
*THE VOICE OF PROTEST: URBAN BLACK WOMEN, SONG AND RESISTANCE, IN
THE 1980s.*

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Music. In accordance with the University of Natal's regulations, I declare this work to be entirely my own work, except where otherwise stated.

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In order to understand black women's socio-political role in the construction of, and participation in resistance culture, it is essential to look at the historic developments as a whole. To define women's social and political role in resistance as inherently separate would in fact marginalize women from the broader overview, and therefore discredit their contribution to resistance politics. Women should be seen as part of public society.

If to be separate is, inherently, to be unequal, then it is only by integrating the study of women into the study of society that "women's studies", by ceasing to exist, will, paradoxically, have had the impact on academic fields that it deserves.¹

Information collected for this thesis, was based on information given by and taped at African National Congress (ANC), United Democratic Front (UDF) and Pan African Congress (PAC) resistance rallies, meetings and conferences. The women and men I interviewed were affiliated to one of the above mentioned political organizations.

I do not wish to speak on behalf of these or any black women, nor do I claim to understand what they had to endure during the eighties. My aim, however, is to document the *toyi-toyi* as it pertained to black women, and the history surrounding its creation, and the symbolic meaning inherent in its performance, as accurately as possible.

I believe the *toyi-toyi* spoke and still speaks about important political and social issues. Ignoring this voice, and letting it go unnoticed would be an intellectual crime and socially irresponsible. History speaks through the actions of people. A very powerful performance and vehicle of communication will be lost if the *toyi-toyi* is left undocumented. We as researchers must not only document the words of leaders, we must let the voices of the people be heard. I know many white South Africans are afraid of the *toyi-toyi* performance. They associate it with unruliness, violence and crime. The SABC news media has done a good job of documenting it as such. News flashes of the

Preface

toyi-toyi was and is still shown in relation to burning tyres, stone throwing and the "violent, chanting black crowd." The aim of my research and the reason behind writing this thesis, is to let the voices of black people, but especially black women be heard - let the *toyi-toyi* speak to those who hide from its performance.

Endnotes.

. M.Z. Rosaldo *Women, Culture and Society*, (Stanford 1974), 128.

Amandla! Mayibuye iAfrika!
[Power. Bring back our Africa]

This slogan was met with a sea of black clenched fists which saluted the air. An overwhelming volume penetrated the city, as the *toyi-toyi* rose, and hit the ears of white passersby who scurried into the nearest buildings. Some of the words may not have been understood by these white people, but they probably sensed the power behind the meaning of the performance. Almost imperceptible, the mass of black fists melted into a large group of women and men performing the *toyi-toyi*. The shared experience of racial oppression, combined with the knowledge, instilled by Black Consciousness and liberation organizations, that liberation was possible and apartheid can be crushed, incited performers even further. As the group of performers danced down the street, they burst into song, followed by slogans and yet more song.

The History of Toyi-toyi.

Throughout the destructive and violent legacy of apartheid, where sanctity of life [had] no meaning, we have inherited the culture of death and destruction.¹

As violence continued to tear Natal apart, as blood continued to stain the soil, and the many unjustifiable deaths - black communities were forced to gather in great numbers, in order to openly voice their grief and anger, dispossession and displacement. Looking back at the eighties in South Africa, however, McKendrick states that all words spoken and action against violence and oppression were silenced immediately by detention, torture and the weapons of the South African Defence Force (SADF).² How then did these men and women articulate their opposition? Quite simply - they articulated a discourse of opposition veiled in the textual and musical syntax of traditional performance embodied in the *toyi-toyi*.

toyi-toyi

At times this discourse came to be more explicit through the performers' use of English text in freedom songs, slogans, and *izibongo* phrases performed as part of the *toyi-toyi*. Nevertheless, the performers' deep seated emotions, embedded in political symbols found within the *toyi-toyi*, were less obvious to the cultural outsider and ultimately the state. As such, these performance structures could exist outside the parameters of state control and power. It was for this reason that the *toyi-toyi* came to symbolize the people's power. Due to this immense polarization of performance as political discourse, the state, together with its functionaries, sought to discredit the *toyi-toyi* as "undisciplined" and "uncivilized."

NB
Collective

For black people, however, *toyi-toyi* performance brought new vigour to the long tradition of protest against the regime. It empowered performers with an aggressive discourse of political resistance. Because the *toyi-toyi* was a collective performance designed to incorporate traditional forms of political slogans, work songs and praise poems, it created a dynamic symbol through which black South African political resistance could be identified. Furthermore, taking the historical and political context of South Africa from the mid-seventies to the late eighties into account, the *toyi-toyi* performance was the only collective voice black men and women had. It was public, very political and powerful, and served to transform an individual's identity from the singular, into that of group solidarity. The *toyi-toyi* thus provided the performers with the impetus they needed to gain public space, space previously only legally occupied by white South Africans.

NB

Until the mid-seventies, black youths had watched their mothers and fathers battle in the face of apartheid, and had witnessed their protests being strangled and choked by the regime. These horrific experiences pushed young men and women to their limits. They realized that liberation would never come unless they took up the struggle and

toy-toyi
 provided it with a more aggressive disposition. By the beginning of the 1980s black youths had gathered together and started marching, performing the *toy-toyi*. That they had had enough, was clearly heard in the chant chorus "*hayi hayi*," (No, no, [we have had enough]).³ Initially the older generation merely observed the youthful performance, associating it with youngsters starting "something new again."⁴ But as time passed, they too realized the power the *toy-toyi* instilled in black people. At that point the *toy-toyi* shifted to include every black man or woman wanting to make a statement about liberation.

WS
 While it was militant black youths who effectively initiated the *toy-toyi* performance as we know it today, the phrase *toy-toyi* initially referred to a military routine used in the Zimbabwean Peoples Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) camps in the late 1970s.) Both *uMkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) and Zimbabwean soldiers were trained at these camps. During the exercise the leader would shout "*itoyi-toyi*," this was followed by a chorus response from the soldiers, "*hoes*." It served as a structural rhythmic force through which the energy of the training exercise was maintained. The rhythm articulated the structure of the training exercise, which paralleled its function in traditional work song.⁵

On their return to South Africa in the early 1980s, *MK* soldiers brought the *toy-toyi* - a "march" they began to use quite regularly - back with them.⁶ Black youths then appropriated the refrain and incorporated variations of traditional dance movements and political slogans, which created a powerful performance structure, for a highly visible political discourse.⁷ Performance as a discourse of political critic however, was nothing new. From the onset of black political resistance, song and dance always formed an integral part of any protest demonstration. Nise Malange said one merely has to look at the history of black people, to note the importance of song and dance as a socio-political commentator. Women were especially in the forefront, as they were traditionally politically mute, and so used performance as a discourse of resistance. The many songs

Stamp
 dance as
 socio-political
 commentary

women composed and sang in past protest marches, viz. anti-pass law demonstrations, are still remembered and performed today. She said that in light of this, the *toyi-toyi* was not new. Youths simply reintroduced a traditional concept of dance and song with sloganeering in a more popularized resistance culture than in the past.⁸

~~The importance of the *toyi-toyi* was that until then, black people had not had a united voice through which they could resist social injustice.~~ Furthermore, they were prohibited from occupying "white" urban public space and participating in the political discourse of the state. Performance of *toyi-toyi* could transcend this prohibition, and so entitled every performer to the domain of urban public space, the centre of political and economic power.

Musical traditions along with other forms of cultural expression are social constructs used and modified by people for particular purposes. The creation of musical traditions under conditions of large scale social change and mass poverty always involves some process of redefinition, of shifting of emphasis.⁹

Composed 7 } The *toyi-toyi* provided more than just a voice for the masses, it communicated messages of socio-political awareness for both participants and observers. It was a vehicle for the expression of group power and identity through song, slogans, *izibongo* and dance. Unique to South Africa, the *toyi-toyi* incorporated dance as an essential part of political sloganeering. This expressive, but militant dance style gave to the performance its unmistakable character. In addition to dance, freedom songs furnished the *toyi-toyi* with auxiliary emotional platforms. After numerous slogans had been cited, freedom songs were sung so as to convey the collective emotional content embodied in the performance. Freedom songs were both political and resistant in nature, and can therefore also be defined as political or protest songs.

Slogans, which consisted of short phrases or words, were an integral part of the *toyi-toyi* performance, and acted as an agent for group alliance and solidarity, viz. "Viva ANC,

slogans
as dissonance
anger
pen
 viva."¹⁰ These slogans were popularized through performance culture and mass resistance, and became as much a part of the struggle as political speeches, posters, poems, freedom songs, art and theater. In a society as violent as South Africa was during the 1980s, slogans were not exempt from violent utterances. These slogans were usually cited in direct response to the deaths black people had suffered as a result of their participation in the struggle for liberation. "I am a soldier," "Azania, Azania....bulala iboelo....bulala." [Kill the Boer]¹¹

Freedom songs and *izibongo* were inserted into the *toyitoyi* performance or sung at meetings, rallies or funerals. They were not simply performed as a means to passing the time, but opened up a discourse - a way of reaching out to the people, a way to share their needs and pain, a way to communicate. Once the march had proceeded through centralised urban areas, the marchers gathered in a central meeting place. The *toyitoyi* melted into endless songs of hope, pain, courage and mourning. It was during these moments that the performers', especially women's emotions emerged at their peaks. For a moment their anger gave way to the pain and suffering as they sang. As such songs were able to articulate painful emotions resulting from the effects of apartheid, and suppressed by the regime for decades. These emotions were shared among the performers in an overwhelming statement of courage as they strove to heal their people and culture.

The act of healing involves translating the arbitrary into the motivated, the unmarked into the marked; healing takes that which is not anticipated and serves to motivate it as if it were anticipated. The medium cures illness by turning it from something unseen and unforeseen into something perceptible.¹²

Collective
 Black South Africans did not only feel a sense of emotional relief in performance, but they gained a notion of collective identity. In the song below the performers confronted the impact of racism on their communities through questioning its validity.

X *Senzenina*
Sono somuntu ubumnyama
iAfrica....
 What have we done?
 The sin of the person is being black.¹³

This song was usually sung at funerals and political rallies. Its popularity during the eighties was so great that it came to be written on banners used as a slogan during marches and finally converted into a poem. According to Cosmo Pieterse: "The lexicon of this poetry (by extension) is the experience of pain."¹⁴

In drawing this section to a close, as I mentioned earlier, political performance had always been an integral dimension of traditional black societies.¹⁵ (Performance as social critique) such as was the practice in *toyi-toyi*, was as old as the hills. Vail and White write that slanderous songs or poems were frequently used to comment on socio-political issues in a community. (The critical difference, however, is that such commentary never posed a threat to existing power structures.¹⁶ In other words, unlike traditional licensed discourse, the *toyi-toyi* in the 1980s posed an enormous threat to institutions of power controlled by the state. In this lay the socio-political and emotional force of the *toyi-toyi*.)

Gender Articulation in Performance.

Joseph writes that the traditional Zulu socio-political order was divided according to gender and age. These divisions were under the control of men, who allocated space within the community for the various activities to take place.¹⁷ This form of social arrangement did not only pertain to Zulu society, but was common among most black pre-colonial societies in South Africa. Rubin extends this to be a global phenomenon, and explains that cultural and socio-political institutions are structured according to biological sexuality. As such, gender divisions evolved from the products of human activity, and the location in which these activities took place.¹⁸

Gender

For this reason, traditional performance structures embraced a range of prohibitions and segregated spatial precincts for women. Men had political power, and therefore controlled and dominated cultural discourse in public. Women were allocated their own space, separate and removed from the public dominion, in which they could perform their own politically motivated songs and dances.

[T]he sexually segregated women's world [are those places] where women daily enact all sorts of minor defiances of the restrictions on activities and movements enforced by elder men in the community.¹⁹

Gunner maintains that these performances became the source of female social identity and strength.²⁰

The Construction of Racial and Gender Oppression.

Primary oppression refers to direct consequences of unequal possession....In the case of biology, for example, the oppression of women and out-groups is attributed to their assumed inferior or different genetic endowment. In contrast with their oppressors, they are supposed to be deficient in respect to qualities such as aggressiveness and intelligence. Thus....inequality is justified in terms of biological power.²¹

Douglas says that power structures inherent in the social body coerced people into thinking of the physical body in a certain way. The physical experience of the body then, was a socialized experience, internalized by individuals or groups of people. These experiences were responsible for sustaining particular views of certain persons, according to set categories of race, gender and class. In its vocation as an image of society, the physical body's main scope was to express the relationship of individual communities of people to the broader social body.²² Brittan maintains that oppression can only be realized through the social construction of the body as an object. Race and gender were "given reality by the attribution of significance to the phenotype."²³

Andersen writes that race and gender structures were fundamental in the construction of institutionalized power relations. These structures functioned through the formulation of unequal power relations, thus creating social acceptance of dominance versus subservience.²⁴ In South Africa, for example, gender and race structures were used by the state to formulate power relations, which were responsible for constructing oppressive socio-political institutions. The state had invested control and was empowered to build a class structure based on white patriarchal superiority. Therefore, in order to conceptualize the social construction of power relations specific to South Africa, the systems of race and gender must be defined.

Andersen also maintains that social institutions of race and gender are ongoing social arrangements and practices within a given society. To this end social institutions provided a coded system by which a group was defined as a race or gender. They were controlled and exploited in terms of their cultural or biological differences. The concept of racial and gender institutions "is not just a matter of belief, but is embedded in a system of power relations."²⁵ As social beliefs change, however, so too will institutions of power relations shift. These changes will create certain contradictions with past social institutions, especially when there had been a major shift in power as is the case in South Africa - black male dominated social structures were redefined according to the development and increased control of white patriarchy.

Historically these contradictions were especially prominent with the development of industrial capitalism, as it pertained to gender relations in black communities in South Africa. Stamp maintains that these contradictions became a significant part of the "peasant struggle," which comprised largely of women.²⁶

gender structures
in apartheid

gender structures
in apartheid

Gender relations are seen both as a site of underdeveloped capitalism's exploitation of petty commodity production and as a site of resistance to this exploitation. Men are in the contradictory position of understanding their peasant power in that they control petty commodity production and the returns from it and thus act as agents of capital accumulation from peasant surplus. Women then emerge as the fighting heart of the peasantry, struggling to keep control of their labour and its products.²⁷

To this end, black women in South Africa had always emerged at the heart of resistance to the state. In the past their interest had been vested in the protection of their labour and domestic space.

Feminism is not only a social and political movement. It functions as a critical category in contemporary culture because it challenges and examines the foundations of our language, thought and institutions, our social and political power structures and their hierarchical divisions. Thus feminism has produced a new theory and praxis in most areas of cultural activity.²⁸

Socio-political events leading up to 1948, and the political and social consequences of legislating apartheid effectively destroyed black people's basic human right to personal control of their own bodies. Apartheid was about state power and control of the black social and individual body. The functionaries of the apartheid state accomplished and maintained control by objectifying the physical black body through socializing the minds of people (both black and white).

Prohibitions restricting the movements of black men and women in "white" public space were legislated after the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. Additional laws were constantly being legislated, while old laws were revised ie. the Urban Areas Act of 1923, the Natives Land Act and Trust Act of 1936 and the Group Areas Act of 1950, to name but a few. Specific areas were located to black people for specific fundamental social interactions, viz. schools, hospitals, beerhalls, and churches. The new conception of "home" and "private space" was incongruent with traditional social

women
early
resistance

definition. Furthermore, black people were socialized as inferior beings. The apartheid regime tried to instill black inferiority in the minds of young children. Their primary aim was to use education as an apparatus for such socialization.

The Discourse of Emotion as Resistance.

Of course I am angry. *Very, very angry.*²⁹

The anger embedded in the *toyi-toyi* created the power with which black people confronted the state in their struggle for equality, liberation, and freedom. As such, this discourse of emotion became a metaphor of socio-political experience and the cultural construction of truth.

In my own experience, once anger, which was rooted in pain, was expressed, eventual self-realization and healing evolved. I therefore believe that people have the ability to gain control over a variety of inner psychological and physiological states of pain through various forms of discourse. I concede that it may be simplistic to reduce the totality of social dispossession to a single emotion of pain. In this regard, social and political dispossession, as black people knew it in South Africa in the eighties, had many complex realities and resultant emotions. Nevertheless, I found in my interviews that many women ended their conversations with me by talking about *ubuhlungu* "pain" in their hearts. Some women even felt physical pain, *isibhobo* in their bodies.

Caraveli writes that "the realm of suffering..is believed to be one in which women dominate over men." In this regard she explains that institutions of pain, such as childbirth are intrinsic components of women's pain. In addition, women in South Africa experienced the deepest pain in the face of state violence and socio-political dispossession, as explained below.³⁰

Today as women we are daily suffering the pain of seeing our children detained, killed, maimed.....Again it is the women who feel the pain more when families are being evicted from their homes.³¹

For this reason, people living in opposition to the state articulated a discourse of resistance through pain.³² The discourse of pain was most frequently expressed in the emotion of anger in the *toyi-toyi*. In this manner the construction and articulation of emotion became accessible to both women and men, because unlike women, men could only express anger, and not the vulnerability associated with the articulations of pain. Lutz says women are intrinsically associated with emotion and vulnerability. For this reason, any discourse of emotion is the discourse of women. "When emotion is defined...it provides an important symbolic vehicle by which a problem in the maintenance of the social order can be voiced."³³ Black men were therefore drawn into the emotional domain of women to articulate their emotions and resistance to racial oppression.

It is my intention to examine political performance structures which had created for black women a vehicle for socio-political expression of pain and anger and ultimately transformation. I take the liberty to go so far as to say that the *toyi-toyi* functioned as an agent of social and individual healing. As such, I have come to understand performance, associated with social, political and emotional conflicts, as a mechanism of empowerment for black South Africans. It embodied the pain associated with loss and separation, and the anger generated by the socio-political realities of apartheid.

During my research, I often came across freedom songs, *izibongo* or slogans which presented solutions to various political or social problems. In such instances performers had moved from a negative state of pain to a positive state of mental health, through the construction of an aggressive discourse of empowerment and transformation. As a result of this, my analysis of political performance structures - specifically the *toyi-toyi* -

examines firstly the negative symbols of association, such as the racial body, the expression of anger and pain, and secondly the positive symbols associated with healing, solidarity and the liberation of the racial and gendered body.

Cultural Response to Urbanization.

Continuity and change in performance must be regarded as aspects of overall processes of urbanization and adaptation. The selection, rejection or transformation of musical elements and compositional principles are greatly determined by emerging patterns of urban social organization and cultural classification and significance.³⁴

249 1122
As Mayer states "urbanization and the dynamics of urban social relations are characterized by the availability of choices."³⁵ Thus urban popular culture in South Africa developed diverse performance genres to accommodate the social complexities arising from the political condition. It created space for multiple forms of personal identification and group alignment. This process of adjustment created community values based on the reconstruction and reconciliation of past social and political values. It was not only in the urban areas that transformation was effected. "People tried to formulate a new cultural response to industry, to a new economy, to money, to migrant work, while also maintaining a traditional way of life in the rural areas."³⁶

Most "new" urban songs and dances developed as a result of cultural interchange between urban and rural areas, hence the coexistence of both traditional and "new" performance structures in both the rural and urban areas. Chernoff writes that one of the most marked characteristics of black culture was that many activities were set within a rhythmic framework, which served as the basis for song structures.³⁷ This was illustrated in work songs, a tradition that urbanized with migrant labourers. Migrant workers accompanied heavy menial labour with rhythmic song performance, as was the practice in the rural areas. Although one can consider its primary function to be work

related, the song text were covertly political and associated with work and urban experience.

Consolidation of Resistance Discourse in the 1980s.

[T]he oral poetry of south-central Africa, in its different genres and many languages, is linked by a common aesthetic.... Central to this aesthetic is the concept of poetic license, the convention that poetic expression is privileged expression, the performer being free to express opinions that would otherwise be in breach of other social conventions. This aesthetic has itself, at different times and in different societies, been the subject of historical struggle.....The advantages of this argument are that it establishes the continuity of a particular poetic tradition over a wide area of southern Africa and over a long period of time, linking together types of poetic performance - praise songs, entertainments, satires, work songs, possession songs - that have hitherto been described separately. It provides vivid access to the past and present intellectual life of communities whose ideas have largely had to be inferred, passively and statically, from the analysis of institutions and observed patterns of behavior. It strengthens and makes more specific the customary claim that oral poetry is valued precisely because it is a privileged form of expression.³⁸

The significance of the continuity and reframing of traditional political discourse played a dominant role in the development of mass resistance culture in the 1980s. The emergence of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in the eighties, formed the base for mass resistance. Qabula says cultural workers had come to realize the great need to revive traditional performance structures, in order to create numerous forms of expression that was accessible to as wide a range of people as possible.³⁹ As a result of this, the *izibongo* (praise poetry/songs) were revived and adapted to correspond with the worker's political aspirations and needs. Vail and White comment throughout their book *Power and the Praise Poem* on the social validity of *izibongo* in resisting different structures of power. As society changed so too did the content and the tone of the *izibongo*, with "changes reflecting the new political realities."⁴⁰

new
cultural
forms
- izibongo

Toyitoyi as a Threat to State Institutions of Power.

Power
of H

Unlike any other discourse of resistance, the *toyitoyi* not only provided performers with privileged articulation, but publicly challenged institutions of state power. For this reason it was seen as a cultural weapon with which performers could reclaim public space in urban areas and so effectively construct a culture of truth and social justice. The slogans cited during the performance were highly symbolic of this empowerment. Even though the state did not understand the symbolism embedded in the *toyitoyi*, it nevertheless recognized the power *toyitoyi* performance had in the formation and expression of political discourse, and its perceived threat to the maintenance of public order.

In an attempt to maintain control, the state-controlled media created the perception among white South Africans, that black people were the enemy who had invaded territory that did not belong to them. The growing militarization of state apparatus was justified in its "protection" of white society and white public space from "die swart gevaar" (black danger). The media and state authorities publicly declared *toyitoyi* performers as unruly and potentially violent.⁴¹ Slogans used in the *toyitoyi* such as "*bulala iboelo*" (kill the boer) and "one settler one bullet," became central to the rationalization of state violence and the need for military intervention.⁴²

Because of the structural control the state has over the SABC, and more importantly, because of the congruence in the ideological outlook and policy between the Corporation and the state as a whole, the government is able to rely on the SABC to punt its point of view uncritically and effectively. Thus in the matter of reporting on and the portrayal of the ANC, it comes as little surprise that the views of the government are the views of the SABC.⁴³

With the implementation of the State of Emergency in 1985, the *toyitoyi* as a mass gathering, was declared illegal, empowering the government to arrest any "offender" who

*reclaimed
weapon*

might engage in its performance. But this did not stop black people from *toyi-toying*. Instead the emotional and symbolic structure of the *toyi-toyi* encouraged continual performance. In other words black people created in the *toyi-toyi* their cultural "weapon" with which to challenge state institutions of militarized power. "Emotion gets its meaning and force from its location and performance in the public realm of discourse."⁴⁴

*reclaimed
space*

The state totalized its control to such an extent that any attempt to defy oppressive laws was punishable, often without trial. Since black people had lost the freedom to use public space in so-called "white areas" - all urban areas - in which to express themselves, as this was against the law, political resistance discourse was aimed at reclaiming public space. In the eighties the *toyi-toyi* realized this need. *Toyi-toying* diminished the effective authority the state had over black people in public space through the intrusive and demanding nature of its performance structure. It clearly communicated to all that there could be no compromise.

