpler scale to articulate the basic, broad beliefs of various groups over time. Within Afrikaner ideology, South Africa was

founded on a typical settler myth featuring “founding father” Jan van Riebeeck as icon. It is a fabrication of convenience that colonizers from a range of countries carried across the world in their conquests: that of the empty, or “Native-free” landscape. The adherents of apartheid ideology, like their colonial predecessors, hawked this “history” through nationalist narratives, international treaties, claims of God-given rights or callings, and the use of force.

After centuries of slavery, war, and disenfranchisement, leaders of a new and democratic South Africa were elected to power by a voting majority on the promise of freedom and equal rights for all. One of the first acts the new government passed was that which created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It aimed to air the gross violations of human rights that took place under apartheid in a quest for truth and reconciliation. The TRC also sought to exorcise the foundational myth of white supremacy from the nascent nation’s psyche so that freedom, human rights, and equality for all would reign.

A duo of living icons, Desmond Tutu and first President Nelson Mandela led the nation through this painful process, leveraging their influence when needed. But their symbolic capital as healers of the nation coupled with the heuristics they employed had a tendency to blot out the unresolved and irreparable, making one wonder, as political cartoonist Zapiro has visually suggested on several occasions, what was hidden beneath Tutu’s clerical robes and behind the glare of Mandela’s halo.

I believe it is the ghosts of apartheid’s children. According to the international standard which defines a child as someone under 18, this year, 2009, marks the last of apartheid’s children: no child alive today could have any memory of apartheid first-hand.

The powerful entreaty, “Never again,” repeated with such emphasis by the newly released Nelson Mandela, and so often invoked by those working for transitional justice in post-authoritarian nations, along with the platitude, “children are our future” suggest that by committing to and prioritizing human rights, that most societies wish to keep children outside of the realm of violence, as both passives and participants. And yet, the reality of our ever-unfolding future suggests otherwise. I write this from a country--my country--whose use of torture, detention without trial, capital punishment, and incarceration of children has recently peaked once again, the full extent of which is only beginning to be revealed. It must have felt like a relief for child advocates and government officials in South Africa’s new dispensation to be able to finally uncouple children and revolt within their political ideology and commitments at home. But perhaps that uncoupling happened long ago. What if it is actually part of the problem, and not the solution, to the challenges of dealing with the past?

Of course, there are no perfect solutions, and I certainly don’t endorse an acceptance or naturalization of children as participants in war or as wielders or recipients of force. But the failure of facing what I have called the impossibility of childhood under apartheid has left important questions unanswered, such as: How did the Soweto generation, made famous in “the Children’s Revolt of 1976,” become the “lost generation? What larger political agendas did this shift serve? And how does it relate to the overwhelming evidence in current-day South Africa which shows that too many of those who were children during apartheid are still outside, and in the margins of freedom’s promise? These are not the futures they imagined or fought for, either on the

most pessimistic or optimistic of days. Caught in the gap between 1994 and 2009, how should the rest of their lives unfold?

Although they have so often been pushed to the margins of history, children become perhaps the most important issue. Perhaps there was no greater transformation than on that day when one set of imaginings displaced another. Even when children could be left to the side in Bantu Education, rural slums, and the TRC, this “to the side” was crucial to each of these domains, and to the imaginations of South Africa’s future more generally. What are the possibilities when you have been rendered invisible in that future altogether?

Tracing the history of children’s rights in South Africa can produce a redemptive tale with a happy ending: decades of invisibility, neglect, and subjugation terminated by what has been hailed as one of the most progressive constitutions in the world—and one which provides extensive provisions for children. But the mythological status of this founding document may overwhelm that which is immediately present.

For even though schools may now be desegregated, the vast majority of black children continue to live in townships and informal settlements with the same decrepit schoolhouses, under-trained teachers, and lack of resources. Many of those who are fortunate enough to have families that can pay their school fees continue to go to school with empty stomachs, while still others do not attend school at all. The job prospects for children coming out of former Bantu Education schools are almost as likely to secure a promising career outside of manual labor as those Bantu Education graduates who came before them.

To address the severe discrepancies in access to wealth and resources: particularly in terms of land, housing, and basic services required for human survival, it is important that we understand more about how the Soweto generation of youth came to be cast aside in the project of nation building. It would seem that the groundwork for that loss was laid early, at the height of children's power. As they were growing stronger in body and mind, they were being pictured overwhelmingly as victims. Their strength not only threatened the state, it threatened the power structures within the resistance movement. These powerful young people had to be bridled, for *real* revolution would have required that they not only displace the imagination of the state, but also that of the liberation movement. Such remains the unfinished work of the struggle for freedom in South Africa.

One of the more celebrated accomplishments of the TRC was that through restoring people's dignity, it turned victims into heroes. In considering the scale and scope of the humiliations, daily indignities, and abjection that black people were subjected to, this is tremendous accomplishment on the personal, communal, and the societal level. But more problematically, it also termed many heroes into victims, particularly in the case of young people, alienating and angering many from the entire TRC process, while simultaneously neutering the attempts of certain survivors to pursue justice by granting some perpetrators amnesty. In relying so heavily upon the victim/perpetrator categories, the TRC presented an impossible dilemma for those who needed a more complex way of accounting for their experiences. For children and youth who chose to join the struggle, and those who lost and suffered for it, it was important to have their contributions and sacrifices acknowledged, but not at the cost of either.