"Reclaiming public space reconstitutes a public."⁴⁵ *Toyi-toyi* created a forum for communication, which empowered black people to work towards building a new civil society, in which they would have the freedom to use, move, and communicate in public space. Until this time, public discourse had been a "privilege" gained by few black people who co-opted with the state and became its "puppets."

A History of Violent Oppression.

As I mentioned before, throughout the history of white, and especially National Party reign, black people were stripped of their right to public space, discourse, political participation and most painfully of all, their right to their identity as citizens of South

Africa. Time and time again black people resisted this situation. But resistance became impossible in the face of the military power of the South African Defence Force.

In South Africa it is to see a pregnant woman and a four year old child killed in cold blood by South African riot police; but not giving up the fight. It is to be restricted in your movements, in your speech, in your worship, but still have the freedom to sing the Lord's song. It is to be uprooted from your dwelling place and to be placed in temporary tents, having your family wiped out in the cold of the night, but still have the warm will to live. It is being. It is black. It is living.⁴⁶

The regime executed violence against black people publicly, in space in which people should have had the freedom to move, to express themselves and to feel safe.

A 12 year old girl was shot in the back while walking home from the shop. She was hospitalized for one month under police guard, prior to being taken to prison. The doctors said that they could not remove the bullet for fear of paralysis. She was given a five year suspended sentence for stone throwing.⁴⁷

Even schools and homes were not exempt from invasion and violent attacks. Women and children lived in constant fear, as they were left after raids to face the aftermath of death and confusion.

Biological victim

My husband was detained the morning the State of Emergency was declared. We had been expecting the worst and I should have been prepared for what was to come. Yet, when it happened, I was shocked, numbed and angry. I was filled with a sense of insecurity and fear. I was alone with a small baby..... But worst of all, I had no idea where my husband was being held.⁴⁸

Russell writes that women feared their own detention too, because a woman's absence often left their homes open to further invasion. Mothers were forced to leave their children behind, living with the knowledge that their children were alone, and their daughters unprotected from abuse.⁴⁹

It was this endless face of violence and death that angered the people the most, that enabled them to mobilize full scale resistance against the regime. Despite the knowledge that lives would be lost, men and women engaged in public political resistance in various forms.

use of
public
space

|||

The public - in all realms and of all ages - is contesting the rights to the use of public, as opposed to state, property. The state such as it is, can no longer claim exclusive authority over the public sphere.⁵⁰

Although Kligman was referring to Romania, socio-political similarities with South Africa prevail. The most obvious parallel was the totalitarian rule of the state and the creation of a mass resistance culture among the oppressed people. In both countries, resistance was aimed at reclaiming public space, and the rebuilding of a civil society in which all people would have the freedom to live and express themselves.

In the 1980s the *toyi-toyi* gradually became the most visible and constant voice of this resistance culture. Together with freedom songs, poetry, political theatre and dance, performance structures have provided a space for socio-political discourse for black South Africans nationally. As such it had encouraged opposition to racial and gendered structures, thus fragmenting the power of these oppressive social structures, and rousing people to activism and even to press for revolutionary changes in the socio-political system of South Africa.

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HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF SOCIALIZATION PROCESSES OF RACIAL AND GENDERED OPPRESSION, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BLACK RESISTANCE CULTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

Introduction.

The ideology of race and gender oppression in South Africa developed over a period of time. In this regard Robertson writes that race and gender were simultaneous and intersecting systems of relationships and meaning. Thus the one cannot be analyzed without the other.¹ In order to understand the socio-political history of black women and their role in resistance culture in the 1980s, the dynamic forces of socio-political change in terms of race and gender must be noted in its totality. The history of black women in South Africa is integrally linked to the history of black people. It is a history of oppression and political dispossession. But for women it has meant the additional structure of a patriarchal state and its functionaries.

These social dynamics created the impetus for the development of a culture of mass resistance. During the eighties this culture came to articulate a new social truth through the force of emotions embodied in the *toyi-toyi*.

In this chapter I will discuss the history and development of resistance as a dynamic force in the face of legal racial and gender oppression, from the colonial period to the end of the 1980s. I will concentrate specifically on the construction of forces of racial and gender oppression. I will, however privilege certain events which bore special significance to the development of mass resistance as it pertained to women.

Colonization of Consciousness: Social Construction of Race and Gender.

Jean Comaroff concludes that the nineteenth century missionaries in South Africa established the foundation for "colonial articulation."² Although the missionaries' main

concerns were evangelical, their socio-political ideologies were rooted in colonial imperialism. Mission cultural principles encompassed Victorian concepts of morality as a passage to "civilization." Civilization in these terms, was accomplished by socializing the gendered and racial body in relation to public and private space, labour and time. As industrial capitalism developed in the late 1800s, colonial rule realized "a greater need for formally controlled markets and sources of raw materials."³ Using the discourse of morality instituted by the missionaries, colonial rule set out to "impose European economic and political systems on a continent with significant underlying similarities in many aspects of society, including the position of women."⁴

The missionaries' understanding of education as a civilising process involved imparting both general and role-specific knowledge....for African women this meant their socialization into western definitions of domestic roles.⁵

Colonial political and economic systems, coexisting with mission symbolic structures, sought to colonize the minds of black people. Class and gender were conceptualized in a hierarchal social structure, placing black women at the bottom.

Missionary societies were of some significance in paving the way for these new social relations to take root, for they were in charge of institutionalized education, and provided models as well as new forms of social interaction on mission stations.⁶

Victorian morality formed the foundation of all education that took place in colonial and mission schools. Conflicting interests between traditional customs and competency and Victorian morality, created dualistic realities, especially for black women. On the one hand, colonial rule and missionaries were against oppressive traditional customs, because they were not in accordance with Victorian rectitude as it pertained to women. Polygamy, *lobola*, marriage ceremonies, the adult rite of passage for girls *iNtonjane* (and boys *abaKhwetha*) were condemned, "with a patent dogmatism rooted in the early Victorian morality of the Evangelical Revival as well as from the standpoint of the

superiority of Western European civilization."⁷ On the other hand, they were against customs that gave women a degree of social autonomy, especially women's participation in agriculture, primarily because black women gained economic independence from men, thus empowering them to execute a certain degree of control over their lives.

According to Stamp, although relations of production in precolonial societies were cooperative, authority was vested in male elders, who in practice exercised ideological, political and juridical power over women.⁸ Nonetheless, she maintains, because women owned the produce they were responsible for growing, in addition to controlling distribution thereof, they gained some control over and claim, in the social economy of their community. One way missionaries sought to bring to an end women's control over resources vital to the system of production, was to eliminate their participation through the introduction of the plough, which brought cattle - a male preserve - into agriculture.⁹

The introduction, by the mission, of the plow...precipitated the most significant transformations within the precolonial system and fostered articulation with the colonial political economy.¹⁰

Furthermore, as agriculture gained market value in the wider political economy, men were automatically drawn into the domain of production. "[N]ot only did men participate in this previously female domain, they also assumed direct control over it."¹¹ Comaroff says that the political and social consequences of commoditizing agriculture and opening it up to the labour market, had immense impact on traditional gender divisions of labour - hence power relations.¹²

These developments made black women especially vulnerable to orthodox Christian socialization processes. Traditional customs merged with western customs, giving rise to new oppressive structures in place of past customs - some of which had given women a degree of social power.

Womens
Power

[M]issionary education operated in complex and contradictory ways: while it may have worked to liberate a few individual African women who were provided with marketable skills, it operated in the main coercively, as an agent of socialization, tying women to subordinate roles in colonial society.¹³

Women were therefore progressively drawn into the domestic realm, either as domestic servants in European homes or as wives and mothers in their own. This effectively reduced their economic role to "reproduction" and maintaining the household. According to Meintjes, Edendale women, for example, were engaged in domestic work in European houses from about 1851.¹⁴ This domestic service, however, reduced black women's productive value. In addition, it had no visible future in the broader market related economic infrastructure. Likewise, domestic activities in their own homesteads had no economically productive or market related value.

The Comaroffs maintain that colonial rule motivated colonization of black people's consciousness with the "axioms and aesthetics of an alien culture."¹⁵

This culture - the culture of European capitalism, of western modernity - had and continues to have, enormous historical force - a force at once ideological and economical, semantic and social. In the face of it, some black Africans have succumbed, some have resisted, some have tried to recast its intrusive forms in their own image. And most have done all of these things, at one or other time, in the effort to formulate an awareness of, and to gain a measure of mastery over, their changing world.¹⁶

diff. subject positions

The colonization of consciousness involved immense social and cultural changes, not only at the level of production, but at the very core of black consciousness. Thus colonialism in alliance with missionary ideology, undertook the task of colonizing black culture as part of a plan to assume social control of black people. This control was institutionalized through acceptable western performance structures used in religion and education. In addition missionaries believed that "[t]he Kafir people as a nation [were]

deficient in poetry and music, and the deafening howl of...women making music for the dancers was part of a chain of heathen customs and practices."¹⁷

Despite attempts made by missionaries to use culture as a means of social control, black people were not passive recipients. Instead they actively sought to expropriate these same cultural structures into "covert expression[s] of protest against colonial rule."¹⁸

Unbeknown to the missionaries, one of the most effective vehicles of black political discourse was the repertory of European hymnody, because it was veiled in metaphors and euphemism. The power of resistance in hymns and other church related performances was therefore textual. Black Christians used European melodies and attached their own meanings to the texts as a vehicle for political expression and resistance.

gospel
songs
hymns

Not all black people were connected to the mission. Those who were not absorbed into the mission, maintained their traditional socio-political structures and practices.

In the villages of the red-blanket Africans, many of whom were our relatives, another drama of life was being played out. This was another world, a world of people stubbornly refusing to be touched by the new influences of school and church. This was a world of traditional ceremonies.¹⁹

Nevertheless, because of the increased contact between rural and growing urban communities, western cultural influences were inevitable. The shift toward a market related economy, and the beginning of diamond and gold mining, in 1867 and 1886 respectively, were largely responsible for the flow of workers between rural and urban centers. As the needs of black people shifted with this social change, particularly in the urban areas, so too did socio-political discourse.

Izibongo (praise poems), work songs, and other song and dance forms thus developed to accommodate the emerging complexities in socio-political developments. Although

performances in urban areas were not set in traditional performance contexts, the semantic composition remained more or less intact. In view of my objective to establish an historical association between traditional political discourse and the *toyi-toyi*, I shall privilege the *izibongo* and work song performance modes.

The Construction of Forces of Oppression Specific to Women.

As I mentioned above, urban industrial developments contributed towards urban-rural cultural exchange. These developments, however, gradually marginalized black women's social, political and economic role.

Even though black men were drawn into productive and economic developments in the early 1900's, their traditional social and political power was marginalized and confined to certain areas. Some black men sought to penetrate colonial imperialism and political structures as a way of regaining a measure of political and social security. They succeeded in permeating the system, because "the remedies they put forward to combat their losing control were fed into the colonial system and emerged as applicable customary law."²⁰ Since colonial rule recognized male authority:

[W]omen were not able to take advantage of a period of redefinition of relationships, because it was male claims which were legitimated as customary law. Because recognition as customs was virtually the only way in which Africans could impose their social aims upon the colonial order, women's claims were almost by definition non-traditional, and could not be made effective.²¹

I feel the extent to which women were traditionally oppressed, or our understanding of "traditional society" as it was interpreted by authorities under colonial rule is unclear. It was decided, however, that black women did enjoy relative economic power, hence some autonomy in traditional society.²² Family life and home were well defined in terms of space. Women occupied this space freely, until colonial rule set out to redefine this

space by incorporating a male perspective of "customary law" into the colonial political system.

Furthermore, colonial rule benefitted from mission socialization processes, of the gendered body, that were already in progress. This made it possible to establish traditional male authority - empowering men to control women and their families. As a result, segregated gender spaces could be entrenched, in accordance with the colonial division of labour and social organization. These divisions were well suited to commoditization of production and trade, and the rapid growth of the mining industry.

There were some headmen, who tried to restore "traditional customs," in terms of women's public and private space. From the following report by Sgt. Harrison,²³ it is clear that women still held control over agriculture, hence land, after the death of their husband in the early 1900s. Colonial authorities, however, used their power to override this tradition in favour of male productivity and control. ²⁴

[I]t appears that the widows of the late Raraba are suffering persecution at the hands of their brother-in-lawThe district headman, Nkantolo reported having fined Mboza [brother-in-law] for planting in the gardens belonging to Raraba's widows.....The magistrate ordered Nkantolo to pay in the fine he had imposed telling him he had no jurisdiction in such cases.²⁵

Although black women were the most affected by this period of transition, black people were all affected by social and political redefinition, of self and society, through colonization.

While some chiefs resisted colonial infiltration, others elected to work in accordance with colonial authority. Sgt. Harrison documented that Chief Mqawe tried to unite all the chiefs against colonial rule over the issue of hut taxation. Headmen advised chiefs on such social and political issues. Nkisimana's (Chief Mqawe's headman) response to

Gender
spaces

Chief Mqawe's actions, indicated his support for the government, "You must not defy your father. The government is your father, and it is you who will be punished if you do so; the people will not be punished."²⁶ Chief Mqawe, asserted his opposition on this matter, and sent word "to the magistrate that his people were unable to pay."²⁷

Alternately, chiefs who accepted colonialism, and therefore oppression, were ruthlessly criticized by their people. They were frequently reproached by an *imbongi* (poet), who warned him of the consequences such dealings would have for his people. The *izibongo* below articulated such criticism, using metaphoric expression of rain to suggest the chief's ignoble conduct.²⁸

What manner of rain is this we have this day-
This rain that moistens only rainless lands?
Alas! We die of drought, we simple fools
Who thought today we lived in rainy land!²⁹

Industrial Capitalism and the Rise of Legalized State Oppression.

While black people were undergoing great social and political change, Afrikaners and British were engaged in continued conflict over economic and political control of the colonies. Despite white economic conflict, socio-political and economic developments in the British colonies increasingly moved toward racial patterns dominated by white power and privilege. In 1910 the four British colonies were united into the existing provinces of South Africa today, and given internal self-rule. From the moment the Union was established, the white government acted to protect the interests of the white voters and to ensure their continued support.

The mining industry played a significant role in the political developments during the first part of the 1900s. "[T]he forms of exploitation and relations which developed in the gold mining industry largely shaped the development of labour practices and social

relations in other sectors."³⁰ Davies states that the mining industry was largely responsible for the development of exploitation and oppression of black people specific to South Africa.³¹

Although colonialism had established racial and gender oppressive socialization strategies, the mining industry could develop these into what Davies calls "their modern form - the migrant labour system, the pass laws, job colour bars, the racial division of labour."³² Migrant labour policies were the answer to the monopoly and control of an uncompetitive but cheap labour market. With the introduction of pass laws as a means of influx control of black people to urban areas, mining companies were guaranteed a large reserve of cheap labour. These systems and laws were also incorporated into industry (1910-1940) and agriculture (1920).

Women did not feature in formal economic structures at this time, as they were assigned, by colonialism, to domestic affairs. "Native reserves" were established for the expatriation of black women, children and the elderly. These reserves were initially "areas of land where peasant resistance had succeeded in preventing total colonial expropriation, and which were later designed as the only areas of the country in which Africans could own land."³³ Some years later these reserves were developed into a structure which could support the whole apartheid ideology. "The first systematic implementation of a Reserve policy occurred in the Natal Colony [just before the end of the 1800s], ...This policy was extended on a national basis by the 1913 Natives Land Act."³⁴

Women and children were restricted to rural areas or reserves allocated to them. They were instructed to establish subsistence farming communities, to support their families and so ensure future labour for the mining companies. "The reproductive role of women play[ed] a crucial part in maintaining or transforming the social and economic

relationships of any society."³⁵ As Davies maintains, in socio-economic terms the role of the reserves, later known as Bantustans, was to create a reservoir of constant cheap labour, which could be easily controlled by autocratic laws imposed upon them.³⁶

The harsh conditions of the reserves coupled with migrant labour policies effectively uprooted the traditional black extended family. On the one hand the state broke down the composition and function of the extended family, while on the other hand they wanted women to maintain traditional customs and values. Strong contradictions clearly undermined the future of such communities, and specifically the degeneration of women's autonomy.



Women's deteriorating status was part of the overall impoverishment of the rural areas. Women's traditional role as cultivators had given them a limited degree of status and recognition within the family....widows often experienced a rapid decline in status and respect. [Due to sons/brothers-in-laws competing for land]³⁷

Urbanization.

Because of the impoverished conditions in the rural areas, between 1911 and 1960 black men and women moved to urban areas (despite the above mentioned control regulations). Women traded as vendors, opened *shebeens* where they sold illegally brewed beer, or were forced into prostitution and domestic service. Men usually found work on the mines and large industries. To regulate black urbanization, the Union of South Africa imposed the pass laws. With the pass system the government could control where black people lived and worked well as controlling the influx of individuals to urban areas. Passes contained a black person's work history which included past and present employers, the dates of contracts, wages, taxes and their character as interpreted by these employers. Without a pass black people faced imprisonment or a fine and they were deported back to their respective homelands. Coupled with the 1913 Land Act, pass

laws dehumanized black people, stripping them of personal autonomy, freedom of movement and speech, as well as access to public space and political discourse.

Organized Resistance.

Great change had come over black people's socio-political structures during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The traditional political system was crumbling. Customs were modified in accordance with emerging urban economic and social developments. This was reflected in the composition of early black political organizations that emerged in response to the increased white political and economical domination. These organizations were usually made up of small regional groups of educated black males, who assimilated new western norms in education, religion, economy and social etiquette.

The powerful impact of Christian missions on African politics was reflected in the educational backgrounds of the first generations of westernized political leaders, their temperateness and respect for constitutional propriety, and the strong moral assertions embodied in their political demands.³⁸

Black leaders from numerous black political organizations united in January 1912, to form the South African Native National Congress (SANNAC). Despite the fact that women were present at the opening meeting, and despite the fact that they were already actively committed to passive resistance, they could not become full members of the organization. Pixley Seme stated in his opening speech at the formation of SANNAC:

Chiefs of Royal Blood and gentlemen of our race....we have discovered that in the land of our birth, Africans are treated as hewers of wood and drawers of water. The white people in this country have formed what is known as the Union of South Africa - a Union in which we have no voice in the making of laws. We have called you therefore to this conference so that we can together devise ways and means of forming our national union for the purpose of creating national unity and defending our rights and privileges.³⁹

"Our rights and privileges" did not include black women. SANNAC left women right out of their agenda. They were only concerned with their (male) right to vote, own property and further their social standing. At that time black political movements generally excluded women from full membership and political participation.⁴⁰ The political exclusion of women, however, was embedded in colonial political practice.⁴¹ Their political ideologies were rooted in the patriarchal imperialism of colonialism. In this regard SANNAC was "seeking to *extend* rather than *overthrow* the existing power base in society, so as to incorporate themselves."⁴²

Although Coloured and Indian people suffered much the same racial oppression, they united under different political organizations. The African Political Organization (APO), a Coloured movement, under Dr. Abdurahman, extensively promoted passive resistance in their newspaper. Wells maintains that Abdurahman's views and insistence on passive resistance influenced black women's resistance strategies a few years later in the Orange River Colony (Orange Free State).⁴³

I feel it was precisely because black women were excluded from petition-politics of the time, that they were more disposed to mass action than men. Despite this marginalization, black women organized themselves in the forefront of mass action. The most pressing issue for them, at that time, was resisting pass laws.

Women and Organized Resistance over Pass Laws.

Initially not all women had to carry passes. Due to the sudden increase in urbanization from the beginning of 1900, white authorities tried to control the influx of black people, especially women and children, into urban areas. According to Wells, municipal authorities claimed that they introduced passes for women in 1913 as a measure to

Early
women's
resistance

counter illegal brewing and prostitution. "In practice it was clear that pass laws were used primarily to regulate the terms of domestic service and as a lever to coerce home-based workers into domestic service."⁴⁴

Wells says black women often obtained passes by providing prostitution services for white men. White men could notify Location Superintendents of alleged employment, and so gain passes for these women without further question. Wells further maintains that many legitimate domestic workers were often forced into sexual activities with their white employer, in order to maintain the passes to which they were legally entitled.⁴⁵

In addition, women were unprotected from sexual assault by black and white policemen, who would specifically wait for women, regardless of whether their passes were valid, to search them, often ending in rape. "In its worst form, the residential pass system made it unsafe for women to be almost anywhere in town."⁴⁶

Resistance to pass laws reflects those times when the relationship between the rulers and the ruled reached a crisis.... When it was women who resisted, it was because the crisis reached the inner sanctum of the home and family life.⁴⁷

In 1912, the women in the Orange Free State started campaigning against passes. They tried to draw the minister of Native Affairs Henry Burton's attention to the perilous conditions passes created for women. Dissatisfied with Burton's response, a delegation of six women left for Cape Town to redress the situation themselves, and present him with a petition signed by 5000 women.⁴⁸ Male leaders from both SANNC and the APO criticized these women for not consulting with them before they embarked on such a mission.

Despite women's concerted effort and commitment to resisting passes, nothing changed. Instead, by the beginning of 1913 the situation had deteriorated dramatically. The

number of women being arrested for pass violations had increased. By the end of May 1913, the women decided to take further action. But they emphatically refused to carry passes, and even tore up passes in defiance. This period of resistance came to a head in mid-June 1913 in Bloemfontein when, according to the African Political Organization's newspaper roughly six hundred women marched to the magistrates office. They were shouting, singing and dancing on their way.⁴⁹

Too long have they submitted
To white malignity;
No passes would they carry,
But assert their dignity.
They vowed no more to fawn and cringe,
Nor creep to the tyrant's power; But to proclaim their
womanhood,
Their inherent, God-given power.⁵⁰

The police tried to maintain control over the women, but ended up in open conflict with them.

In spite of the women's continued efforts to lobby against passes, the outbreak of the First World War prompted SANNC to relinquish "any political confrontation" - and thus ended the women's anti-pass campaign for the time being.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the anti-pass campaigns of the early 1900's played a major role in putting women on the political map. Walker writes that the formation of the "Bantu Women's League" in 1913, stemmed from these campaigns. In spite of the women's political activities and influence, SANNC, APO and the ANC, denied women majority rights, limiting their role in these organizations. Walker states that "[i]n terms of the ANC constitution drawn up and adopted in 1919, women were accorded the status of 'auxiliary membership' only."⁵²

The Poor White Question.

Apartheid was based on the need for affirmative action, so as to eliminate the growing poverty of white Afrikaners. Through the early 1900's "ran the growing realization that the Native Question, ...was really the other side of the problem of the poor whites."⁵³ It was this realization, largely born out of fear, that was responsible for the growing black racism. Some years later Hertzog told Edwin Mofutsanyana (ANC Executive), "When I walk in Europe I felt free, but every time I came back I was always worried because one day we [whites] shall be overwhelmed by them [black]."⁵⁴

The Johannesburg Local Government Commission, commonly referred to as the Stallard Commission, articulated white interests and fears in the face of an ever growing black work force. Davies writes that in 1922 the Commission declared black people would not be entitled to permanent residence in the towns, as white people would enjoy exclusive residency. Black people would only be permitted into town to ensure that the needs of white people were seen to. They would, however have no need to reside in white areas, as segregated townships and hostels would house black workers. As soon as black people had no further function in town, they would be deported to the reserves. Thus, pass laws remained essential to the control of black urbanization.⁵⁵

Consequently the Interdepartmental Pass Law Committee had been investigating the outcome of pass laws for women after the unrest in 1913. Wells stated that their report disclosed information of assault on women, and the resultant unrest which had resulted from the women's anti-pass campaigns. In addition they anticipated detrimental consequences to industry and mining if the women's animosity was not addressed and dealt with.⁵⁶

The Stallard Commission and the Interdepartmental Pass Committee's reports were consolidated and amended at a parliamentary sitting and introduced in 1923 as the Urban Areas Act. The Rand revolt of unskilled white workers, played a significant role in shaping the final draft. The conclusion of the sitting was that black people would have no right to permanent land ownership outside the reserves, and so were denied any possibility of a vote. Furthermore passes remained for men, but women were exempted from carrying them.

The start of a New Era: Apartheid.

The forties was a decade of severe poverty in the "Native" reserves, largely due to the poor economy as a result of the Second World War. Davies notes that the rapid growth of black proletarians and increasing militancy among the petty bourgeoisie in the cities, influenced the ANC to reorganize its internal structures and recognize women as full members.⁵⁷

For the first time, the ANC recognized the importance of obtaining franchise for all oppressed people, regardless of gender, in order to increase their support. Now mass resistance action was organized. "Following the brutal suppression of the 1946 black mineworkers' strike, even conservative bodies adopted a more confrontational stance with the state."⁵⁸

During this period of economic decline and sudden mass uprising and resistance of black people, the white community found itself in a quandary. Quite suddenly attention was focused on the emergent class struggle amongst the whites. Penetrating divisions surfaced within white political quarters, divisions which eventually "weakened the capacity of the ruling United Party to organize together all the elements of capital."⁵⁹

D.F. Malan, leader of the coalition between the Herenigde Nasionale and Afrikaner Parties, used the United Party's ambivalent position in foreign affairs and domestic policies as a criterion for his party's oppositional response. Smuts's Indian policy had received major criticism from both The committee and General Assembly of the United Nations in May 1947. Malan's election manifesto of 21 April 1948, adopted an anti-communists, but pro-British disposition. He pledged to establish policies which would favour white industrial, agricultural and economic development - ensuring the growth of white petty bourgeoisie.⁶⁰

All this was possible because of Malan's central ideology of separate development or apartheid. He presented "apartheid benevolently to the world," based on Christian principles and reasonableness.⁶¹ The apartheid policy gave the Nationalist Party enough support "to take power with a narrow parliamentary majority in May 1948."⁶² With the implementation of apartheid the regime devoted much time to separate development policies, in order to ensure apartheid's success. Through this policy of separate development the Malan government sought the "maintenance of capitalist exploitation through national oppression."⁶³

Land laws which had been consolidated in 1936 under the Natives Land and Trust Act were retained in legislation passed under the Nationalist regime after 1948. This meant that effectively, the majority of people residing in South Africa had to "develop" barren reserves, which made up 13% of the total land area. Furthermore they were prohibited from acquiring or living on land outside these areas, unless they had prior permission as migrant workers. Amendment were passed in 1954 and 1964 to tighten up any loop holes remained.

For the majority of black people, 1948 was remembered as a grave and harsh year. Racism and sexism were entrenched in apartheid legislation, which formed the basis for

state control of the body. Thus, for them it was dehumanizing, their bodies were objectified in order for the government to implement apartheid. Adding to this was the legislation of the Group Areas Act on 1950. Black people were faced with total segregation, public and private spatial restraint, job colour bars, influx control, to mention but a few of the laws entrenched to control their lives.

According to women I spoke to in Durban and the Natal midlands, apartheid equalled even greater pain for women. One elderly woman even shed tears whilst recollecting those painful memories with me. But she remarked the women were not about to give up. Frances Baard prominent woman in South African resistance politics had the following to say:

In 1948, the same year I joined the ANC and the trade union, the Nationalists won the election and they became the government. That was a very bad thing and we all knew, no, things were going to be worse for us all now that the Nationalists are boss. We knew now we were going to have to work very hard to change things and make things how we want them.⁶⁴

The Development of Mass Resistance.

From then on many black (which includes Indian and coloured) women became increasingly active. Politics had invaded their home and made survival almost impossible. The ANC Women's League became the driving force behind mobilizing large scale defiance campaigns among black people in the townships. This led to the national defiance campaign organized by the ANC in association with the Indian Congress in 1952. They targeted the Group Areas Act, Bantu Authorities Act, Suppression of Communism Act, pass laws, Urban Areas Act, to name but a few. Baard maintained if black people all broke the repressive laws, the government would eventually have to remove them.⁶⁵

We broke lots of laws during that time. You go to a shop and you see a sign there 'Whites Only,' so then you go into that shop...But it was very well organized, who is going to defy, and where they must go....We use to tell the police there will be so many people at such and such a place (usually just a small group) only and they are going to break the law, so that they could be there to arrest them.⁶⁶

Despite the combined efforts of the ANC and ANC Women's League, the government took action, and toward the end of 1952, violent clashes occurred in Port Elizabeth and East London, between the police and protesters. "But with this trouble the police shot some people..then the people were very angry and things got very bad."⁶⁷ After these events a curfew was implemented and meetings were banned until things quieted down again.

In 1953, the government passed the Bantu Education Act, which empowered authorities in the Department of Bantu Education to draft and implement an inferior education syllabus for black children. Dr H.F. Verwoerd stated

There is no place for him [black people] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour...for that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aims absorption in the European community...Until now he had been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the greener pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to graze.⁶⁸

Lilian Ngoyi said, "The Bantu Education Act will make African mothers like fowls who lay eggs for other people to take away and make what they like with them."⁶⁹

Furthermore, Ida Adams said black teachers would face a precarious future, as opportunities for employment at mission or private schools, were by then already hard to come by. In addition the government stated that if black teachers decided against government education service, they would be barred from obtaining teaching posts in future government schools.⁷⁰

Formation of Women's Organizations.

The Federation of South African Women (FSAW) was formed under the vision and leadership of women such as Lilian Ngoyi, Florence Mkhize, Ray Alexander, Helen Joseph, Rahima Moosa, Elizabeth Mafekeng and Frances Baard, in April 1954. Their motivation to establish a national women's organization was two-fold - liberation from racial and gendered oppression. Furthermore it became imperative for women to mobilize as part of the broader liberation struggle. As a FSAW document of the 1950s puts it

Many men who are politically active and progressive in outlook still follow the tradition that women should take no part in politics and a great resentment exists towards women who seek independent activities or even express independent options.⁷¹

To add to their burden, the Minister of Native Affairs confirmed that by January 1956, all women would have to carry passes. Women feared his statement, as they were aware of the social and emotional damage passes had had on them in the past.

Thus once again, the women took to public space and mobilized massive anti-pass resistance campaigns under the banner of FSAW, reaching a milestone in women's resistance politics on the 9th August 1956. Historically, black women had always stood together when challenging state power. One of the main organizers, and leader, Lilian Ngoyi said:

Men are born into the system and it has become a life tradition that they carry passes. We as women have seen the treatment our men have - when they leave home in the morning you are not sure if they will come back. If the husband is to be arrested, and the mother, what about the child?⁷²

For those women who participated or witnessed the event, it was one of the most memorable occasions, when they publicly marched in small groups to the Union Buildings in Pretoria to see Prime Minister J.G.Strydom. They gathered at the amphitheatre just below the Union Building, while Lilian Ngoyi and other leaders went up to the Building to leave thousands of signed petitions for the Prime Minister - who was, however, "unavailable" to see them. Ngoyi returned and told the crowd of women that "Strydom is too much of a coward to meet with us."⁷³

They then stood in silence for thirty minutes to salute the congress, after which they sang both anthems, *Nkosi Sikelel iAfrica* and *Morena Boloka*. "The singing as they dispersed, echoed over the city, and the women began a new freedom song with its refrain."⁷⁴

Wena Strydom, wa'thinthabafazi, wathint'embokotho
uzokufa.

You Strydom, you have touched the women, you have
struck a rock, you have dislodged a boulder, you will die
[be crushed].⁷⁵

Many women who participated, including Baard, did not find Strydom's death unexpected - "Of course he did die not long after that."⁷⁶ Even though Strydom's death may have been a mere coincidence, it instilled in women a strong sense of their own power and wisdom.

Natal Women and Resistance.

The 1950s saw women's resistance movements grow on a national level. Natal women were also involved in resistance actions. They were not afraid to confront government officials, especially concerning pass laws. (In January 1957 a deputation of women from all races, told the chief native commissioner, Mr AJ Turton, in Pietermaritzburg, that by extending pass laws to black women the government "would give itself a means of getting at the African women political leaders - who were not criminals."⁷⁷

We believe that issuing passes to Native women is a means of getting at that element in the community, the decent people who have committed no crimes, but are protesting against oppression.⁷⁸

Later the same day, about a 100 women, marched through the streets of Pietermaritzburg, protesting against the issuing of passes to black women. The Mercury also stated that women wearing mortar boards and the yellow, black and green colours of the ANC, were leading the gathering in African songs.⁷⁹

A few years later in June 1959, women living in Cato Manor, Durban, started rioting after police destroyed their liquor stills. Totally unplanned, protests and rioting spread throughout Natal. Although these riots were not initially part of the ANC's national resistance campaign, they were eventually incorporated into the campaign.

Unlike most other townships, Cato Manor was completely unplanned, and as a result of its spontaneous creation far less controlled and policed. Living conditions were poor, with minimal sanitation facilities. The first settlement began around 1927, with black people renting from Indian landlords. Cato Manor shack development continued in step with Durban industrial development. Women survived by running *shebeens* and brewed illegal beer, while others engaged in petty trade or domestic service. In 1959 municipal officials were ordered to destroy all illegal brewing stills. The unrest that followed had many underlying socio-political dimensions. Firstly women were outraged with their men for supporting municipal beer-halls instead of supporting them. Not only did this deprive women of their only income, but according to the women it was not in keeping with tradition. This in turn created weak links in an already unstable social order. "The brewing of liquor was the full-time occupation of these women and when this avenue was closed to them their incomes were taken away and they had to protest."⁸⁰

The first action we took.....it was the beer halls. We had to close the beer halls. <Why?> It was because our husbands who use not to come home early and when coming home they use to come drunk, and they were useless to the family. And there was no money. They couldn't support the families because of these beer halls.⁸¹

Police reaction was brutal, and at times fatal. According to a Mercury article, women "refused to hand over their weapons. "They swung their sticks in the faces of policemen and lifted their dresses to the policemen as they danced." The policemen found the women's actions threatening, justifying arrest by force and placing them in troop carriers.⁸²

Yes, I remember there were quite a number of incidents at that time, there was even shooting by the police. Quite a number of people died. I would quote one beer hall that there was here at Cato Manor called "Gezazandla," some shooting went on there, some people died.⁸³

The situation was inflammatory and tense at the beer halls in and around Durban. A police force was used to arrest the women in order to bring them to court and charge them with public violence. According to evidence given at the trial of the 29 arrested women on 19 June:

Head constable Botes said he did not see any women hit a policeman. "If one of them had injured a policeman there would have been much bigger trouble." (Cross examination on trial)

He said that "some of the women danced about, jumped in the air, turned their backs on the police and lifted their dresses."⁸⁴

Florence Mkhize, secretary of the Women's League of the ANC in Natal and Dorothy Nyembe, the chairperson, were two women who played a prominent role in mobilizing women into taking action in Natal. Their strength was an inspiration to many.

On the 17 August 1959 in the village of St Faith's, near Port Shepstone, more than 1,200 black women demonstrated against the poll tax and pass laws.⁸⁵ Police armed with

"sten guns and rifles with bayonets fixed, stood by as Native women from St Faith's and the surrounding districts poured into an open area in the front of the small police station."⁸⁶ The women's demonstrations were described by the Mercury as wild and frenzied.

The leader of the demonstrating women, dressed in the uniform of the ANC, came forward to air the mob's grievances to Lieut. C. Groenewald.....Women dressed in the uniform of the ANC led the crowd in singing and chanting and the ground reverberated to the thud of their sticks beating time to the singing.....Just before noon the group gathered in a circle and prayed. They became orderly, reciting Christian prayers.....Singing the congress songs the crowd gradually dispersed.⁸⁷

During a Pan African Congress anti-pass campaign in March 1960, Natal women braved police rifles and protested against pass laws. While protesting they sang Nkosi sikeleli iAfrica and prayed. On arrival the police gave the women 3 minutes to disperse, nevertheless while people were still standing about the police started hitting them.⁸⁸

Sharpeville.

The protests continued, but the state tightened their position and in the end women were forced to take out passes. Laws and regulations were tightened up and made more effective under amendments and new acts passed in the 1960s. "The greater the unrest in South Africa, the more fervent the government's repressive measures [became]."⁸⁹

In 1960 the government shocked resisters, when on the 21 March, in Sharpeville, sixty-nine peaceful protesters were shot down by the police. Preceding this event, in 1959 the ANC called for increased defiance of passes. Men and women were asked to join in a national demonstration of civil disobedience. On the 31 March 1960, all black people were to march to their local police station without their passes.

discuss
protest

Ten days before this date, the PAC launched a counter anti-pass campaign. As part of this campaign, black residents from the Vereeniging township presented themselves at the police station without their passes. The police gave the protesters three minutes to disperse, yet without warning open fired on the crowd. Most of the people were shot in the back, including children. After the massacre riots swept the country, creating a national political crisis. The government responded by declaring a state of emergency. They introduced the Unlawful Organizations Act which empowered the regime to ban the ANC, PAC and any other organization which might oppose apartheid. Furthermore the penalty for furthering the aims of these organization, under this Act, would be imprisonment for any thing up to ten years.

The government tightened up its control, amending and legislating new security acts. In addition, detention without trial was legalized, which provided for up to 90 days detention, in isolation, without access to the courts, for the purpose of interrogation. The 90 day clause was initially introduced, but in 1965 the 180 day clause was added as an alternative. The police and regime could imprison any person, regardless of age or gender, who engaged in activities which posed a threat to stability and the government.

Resistance Movements Move Underground.

These events marked the turning point in national resistance movements. The banning of anti-apartheid organizations forced them underground. For a while their morale weakened, as threats of detention and torture became a personal reality to all who opposed the South African government. In spite of this, those people who remained in the ANC implemented the M-plan. This plan devised by Mandela, as a safeguard against the ANC dissipating completely in the event of government interdiction.

Even though membership dwindled considerably, the ANC managed to mobilize its armed struggle and sabotage plans. In alliance with the South African Communist Party, the ANC formed *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK), its military wing. "Between the anvil of united mass action and the hammer of the armed struggle we shall crush apartheid."⁹⁰ Thousands of young black men and women left the country to seek military training.

Those who stayed behind engaged in nationwide resistance protests and sabotage acts. Bishop Tutu said in an interview that there "is a new breed of children....they believe they're going to die, and the frightening thing is they don't care....In their view the only language the government understands is violence."⁹¹

Despite calls for peaceful change from some quarters, the youth felt that peaceful change had become impossible as the government always responded with violence. "We'll show what violence has done."⁹² This is clearly reflected in the freedom song below.

Our Father who art in heaven
 Hallowed be thy name
 Thy freedom come
 Thy will be done in South Africa
 As it is in Lusaka
 Give us those weapons
 Our daily military training
 And forgive the South Africans our leaders
 And lead us not to apartheid
 for there is the kingdom
 the power and the victory
 Aluta Continua.⁹³

But in "July 1963 the underground network of the ANC and MK was effectively broken in a raid on the Rivonia underground headquarters."⁹⁴ As a result of their active participation in MK, and the ANC, leaders Mandela, Sisulu and Govan Mbeki were sentenced to life imprisonment after a drawn-out hearing which became known as the Rivonia trial.

Even though the ANC was crippled with the loss of such prominent leaders, they endeavored to carry liberation forward. At a conference held at Morogoro in Tanzania in 1969 a policy, which opened the membership of the ANC up to all people opposed to the apartheid regime, regardless of race or gender, was adopted. The main aim of the policy "was to unite together on as broad as possible a front of democratic, progressive forces to overthrow the apartheid state."⁹⁵

women
5/17

The FSAW was never officially banned, although public gatherings or meetings were prohibited under the emergency regulations. Furthermore most of the key figures were under house arrest, detained, restricted and forced into exile. Even though, under these circumstances, it was very difficult to function as an organization, members nevertheless continued to mobilize for various non-violent activities.

One such task was to introduce community based organizations, known as clubs called "Save Our Families Clubs." These organizations were considered "as a direct replacement of the ANCWL's branch organization."⁹⁶ Natal boasted the second highest number of clubs in the country. I feel this was most likely due to the politicizing effects the 1959 beerhall resistance actions had on women in Natal.

For white South African the "real golden age" of apartheid started to flourish from about 1963, and continued to do so until about 1972. Enforced stability ensured economic development. It also saw massive deportation of black people, especially women to the homelands as "industry and agriculture underwent rapid mechanization."⁹⁷ The state became intransigent with their separate development strategies, justifying the "good in apartheid." Jaap Marais (National Party MP 1958-69) said in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation that separate development was a prerequisite for

survival, "it was an act of self defense."⁹⁸ Questioned on the humane aspect of apartheid he replied "one has to do some unpleasant things to be kind."

The signs and symbols of apartheid were displayed publicly. Public space was privilege, it belonged to the regime and its white electorate, and was controlled by them. Victoria Mehlomakulu said in a speech at the 1980 Copenhagen Conference of the ANC, that the general physical and mental health of black people, especially women were very poor, due to extreme impoverishment in the homelands and in urban areas.

This we believe is a political strategy by the racist government to keep the masses sick, debilitated mentally and educationally, physically retardedso that their oppression can be easily perpetuated.⁹⁹

The Birth of Black Consciousness.

The seventies saw a revival of mass struggles, but with increased militancy. A powerful political philosophical development was the growth of the Black Consciousness movement. Angered by their total dispossession, young black men and women sought ways of reclaiming their human dignity embodied in a new cognitive black ideology. The movement was dominated by a new generation of student activists, with Steve Biko as a key figure, seeking to exclude all white sympathizers from active involvement in the black liberation struggle. They maintained that "whites should "fight for their own freedom, educate their white brothers and serve as lubricating material."¹⁰⁰

Biko wanted to establish 'black communalism' which would in reality be a "modified version of traditional African economic life...with some state regulation of key sectors," such as industry and major corporations. ¹⁰¹

The first indication that the state was losing control of the economic structure of apartheid came with the the mass strikes which began in Durban at the end of 1972, and

which subsequently spread throughout the country. The Durban strikes were largely spontaneous in character, and on such a large scale that the state could not respond adequately with arrests and dismissals. The fundamental issue in the strike action was the extremely low wages black workers were paid at the time of sharp increases in the price of market goods.

Trade union organizations began to emerge nationally in support of mass action and strikes. They also adopted an increasingly militant stance. By 1975 these unions were "putting forward the demand to organize as well as demands over wages and working conditions."¹⁰² The rapid increase in mass mobilization in these trade unions, spilt over into a number of other resistance organizations whose leaders realized "the need to turn to the oppressed communities and develop a mass base."¹⁰³

Soweto.

Students, particularly school children, were also mobilizing. They became one of the most militant divisions in the mass based liberation movement. "With the formation of locally based Student's Representative Councils in many areas, the BCM played a crucial role in pushing forward a struggle against the imposition of Afrikaans" the primary medium of instruction in black education.¹⁰⁴

The children in Soweto responded with a peaceful mass demonstration on 16 June 1976. They were gunned down by the South African Defence Force. "The voices of these children could be heard throughout the country."¹⁰⁵

The 1976 protest ushered in a new beginning to the opposition to apartheid and structural violence - the birth of a generation of politicized and politically active youth. Schoolchildren now became the leaders in seeking an effective means of changing the structure in which they were trapped. What began as the protest of children

against an inadequate and racist educational system, in subsequent years broadened to encompass a fight to effect political change that would result in the transformation of South African society.¹⁰⁶

"What are they doing to our children?" cried many women. They witness how state violence had created a society filled with such violence, that children could no longer be protected by their mothers. "Brutalization of children is the brutalization of the future South African children...we must stand in solidarity with their future citizens, their black brothers and sisters."¹⁰⁷

Women saw their children dying of hunger, lack of education, police violence and social violence. Albertina Sisulu disclosed the pain that has never gone away after the government killed their children in Soweto 1976. "If the government continues killing the children, the women will become even more angry, and these are the people who will take up the struggle."¹⁰⁸

Apartheid's New Era: Adapt or Die.

In September 1978, the election of P.W. Botha as State President, marked a "new era of political alliance of monopoly capital and the military as the dominant force within the state."¹⁰⁹ It also created new ground for the constitution of a series of unexplored state policies. The Botha regime slogan "adapt or die," became fundamental to the political and economic thinking of apartheid during the eighties.

In an attempt to counter reform, the state endeavored to maximize the "ideological leadership role of the (black) petty bourgeoisie" in relation to the working class. Its aim was to confine the workers' struggles to appropriate trade unionism, and to implement a "policy of 'free enterprise' disassociated with politics," in order to weaken national liberation alliance.¹¹⁰

In 1984 Botha introduced the 'tricameral parliament', based on a new constitution, in which the House of Assembly (Whites), the House of Representatives (Coloureds) and the House of Delegates (Indians) were devised to function separately, but under the ultimate power and control of the House of Assembly.

Botha set up local authorities and councils within the townships. The government maintained that black people now had an electorate and voting power within their given areas. In return these councils would have some stake, but under the direction of white minority rule, in the political system of South Africa. Botha invested in black community Authorities the power to control townships, hoping they would create some hold over the increased mass resistance.

Botha's regime, however could not establish a large enough black petty bourgeoisie "to act as a stabilizer among the masses. Thus the state failed to overcome the organic crisis created by the apartheid system."¹¹¹ Black people knew they still had no real power and no voice. Furthermore public space was still in the hands of white minority control, which effectively meant black people had no public in South Africa.

There was a marked increase in violence between 1984 and 1986, in many of the townships. The implementation of the tricameral parliamentary system, which came into force in September 1984 provoked the initial swell. Albeit reactions to black councils and their alliance with the state was a constant spark for initiating violence. Furthermore councils added to the burden of black people by increasing rents at a time of extreme poverty and political disposition. The government's reform policies were exposed for what they stood for - the adaption of apartheid in order to save it from dying altogether.

Militarization as a Means of State Control.

The South African government, then reverted back to the only possible choice - the military as a means of control.

At the political level, militarization is indicated by the increasing use of the SADF to protect white minority rule, and in the power of the military in decision-making. It is generally agreed by analysts that the military have come to be positioned at the centre of state decision-making.... Vale [The Star 1988] took this further in 1988 to argue that the military constituted an extra-parliamentary government which actually ruled South Africa.¹¹²

Until recently, the National Security Management System (NSMS) made up the controlling body of the South African military. The State Security Council (SSC), replaced the cabinet as the most important decision making body of the NSMS. This accorded the military direct authority over administering control in decision-making policies within their and immediate political structures. The SADF became a means to an end - perpetuating the apartheid system.¹¹³

"In this process of repression, the Defense force has come to be an important agency of political violence."¹¹⁴ Both the SADF and SAP had the power to shoot and kill, in the event of a riotous crowd failing to disperse, or willfully prolonging dispersion as an act of agitation.