Decades after the “Children’s Revolt,” Soweto continues to figure prominently in the history of the people’s fight against apartheid. South Africa celebrates National Youth Day on the anniversary of the student uprising on June 16, as a day to honor young people and focus on their needs. But the interpretations of that event are still highly contested and controversial. As Sifiso Ndlovu writes,

The literature that discusses the origins of the Soweto uprising regards the various liberation movements as the driving force that fanned the flames, or the motor that drove the protesting students. Every year, prior to the commemoration of 16 June 1976, one becomes aware of the dogfight between various liberation movements clamouring and posturing for recognition as champions of the uprisings. This is because this day is recognized as the most important turning point in our country’s history.³⁴⁵

What still remains to be recognized, perhaps, is that improving the life that South Africa offers its children will be the most important turning point in the country’s future.

³⁴⁵ Ndlovu 1998: 50.

Conclusion

I have often been asked to reveal my definition of childhood, as if there is a clear-cut answer that I am withholding. But for an anthropologist, the question is one which I believe yields more by remaining open than any attempts on my part to settle it would provide. Besides, a myriad of practitioners, researchers, marketers, and lawmakers have established entire subfields, industries, and legal codes based upon various definitional notions of what childhood is or should be. Based on my research on apartheid South Africa, my understanding of childhood is one which resists such stabilization.

Violence and childhood have transcendent political and cultural authority, yet they are inherently unstable. Violence, or the memory of violence, is what vexes and complicates constructions of childhood in South Africa. In the odious context of apartheid, these two highly unsettled and unstable constructs--childhood and violence--are inextricably linked. Each in a sense nurtures the complexities and possibilities of the other. The pervasive presence of various forms and threats of violence in the everyday lives of young people amplifies the instability and uncertainty of childhood in ways which push ambiguity into any naturalization of children as victims. For children are seen to have extraordinary agency and responsibility. Likewise, the unsettled nature of evaluations of pain and violence leave questions of agency and responsibility open to additional reflection, revision, and debate.

In the context of apartheid South Africa, race-- or racism-- is the reason for the connection between violence and childhood in historically specific, abhorrent ways. The linking of violence, childhood, and race in the apartheid era³⁴⁶ accounted for a tremendous amount of inhumanity and suffering, and diminished everyone within what has been aptly referred to as a sick society. I have focused primarily on the ways these three vectors come together in the case of black children, but there is much more that could be written about childhood constructions and their connection to particular forms of violence affecting white children during this period. What is clear, however, is that in apartheid South Africa, violence, race, and childhood cannot be pulled apart, for they are in fact constitutive of one another.

In excavating the found remains of childhood from the broken grounds in which their constructions are embedded, I have attempted to trace their contours and track their mobilization and manipulation to consider not only what constructions of childhood may tell us about children in this particular cultural context and historical milieu, but what these understandings reveal about the society from which they come. In attempting to investigate what dominant notions of childhood do for communities, states, and the global politic, I sought out the complex and often opaque ways in which such understandings resonate, travel, and transmute by shifting my focus between localized, national, and international settings that were dynamically linked and engaged.

In my research, “the points of suspension on which the broken threads of childhood...are caught”³⁴⁷ consisted of a set of fragments and artifacts I gathered, more notable for what was missing than what I found. They point to overwhelming loss:

³⁴⁶ I do not mean to suggest that this linkage originated in the apartheid period, however, as these interconnections can be traced back much earlier.

³⁴⁷ Percec 1988, preface.

young lives broken and impaired by trauma, malnutrition, lack of opportunity and the premature imposition of the burdens of adulthood. Living lives meant to be bound by never-ending negation, “non-whites” were treated as non-entities—foreigners in their own land, lacking freedom of movement, stability, privacy, security, and unfettered opportunities for fulfillment.

But children in this period also possessed incredible resilience, ingenuity, resourcefulness, and creativity, all of which found expression in a variety of forms. Unfortunately, many of these expressions have not received adequate attention or engagement by the custodians of history both within and outside of academe. This is because of the power and tendency of constructions of childhood to blot out the complex subjectivities and experiences of children as dynamic social actors. Moreover, there are still strikingly few spaces in which children are visible historically and culturally.

The spaces and overlap between conventions and genres offers a productive site for the analysis of competing and complementary constructions of childhood. Childhood is an evocative meaning-scape for the projection and reflection of fears and values. Working across different genres, I excavate some of the found remains of childhood and attempt to track the historical changes in understandings of childhood to investigate the work that such constructions can do. I seek to examine, with greater scrutiny, the particular forms of childhood in the imaginaries of political activists, apartheid’s architects, the United Nations, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and children themselves.