In addition the SAP had the power to increase instances of interrogation and acts of torture in detention, without state intervention. "Torture [became] an important element of modern counter-revolutionary war.....[it was] an effective instrument of social atomization, a function which may be more important than obtaining information."¹¹⁵

Vigilantes as a disorganizing force represents a shift away from the reliance on the SADF and the SAP to suppress black resistance. It is crucial to appreciate that this shift is

part of the military strategy.....the effect of this type of violence is to spread extreme fear. This fear becomes widespread when the pattern of violence is arbitrary, and seems to be directed not only against anti-apartheid activists but also ordinary township residents.¹¹⁶

Militant Resistance.

Two forms of resistance violence prevailed in South Africa in the eighties. Firstly the armed struggle of the ANC had moved within the parameters of South African society. It "was part of an expansive strategy of political mobilization, which was adopted by the ANC at the Kabwe Conference in 1985."¹¹⁷ Violent acts were aimed "mainly against military and collaborationist targets."¹¹⁸

Secondly increased activities within the ranks of unemployed militant youths led to so-called "counter-violent" acts. Their attempt "to neutralize state control and violence in the townships" led to "cruel acts of political violence in the name of liberation."¹¹⁹ Youngsters took to the streets, in an attempt to dispose of state "puppets" and *impimpi* (informers). They were seen as part of the apartheid system, collaborating with the SADF in violent attacks against black people. Counter-violent acts in these instances would include burning or stoning to death or necklacing the *impimpi*.

Resistance stratagems, however, also incorporated the development of a wide range of democratic organizations and of a popular resistance culture, which promoted unity and solidarity among black people. The *toyi-toyi* performance developed the broadest base in popular culture in the eighties. It catapulted black resistance culture back into the heart of the public domain.

For the first time in the history of apartheid, the regime was faced with the full impact of "the people's power."¹²⁰ Students and militant youths attacked anything associated with white rule. They burnt schools, destroyed shops and government buildings. They wanted an end to apartheid.

Yet again the state responded with violence, detentions, curfews - using the military as the mechanism of implication. Nonetheless by 1985 the political crisis in South Africa reached a critical point for the state. Their carefully worked out strategy of adapting apartheid without abolishing it was backfiring, forcing the state to implement the State of Emergency.

But black men and women were tired of the injustices they had had to suffer, because white minority rule could not recognize that it was time to give up apartheid. Mr Phuneo lost his 12 year-old son Godfery who was killed at school by the SADF. He said, "We've got voices, but nobody listens...I want to live in peace. I'm afraid, I don't know what's going to happen next time."¹²¹ But Mr Phuneo knew that more killings awaited black people. An unnamed undertaker opened his books to reveal the names of 34 children he had buried. "If a child has done wrong, why shoot, why not chaise."¹²² After losing a close friend, a young girl decided to join the struggle. Her father was afraid for her life, but she assured him that the liberation of the people was the most important thing in her life now. "Death is the price I have to pay for liberation."¹²³

The SADF was sent into a number of townships, to "contain" the violence. Both the SADF and SAP were constantly engaged in operations that included house-to-house searches, cordoning off the entrances to townships and constantly maintaining a militant stance within the townships. They entered and assumed control of almost all areas of black existence, including health, housing, labour, and education.

Political Funerals.

I feel that the reverberations set in motion by continual prohibitions will always find a cultural outlet. Ritual or religious structures are bound to facilitate political discourse

and provided spaces of sanctuary. In this regard funerals of political victims became indispensable for mobilizing blacks in the struggle against apartheid.

funerals

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[N]ot even the State of Emergency has blunted the impact of funerals as a politicising experience for the blacks who turn up in the thousands to pay homage to the dead as martyrs and heroes of the "freedom struggle."¹²⁴

toy-toyi

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On the contrary, the State of Emergency had compelled mourners to seek political refuge in funeral performance and religious structures. Weekly Mail political journalists had noticed a marked difference between the last and the first funeral after the implementation of the State of Emergency.¹²⁵ Political symbols were constructed within the funeral rite, as well as in poems and songs performed at the funeral. Mourners were summoned to join the struggle and fight for the liberation of South Africa. Here, as in most political events during the eighties, the *toy-toyi* played a dominant role.

Thousands of feet stamped out a rhythm of defiance as people chorused praises of the ANC leaders Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo, and warnings to President PW Botha to heed the tide of history before it is too late.¹²⁶

More importantly, the *toy-toyi* empowered the mourners to express their anger and pain. Usually the performance took on a very militant facade, which I feel was partly in response to the SADF and SAP lack of reverence for the dead. Poems and freedom songs provided for political proselytization, especially with regard to the armed struggle. During the funeral of ANC leaders Matthew Goniwe, Sparrow Mkhonto, Fort Calata, the following poem was recited.¹²⁷

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God forgives. I don't.
Africa do something.
The spear has fallen.
Pick it up.
Fight side by side
for a non-racial South Africa.¹²⁸

On 21 March 1985 twenty black people were killed by the police at a funeral near Langa. Reactions to police killings were violent. Thereafter the state implemented a series of

restrictions on all funerals. From then on all open air funeral services were prohibited, as well as the burial of more than one person at a time. Furthermore only ordained ministers of religion could speak, without discussion of political issues, during funeral orations. Notably, *toyi-toying* to and from the funeral was banned. Mourners had to travel to the funeral by vehicle, along a predetermined route that was approved by the local police.¹²⁹

Political Unions.

Black workers' unions constituted an important part of the liberation struggle in the eighties. Before then unions were relatively unorganized, partly due to the fact that democratic unions after 1973 were not recognized in terms of industrial legislation. The Industrial Conciliation Act prohibited these unions to set up negotiating bodies, thus effectively devaluing their negotiating power.

Workers came to realize however, that in order to fight for their rights in the work place they had to fight both their employers and the state. It became apparent that mobilizing around better wages, working conditions and labour, was tied up with the broader spectrum of the liberation struggle. As a result most trade unions were united to form a unitary body, COSATU in November 1985. By the beginning of December that same year COSATU was legally recognised and gained some power on the negotiating front.

COSATU demanded that socio-political oppressive laws affecting the morale of black workers be abolished. Moreover a time limit was within which the government and business sector were to respond to these demands and implement changes. Within the given six month period the pass laws were finally scrapped. But South Africa still remained segregated.

It was at this point that women finally conquered the pass laws. Yet they were not free. After committing themselves to the struggle for liberation for most of the century, they were still marginalized in the ranks of the liberation movement. Some women recognized, however, the immediate need to confront their position as women, in relation not only to white oppression, but also in terms of black patriarchy. Ma Baard had vision beyond that of many organizers of her day. She had courage and strength, and she mobilized people into taking action.

We need to break down every division between men and women, by taking on problems face to face...if we don't address these problems the bosses will play the women off against the men.¹³⁰

Other women, like Jabu Ndlovu, gained much respect among the youth of Pietermaritzburg. But she still had to fight for her place at union meetings. Many women stated that their opinions were not regarded with much seriousness, especially issues specific to women. Lydia Kompe said, "I felt inferior all the time, maybe because we African women are taught to think we are inferior." But the women did not submit to their subordinate position, as Ndlovu indicated:

We started working on women's problems when we joined the union. We said equal pay for equal jobs, because we saw we were working on the same machines, were working the same hours....The company was not against that ...But in the union we have the problem that some people are still very weak. They are afraid to express themselves, saying that as women we must get this, though we are with men.¹³¹

Central to union meetings were freedom songs, poems and the *toyi-toyi*. With the help of a friend, Ndlovu formed a choir to help organize and mobilize women into taking action. "The Prestige choir came to be well known in Imbali. As the years went by, the choir sang at many rallies and cultural events."¹³² The songs they sang reflected the violence that was shattering Natal, especially the song "*Siyakhala eMgungundlovu*" (We

are crying in Maritzburg). As Ndlovo sadly reflects, "You don't know who has died or who has done the killing. That is why we are crying in Pietermaritzburg."¹³³

Dora Tamana recited the following poem, at a conference of the United Women's Organization in Cape Town. It provides a graphic insight into the growing strength and vitality of women in the liberation struggle during the 1980s.

You who have no work, speak.
You who have no homes speak.
You who have no schools, speak.
You who have to run like chickens from the vulture, speak.
Let us share our problems so that we can solve them together.
We must free ourselves.
Men and women must share housework.
Men and women must work together in the home and *out in the world*.
There are no creches and nursery schools for our children.
There are no homes for the aged.
There is no-one to care for the sick.
Women must unite to fight for these rights.
I open the road for you.
You must go forward.¹³⁴

The foundation of the United Democratic front (UDF) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in the eighties, created alternative structures of people's power. This power was effectively articulated in the peoples culture. Found on the streets, at funerals, schools, hospitals, rallies and political meetings, resistance culture was the predominant form of art during the eighties. In 1986 the ANC introduced the slogan "From ungovernability to people's power." This slogan openly empowered performers with a militant actuality, which was realized through the broader organization of performance culture.

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KULUMANI MAKHOSIKAZI: SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN SPEAK.

Women are the people who are going to relieve us from all this oppression and depression...It is the women who are on the street committees educating the people to stand up and protect each other.¹

In the 1980's women had made their voices heard in public, through the discourse of emotion embodied in mass resistance. Their pain articulated experiences of racial and gender oppression, and as such became a metaphor for their own construction of cultural truth.

Although the community as a whole [was] affected by political and economic crises, women [were] the first to feel the pinch...especially when there [was] no money to buy food or pay rent. The women [were] immediately affected by the school crisis, because it involve[ed] their children. They [were] affected by retrenchments, at their work or at their husbands' work. There [were] so many pressures forcing them to respond.²

Most women responded as they had always done in the past - they participated in mass resistance. During the eighties however, many women drawn into the struggle were young women, wanting their voice to be heard as people, and not as mothers and wives. Zandile Cele told me that she did not want to get married, because marriage and children would only serve to enhance her oppression. As a single black woman, in a society that constructs marriage as the ultimate destiny for women, she maintains she was better able to fight past notions of gender roles, and so liberate herself from these.³ Some women shared the same negative feelings toward marriage, and wanted to free themselves of additional oppressive domestic burdens, during the struggle. Although many rejected marriage, most were still committed to having children. Most women participating in the struggle were mothers, or saw themselves as potential mothers.

Women made their presence felt in society on two levels. First they removed their existence sporadically from economic oppressive structures through boycotts and

stayaways, ie absence made their presence felt. Secondly they had made their bodies visible by participation in public resistance performances. One woman told me during a *toyi-toyi* performance, that it was their way of saying to the state "you can kill our people, but you will never kill our spirit." Her words were echoed in the performance of the *toyi-toyi*, and further imprinted by the T-shirts women and men were wearing that stated, "**BANNED BUT NOT SILENCED.**"⁴

In this chapter, I will take a look at the difficulties women faced as participants of the national liberation struggle. They were the victims of an abhorrent war, which directed particular forms of violence against them because they were women. In addition to this, they were exposed to attacks on their homes and families, and had to pick up the pieces of a broken and angry community. Despite their efforts and commitment to the struggle, for which they often died, it was only the men who were praised and remembered in freedom songs and *izibongo*. My objective in this chapter is to acknowledge the role of women, and thereby enable their voices to be heard and remembered.

Women and Violence.

For some decades Natal had been savaged by violence, which escalated dramatically during the 1980s. The root cause remained unclear, but among the perceived immediate causes were the actions of the South African Defence Force (SADF) and of vigilantes. Then in 1987 the so-called *Inkatha* - United Democratic Front (UDF) war emerged as a central factor in this violence. The actual truth behind this war, consistently portrayed by the state and its functionaries as "black on black" violence, is yet to be uncovered. Nqobile and Mandla, two ANC supporters, explained to me that they felt the state, in collaboration with the SADF, was really behind the conflict between supporters of *Inkatha* and the ANC/UDF alliance.⁵ Whatever the truth behind this violence might be, communities, and particularly activists and their families, lived in constant affliction.

Women, were often specifically targeted for attacks, which frequently included rape by alleged state sponsored vigilantes and the police. "Security forces and very often, municipal police or *kitskonstables* [were] perpetrators of open brutality, random harassment, and attacks."⁶ The brutal murder of Victoria Mxenge in 1985, in Natal, for one has never been solved. She was a lawyer and leader of the United Democratic Front and Natal Organization of Women. "[F]our days before she was due to appear, on behalf of treason trialists, in the Pietermaritzburg Supreme court," she was mysteriously murdered.⁷

The devastating effects of such attacks had provoked women to adopt a more assertive disposition during protest marches. On 3 April 1990, women marched and *toyi-toyied* through Umlazi, a township just outside Durban, in protest against police and vigilante brutality.⁸ On numerous other occasions women mobilized protest campaigns against the presence of the SADF and *kitskonstables* in the townships, who they felt had instigated much of the unrest.

Women and Detention.

In the 1980s, many women were being detained for their participation in liberation movements. Jabu Ngcobo maintains that the state needed to silence the people who were fighting for the liberation of black people.⁹ As with the nature of violent attacks against, women also faced gender specific assaults in detention. Women told me that the one thing they had always feared if they were to be detained, was the possibility of being raped or sexually assaulted. Women who experienced detention maintained that police used the threat of rape, knowing that its intimidation was not idle, as a form of interrogation. Their experienced of sexual harassment, was thus on an emotional and physical level. "One common occurrence for women was sexual assault by stripping and

body searches, which included vaginal examinations."¹⁰ In addition to this, police behaved in such a way as to imply that women's menstruation was a pollutant. They deprived women of sanitary towels, or allocated an inadequate supply, which had the effect of humiliating and dehumanization. Nevertheless both forms of emotional and physical intimidation left women feeling insecure and violated.

Pregnant women were placed in an even more vulnerable position. Apart from the fact that their nutritional and medical needs were usually not seen to, they had to endure torture and interrogation similar to that of the detainees. This placed undue stress on these women and on their unborn babies, which often resulted in miscarriages. "A young woman, detained when three months pregnant, was kept in detention until almost nine months pregnant. She was interrogated with hooding and electrical shocks."¹¹ Women who did carry to full term, had to give birth under inadequate prison conditions, usually with very little medical after care.

Women's Organizations

It is empowering for women to be able to get together and discuss the things that affect them.¹²

Women did not want to marginalize themselves from other mass resistance movements. They felt however, that separate women's movements were necessary to deal with issues specific to themselves. Women needed to come together and share their experiences in detention, in unions, in the main liberation movements, on the work front and at home. This contact with others provided women with space to prepare themselves for a future democratic society, inform one another about past experiences, and in so doing help each other to cope with the trauma and pain they had had to go through. Furthermore, women needed their own space to discuss and decided on issues and problems affecting them as women, without being dominated by men.¹³

Jabu informs me that she encouraged women to join the ANC Women's League, because they had to develop the necessary skills required to take up leadership positions in organizations. To this end, women felt that they would be in a better position to challenge the political prejudices men and the state held against women. Jabu herself said that it took her "quite some time to gain confidence" before she could effectively challenge male "comrades" and their sexist attitudes towards women.¹⁴

COSATU Women and Discrimination Within the Union.

Meer writes that even though women had played a dominant role in union organizations and mobilized for change in the community, relatively few women held leadership roles.¹⁵ One of the main reasons for this may lie in the words of Lydia Kompe. She explains the difficulties she faced when she first started to work for the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU), as stated below.

In 1977 I started working for MAWU. I was the only woman organizer in MAWU in the Transvaal....It was a real problem at the beginning but I learned to live with it. I felt inferior all the time, maybe because we African women are taught to think we are inferior to men.¹⁶

Lydia Kompe maintains that men had a tendency to deride women's opinions, as they were reluctant to associate them with serious politics. "During meetings we tried to fight the undermining of women's suggestions."¹⁷ There were, however, some younger men who joined together with the women and resisted this attitude. Kompe said, initially she was always elected to purchase food or make tea for the men, at the expense of her own Union work. Eventually she spoke up, "By the end I was quite happy because organizers were prepared to share the jobs with me. I got used to resisting, saying I'm not here to become tea girl"¹⁸

It was precisely because of individuals like Lydia, that more women began to make their existence felt in union structures during the eighties. In March 1989, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) held its first National Seminar on Women. According to *Speak*, women voiced the need for female representation in leadership positions, in view of the fact that they made up a large percentage of union membership. Other issues discussed were the inclusion of equal pay for women in the Living Wage Campaign, women's right to better health facilities, housing loans for women, child care facilities, paid maternity leave, and the problem of increased violence against women.¹⁹ Discrimination and sexual harassment of women within the union itself, had also received much attention.

These issues were then put forward in a draft resolution, at the 1989 National Congress of COSATU. The congress supported the need for greater female representation in leadership positions, but male delegates rejected the motion that condemned sexual harassment of women within the organization, stating that these allegations were unfounded.²⁰

A truncated and watered-down resolution was adopted, calling for discussion of a code of conduct and the possible incorporation into the question of sexual conduct.²¹

Images of Women in Literature and Media.

In posters, pamphlets, songs and speeches... in the phases of mass popular mobilization in the 1950s and again in the 1970s and 1980s the ANC, and the mass democratic organizations that share its aspirations, have laid much stress on the image of the mother; indeed the general appeal to all women has been in terms of their common potential experience of motherhood, although there [had] been important qualitative differences in the portrayal of the mother in the different periods.²²

Motherhood was seen as a common experience for women - an experience even they had noted in past resistance activities. During the anti-pass campaigns in the 1950s, for

example, the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW), focused on women's status as mothers, as a crucial factor in their need to abolish passes for women. They maintained that constant imprisonment meant that many children and families were left uncared for. These women proclaimed in song and slogans, "As mothers and wives we condemn the pass laws and all they imply."²³

When the ANC and other anti-apartheid movements reemerged during the 1970s, young people were more prominent in resistance campaigns.

The mother [was] an inspiration to the daughter, but it [was] the daughter who [was] the protector of the mother, and in that guise her decision to join the struggle and build a new society, becomes the mother to the future unborn generation.²⁴

Young women, however, wanted to be recognized as equal participants in the liberation movement. They wanted to establish a future society that would see women as people, and not only as mothers and symbols of male desire. During a conference held by the Congress of South African Writers (COSAW) in November 1988, delegates noted that the media often portrayed women "as sex symbols, or as mothers, but very seldom as people with a life, dreams and feelings of their own."²⁵ At this conference the women maintained that their position in society must change, "so that women [would be] free to participate in society as a whole."²⁶ It must be noted, however, that these young women also wanted the freedom to be mothers themselves, and thus be reconciled with their own mothers.

Attitudes Towards Traditional Gender Roles.

Zandile Cele said to me during an interview, "I had to liberate myself, before I could work towards the liberation of my people."²⁷ Similarly, addressing women at the 1986 National Assembly of Women, Dr. Mamphela Ramphele (community health research

officer at the University of Cape Town) said that the country would not be liberated unless the dividing mechanisms of class, race and gender were challenged. "You can remove apartheid today and this country won't change fundamentally. What has to alter is power relations."²⁸

"That women are dominated by men is an undeniable fact, both universally and historically; that women do not consciously experience it as suppression or oppression, is also a fact."²⁹ Some women, however, were not in a position to challenge their oppression. For example, women who secretly lived in male hostels, endured their oppression silently, because they were dependent on their husbands or lovers for accommodation.

Women not only reproduced labour but also played a particularly onerous nurturing role in the hostels....Nurturing also involved soothing the wounded egos of migrant men, who were both dehumanized at their workplace and looked down by many urban dwellers. Such a man was bound to be unreasonably assertive in relation to his partner....There [was] little scope for reason and discussion and women suffer[ed] assaults and other abuses silently....It [was] the only way in which this man [could] maintain some measure of control over his environment.³⁰

These power relations were not restricted to hostel dwellers, but were prevalent in communities throughout South Africa. Some women voiced their oppression through culture, as this seemed the only way to get the message across. Nise Malange told me that a group of Pondo women from *Kwa-Mashu* came to her office in need of help. Unable to explain their situation in any other way, they acted out a typical domestic scene in which men oppressed them. Not only were they able to voice their oppression, but together with Nise, sought to help other women in similar situations, through theatre.³¹

Despite Victoria Mxenge's commitment to the struggle, she was recognized only after her husband Griffiths Mxenge was murdered. Thereafter, she commanded a strong

influence over the youth, who now respected her commitment. Their admiration in part also stemmed from her ability to defend activists with much success.³²

What Were the Women Saying

Women have become very political in the last two years. They have become aware of the need to galvanise on a political level. The troops in the township and what their children are experiencing have a lot to do with it.³³

Nise told me, it was frequently the women in communities who had organized resistance campaigns, and that the men would "hide behind" them, only to "claim victory" for the outcome. During the eighties women began to question such behaviour. They had realized that their oppression was linked, not only to the laws of apartheid, but also to the structure of unequal gender relations within their communities and homes.³⁴

Many black women I interviewed, had come to understand that national liberation would not ensure women's free participation in a future society - not unless it also challenged gender oppression.

Men must listen to women, they must hear what women's problems are. We must teach each other, and together we must find the answers. But most of all we must be honest when we evaluate why we have not achieved our goals. We must tell no lies and claim no easy victories.....comrades, the yardstick by which we measure how far our struggle has advanced is whether we are taking forward the women's struggle.³⁵

In order to establish a new democratic society, all oppressive structures must be challenged. In former resistance movements, only issues that surrounded apartheid policies were ever challenged. As such, power structures within these movements could veil internal gender oppressive structures, and had failed to recognize this socio-political process as male centered. "The men for their part, believed it was the right of men to make all decisions, and to guide and control women."³⁶

[M]en were generally respected, venerated, obeyed and feared.....They were seen as having superior, and as having special needs, which had to be satisfied. Hard work was the lot for women, men needed to rest at home and be refreshed for the ensuing day. There was no overt consciousness that women also needed to be refreshed to face a new day.³⁷

These implications were carried over into political organizations, so that the "struggle for liberation" also became instrumental in the oppression of women.

Cultures and their "positioned subjects" are laced with power, and power in turn is shaped by cultural forms. Like form and feeling, culture and power are inextricably intertwined. In discussing forms of social knowledge, both of analysts and of human actors, one must consider their social positions.³⁸

Some women, however, assured me, they knew "about these things" they just "did not know what to do."³⁹ This knowledge, for example, was reflected in the community work various women's organizations did in Natal. Their commitment to prevent social disintegration, in itself, was a silent discourse central to community politics.

We need to make people aware that politics is everything. If we want proper houses its politics. If we want decent education for our children its politics.....We are concerned about what is going on in our country and we are also concerned about what happens to people.⁴⁰

As such, black women kept communities from degenerating in the 1980s. When violence broke out, they would shout the slogan *ibhemile* (there is smoke), to indicate that there was trouble in the area. Women told me that they were afraid, but that they could not rely on men. "It may well be your child dying there. We take anything we can find to fight with and go for it. We have to defend our lives and our homes."⁴¹

It was the women who had to try and find their children and husbands, after raids or attacks on their homes. They had to counsel young children who needed to cope with

the violent loss of family and friends. The women had to make sure that their own children did not join gangs, or become subordinate by or victims of warlords. These violent invasion of the home, politicized even those women who avoided and feared political activities.

After the implementation of the State of Emergency in 1985, the violence in Natal had increased considerably. Townships around Durban and Pietermaritzburg were especially affected. Jabu Ndlovu says

My message is to encourage women to struggle, even if they are not working, to be active within the community. They must help the community, especially the youth - help them when they have problems. The youth complain that their fathers are not helping, especially on the weekends they go off drinking. So the women must help the youth - they must call meetings and help them plan what to do.⁴²

Ruth Mompoti expresses that, "In South Africa you don't join politics; politics decides to join you."⁴³

There is no struggle
from which women are exempt.
No struggle in which women
do not play their part;
Our struggle is in fact
for women's day; To struggle for tomorrow
is a woman's fight today.⁴⁴

Short Historical overview of Women's Performance Discourse.

Under the conditions of apartheid South Africa's oppressed women cannot limit their objectives to those of simply trying to establish their legal rights in a modern industrial society, nor can they hope to emerge with a few privileges in what is still largely a male-dominated world; but to destroy the whole basis of racial exploitation, and in so doing open up the prospect of a free development of both women and men. In this they are an example to women's movements everywhere, for they know that the liberation of women is not simply a matter of amending laws or changing male attitudes, but of a fundamental restructuring of a whole society towards the aims of freedom and justice for all.⁴⁵

In resistance campaigns before and leading up to the eighties, women had developed a discourse of politics in mass culture. "Women were always singing.....it brought to the assembled women a sense of joy and power, and an amity that carried over into their political deliberations."⁴⁶

Behold us joyful,
The women of Africa,
In the presence of our baas:
The great one
Who conquers Lefurutse
With his knobkerrie,
And his assegai, And his gun.⁴⁷

The anti-pass campaign was perhaps the longest struggle in which women were involved in on their own. Even though women were forced to carry passes after the many campaigns, they had left their mark on resistance culture. But despite this, women felt that in the past, men had not recognized their contributions to the struggle. And women, says Jabu Ngcobo, were too afraid to speak up on their own behalf, and to draw attention to these contradictions.

In spite of this, Jabu indicated that women were able to express themselves through performance spaces they had created in mass resistance and the *toyi-toyi*. Their commitment indicated their wish to be part of a public discourse of politics, rather than be marginalized into exclusive women's movement, which only dealt with domestic issues. This was not to say that these issues were not important, they were of extreme importance, and it was necessary to have a separate movement for women to deal with these issues. But if they had involved themselves only in exclusive women's movements, equal participation with men in political and broader social issues would be very difficult.

Women's presence in the *toyi-toyi* performance functioned in a number of ways. Firstly it confronted and resisted traditional power structures concerning gender divisions in political performances. Secondly, through *toyi-toying* they challenged the patriarchal and racial ideologies of the South African government, who had placed women at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

It is easy to understand that the question of power is central to black liberation in South Africa, and for this absolutely basic reason, no 'reform' of apartheid can ever radically alter the position of the black majority. But it is not so easily accepted by men that the question of power is central, too, to women's liberation, and thus for women as well, reform can never be the answer.⁴⁸

"We wanted to *toyi-toyi*, it was in our blood."⁴⁹ For many women, just participating in the *toyi-toyi* was in itself a small victory. Often husbands prohibited their wives from participation, stressing their domestic role and responsibilities towards the family. Mrs Xoliswa Tom (Border Council of Churches) observes "customs which constrain men are quick to erode; those which oppress women remain firmly in place."⁵⁰ Throughout the eighties women had voiced the importance of their participation in the liberation struggle. Ruth Mompati (ANC) said, "What happens to women after liberation, depends on how much women are part of the liberation struggle itself."⁵¹

I stand unafraid! I stand defiant! I stand sorry for the
Government, its supporters and its puppets.⁵²

Regardless of the continual persecution women endured from both the state and black men, they stood together. They created a collective voice that could speak out against the regime expose gendered structures, and challenge their own men. The expressive domain of song and dance, ultimately articulated their political and social aspirations, in public space.

Fight for an Africa
where women are not slaves,
Fight for an Africa
where women do not waste their lives.
South Africa in fact
is on its way, to celebrate its freedom
and to honour women's day.⁵³

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*THE USE OF PERFORMANCE CULTURE AS THE MEANS TO UNDERSTANDING
THE ENCODING OF HISTORICAL EXPERIENCES OF BLACK SOUTH AFRICANS.*

Introduction.

Performance structures can be defined as modes of performances which are fluid and not fixed. As such, they can adapt to their performative context, audience response and environmental stimuli. For this reason, resistance performance in South Africa was able to adapt to the changing structures of state power and of social institutions.

Throughout the course of the twentieth century, the discourse for black resistance came to include traditional *Nguni* song, dance, and poetry (such as the *izibongo* ie. praise poems), as well as church and religious hymns, newly composed freedom songs, slogans and the *toyi-toyi*. Generally speaking, these performances embodied highly symbolic and coded accounts of the socio-political realities of their performers. Because of the expansive history of black resistance, we have inherited a repertory of cultural performance embedded with specific socio-political commentary. Thus, the analysis of performance structures, enables us to better understand current socio-cultural experiences.

In this chapter I shall analyze the performative mechanisms of political resistance, focusing on the *toyi-toyi* in the 1980s. I will also relate the healing properties of song and dance to political performance, and the *toyi-toyi*.

We would better understand change in political beliefs if we knew more about the way in which music, dance, or any other forms of traditional behaviour develop, and of how they are modified by the outside influences with which they are brought in contact.¹

Synonymous with the history of the people of South Africa, is the construction and development of racism as acceptable state power. It was endemic to the colonial encounter, and laid the foundation for the 1948 apartheid legislation. Every aspect of

social life and political thought in the past was subjected to a racial ideology of separation. While the historical, social and political implications of apartheid have been dealt with at great length by social theorists and historians, viz. Walker (1965), Davenport (1977), Odendaal (1984), Davies (1985), and Maylam (1986) to name but a few, the wealth of social and political information to be found in oral and musical traditions of Black South Africans has received only minimal attention.

The Discourse of Resistance.

Where there is power, there is resistance and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.²

Resistance may be realized through different forms of individual or group activities - including cultural performance - which challenged prevailing power structures. Yet in a country like South Africa, where power structures are multi-dimensional, and often disguised by apartheid, resistance structures can be used in defining additional power relations of gender and class. Foucault therefore ingeniously inverts his statement (mentioned above) to "where there is resistance there is power." Abu-Lughod finds Foucault's theory most constructive, in its avoidance of "abstract theories of power and its movement toward methodological strategies for the study of power in particular situations."³

My interest lies in those performance structures used by muted and oppressed groups of people, especially black women, to express their resistance to domination. Although the significance of resistance differs from culture to culture, and even among individuals from within the same culture, Foucault's theory of power and resistance has relevance for my analysis.

I think it is somewhat arbitrary to try to dissociate the effective practice of freedom by people, the practice of social relations and the spatial distributions in which they find themselves. If they are separate[d] they become impossible to understand. Each can only be understood through the other.⁴

I feel performance structures created space for oppressed people to actively respond to and resist the power structures of the state - power structures which had caused enormous pain, distress and social dislocation. Furthermore, historically, performance was the primary way black women articulated their socio-political aspirations and discontent. By creating alternate performance spaces women were empowered to express their emotions and important developments in their community.⁵ For this reason, I believe they were better able to formulate and articulate emotional distress in resistance performance than men.

The Cultural Construction of Pain as a Metaphor in the Construction of Political Truth and Resistance.

"Pain as an institutional, jural, and political idiom constructs a subject by fusing emotional or physical states with the ideological organization of the social structure."⁶ In my opinion, black women used pain as a metaphor for the expression of anger symbolized in the *toyi-toyi* performance. Because anger was a resultant of pain, I believe, oppressors found it difficult to deal with expressions of anger in public, especially when muted groups of people were represented.

The supporters and functionaries of the apartheid regime, had not wanted to take responsibility for having created the social pain of black people. So they had justified their actions through laws braced by a discourse of morality. From the onset, Verwoerd presented apartheid to the outside world "benevolently." He stated that apartheid was not an "illiberal policy but a policy of social engineering, which would at the end of the

day bring justice to everybody, in separate development."⁷ This effectively socialized white supporters into thinking of apartheid as a resourceful way of solving white poverty (as discussed in chapter one under the title *The Poor White Problem*). They could then secure a future for themselves without being responsible for depriving a people of their land and posterity. As time passed their comfort veiled the reality and brutality of apartheid. So much so, that some decades later, the pain and anger articulated in the *toyi-toyi*, brought their illusive reality to an abrupt end. It then became necessary for the apartheid regime, to recondition white social thinking, and discredit any form resistance performance and the *toyi-toyi* to that of the recalcitrant.

The visibility of this anger and pain, had already created an impact on the economy, and thus political security. It was because the social construction of pain as a discourse of politics reconciles the emotional with the physical state. To this end, the body became a vehicle for the expression of pain, which could include various physiological states ie crying, agitation, rage and so forth. In a collective performance, such as the *toyi-toyi*, the individual defined personal pain in relation to the group of performers, as well as in relation to the socio-political circumstances surrounding a particular performance

In the eighties then, the use of pain in resistance performance became a metaphor for the social experience and cultural construction of truth, in order to resist dominant institutions of state power in South Africa. Furthermore, black women used this construction of truth, to facilitate a discourse of political resistance pertained to gender oppression.

Seeking social justice through performance, was encoded in a discourse of healing. The *toyi-toyi* was performed in urban areas where the performers physical bodies were highly visible to the institutions of state power. In this sense, as Comaroff states, the body becomes the site of the struggle.⁸ As such, the *toyi-toyi* posed a threat to the state

because, both the physical presence of the body and the performance in public space, empowered black people to reinstate black civil society in urban areas.

The real innovation is in showing how discourses of emotion establish, assert, challenge, or reinforce power or status differences..... emotion and emotional discourses can serve, in other instances, for the relatively powerless as loci of resistance and idioms of rebellion.⁹

In talking with black women and men, and after extensive analysis of freedom songs and the *toyi-toyi*, I have observed a strong correlation between political empowerment and social healing, as embodied in public performance. Throughout South African history, performance structures had expedited a discourse of socio-politics, which was embedded in unequal racial and gender relations. Moreover, since the structures endorsing racial and gender inequality were legislated, along with the removal of black civil and political society, culture came to be an effective agent for a discourse of politics. Social, political and economic marginalization, especially as it pertained to black women, empowered the state to control the emotional and physical spaces in black communities.

Black people voiced their anger and suffering through cultural forms. This did not however, confront personal injury, or at least not until the eighties. Ambiguous as this might sound, as Farber maintains the human body was capable of deferring emotional injury in the face of violent physical constraints.¹⁰

The social construction of emotion in South Africa rejected active aggression, in favour of the suppression of anger and pain. Lutz maintains that, in the western academic debate, emotional characteristics are associated with women, "so that qualities that define the emotional also define women." In addition, the conception of emotion was regarded as a natural, subjective and therefore an uncontrollable phenomenon. Subsequently the discourse of emotion was linked with women, subordination and rebellion, ie. something that needed to be controlled.¹¹

Anger, "a passionate feeling of displeasure,"¹² was prohibited from women's, and in fact any oppressed group's, daily discourse. Alternately, Lutz remarks that anger was in fact the only emotion men could express.¹³ Considering the definition of anger, in a patriarchal and racist society such as South Africa, in the eighties, the social and political control of aggressive discourse became two-fold.

Firstly, the male's prerogative to express anger, induced by his reaction to a particular social or political issue, enabled him to dominate and mould a situation to his own advantage. In South Africa however, black men did not have access to public political power, and for this reason, were marginalized from the so-called "right" to express anger. Secondly, as a result, black men were feminized, and inadvertently reconstructed social and political realities outside the boundaries of state power, empowering them to control black discourse. This effectively meant that black women had to deal with two oppressive structures. The marginalization as black people and as black women.

Black women, however were more willing to seek emotional sanctuary in resistance culture than were black men. Lutz writes that emotions usually identify "problems in women's lives and are therefore political."¹⁴ I feel Lutz's observation could be extended to include all muted groups. For this reason, emotional discourse was prevalent and embedded in resistance culture. This might sound contradictory, but that was because the nature of social circumstances in the eighties were. Men talked about emotional feelings in performance structures, but never expressed them (with the exception of anger) publicly. In this sense, "[t]alk about the control of emotions would be,.... talk about the suppression of public acknowledgment of problems."¹⁵

The Construction of Race and Gender.

Cultures and their "positioned subjects" are laced with power, and power in turn is shaped by cultural forms. Like form and feeling, culture and power are inextricably intertwined. In discussing forms of social knowledge, both of analysts and of human actors, one must consider their social positions.¹⁶

As I mentioned before, the construction of racial and gender oppression in South Africa, is embedded in cultural and socio-political institutions, controlled by the white patriarchal ruling class. These institutions, however were realized in black traditional society, colonialism and thereafter developed and legislated by the South African government.

These institutions later developed racial oppression through the "social construction of the body as an object." An ideology which by itself made the implementation of Apartheid possible. Similarly gender oppression was constructed through the sexual objectification of the gendered body. "While she ha[d] her own feelings, her lived experience [was] mediated and worked upon by social and cultural powers which objectifie[d] her sense of bodily reality."¹⁷ Black woman's social experience of her body was therefore objectified on two levels.

State legislation of racial oppression was clearly defined in apartheid, and for that reason not difficult to challenge. Even though the state may have placed mass resistance on a precarious road, apartheid policies were nevertheless clearly racist. Sexual objectification of the gendered body, however, was more difficult to perceive, as it involved both black and white male aspirations, and was therefore not as easy to resist.

The Comaroffs write that socialization of the gendered body was based on the implied naturalness of procreation.¹⁸ "In a sense, the sex act [was] the primal power relationship - it [was] the prototype on which all other power relationships [were] built."¹⁹ For this

reason "gender identity had not been vested in the anatomy of procreation alone but in more general features of moral and social disposition."²⁰

Jordanova comments that according to nineteenth century biological philosophy, a woman's uterus marked the retreat of femaleness into the secret private domain of "gynecological anatomy," unseen and separated from the public. This separateness of private and public marked and institutionalized the dissimilarity between male and femaleness. Thus, what came to be understood as a natural relationship between men and women disguised the actuality of male power.²¹ The Comaroffs maintain this biological focus on "difference and incommensurability, then shackled women to their sexual nature as resolutely as it freed men - or at least European men."²²

It has become apparent to me that socio-political power relations in South Africa were based on a chain of hierarchal reactions. Dominating and controlling this chain was ultimately the state. The strategies and racial policies implemented by the state, however, were given life by those people who chose to live within the socialized racial structures of the state, thus being functional in maintaining oppressive institutions.

For the racist, beliefs are not only cognitive categories or stereotypes - they represent a way of making sense [of] and reacting to a range of social experiences. Ideology in this sense is not simply imposed from the outside by some super-powerful socialization agency; on the contrary, it is used by people to define their own lives and understand the struggles and conflicts they live in.²³

The state inculcated both black and white people into thinking of the body in terms of racial and gender codes.

But, black people were diminished to minority status, and not identified as functional adults by the white community. Continual references of black adults as "the boy" or "the girl" rather than by personal name, were made by white people, including white

children. This process of diminution instilled the notion of black subordination, giving white people greater authority to act in the state's best interest. Thus black people were reduced to objects of labour for the benefit of white communities.

Cultural products [such as those] that present people who have no money or power as innately stupid or depraved and thus unworthy of money or power, are [created] in the interest of the ruling class and the power structure.²⁴

The objectification of the black body was a strategy of control devised and manipulated by the government. Black people grew up feeling victimized and injured, their bodies were scarred and they carried the mental and physical wounds of apartheid inside of themselves.

In the same way, as the concept of difference shaped the construction of racial categories based of race, so too did it shape the strategies of gender oppression. Once these socialized structures were in place, black men sought to discriminate against women as a way to counteract their own racial dispossession.

The black woman became an instrument through which men could channel their sexual aspirations in order to recover their manhood. In her book, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*, Michele Wallace talks about the rise of black power in the sixties in America, embodied in figures such as Stokely Carmichael and Malcolm X, as the pursuit of black manhood. On the surface the rationale of black power surrounding social liberation appears logistical.²⁵

[But] underneath a blind rage was working....The driving force behind it had very little to do with bread and butter, it was revenge...not equality, but superiority - black manhood.²⁶

South African liberation movements, in many ways, had revealed the same characteristics. Women I expressed that men had not recognized women as political or

social beings. They felt that leaders constantly spoke of liberating men from political deprivation. In their terms it was clear that political liberation meant transference of social control from white men to black men, whilst maintaining a gendered society.

Male chauvinist resistance" carried the day at the Congress of SA Trade Unions' national congress, when male delegates rejected the notion condemning sexual harassment within Cosatu's ranks.²⁷

These power structures manifested themselves in daily discourse. The way people communicated, the language they used and the social violence that was committed, all reinforced oppressive relationships constructed in the racialized and gendered body.

"Traditional emphasis on the state, the economy, and other institutions as being critical sources of oppression ignore[d] the power and oppression in a host of other situations."²⁸ People themselves perpetuated oppressive structures set up by the government. One must however, not banish the state's role in socializing people into certain modes of thinking. South African language was saturated with oppressive discourse. Therefore people who favoured oppressive discourse ultimately empowered the state to enforce oppressive structures.

To understand women's dispossession the whole framework of resistance culture and *toyi-toyi* must be examined. South African government denied black people the right to public space and freedom to engage in public political discourse for almost a century. By legislating apartheid in 1948, the location and arrangement of a new black social reality was created and controlled by the government. "Our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace...by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality."²⁹

The construction of the body as an object, had been fundamental to both racial and sexual oppression. Emphasis was placed on body phenotypical characteristics of

ethnicity and gender, as a way to implement state control.³⁰ South African society developed a culture of racial purism, accepting whiteness of the skin as good, hence superior and affording political and economic access; and blackness as offensive, thus subordinate, and in the eyes of the state subservient.

Socialization of the mind through education further enabled authorities to implement racialized and gendered power structures, particularly in terms of the body.

The Bantu education classroom is a training ground for absolute obedience and subordination where passive and conforming attitudes are matured through the administration of strict discipline which often takes the form of corporal punishment.³¹

This was clearly evident in South Africa at the beginning of the 1980s. Black people were still the "other" or "them," subjected to segregation and the pass system. The government had control over movement, as well as the domestic and public spaces black people occupied. Beaches, parks and most other "public facilities" were part of white society, controlled by signs warning blacks: "whites only." Even the hospitals and educational institutions remained segregated.

To be black in South Africa is to smell the stench of injustice from the armpits of mine workers, of domestic servants, and of factory workers. To be black is to be faced very often by a board stating 'whites only' to a very beautiful park, and not to feel your humanness diminished. It is to be thrown into prison for saying that you cannot and never will stand under the authority of an unjust system.³²

Deconstruction of Racist and Gendered Oppression.

My argument is that if on the one hand oppressed members of society challenged oppressive structures, by "cleaning up" gendered and racial social discourse, the state would have difficulty in socializing people into racial and gendered roles. On the other

hand, however, the whole process of socialization must undergo complete change, in order to restructure social consciousness.

Therefore, before oppressive structures could effectively be challenged, black women would have to confront and dismantle past socialized perceptions of their racialized and gendered bodies. Furthermore, gendered discourse would have to be dislodged from resistance culture.

The fact that black women are subjected to the simultaneous oppression of patriarchy, class and race is the prime reason for not employing parallels that render their position and experience not only marginal but also invisible.³³

"Revolutionary culture tells the truth about our society, demonstrates opposition to what is going on, and sometimes poses alternatives."³⁴ I maintain black women were more revolutionary in their thinking than black men, largely due to their subordinate socio-political status and position in society ie. they had more to fight for - more at stake and less to lose.

Although the community as a whole [was] affected by political and economic crises, women were the first to feel the pinch....The women [were] immediately affected by the school crisis, because it involv[ed] their children. They [were] affected by retrenchments, at their work or at their husband's work. There are so many pressures forcing them to respond.³⁵

Dipho, national representative of women in the South African Youth Congress, said in an interview with *Youth Focus*, "Standing in the shadows of boyfriends or husbands means we will fall if those are removed."³⁶

The liberation in this country will be meaningless as long as it does not include women, completely changing society, or the creation of a new person.....As women we do not have to wait for events to give us direction, but we have to direct and actively involve ourselves in the events.³⁷

Many other women, young and old, in political organizations felt the same way as Dipho did. These women knew they had to work to effectively stop racial and gender prejudice, to promote a new social democratic structure, and not to marginalize themselves from the broader structures of resistance culture.

Resistance then becomes a mediator, to bring to light power relations, locate their position, find out their points of application and discover the methods used.³⁸ The whole concept of power in South Africa was multidimensional; operating on many levels of social interaction, between two people or between groups of people. Oppressed people created alternate social spaces, which existed outside the boundaries of these power structures. By so doing, they were able to develop a coded discourse of resistance. Understanding the composition and function of these spaces, existing collateral power structures, such as gender and class, would be unveiled.

Power is a dynamic relationship between the relatively dominant and subdominant determined by a host of economic, social, political, technological and cultural factors....[these relationships] are necessarily ambiguous, for in them are the seeds of conflict and strife.....It is this structured imbalance that goes far toward providing the dynamic element in power relationships, making them subject - even in situations where power is successfully maintained - to ever changing reformulations of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled and thereby affecting the historic role of licensed poetry [or cultural discourse].³⁹

By the 1980s black resistance culture had already evolved to effectively voice their defiance. Black people had recognized that their bodies belong to them, and in so doing reclaim their bodies for themselves. Once the self had been restored to the individual, collective resistance performance took on a new meaning and drive. People began to demand space in the public arena.

Recovering public life entails regaining various fundamental rights and becoming familiar with them in practice: freedom of assembly, freedom of expression (ranging from the use of language to the right to publish), and respect for cultural identity (including access to media, education and ethnic traditions).⁴⁰

Reclaiming Public Space Through Performance: A Process of Social Healing.

Making public inquiries, demanding to know and be heard - these are fundamental aspects of reclaiming a public voice....Initially, a public voice had to be refound. One voice raised in unison against the monologic discourse of the state. As people recovered their vocal chords, shouting slogans that expressed their shared sentiments. This time, the "masses" voluntarily filled the streets. A veritable chorus of vocalized dissent shattered the silence of years.⁴¹

Kligman's description of Rumanian discourse of public politics, paralleled aspects of black South African politics in the 1980s. As in Rumania, slogans were ritualized "as part of a creative process. Such expression of opinion [had become] a general form of public communication with those in power."⁴² For the first time after decades of resistance, black people in South Africa had recovered public space through performances of the *toyi-toyi*, as part of a collective expression of defiance. "[T]he very process of performance and of providing mutual comfort...enact[s] and negotiate[s] varied significant relationships."⁴³ This was particularly true for women.

One point worthy of note about 'songs of allusion' or 'songs of derision' is that such songs serve as vehicles for mobilization of authoritative community values.....a song may exceed the boundries of social propriety without giving undue offense, and at the same time, people attracted to the song will be more accessible to its argument and may help induce a miscreant to make amends.⁴⁴

The *toyi-toyi* gave to black people an unauthorized license to utter any textual content they felt necessary.⁴⁵ It is my opinion that this form of expression brought black anger and pain to the forefront of this discourse - ie. made it public. This enactment posed an

enormous threat to both the state and people outside of its performance - especially white South Africans, though not exclusively so. Once the performer had reached such an emotional peak, healing of the inner physic could begin to take place. This was because performers were able to construct and enact social and political realities - by way of transference of symbolism embedded in the *toyi-toyi* performance, to represent a new actuality.

Recovery, however, had to involve the whole person, body and soul. Coming to terms with the reality in which the body had been injured, was only part of the recovery process. Recognition of this process, nevertheless acted as an agent of recovery. I am convinced that any form of oppression is manifested as an injury, to both the mind and body.

Performance Structures.