Latent contradictions lurk below the surface in the constructions of black South African childhood. They are concealed and contained through discursive and ideological

positionings which engender and enable some strategies while shutting down others. Whether cast as extensions of mothers, as victims, as a social and political or public health issue, as the future, or as agents, children are conceptualized in limited terms that are continually deployed by adults (and sometimes children themselves) in pursuit of particular agendas. These tropes -- as tropes -- are partial and none can accommodate all that is needed to understand childhood in all its complexity.

This dissertation is an initial attempt, using gaps, to see deeper into the constructions of childhood that circulated in the end of apartheid by considering them in relation to one another, for, as I have discovered, a gap is also an opening. Much of the incommensurability and contradiction of the constructions with which I am concerned is in *how* they've been constructed, and more importantly how these constructions have been maintained historically and culturally. As with any construction of a subaltern, the how is always strategic, hegemonic, and silencing.

In tending to historical changes and shifting definitions of childhood, I use historical developments as a way of marking difference and explaining differences in the apartheid context to better understand how people thought about what they were doing. There are important changes in terms of how children are being conceptualized, or allowed to speak within varied efforts to typologize, regulate, normalize, and pathologize them as subjects. But the children themselves reinvent, reject, and render irrelevant some of these understandings, as when they burst onto the political stage to a horrified global public during the Soweto Uprising. They refuse to be contained within the constructions that seek to define them.

The power of these constructions derives from their familiarity, emotional potency, and reflection of social values. The gaps between and within these constructions mask the complex and varied roles and experiences of young people and reinforce their subalternity socially, politically, and within South African historiography. These gaps have also enabled a nation to look away from the devastating realities of then and now, even while purporting to hold them up for acknowledgement and examination. The TRC was ultimately unable to resolve the fundamental contradiction of acknowledging and celebrating the contribution of young people in the struggle, and the horror of what those contributions so often looked like. How could such horror ever be resolved? As Martha Minow has argued, because of the inherent brutality and scope of mass violence, “there is no punishment that could express the proper scale of outrage,”³⁴⁸ there is no market measure that can put a value on “living an ordinary life,”³⁴⁹ and no apology that is adequate for the harms inflicted.³⁵⁰

At one time in South Africa’s recent history, the instability of childhood was the liberation movement’s greatest resource. The vitality, hope, and impatience of young people forced one of the most authoritarian regimes ever known to eventually relinquish their ill-gained monopoly on state governance and power. But these contributions, which could not have been given (or taken) with a full understanding of the consequences involved, have had devastating consequences for all South Africans. Particular constructions help to hide what is at stake: individuals’ lives, and society at large.

³⁴⁸ Minow, Martha, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* Boston: Beacon Press, 1998, pg 121.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 104.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 114.

The costs of compromise in negotiating the terms of a democratic South Africa have been high. Continuities across apartheid and the post-apartheid era abound. Apartheid is all around. It is inscribed on the landscape, manifest in the distribution of wealth and resources, and it endures in the social conditioning which continues to poison the way many white people look at, talk to, and think of black people. As political exile Mbulelo Mzamane once exclaimed, “Show me the corpse of the dead apartheid!”³⁵¹ Contemporary divisions are not only between white and black. Paradoxically, the most enduring achievement and greatest failure of the apartheid system was in dividing people based on fear, hatred, greed, and bigotry. Deep divisions among all kinds of people still remain.

Many of the people who were of school-going age during the last decade and a half of the struggle against apartheid boycotted schools (often whether or not they wanted to). Although a select few of the former youth who were regarded by the apartheid state as lawless and irresponsible have gone on to play important roles in the new national leadership, many are now suffering from poverty, unemployment, emotional and physical illness, and lack of education, opportunity, and resources. Labeled as members of the so-called “lost generation”, these people have often been written off by society as a hopeless, irrecoverable cause. They are blamed for problems including violence, drug trafficking, gangsterism, the HIV pandemic, and environmental degradation, and have been described as dangerous and unproductive leeches of society. Despite their sacrifice and suffering during the struggle, they have benefited very little from the transition to democracy.

³⁵¹ “Reimagining South Africa and the Political Imagination of South Africans.” Conference organized by African History graduate students at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Saturday January 13, 2001.

If childhood is, as Perec suggests, “a horizon, a point of departure, a set of coordinates from which the axes of... life may draw their meaning,”³⁵² what happens when people live in a world in which the openings are to terrible voids, absences, gaps, and contradictory representations that can’t be reassembled in some coherent sense of identity or purpose? What if the destination of children turns out to be a dead end, where all the universalisms fail? Given the abject inequality that continues to plague South Africa today, it is vitally important to wrest away the concept of childhood from simplistic victim-based or celebrationist accounts which gloss over the unsettled and unresolved tensions around childhood to lay bare the gaping holes in this story of nation-building, and to engage in a more honest and effective consideration of the interconnections between race, violence and childhood, in the apartheid structures of the past and in their pernicious incarnations today.

It is time for a more nuanced understanding of the loss and the failure of getting the child to a better future in contemporary South Africa, and the failure of giving all people their deserved rights—an understanding that will enable not only acknowledgement but action in the form of social and economic change. For only then will it be possible to begin the difficult process of addressing the gaping chasm between the promised fruits of freedom and post-apartheid realities.

³⁵² Perec, 1988: 12.

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