The whole performance process of the *toyi-toyi* was based on physiological, psychological, cognitive and spiritual structures.⁴⁶ Together these structures created symbolic modes which conveyed "meaning in terms of the values of a believing community."⁴⁷

Meyer talks about kinetic-syntactic modes of signification, which refer to the symbolic meaning inherent in the musical experiences. The performer associates certain emotions with sound and movements to previous performance experiences. The new performance reinstates emotional symbolism inherent in past musical and dance structures, creating a sense of movement toward and away from purely dance and musical goals.⁴⁸

Music, then, is kinetic energy made audible, that effects changes in perception through its influence on human consciousness of creator and listener alike and therefore attracts and engages both mind and the emotions.⁴⁹

Thornton maintains that a person's kinaesthetic sense "is stimulated by body activity, giving rise to an awareness of the sensation of the movement of the body."⁵⁰ As such, our perception of body movement can be revealed in our kinaesthetic sense, which in turn triggers off mental responses. In addition Laban stated that, an individual's perception of the environment in which they move, was stimulated through sensory contact. Environmental surroundings and the space in which the body finds itself, becomes an additional characteristic of movement. Laban conceptualized movement as functioning in space.⁵¹ The *toyi-toyi* established the physical body as visible in prohibited public space. As such, the performers could use their physical presence as a threat to state control. This visual demeanor made a powerful statement, in that past legislation directed its function, at making black people invisible.

Humans equate dance with the vitalization of animate and inanimate powers and both positive and negative energies. In this sense dance is power, a form through which life forces are made manifest and communicated. It seems, then, not unlikely that dance messages may significantly influence a performer's mind and body and an audience's response.....Dance provokes a sense of personal and group power for performers and observer alike.⁵²

Movement, as defined by Laban, embraced emotional, intellectual, and spiritual non-verbal discourse. It interlocks the mind and the body, creating meaning through dance - which Laban terms as the flow of movement - making visible the performer's emotional and physical needs. In this way it releases people from inner tensions and pain, giving rise to symbolic associations with socio-political and individual healing.⁵³

The simplest form of power is the individual's own body. Ontogenetically each person experiences the discovery and mastery of the body in time, space, and effort patterns. Initially there is incorporation with the mouth and eyes, sensory power of sight, smell, touch, and sound. Then follows an increased body awareness and mastery and physical control of the environment through various manipulations, weight exertion, and speed and strength in gesture and locomotion. There is a drive to overcome helplessness.⁵⁴

The impact of resistance performance increased when the place of enactment was restricted space, so that the presence of both the performer's body and the performance of song and dance became vehicles of resistance. In this regard, the power inherent in the body as a tool of communicating social ideas, through symbolic gesture in dance, was what gave the *toyi-toyi* its impetus. For black people, participation in a collective performance, in prohibited white spaces, (despite the State of Emergency in 1985), was seen as the zenith in their empowerment.

Power structures found in dance, however, defined certain power relationships, even among the performers of *toyi-toyi*. Hanna identified these gender power structures in dance, where men tend to compete for power.⁵⁵ In this way they took control of the performative discourse, inherent in that particular situation. By creating male power positions in resistance performance, men could facilitate and ensure their dominant positions in a posed reformed society. In this regard, Tax maintains that revolutionary culture puts forward the theorization of a new society.⁵⁶

Song and dance encompass syntactic and cognitive musical and dance structures.⁵⁷ Syntactic musical structures apply to the grammatical tonal composition and rules governing the musical construction. The way in which the mind organizes and evaluates this information involves psychological and physiological reactions which begin with the body. "Following a memory check the process of evaluation begins as we assess our physical, cognitive and spiritual reactions" to the musical sound.⁵⁸

Cognitive structures are responsible for any emotional and spiritual meaning that might arise from aesthetic or performance satisfaction. To make sense out of these structures, symbolic meaning can be ascribed to the various musical styles that are found within a culture. Both rules and symbolic meaning of these structures are culture bound.

The meaning of dance can be analyzed according to pragmatic, semantic and syntactic structures. Pragmatics highlight the relation of symbolic references to earlier performances, its significance, and ideology. Historical reference indicates the importance of signs within the contextual ritual behaviour or event in which those signs occur. Information can be communicated and acted upon in the new situation, even though it may have strong associations with past events. The interdependence of semantics and syntax can be encountered in the pragmatic domain.⁵⁹

Semantics focuses on the meaning of symbols and signs in relation to the information content of the dance.⁶⁰ It deals with the emotions suggested through movements, but not verbally commented upon. Syntactic structures refer to the grammar or rules governing the manner in which symbols and signs are combined to create meaning in dance.

Merriam explains "a symbol must have ascribed meaning to be a symbol."⁶¹ Furthermore, symbolism inherent in music and dance reflects emotions and meanings of a believing community. "[W]e can refer to this as "affective " or "cultural" meaning, and here we are on much stronger and more obvious ground for the symbolism is distinct and culturally defined."⁶²

The above mentioned dance structures were made up of dimensions of space, rhythm, dynamics, and body movements. The criteria used in defining and analyzing movement in these dimensions follow negotiations of contrasting actions viz. (high verses deep (up - down), long versus short (forward - backward), and wide versus narrow (right - left). It not only incorporates periods of movement, but period of rest or stillness as well.⁶³

An awareness of the human anatomy are essential to the analysis of movement, "because the human body as dance instrument has natural kinetic parameters and extraordinary extensions."⁶⁴ Distinctions of the various structural dimensions of dance are dependent on body shape and motional flow.

[T]hrough communication humans solve crucial problems of social organization and regulation, discriminate sex, age, social background, group membership, emotional and motivational status, environmental conditions, and transmit culture to subsequent generations....Dance is part of this cultural communication system in which information, valuable in adaption, is relayed to oneself and others.⁶⁵

It is my hypothesis that the *toyi-toyi* performance functioned to reinstate the body as positive to the performer, and so facilitate a therapeutic process. Through collective and ritualized performance, participants were able to detach themselves from the social conditions of apartheid and create a truth outside the parameters of the actual social structures of South Africa. This empowered the performers to reclaim public space.

Because black women had experienced such extreme pain, in their racial and gendered situation during the preceding decades, they had built strength far beyond that of black men. These experiences mobilized many women into taking a collective public stand, to dance and sing for their rights and the rights of their people. "Knowledge has the power to heal when it takes that which is unknown and defines it."⁶⁶ For the first time women articulated their knowledge and resistance against both racial and gender power structures. As such, the *toyi-toyi* performance became a vehicle in their transcendence away from oppressive structures such as traditional gender roles in the black communities, and racial discrimination in the South African society as a whole.

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THE CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF TRUTH EMBODIED IN THE DISCOURSE OF EMOTION AND PUBLIC PERFORMANCE.

Socialization is not usually equated with political power and resistance, but rather with the inculcation of a society's values, and cultural ways into individuals. Nevertheless, socialization in South Africa, leading up to and including the 1980s, was an intrinsically political process. The oppressive nature of South African socio-political structures ultimately needed coercive social forces viz. culture, education, media and political discourse to sustain its prolonged functioning. These conditions forced black people to seek alternate ways to construct and articulate social truth.

In this chapter I will discuss the validity of resistance performance as political discourse, and in so doing, the construction of social truth for marginalized and oppressed groups of people in South Africa. Furthermore, using emotion as a metaphor for constructing social truth, I will ascertain psychological healing properties inherent in resistance performance, especially the *toyi-toyi*, with regard women. Lastly, I shall assess the *toyi-toyi* performance as a form of ritual, based on my perception and analysis of emotions.

Black Resistance Constructed through Culture.

Oral epic singing at its best was both a way of coming to terms with history and a means of getting out of it. That is why its ultimate significance cannot be grasped in the analysis either of the technique of its composition or of the diverse historical sources of its social concepts, motifs and themes. For a song about fighting is not the same thing as fighting or even as the recording of an actual response to it. Similarly, songs about great defeats, vassalage, outlawry or rebellions attempt to grasp in language not only their historical but also their moral significance. They interpret the actual in terms of what it means as a challenge to the human spirit and to the whole tradition of oral poetic language in which it expresses itself.¹

Chernoff maintains that music is fundamental to black people's social and political experience. To this extent performance structures acquaint individuals with given socio-political aspirations.²

[M]usic's explicit purpose, in the various ways it might be defined by Africans, is, essentially, socialization.....These values form part of an elaborate set of generative themes which pattern the experience of everyday life and the institutionalization of customs.³

Throughout the history of South Africa, black culture had intersected with social and political continuity and change, "which vitalize[d] the efforts of individuals and communities as they [met] the realities of new situations."⁴

It was the oppressive nature of South African social structures, however, that ultimately served to synthesize culture and mass resistance. As such, traditional socio-political performance structures, brought about new cultural frameworks for the development of a specific black discourse in politics. This development reached its peak in the eighties. Poet, Mzwakhe Mbuli maintains, "The struggle as a whole [was] a cultural struggle."⁵

The continued urbanization of black people, especially in the 1950s, was a direct response to industrial growth. In this context, the integration of ethnic identities of the emergent black proletarians, agglomerated into what was to become a mass urban culture of resistance. Endless time spent commuting to and from work, in trains and buses, made for convenient cultural and political exchange.⁶ Despite the government's vigorous efforts to institutionalize ethnicity, as a covert strategy to derail the development of a unified resistance body, urbanization ultimately served the development of a culture of mass resistance.

As I mentioned in my introduction, traditional black socio-political structures were divided according to gender and age. These divisions provided men, women and

children with their own performance space. Although performances did at times disregard these divisions, some performance structures remained unquestionably gender or age specific. In such instances, divisions of gender and age were strictly adhered to. For example, the discourse of politics, was and continued to be an unequivocally male preserve, simply placing such discourse out of reach for women. This did not mean that women were apolitical. On the contrary many were highly politicized. But it was within their own spatial boundaries, that women created a "private public," ie. women could communicate with one other, in male condoned spaces, without the presence of men. During these times they directed and controlled their own polity.⁷

Marked segregation and oppressive policies, which had been in place since colonialism, rapidly transformed the traditional social composition. Women were particularly affected, as they no longer had access to a "private public." In addition to this, black men were stripped of their traditional discourse of politics, which meant that women had to cope with their dispossession as well. For this reason, I believe black men and women joined together to form a culturally informed political alliance against the government. Mass resistance culture had no option but to sought the absorption of women into the discourse of resistance. Comaroff points out that, distinctions of class, race and gender concertized an awareness of inequality, creating a basis for challenge and resistance.⁸

Black people in the urban areas, were continually confronted with an awareness of the prosperous lives white South Africans were leading. They were also conscious of the price black people had paid for white prosperity - extreme impoverishment, economic discrimination and the lack of socio-political freedom. Their repression was not merely coincidental, but part and parcel of the surreptitious planning of the South African government's inscribed legislative policies. It became essential to create a mass resistance front, which could emphatically reclaim black political space and a place in civil society.

Pursuing civil society, in fact identified the need for a collective discourse of politics which could voice the people's socio-political aspirations. Women were particularly recusant during this period of social redefinition, as they became more aware of the additional need to overcome gendered oppression at a political level. "Previously [women] might have said we are all victims of apartheid, but now they are realising they have a position - which is right at the bottom of the ladder."⁹

Mass Resistance Culture in the 1980s.

In the 1980s black people realized their quest in the *toyi-toyi*, which embodied and mobilized the political aspirations of mass resistance. It was an affective performance which revolutionized the dynamic of the "people's power," making discourse of public socio-politics accessible to both men and women.¹⁰

[W]hat [was] being constructed [was] a democratic public sphere in which a polyphony of voices [would] be heard...[t]he emergency of civil society as a feature of contemporary discourses....represent[ing] the desired other from the West. Entangled with or embedded in the meaning of civil society [were] free elections - [a] staunch symbol of democratic government, and of the "market" - another Other from the west.¹¹

Politicisation of mass consciousness increased with the popularization of mass resistance culture, epitomized in the *toyi-toyi*. Protest songs and the *toyi-toyi* were known to all, regardless of geographical or cultural location. Resistance performance structures, whether old or recently composed, were all absorbed into the larger framework of mass resistance culture. This was most likely due to the fact that freedom songs had come to symbolize mass resistance, rather than being associated with specific events, locations or performances.

In view of the fact that resistance culture was essentially the discourse of urban migrants and other workers, work songs naturally came to play a dominant role in its development. Erlmann comments on the historical importance of the work song as political discourse. He says that with the expropriation of black labour by white authorities, work songs increasingly came to voice the political aspirations of these people. It was then not surprising that these songs articulated "the most deep seated desire of the expelled, dehumanized and dispossessed black masses: the cry for land, the longing to regain the land their forefathers had lost to the white settlers."¹² The structural composition of work songs lent itself to mass resistance performance, primarily because it was an inherently collective performance with no obvious demarcation between performer and audience.

The traditional *Nguni* work song had survived in its original form until then. Physical activities such as hoeing, hammering and pounding millet created distinct movement patterns that lent itself to rhythmic construction. As such, rhythmic patterns, songs and dance movements were performed in conjunction with a particular activity, in order to maintain its momentum. The syntactic composition of most work songs were constructed according to call-and-response cycles. These were made up of question and answer exchanges between a lead voice and chorus. As with the work song, the *toyi-toyi's* dance and vocal construction was based on call-and-response exchanges. A leader would usually initiated the direction or "question" of a performance, which actuated a response or "answer" from the other performers.

With the emergence of politicized trade unions during the 1980s, a more unified work force was created. Mine, industry and farm workers incorporated liberation themes into their work songs. Workers informed me that they would often perform liberation songs and the *toyi-toyi* whilst engaged in work activities. This culture was not limited to worker culture however, but spread to all levels of black society. I observed this when I

was teaching art at a community based school, *Intuthoko Art and Development Centre*, in Kwa Mashu, (during a period of increased violence in the area in 1993). The children sang freedom songs and performed *toyi-toyi* rhythms whilst painting pictures. Although they never enacted any dance movements, their strong vocalization of these rhythms indicated the importance and growth of this performance.

By the late 1980s mass resistance culture was well established. It was not framed in art galleries, or confined to the theater, but found in the public domain. Despite severe state restrictions and stringent censorship laws which accompanied the State of Emergency (1985), popular resistance culture grew. According to Bauer (1986) the importance of mass resistance culture was due to the fact that it existed outside the discourses of state power and control.¹³

The people you pass are less likely to be whistling Motown tunes than the refrain from a song improvised by activists in a skirmish with the police the day before. Fashioning wooden guns..dancing the *toyi-toyi*, incorporating ANC colours into your everyday clothing; shedding once and for all the western name that made it easier for the master.¹⁴

Traditional Izibongo.

Cultural groups affiliated to trade unions, emerged at the base of mass resistance. Their contributions rested heavily on traditional forms, especially the revival of *izibongo* (praise poems). These traditional *izibongo* performances were characterized by highly symbolic texts, most often expressed in metaphoric language. The use of various figures of speech empowered an *imbongi* (sing. poet) to comment on and criticize leaders and political structures without reprisal. It empowered a performer to use artistic resources when composing an *isibongo* (sing. poem), which was intentionally critical and offensive, often with a satirical twist. In the past, migrant labourers had engaged in political *izibongo* whilst travelling to work. In this regard Opland writes, "Migrant laborers refer to their journey to work as an entry into battle."¹⁵

He maintains that *izibongo*, especially in the last three decades, have often used war imagery and associations, and other related political imagery in their poems. I feel that the use of war imagery in these performances was the way in which men substantiated their superior and important role in political discourse, counteracting their loss of this role. Furthermore, traditionally *izibongo* as public political discourse was performed by men only - "because of its association with war, and with authority, it is usually regarded as a male preserve."¹⁶ In this way traditional culture was instrumental in women's political oppression. "In traditional culture women were only seen as objects who have to bring up the kids and be ululating whilst the praise poet is praising the Chief or *Induna*," said Malange.¹⁷

<i>Hay' kodw' iBritan' enkulu</i>	Alas! Oh! Great Britain!
<i>Yeza nebotile ne Bayibele;</i>	She sent us the Bottle and the Great Book;
<i>Yeza nomfundis' exhag' ijoni;</i>	She brought us the preacher and the soldier;
<i>Yeza nerhuluwa nesinandile;</i>	She sent gunpowder and firearm
<i>Yeza nenkanunu nemfakadolo.</i>	She brought cannon and breechloader.
<i>Taru bawo, sive yiphi na?</i>	Dear God! which must we embrace? ¹⁸

This satirical *isibongo*, composed by Mqhayi, was originally performed in 1925, however later revived and published in 1984. Despite the fact that this poem was directed at the Prince of Wales, as the title suggests, (*Itshawe LaseBritain*), Mqhayi directs the poem toward a more satirical war imagery, suggesting a militant disposition and resistance of

colonization. This militancy was rooted in the gradual colonization of black consciousness through missionary education, and western military institutions.

Women and Traditional Izibongo.

This did not mean women refrained from performing *izibongo*. Within their own spatial performance parameters women were able to recite their own *izibongo*, which "reflect[ed] the facets of life important to women."¹⁹ These traditional performances, however, were restricted to women, and performed in established female domains other than in public space. Nevertheless, the creation of female performance space empowered women with licenced discourse. As such they were able to deal with crucial socio-political issues. Abu-Lughod wrote an article on Bedouin women's performance space, in which she describes similar social performance spatial divisions.

[A] range of prohibitions and restrictions applied to them (women) that they both embrace, in their support for the system of sexual segregation, and resist, as suggested by the fact that these women fiercely protect the violability of their separate sphere where defiances take place.²⁰

In a chapter on women's performances space entitled, *The Possession of the Dispossessed*, Vail and White examines the *vimbuza*, a form of praise poetry that existed amongst Tumbuka speaking people of Malawi and Zambia. Here again, similar spatial performance allocations can be noted. The primary reason for women to perform *vimbuza*, were when their bodes were in a state of illness. As the performance involved spirit possession in a therapeutic manner, women could overcome illness, hence personal disorder, and so benefit her immediate community.²¹

Through complex rhythmic patterns the spirit within a woman's body was "aroused" and so took possession of her. The possessed woman sang and danced as she disclosed her plight, often speaking in "tongues." The lyrics, as with most *izibongo* were highly symbolic and licentious.²²

Possession is.....a form of social therapy that is initiated through the power of poetic license, but it is now especially used by women who, because of their personal insecurity in local society, need to have their message reinforced both by the presence of the supernatural and the supportive participation of sympathetic members of their community.²³

Women and Poetry in the 1980s.

During the eighties, despite strong criticism from men, women became very involved in writing politically motivated *izibongo* and other poetry, for public performance. Malange believes "anger and pain suffered by women in Natal under the state of emergency and the current violence had [motivated] women into writing, [and so publicized] issues that affected them."²⁴

Although stylistically *izibongo* were based on traditional forms in the 1980s, the social and political circumstances surrounding their performance had changed remarkably. Qabula states that themes had shifted to reflect the socio-political ideologies of the workers in their struggle for liberation.²⁵

The [*imbongi*] thus serves as an oracle not for ancestors but for the new spirit and vibrancy of the words that are born out of the relationship between people and the revolutionary process."²⁶

Hlatshwayo says, "We take traditional sayings and recitations that people used in their festivals...that are dear to them and change them to fit the struggle."²⁷

Frederick Willemse this is the introduction
to your Five year plan
Women still demand safety and
decent housing
we still want our demands to be heard by
public
peace and security still our demand, and
safety of our leaders.²⁸

For me the most prolific line in Malange's poem is "we still want our demands to be heard by public." The words 'we', 'still,' 'demands,' 'heard' and 'public' sum up the worker's political consciousness of the late 1980s and early 1990s. That is to say (we), the people, (still), will continue, (to demand), fight for total racial liberation, (heard and public), through political cultural discourse such as *izibongo*, freedom songs and *toyi-toyi*.

Women and their Experiences of Pain in Toyi-toyi Performance.

Unlike *izibongo*, however, *toyi-toyi* was a group performance that relied just as much on dance as on song for inciting emotions. Because the *toyi-toyi* was structurally based on the call-and-response work song, it was accessible to the broader black community.

Even though *toyi-toyi* was a collective performance, women's experience of the performance was not synonymous with that of men. In this regard, during my research women were more likely to reflect on the pain inherent in the racialized and gendered body than the men would. Their anger at being objects of male desire and racial exploitation, was exacerbated especially in South Africa, where they were muted by customary law.

The relationship between aesthetics and heightened emotional content has several implications. It suggests the existence of an intricate system of folk aesthetics connected to the daily emotional needs of the performers, such as the need for emotional catharsis and for confrontation with fearful aspects of their world.²⁹

The validity of experiencing pain during political performance, which was expressed through dance and articulated by way of various vocalized sounds, facilitated a healing process for women - and men to a lesser degree - of their injured bodies. It was my observation, that women were more likely to employ emotional display during a *toyi-toyi* performance than men. The following description was relevant to most *toyi-toyi* performances I participated in during my research between 1989 and 1993.

In terms of vocalization, women would *ukuyiyizela* (yodel) in high pitched voices, hands quavering in the air, before breaking into slogans such as "viva" or "amandla". Their emotions were evident in both their physical gestures and vocalized responses to the performance. A close relationship between *toyi-toying* and funeral rites exist, in that women were licensed with public emotional expression - they executed control over their movements and discourse. This was sharply contrasted by men's responses to the emotion embodied in *toyi-toyi* performance. Men usually remained "controlled" and distinctively militant, occasionally whistling and shouting slogans or mimicing combat. This in itself displays the strong gender divisions that exist in emotional discourse and social acceptability thereof.

Seremetakis explains a similar situation among the Maniat where the "gender dichotomies of the lament sessionwomen are vocal and emotionally demonstrative in public and men are silent, inhibited and spatially segregated."³⁰ She brilliantly conceptualized the relation between gender identity and death, by speaking of institutions of pain over death as a way of mobilizing political discourse and resistance. Through lamentation Maniat women were able to take on a form of socio-political discourse concerned with the "cultural construction of truth."³¹ This process parallels funerals of political victims during the 1980s in South Africa, during which the *toyi-toyi*

performance empowered mourners to express pain (women) and anger (men) associated with political violence and dispossession.

This ties up with my discussion of Lutz's analogy of emotion in chapter 3. To briefly resume the issue on emotion as political discourse for women, I would like to focus once more on women seen as muted in public - and so they seek alternate forms of discourse. Society trivialized emotion to individual feelings, which are subjective in nature. For this reason, emotional discourse becomes subjective and invalid for any discourse of social politics. Since women are equated with emotional discourse, any public engagement thereof, would in effect, not pose a threat to male political dominance and discourse of power. In South Africa women's commitment to seek political sanctuary in emotional discourse, as part of the broader resistance culture, would therefore not pose an immediate threat to the exclusivity men enjoyed in political cultural discourse until then. These emotions identified racial and gendered problems in their lives, and are therefore political. Since the political relevance was not noted by male power structures, this emotional discourse veiled the extent to which women became publically involved in political issues.

The Cultural Construction of Truth.

Truth-claiming through the force of emotions and shared moral inferences frequently occurs when the subject is in conflict with the social order. It is in this type of situation that the validation of truth-claims turns to media outside the official jurial ones. The personal signification of pain, synthesizing emotional force and body symbolism, can vividly dramatize the dissonance between self and society. This discontinuity can attain a collective dimension by exploiting the formative capacity of emotional inference to generate affective enclaves, communities of pain and of healing.³²

Using pain as a metaphor for constructing social truth in the text of protest songs and the *toyi-toyi*, South African black women created symbolic associations with truth bearing

realities, far beyond the actual performance - "discoursed pain and discourse in pain constitutes truth."³³

Caraveli stresses the "metaphorical similarities between possession rituals and the performance of laments" which occurred among Greek women lament performers. Although in theoretical terms *toyi-toyi* cannot be defined as a lament, the metaphoric text and dance invoked a ritualized experience in the performers, similar to that of lament performances by the Greek women Caraveli was describing.³⁴

Both lament texts and folk commentary employ possession-related metaphors, including an entire system of aesthetics developed around the concept of pain and used to connote the state of emotional engrossment of the performer.³⁵

Both women and men performed the *toyi-toyi*. Since men would experience and express pain differently to women, it would manifest itself as such in the performance. Perceptions of the self as part of a socialized gender identity ultimately dictated how performers would react to pain during the *toyi-toyi*. Seremetakis maintains ritualized structures of pain enable the transcendence of the "self from everyday social contexts and identities."³⁶

Toyi-toyi as Ritual.

This brings me to the point of ritualization of "truth-claiming." In South Africa, the large majority of black men and women who were opposed to the government, were seeking performance space in *toyi-toyi* as a vehicle for expressing social and political realities, and publicly exposing oppressive structures.

Composed of entire categories of persons in conflict with the social structure, such communities of shared emotional inference and reference correspond to Bauman's (1977) notion of performance spaces as disruptive and disjunctive, and as alternative social structures within or at the margins of a social structure.³⁷

Traditionally ritual facilitated structured action. Comparable to Comaroff's analysis of ritual, *toyi-toyi* was an essential catalyst for coercive social transformation. Performers were invested with ritualized authorization, and so command public space. This effectively destroyed the white South African belief that blacks lacked a political identity. I would like to view *toyi-toyi* as a form of political resistance, structured as ritual. Since the performance structure remained more or less constant, performers were open to explore other aspects of the performance, and so had the potential to reach a transcendental experience. This does not indicate, however, that each performer would have the capacity to reach such a state. Nor does it mean that performers void of such an experience were bereft of emotional involvement.³⁸

Ritual as an idiom of political discourse in *toyi-toyi* enabled performers to transcend their oppressed bodies, into an "altered" state of consciousness in which uninhibited political discourse took place. "Ritual frequently [had] been seen as a device that allows for the expression of preexisting emotions that could create problems if not expressed."³⁹

This form of ritualized performance in the *toyi-toyi* brought about a process of healing. Individual performers could focus on the self in relation to the suppressed socialized self. The racial and gendered body was rejected in favour of revolutionized gendered identities and social relationships. Men, however, sought only to overcome their racial bodies, and did not recognize or supporting women's gendered plight. In spite of this, performers were empowered to build new relationships pertaining to public and private space. Furthermore, *toyi-toying* placed civil society in the control of black people for the duration of the performance, providing the performers with a sense of community and social solidarity.

As such the *toyi-toyi* acted as a catalyst for ritualized public therapy. It reordered social relationships and reintegrated performers into an conceived new social order. The socio-political actuality of black people in South Africa was, however, still very limited in the 1980s. Persistent state control in terms of racial, gender and class called for conformity and obedience, a world in which black people did not, and could not belong.

Ritual therapy could in these terms asserts the power of the self - a self which is free from the limits and constraints imposed by the state and its functionaries. People were aware of restraints placed upon them, but *toyi-toying* made impossibilities become possible. The performance became a metaphor of the lives black people led and more specifically the problems and challenges they encountered. Marching through the city, facing the guns and barricades of the SADF, was a reality of daily living.

For this reason the *toyi-toyi* was seen as a cultural weapon in the struggle - in that lies its power. The act of *toyi-toying* represented the struggle of the people against a militarized state. It became a powerful ritual of change - a rite of passage to public space. *Toyi-toyi* stated performers' intentions to have a new and positive future. Because people's subjective experience of the world determined their reality, their state of mind as they entered a performance determined the outcome for them.

Toyi-toyi and Cultural Meaning.

Political slogans, songs and poems, especially those sung during the *toyi toyi*, symbolized the struggle embedded in the philosophy of Black Consciousness. Songs, slogans and *toyi-toyi* carried the message of revolution, of heroes and the "denial of the priorities of western civilization, the culture of the people ha[d] aligned itself, both ideologically and practically, with the political struggle."⁴⁰

During the funeral of murdered leaders Goniwe, Mkhonto, Galata, mentioned in chapter one, slogans were cited in reaction to the brutality of the SADF. "The chanting was soft and hauntingly beautiful. The words were not always gentle. They said of their enemies: "We shall burn them. They shall not exist."⁴¹

The deceased leaders become martyrs and their funeral assumed a political character. By attending the funeral, mourners were showing solidarity with and support for the cause of liberation. Naturally the atmosphere was highly emotive. The slogans were expressions of black anger directed at the state and the SADF. The use of militant slogans appeared to enhance the power performers gained. "They shall not exist," explicitly renounced apartheid rule and militarized strategies of maintaining inhuman social policies.

It is important to understand that slogans and other symbolic texts found in freedom songs reflected a violent and oppressive system created and perpetuated by the state. McKendrick maintains violence breeds violence.⁴² It was therefore inevitable that the mourners would seek reciprocal violence. Singing about violent reactions to state oppression was not the same as acting upon it, although there always remained the potential to do so. Performed songs opened up alternate social spaces in which performers could respond to state oppression. "Singing in itself, then, can facilitate the transition from ordinary to extraordinary experience."⁴³ Both the *toyi-toyi* and protest songs provided black people with an opportunity to communicate their experiences to other people in similar situations. These experiences gave rise to possible responses that could ease their pain (women) and vent their anger (men).

Although these solutions were found in performance structures, and not in military warfare or industrial sabotage, such performance enabled people to believe in their ability to counter oppression. "While reciting a text can be relatively unemotional, singing it

produces intense emotion on the part of the performer."⁴⁴ The performers could sing and so act upon situations that were oppressive, which were not otherwise possible in reality, without the threat of death and carnage.

When I attended an Azapo rally, in Durban on the 6 June 1990, during a *toyi-toyi* performance the leader initiated the slogan "*bulala ibulu*" (kill the farmer) and then embarked on repeating a similar slogan in English, "kill the whites, kill them unconditionally." I was as far as I could remember, the only white and English speaking person present. After numerous repetitions of the slogan, it developed into a highly rhythmic, and emotive song and dance. With each repetition the intensity grew, together with an ever increasing elaborate dance. The people performing the *toyi-toyi* however, did not embrace the actuality of the slogan. Its symbolic significance, especially in view of the English repetition, was indicative of the violent and oppressive nature of white people's presence in their space, and could well have been directed at me.

Certain aspects of the performance, such as the use of non-linguistic symbols manifested in dance or bodily communication, played an important role in *toyi-toyi*. Performers could act upon the words without creating a reality in which violence or other physical revenge tactics could be executed during the performance. But at times violence did occur in the confusion and aftermath, especially when the SADF or SAP reacted to the *toyi-toyi* performance.

I often noticed when *toyi-toyi* performers mentioned the SADF or were dancing past SADF units during the performance, they would enact a shooting scene using their hands whilst in dance, accompanied by percussive rhythmic vocal sounds similar to those of the AK 47 "*qa*." At this point the leader often changed the rhythmic pattern to a triple feel, accentuated with the feet. This pattern and vocal sound in itself became a metaphor of the AK 47, ie a metaphor for militant political struggle.

Such moments are rhythmically intense and very emotional for the performers. By staging a "revenge attack" performers found space to vent their anger in public. This also gave form to their emotions, freely expressing their thoughts. In this manner, both dance and rhythm became symbolic of the armed struggle and the people's power, embodied in the AK 47.

[T]he contrasting, tightly organized rhythms are powerful - powerful because there is vitality in rhythmic conflict, powerful precisely because people are affected and moved. As people participate in a musical situation, they mediate the conflict, and their immediate presence gives power a personal form so that they may relate to it.....people participate with power as a way of relating effectively to each other at a musical or social event.⁴⁵

During the *toyitoyi* the leader initiated the emotional direction the performance would take. A chorus of sympathetic supporters echoed the leader's sentiments in their response. The basic structure was patterned on call and response mode of performance.

The chorus or response is a rhythmic phrase which recurs regularly; the rhythms of the lead singer vary and are cast against the steady repetition of the response....the repetition of the response is the African alternative to the development of a melodic line.⁴⁶

Furthermore mass performance rose above the boundaries of South African soil into the international political arena. The exposure of social and racial realities previously hidden by the boundaries of "townships" and "bantustans," allowed for the criticism of longstanding public policies and powerful political institutions of state control. In the same way the presence of women in the *toyitoyi* questioned the longstanding gendered rationale of political masculinity. In both instances active participation in the previously prohibited domain attained access to and confronted the unfounded prejudices.

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MUSICAL STRUCTURE FOUND IN THE TOYI-TOYI AND FREEDOM SONGS.

Introduction

In this chapter I will analyze *toyi-toyi* performance, using a cross section of performances I recorded. Although each performance may vary in semantic composition, the basic syntax of the *toyi-toyi* remains fairly constant. In this regard, I decided to use various excerpts from different performances for my analysis and transcriptions. Since the basic performance structure is still currently in practice, I have framed my analysis and discussion in the present tense.

My analysis will be based on the syntactic organization of the *toyi-toyi* performance (which encompasses dance, slogans, freedom songs and *izibongo*), as well as the way in which semantic and pragmatic elements affect that organization. Semantic in this context refers to the meaning and symbols associated with *toyi-toyi*, slogans, freedom songs and *izibongo*. Meaning does not however, necessarily reside in the actual pitch content, because the way in which pitches are formed, listened to, and interpreted by the performers and listeners derives from their previous performance experiences. As such, music and dance in the *toyi-toyi* performance become acts of communication, which are influenced by its pragmatic components viz. the behaviour of the participants. In this context, both the semantic components and the system of syntactic rules influence the direction and shape of a performance.

Syntactic rules define the rhythmic and melodic foundations of the *toyi-toyi* and freedom songs. These are apparent in the textual organization in, for example, the repetition of words or phrases and phonetic reiteration. The use of metaphoric language adds another dimension to the performance, creating a rich tapestry of expressive text. This

creative language often veils intended political discourse to outsiders. In such instances, dance communicates and enhances the desired message among the performers. In this manner semantic structures are uncovered, because they are inherent in the syntactic organization of existing poetic lines, slogans or song phrases and dance.

Text

South African poetry is organic, committed, responsible: it is communication and it speaks to, for and from the people; it speaks out of experience, to the imperatives of mobilization, organization and action in the present, for the possible, full future.¹

When Pieterse refers to poetry, he includes all textual performance discourses viz. *toyi-toyi*, freedom songs, *izibongo*, and even slogans. As such, the textual organization of each performance style can be analyzed as a single umbrella discourse.

The basic textual composition of *toyi-toyi*, freedom songs, slogans and *izibongo* is usually simple, in the vernacular, which comprises of Nguni, and sometimes in English or Afrikaans. Composers and performers use both standard and colloquial diction and idiom, which Pieterse refers to as "die mensetaal" (people's tongue).² Because not all performers or listeners understand the *Nguni* diction, the composer uses English as an alternative, so as to ensure accessibility to all. For this reason, poems, slogans and freedom songs appear on clothing, banners and postcards. In this way, resistance culture is popularized, making it available to people unable to participate in a performance for various reasons. As popular culture, the spread of resistance politics among most oppressed people, but especially women - who were denied access to political discourse in the past - is ensured.³ In addition to this, language enables the

performer to role play various situations and conversations. This effectively challenged (and openly condemned) the state and its functionaries, in a creative textual dialogue which has meaning for the performers and their listeners.

Repetition

The revival of traditional oral performance meant the revival of traditional *Nguni* syntactic organization. In traditional oral performance, repetition is usually employed for dramatic effect. To enhance this effect changes in tone, accompanying rhythms and even dance steps is a common practise.⁴ The use of repetition and tonal variation is climatic in effect.

Repetition establishes the musical, textual and emotional framework of the *toyi-toyi*, and its fundamental syntactic infrastructure. Constant repetition of words and phrases, or phonetic reiteration provides a rhythm for communal dance participation. Moreover, it is used for dramatic and aesthetic purposes inherent in a discourse of emotion. "Hearing a phrase for the second time is not the same as hearing it for the first time."⁵ Repetition guides the semantics found in the syntactic organization. In this regard the *toyi-toyi* performance structure remains more or less constant, while the emotional responses of the performers to each reenactment of the *toyi-toyi*, varies according to the personal and socio-political circumstances. Such variation is the result of environmental stimuli, place of performance, participant's objectives for *toyi-toying*, socio-political events prior to and surrounding the event, and the composition of the group of performers themselves.

Toyi-toyi Call-and-Response Choruses

The most expressive domain incorporated into a single *toyi-toyi* performance consist of call-and-response choruses. These choruses, created with slogans and praises, stand out because the linguistic and rhythmic syntax do not veil the political content. Praises and slogans are openly political and defiant. Occasionally metaphors may conceal the explicit meaning, but they never hide the political intention.

The *toyi-toyi* is very physical, commanding body and soul. The momentum is maintained by this highly physical call-and-response rhythmic structure. The response choruses provide an emotional platform for the performers to express themselves, once the leader has set the tone through short bursts of poetry. The leader is at liberty to freely improvise phrases, constructed from existing slogans, freedom songs or *izibongo* lines. His creative ability and knowledge of such text inspires the other performers and so enhances the overall performance of the *toyi-toyi*. The response chorus is characterized by strong cross-rhythmic relationships. These are emphasized through body movement, the clapping of hands, and foot stamping. Body movements reinforce the verbal utterances of the leader and the group. Because the meaning of body movement is subtly differentiated, the code must be learned and understood by all performers.

Rhythm

The syntactic organization of rhythm in the *toyi-toyi* is based on what Nketia terms a time line.⁶ This concept is based on the natural divisions of rhythms into pulses, which are cyclic in nature. In the *toyi-toyi* the stressed beat - or rather the perception of a possible first beat of the cycle - coincides with the entrance of the chorus and not the entrance of the call section. The vitality in the rhythmic structure of the *toyi-toyi* performance stems

from driving pulsations created by foot stamping and hand clapping that tend to anticipate each beat with accented entrances.

At an African musical event, we are concerned with sound and movement, space and time, the deepest modalities of perception. Foremost is the dynamic tension of the multiple rhythms and the cohesive power of their relationship.⁷

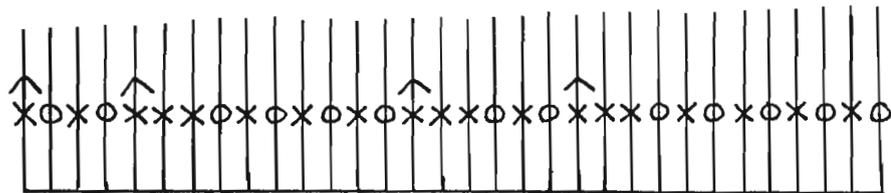
As in traditional *Nguni* performance, when individual rhythmic patterns of the *toyi-toyi* are rendered on their own, they sound simple, but in combination their relationships create complex interweaving patterns. One rhythm differentiates another through points of intersection in the rhythmic cycle or time line, which are often accented.⁸ These accented pulses also create a driving force which increases in momentum with each repeated cycle. The time line or cycle, is usually externalized as a way of keeping time. Unlike western metrical organization of equal grouping of pulse divisions, the time line is conceived of as an extended cycle of pulsations. Division of the line into segments is possible only by superimposing the concept of accents which mark divisions into smaller units.

Basically, the pulse framework of the *toyi-toyi* consists of pulse divisions in multiples of duple (two), triple (three), or a combination of duple and triple meter. Nketia calls this type of alternation hemiola.⁹ These figures create overlapping rhythmic relationships. As in most African musical traditions, the time line of the *toyi-toyi* is not divided into regular groups of duple or triple divisions, but is perpetually changing in reaction to environmental stimuli, the rhythm created by other performers, and by the text. There are even times when unrelated pulse divisions exist simultaneously, creating overlapping parts. Regardless of pulse divisions, pulsations are externalized through body movements.

Spacing of pulses is very important in realizing the time line and in constructing multilinear rhythmic patterns in the *toyi-toyi*. Only through spacing can rhythmic lines interlock, and entries produce variant rhythmic patterns. When different pulse division structures are juxtaposed and interwoven, cross or polyrhythms are created. During this interplay of cross rhythms, spacing and pulses are guided by the resultant rhythmic figure.

The notation of these musical examples is best facilitated by the system developed by ethnomusicologist G. Kubik. He states that "impact notation" ie. the basis of western notation, is not truly reflective of the rhythmic sound which characterizes much traditional black African performance. This is because only the impact of sound can be notated, while spaces are left as points of rests or no sound. He substantiates his claim by developing a concept of "corner points," in which he records the furthest point from the impact and the impact itself, as integral to the beat, hence rhythmic structure. In order to obtain a true analysis of the rhythmic time span, both the corner points of impact and non-impact must be recorded.¹⁰

Transcription of pulse cycle in part of the *toyi-toyi* chorus.¹¹



These points become inaudible beats which are strongly accentuated in the dance movements of the *toyi-toyi* - which is responsible for the motor behaviour of the performer. It is therefore impossible to understand the music by notating only the audible aspects. Through notation of both corner points, which are the extreme points of the motor pattern at which the locus of movement is aimed, the entire rhythmic pattern can be realized.

These corner points mark the end and the beginning of the next pulse of movement. A simple two-dimensional movement such as a foot (knee) lift and then stamping down, such as a dance-march movement in the *toyi-toyi*, is marked by two corner points. The first corner point is the vertex position of the foot (or knee) from the ground, while the second is marked by the impact of the foot on the ground.

Due to the perpetual change in the duration of the time line in the *toyi-toyi*, accented segments are divided according to divisive or additive rhythmic pulses of varying density. There are usually 14 or 16 pulses in a cycle that make up this time. Divisive rhythmic pulses are grouped into two and multiples of two. Pulses that are grouped into 3 + 4 and multiples thereof, are constructed according to the additive rhythmic structure. Sometimes a second cycle that is divided into three or multiples thereof runs parallel to the divisions of two. Because the spacing of triple pulse divisions are different to double divisions, cross rhythmic relations are formed. Accentuation differs according to textual and emotional settings. These divisions may occur at even intervals as found in divisive rhythm, or uneven intervals as in additive rhythm.¹²

In the call section, linguistic and musical syntactic patterns also influence rhythmic variations. The leader or caller interlocks political praise poems with slogans and songs. The performers use these rhythmic patterns in a conversational mode, emphasizing the importance of physical interaction in public space. Rhythmic and personal interactions bond and create solidarity among the performers of the *toyi-toyi*. "Multiple meter is, in brief, a communal examination of percussive individuality."¹³

Leader: *Viva African National Congress, viva.* [sic]
 Chorus: *Viva.* [sic]
 Leader: *We are members of the African National Congress,
 we are align.* [sic]
 Chorus: *We are align.* [sic]
 Leader: *We are members of the National Youth Congress,
 we are aligned.*
 Chorus: *We are aligned.* [sic].¹⁴

In the above example, the leader repeatedly calls in rapid succession a lengthy, rhythmic line void of melody, always stressing the "we." In exchange the response section is slightly slower and more accentuated, but still void of a melody. The need to emphasize unity among the people at the event (and in all anti-apartheid organizations united in liberation struggle) is clearly demonstrated by the constant repetition of "we are aligned." Furthermore the leader's call is never left unanswered. He indicates the final call with, "*Amandla*" (power), which is followed by the response "*Awethu*" (to the people) by the performers.

Dance

Central to the effectiveness of the *toyitoyi's* performance is the physical response (usually in the form of dance) to the textual and emotional content of the present moment of its enactment. In addition, memories of past experiences and emotions enhance each new performance. With this stress on the physical response embedded in performance, I suggest it is more appropriate to use graphic transcription rather than western notation in my analysis of the performance. Performers respond with their bodies to both the textual content and the performance context. These two elements determine the emotional impact of the performance.

Rhythmic variations in the *toyitoyi* are created by dance movements that accompany the call-and-response sections. These dance movements correspond with the syntax of the rhythmic structure. In addition, dance movements often define or communicate the

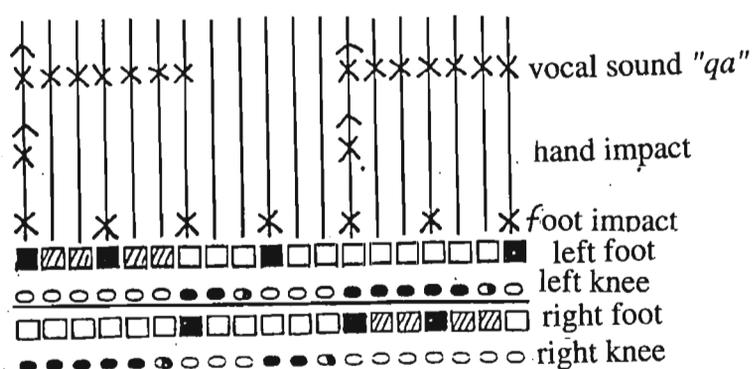
meaning of symbols suggested in the emotional capacity of the performance. Performers articulate unspoken or elaborate textual utterances through body movements. One example of this, is taken from the ANC's National Mass Action held in Durban in May 1991, when performers would repeatedly shout "*panzi*" (down) when passing SADF members en route, this was accompanied by a downward hand movement. At a later stage this same hand movement was used without any utterances, but it had the same effect upon the performers.

Since the *toyi-toyi* performance incorporates a diversity of movements, I felt it necessary to include all three variants of Hanna's analogy of movement patterns viz. postural, auxiliary and locational. Postural movements are impact movements which create impact rhythmic sound and energy. These motions include feet stamping and hand clapping. Auxiliary movements involve only parts of the body as gestural actions. These movements are not necessarily passive as in facial expressions, but also incorporate active gestures which create impact against the air, such as arm movements, leg lifts or even hand signals. They are just as important to the performance as postural movements. The size, contour and direction of all these movements effects the impact and space occupied by the body.¹⁵ Since the *toyi-toyi* encompassess locational change, the whole body is involved in moving from a starting point to a desired destination. The consequential pattern of spatial movement in relation to postural and auxiliary movements creates locational movement.

Communication occurs among the performers in all three movement patterns. This is illustrated by the rhythmic pattern and dance surrounding the armed struggle embodied in the AK 47 I mentioned in the previous chapter. The strong vocal sound "*Qa*" is extended through the use of both postural and auxiliary movements. Fundamentally the robust stamping of feet and hand clapping on the accented pulses creates postural movements. Alternately, in between the hand clapping, the dancers mimic a shooting

scene using their arms and upper bodies. Some dancers extend these gestures by hitting the air with strong arm maneuvers as if in combat. These motions all make up the auxiliary movements.

Transcription of AK-47 sound in the *toyi-toyi* chorus.



While this is taking place the dance moves forward towards a specific destination. As I mentioned above, the constant change in position and place of dance, encompassess locational movement. As the performers *toyi-toyi* through the streets of urban areas, to and from funerals and meetings, the space of enactment changes with the progress of the march. Once the march reaches the desired destination, the *toyi-toyi* cease to encompass locational movement, and remains in one area.

These dance patterns are used to create symbolic meaning which is communicated in performance. The above dance description embodies the people's power in performance spaces. It empowers the leader to order and direct performance behaviour and the performers to respond to and enhance this direction. The *toyi-toyi* performance thus becomes symbolic of freedom fighters, a war in which people are fighting for liberation. Body movement and gesture, rhythmic patterns, and song in the end merely facilitate socio-political symbolism, and communicative efficacy which are realized in the broader structures of the performance.

The degree of representational or abstract symbolization and the syntactic arrangement - the permissive groups of movements which refer to sequences of meaning - depend on cultural patterning.¹⁶

The basic leg movement of the *toyitoyi* is an invigorated march movement, comparable with soldiers marching. The performers are thereby equated with soldiers, and as such the performance empowers them with a militant actuality. This in itself affords a response from the public, the SADF, and the government. As such, the *toyitoyi* performance moves beyond traditional expressive culture, in that unlike the past, where licensed commentary posed no real threat to state authority, the *toyitoyi* does so most vehemently.

In this regard, in the 1980s, the threat *toyitoyi* performance posed to the state was reflected in constant surveillance by the military at all moments of its enactment, the media's response to the *toyitoyi* and the potential of performers to react to the emotional capacity inherent in such licensed commentary. One example of this occurred on the 15 of December 1985, when the United Democratic Front held a meeting at Curries Fountain in Durban. The *Weekly Mail* reported that the police had tried to video tape the events at this meeting. Angered youths confronted the police, *toyitoying* and shouting the slogan " *amabutho*" (I am a soldier).¹⁷ Their emotions were highly charged, and their anger clearly evident in this slogan and the unrest that followed the meeting. Such responses are more extreme, but to be expected in view of the fact that the state had created an acceptance of organized state violence as a legitimate solution to conflict.

Rhythm in Dance

"Intentional rhythm in dance refers to the organized flow of energy in time and space which contrasts with the autonomic-interactional rhythms of other human and nonhuman

Because each performer executes multiple rhythms with the whole body as an instrument, rhythmic understanding is essential for a good performance. The example above indicates various levels of rhythmic actions that occur simultaneously.

Other body movements make up secondary extensions of the rhythmic cycle. Since these movements are usually inaudible, they are more difficult to notate and appreciate in terms of the time line. It is here that Kubik's corner point notation is of extreme importance.¹⁹ Arm and leg movements in the air are integral parts of the rhythmic composition and emotional expression in the *toyi-toyi*. Even though they are not impact actions, delivery of these movements remains rhythmic.

The performers' perception of their body movements is related to their kinaesthetic sense, which in turn facilitates emotional response. Environmental stimuli and the space in which they are performing the *toyi-toyi*, also motivates certain body maneuvers and slogans.

The leader demonstrates his own awareness of the rhythmic potential of the music, and his involvement with the social situation, in a dramatic gesture that will play on the minds and bodies of his fellow performers and his audience.²⁰

This is well demonstrated in the following example. During one of the *toyi-toyi* performances I participated in in 1990, the procession passed white business men observing the *toyi-toyi*. They were clearly not in favour of the march taking place in Durban's central business district. Although I could not hear their comments, one of the leaders of the *toyi-toyi* called his section of the march to a halt as they passed these men. The rhythms of the call and the response, became more dense, and the pulses highly accentuated. The leader started citing slogans and poetic lines, which were responded to by the rest of the performers. As soon as these business men retreated into their offices

and closed the doors, the performers shouted and danced at their "victory," before moving on. The performance empowered them to claim control of that particular space.

This is also an explicit example of how the use of traditional poetic license in the *toyi-toyi* posed a threat to institutions of power. The business men represented the centralized (and frequently oppressive) power of economic institutions, controlled by white men. Their retreat symbolized the weakening of white power at the time of the performance. Here, contrary to traditional poetic license, the performance clearly constituted a threat to white domination.

Freedom Songs

Encompassed in a complete march are numerous freedom songs sung at various intervals during the *toyi-toyi* dance. Participants inaugurate the performance of freedom songs either during cycles of lower intensity in the *toyi-toyi*, or when the march has reached its intended destination. Then the performers continue to *toyi-toyi* on the spot, singing freedom songs or listening to *izibongo*, until the start of the intended meeting, funeral, rally or cultural event. These cycles or periods are usually directed by the leader of that particular group of performers. At this time the performance often becomes slightly less physical and more melodic. Since freedom songs are constructed as melody, the emotional content becomes more dependent on the interrelationship between the textual and musical syntax.

During the 1980s three different styles of freedom songs emerged from my data viz. western hymnody, newly composed songs influenced by both traditional *Nguni* song styles and western harmonic hymn structures viz. *isicathamiya*, and finally traditional *Nguni* songs (these are adaptations of older war songs, *ingoma* and *amahubo*)²¹ Black people in the colonial period, and subsequent black composers drawing on western

hymnody, utilized melody to create musical space for a discourse of politics, and not simply artistic expression. The musical syntax of these songs veil the critical discourse of political resistance to those not paying in-depth attention to the textual content, or not familiar with the vernacular semantic code. These songs could bring forth political education and communication without being exposed by the powers of the government.

In all instances, political discourse is of paramount concern to the composers and performers. It determines both the shape and direction of each performance. As such, freedom songs included in the *toyi-toyi* performance become acts of collective political communication. Composers pay attention to the text and its political function, while maintaining a coherent musical syntax. Their primary aim is to ensure textual meaning. As I noted in the introduction chapter, performance culture came to be the primary vehicle for the discourse of politics for black people in South Africa. For this reason the melodic lines become subordinate to the text. Performance came to be the people's political information data bank, as Chris Dhlamini reflects below.

They composed a song which referred to my detention, and that of others, as a way of reminding the people of our fate. This ensured that no one in detention from our factory and community was forgotten, despite the clampdown on information by the state.²²

People in liberation movements from all over South Africa sing the same freedom songs. As a result, they access the same information, and communicate in the same performance mode. This led to the sloganeering of popular songs and poems. When these slogans are cited, previous memories of the song text is also raised for the performer. As such the song is concerned with human experience and emotions, while the slogan reinforces this experience without having to perform the original text in its entirety. A poignant example is the slogan *Senzenina* (the voice of protest) taken from the song quoted in my introduction. The song deals with the pain apartheid had caused, as seen in the phrases, "These are our people; why are they weeping?" The slogan born out of this

song, overcomes this pain through confronting and challenging the apartheid ideology of the state. "The voice of protest," is the voice of the people expressing their disapproval and need for a new socio-political climate. Although the song's emotional content is painful, the slogan empowers the performers to overcome this pain.

The most widely performed freedom songs are those sung during the *toyitoyi* call-and-response cycles. These songs are based on the rhythmic syntax of the call-and-response sections. They replace the vocal responses with a melodic line which iterates itself with each repetition. Although the basic melodic and textual context does not change, the emotional capacity of the performers are heightened with each repetition. The change in emotions are reflected in the change in dance movements and rhythmic bodily accompaniment such as hand clapping and foot stamping. In the freedom song below, the performers repeat one phrase, " *Oh sivulele*," (open or let out), while the leader intersects each repetition with praises and slogans. As the performance progresses a rhythmic marching dance step is added. At this point the performers become extremely emotional, and may even respond with additional slogans, vocal sounds or dance steps. The tone of the song is extremely militant and demanding, while at the same time it provides a source of hope and encouragement for the performers. The performer's demand is simple, in that the state must open the way for the people. While hope is embedded in pain, in that the way out is through the struggle and the people's war. Embodied in the notion of war is the motivation for that war - it was a painful war against the state and its functionaries.

point people are rallied together in their plight for liberation, which becomes the root for motivating people to use culture as a weapon in the struggle.

Izibongo.

With the reemergence of *izibongo* during the 1980s, two forms came into being. The one form is more auditory, relying on *toyi-toyi* rhythms and metaphors, while the second form is formally simple, with little or no use of metaphors.²⁵

During *izibongo* narrative, the performers take on a slightly different role, viz. that of an audience. The crowds of people who were in the process of performing freedom songs and *toyi-toying*, now listen assiduously, providing enthusiastic responses to the various emotions the *imbongi* evokes. As I mentioned in chapter 4, *izibongo* are characterized by highly symbolic texts, which empower the *imbongi* to utilize figures of speech in a creative and artistic manner whilst still engaging in a discourse of political resistance. There exists a basic correlation between the syntactic organization of newly composed *izibongo* and that of traditional *izibongo*. Although extensive praise of ancestors is no longer a prerequisite, as it was in the past, important deceased political figures and current leaders are often incorporated into the poems. Metaphors continue to play a crucial role, as well as tonal inflections, textual rhythmic patterns, and satirical commentary. This satire is reflected in the following *isibongo*.

We shall remember you
 Not only as the State President
 but as a symbol of eternity
 among them all
 P.W. Botha
 We shall remember you

They call you
Pet William Botha

We the masses call you
P.W. Botha
P *panzi* [down]
W *wena* [with you]
Botha.²⁶

In the performance of this *isibongo*, which opens with an introduction to P.W. Botha, the State President of South Africa (1978-1986), the audience intuitively anticipated the satirical twist in the poem. As the recital progressed there was an increase in tempo and accented articulation, which only paused on the punch lines. When Andile (the *imbongi*) concluded the final two stanzas of his *isibongo* quoted above, the audience responded by whistling and cheering him on. They openly voiced their feelings of disparagement towards the President. Notably this *isibongo* was recited in English in almost its entirety. As with some of the freedom songs, the use of English rather than the vernacular, is indicative of code switching. As such composers could direct their message to as wide an audience as possible, including the state and its functionaries.

The following *isibongo* by Keith Gottschalk reflects this form of code switching well. He employs Xhosa, English and Afrikaans to ensure his message and the emotional direction of the poem. This is achieved by allocating Afrikaans, as vernacular of the state, to its functionaries, and English as the historical narrative. Finally Xhosa is used at the climax of the *isibongo*, which deals with the restoration of the land to its people. Gottschalk draws on pain - as reflected in the description of disposition and a moving phrase, "we sat down and wept," - as a metaphor for constructing social truth. Through this construction arises the political ideal of liberation and its social solution for the future, voiced in the slogan, "The People shall share in the country's wealth!" At this point there is a shift from pain to hope and strength. This shift in emotional content also marks a process of social healing.

.....
 By the tommy boybell gebou
 we sat down and wept.
 You are no longer a man but manlike -

'MANLIKE A TOT L ON 40 %:
 Come on time! Sit Quite!
 Produce your identity!
 Kom! Sign! Voeeeeertsak!'

.....
 Comrades Elijah and Jay say:
 'ORGANIZE!
 Build our unions!
 Build COSATU locals!
 Build the strategic alliance COSATU-UDF!'

'AANDAG!
 Nademaal dit na my blyk,
 Dat omstandighede ontstaan,
 Kragtens die bevoegdheid aan my verleen,
 By artikel twee sit-in-hakies een sluit-hakies,
 Verklaar ek derhalwe hierby,
 Dat ek ñ noodtoestand toewy.

Gegee onder my Hand en die Seël van die
 Republiek.....

ABANTU bayakuxhamla ubutyebi belize!
 Ubutyebi belizwe lethu,
 ilifa lomntu wonke wase Mzantsi Afrika,
 bayakububuyiselwa ebantwini.....

[The people shall share in the country's wealth!
 The national wealth of our country,
 the heritage of all South Africans,
 shall be restored to the people.....].²⁷

Women Performing Izibongo

What made *izibongo* performances so remarkable in the late 1980s and even more so in the early 1990s, was the fact that women occasionally performed political poems in public. According to the comments made to me by some of the men at these meetings, women performing in public took some getting use to. They did not however, reject the idea completely. Nevertheless despite women's efforts, men still controlled the political content and performance of the various public discourses. During the ANC's

Conference on the Development of Culture held in May 1993, numerous women succeeded in performing their *izibongo* between speeches or working groups.

In the 1980s, men dominated the platform, and therefore their *izibongo* were documented and remembered. This is not to say that I disagree with this documentation, though I have trouble agreeing with the exclusivity of this male focus. As Nise Malange noted, men battle to deal with the idea that a woman can be an *imbongi*, and be as creative and politically aware as they are.²⁸ As a result of the large absence of women from performance of *izibongo*, even during the women's rallies I attended, my research is sadly lacking in this area. Fortunately women have not just sat back. Some have managed to publish their work in journals, newspapers and magazines such as *Speak*. The following *isibongo* by Malange was published in a collective book form, together with A.T. Qabula and M. Hlatshwayo.

Everyone who has died
Is here today
Those who died in the struggle of the people
Are here
Sing with us -
They are holding our hands
Just that touch
Moving through our bodies
Like a bloodstream.²⁹

Semantics

Meaning then, in a communicative sense, is dependent on the interpretive action, which is compiled from extant cultural knowledge. In the *toyi-toyi* context sound actively communicates deeply felt emotions of anger and pain which is embedded in the political discourse of dispossession and death. As I mentioned earlier on in this chapter, the vocal sound of the AK 47, "qa," embodies deep seated emotions of anger and power. As such this anger symbolizes the people's war in reaction to the death and destruction apartheid has caused in black communities. For the majority of people in liberation movements,

the armed struggle, one of the most powerful weapons in the battle against the state, is that of cultural performance. For them, the *toyi-toyi* came to symbolize a cultural weapon. As such the vocal sound of the AK 47 (including the dance movements) itself came to symbolize the struggle against a militarized society and state. So powerful has this vocalized metaphor of the AK 47 become, that it is widely incorporated into songs and recited during *izibongo*. The latter is clearly demonstrated in excerpt no.13 of the tape. Here Andile incorporated the "qa" sound into the middle of his *isibongo*, "I'm speaking of the people's heroes." It provided for a dramatic climax, at which moment the audience articulated their approval of the armed struggle uproariously, with cheers, clapping of hands and stamping their feet.

Organization of Performances

The basic structural organization of the performers is one of practicality, viz. the subdivision of performers into smaller groups in the march situation. Since many thousands of people may participate in a march at one time, it is impossible to perform as a unitary group. This is because the performers are drawn-out along large extensions of the street or area of performance. As a result the performers in the front will not be able to hear those performers in the middle or back of the procession and vice versa, making coherent performance impossible.³⁰ Participants are therefore grouped according to their political organization, or sub-branch within that organization. In an important march, for example the ANC, SACP and COSATU Alliance Peace Campaign held in Durban on 10 August 1992, divisions were made accordingly: ANC, *uMkhonto we Sizwe*, ANC Youth League, ANC Women's League, SACP, SACP Youth League, COSATU (with their various sub-sidery bodies) and various student groups. Each of these groups comprised of both men and women, regardless of the organization represented, including the ANC Women's League. Flags and banners were displayed in each of the group's front rows. The leader, or leaders, (as this position can be rotated

among the key people in the front row), directs the group musically and geographically. In all mass *toyi-toyi* performance during the eighties, I have noted that the leadership position was seldom held by a woman. Albeit, women did initiate freedom songs and slogans.

Gender

As I mentioned in chapter four, traditional discourse of politics is the discourse of men. They were invested with the power to make social decisions which concerned both men and women. The transformation from traditional to western political thought, only reinforced the fact that public and political concerns men. Again female social spaces are separated from the public realm of politics. As such, performance spaces constructed by women are viewed as feminine, therefore not political, but domestic. Furthermore women performing alongside men in the *toyi-toyi*, freedom songs or slogans are seen as mothers, thus their presence in public viewed as having domestic intent. The women, however, viewed their performance as political.

For the first time in the political history of South Africa, black women claimed space in the public political arena, not as mothers of the nation, but as women. "I'm not a mother, I'm young.....a woman...I *toyi-toyi* because I'm angry for oppression."³¹ The eighties saw significant changes in the political role black women were to play. This did not mean, however, that black women had equal status with their men, at political rallies or performances. The *toyi-toyi* is not void of divisions, even though on the surface the performance may suggest, that women participants are marching alongside the men. Women I interviewed, emphatically stated that women's political role is still seen as secondary by the men.

Even though black women were subjected to social prejudice in the eighties, they began to see themselves in a more positive light. It will take a long time to break down existing social structures based on unequal gender divisions, especially when, women face the additional factor of racial oppression. As I discussed in the previous chapters, during the eighties, the internal structure of liberation movements did not facilitate women's needs and political aspirations, as they were not regarded as important. As a result, women were often forced to forgo gender liberation in favour of racial liberation, because the latter was prioritized as the most pressing issue for black people in South Africa. This is clearly demonstrated in the absence of women in leadership positions in political organizations and performance structures. This absence is also evident in the *toyi-toyi* performance.

At major rallies or even women's rallies, men dominated leadership positions in the performance. Although towards the end of the eighties and the early nineties, women began to hold and run exclusive rallies on their own more often. Men, still intervened, however, by taking up a leading position in *toyi-toyi* performances. I spoke to some male participants who felt unanimous about their superior role at political events. They maintained that women could not be left to their own devices when dealing with political matters. When I pointed out that the event taking place was organized by women, the observation was side stepped with various questions unrelated to the event.³²

As women came into their own politically, through the many campaigns they held and supported viz. consumer boycotts, rent boycotts, education crisis campaigns and anti-pass campaigns to name but a few, they realized as mothers and women, they had a say in the future of the country. For this reason the *toyi-toyi* performance had meaning for women and their role in the liberation struggle. As a performance space, it opened up new options for them. They could fuse traditional domestic related feminine performance spaces with the current discourse of politics - which was traditionally

regarded as public and masculine. In so doing, performance culture has opened the door for women in the eighties to move from other subordinate domains of discourse to the central public domain of socio-political discourse.

Endnotes.

1. Cosmo Pieterse, in *Culture in Another South Africa*, (London 1989), 112.
 2. *Ibid.*
 3. Ari Sitas, "The Publication and Reception of Worker's Literature," in *Staffrider*, Vol. 8, no. 3 & 4, (Johannesburg 1989), 62.
 4. *Ibid.*
 5. L. Vail & L. White, *Power and the Praise Poem: Southern African Voices in History*, (London 1991), 29.
 6. J.H.K. Nketia, *The Music of Africa*, (London 1975).
 7. J.M. Chernoff, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility*, (Chicago 1979), 154.
 8. J.H.K. Nketia, *The Music of Africa*, (London 1975).
 9. *Ibid.*
 10. G. Kubik, "Transcription of African Music from Silent Film: Theory and Methods," in *Journal of the African Music Society*, Vol. 5, no. 2, 1972.
 11. I would like to clarify the symbols used in my transcriptions that will follow. Body movements are incorporated into the transcriptions through symbols, or what I term movement blocks. Each movement block correspond to a pulse line in the rhythmic cycle. I repeated each cycle twice, so as to show left and right alternations in the leg movements.
- ---- Foot placed on the ground with impact.
 ▨ ---- Low jump, to return on the same leg.
 □ ---- Foot lifted off the ground.
 ● ---- Knee lifted at a 90 degree angle.
 ⊙ ---- Knee lifted a 45 degree angle.
 ○ ---- Knee straight.
- The following symbols are used on the pulse line grid.
- ^ ---- Indicates an accented pulse.
 X ---- Indicates audible pulses.
 O ---- Indicated inaudible pulses.
12. J.H.K. Nketia, *Op Cit.*
 13. R. Thompson from J.M. Chernoff, *Op Cit.*, 125.
 14. Personal recording of ANC Cultural Evening, 16 June, 1992.
 15. J.L. Hanna, *Op Cit.*, 36.
 16. *Ibid.*, 38.
 17. *Weekly Mail*, 10 January 1986.
 18. *Ibid.*, 72.
 19. G. Kubik, *Op Cit.*
 20. J.M. Chernoff, *Op Cit.*, 111.
 21. W. Rhodes uses similar classifications in his paper "Music as an Agent of Political Expression, in *Arts, Human Behavior and Africa, African Studies Bulletin*, (Vol. 5, 1962), 98.
 22. Chris Dhlamini, "The K-Team and Resistance Music," in *Staffrider*, Vol. 8, no. 3 & 4, (Johannesburg 1989), 48.
 23. C.N. Seremetakis, "The Ethics of Antiphony: The Social Construction of Pain, Gender, and Power in the Southern Peloponnese," in *Ethos: A Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology*, Vol. 18, no. 4, 1990.
 24. Freedom song recorded at the ANC Cultural Evening, 16 June 1990.
 25. Ari Sitas, *Op Cit.*, 68.
 26. Personal recording of *imbongi* Andile reciting "We Shall Remember You," at the ANC Cultural Evening, 16 June 1992. Also see Appendix no. 14.
 27. Keith Gottschalk, "Praise Poem of COSATU," first performed at the May Day Rally, Athlone Stadium, Cape Town, 1989, pub in *Staffrider*, Vol. 8, no. 4 & 5, (Johannesburg 1989), 145-146.
 28. Personal interview, Nise Malange, January 1993.
 29. N. Malange, "Today," from FOSATU Culture Day, 1985, in *Black Mamba Rising*, (Durban

1986), 56.

30. See Appendix no. 15.

31. Personal recording, Women's Rally, 30 May 1990.

32. Personal recording, *Ibid.*

CONCLUSION.

[P]eople relegated to the backyards of the world by law and privilege gained through conspiracy and blood letting, have been and must be a subject and an issue of great concern for cultural expression...A people's history, and thus their cultural expression, binds them with humanity. That is so because history is of the people,.....and culture is their expression of their acting out that history.¹

After much research I concluded that resistance culture, but more specifically the *toyi-toyi*, activated a therapeutic process through individual performers focusing on the self in relation to the suppressed social body. In doing so they rejected the racial and gendered body in favour of revolutionized social identities and relationships. This process empowered performers to create new relationships pertaining to public and private space, initiating a mechanism through which they would ultimately reclaim civil society and place it in the control of black people. Furthermore the *toyi-toyi* provided people with a sense of community and a sense of social solidarity. It was this power which became the healing agent.

Historically black people in South Africa have faced extreme oppression and political deprivation. This has been particularly true for women. The state controlled racial, gender and class legalized structures, through an ideology of social conformity and obedience. Because the *toyi-toyi* performance existed outside the parameters of state power, individual participants were set free from the limits and constraints imposed by these laws of apartheid.

Therapy, however was not only rooted in the physical act of dance and public presence, but also in the power of poetic license. For that reason the *toyi-toyi* was seen as a symbol of empowerment and transformation. Performers could transcend the limitations imposed upon political discourse by apartheid. The articulated words and feelings were transformed into emotive political and performative discourse.

Symbolically, the *toyi-toyi* became a cultural weapon in the liberation struggle. It embodied physical and textual imagery of the people's war against oppression. It challenged all political structures which had infringed upon their lives, and created a society in which, to be black meant to be nothing, to have no value. Ultimately, *toyi-toying* in the 1980s, meant reclaiming the right to occupying public space, and the right to participate in civil society, in a free and democratic environment. *Toyi-toyi* facilitated the rite of passage from marginalized rural spaces to the centers of power and politics - the buildings and parks of urban space.

The act of *toyi-toying* embodied the struggle. Understanding that South African public space was military space, occupation of this space would be seen as militant. Marching through city centres, facing the guns and barricades of the SADF and SAP in itself was seen as a declaration of war. *Toyi-toying* transcended the limitations imposed by the SADF or SAP, demanding performers' rights - to have a new and positive future - even if they had to fight for it.

Another important aspect of *toyi-toying*, was a strengthened black identity that was emphatic and separate from white socio-political discourse. The philosophy of Black Consciousness came to underwrite the semantic and syntactic structures of resistance culture. The "Back-to-the-land-pick-up-your-roots message was simplistic but telling: it indicated their tiredness of Western ways."²

For women resistance culture went one step further. Not only did they display control over personal autonomy in public as black people, but as women as well. It was especially important to have their own voice reinforced through their participation in the *toyi-toyi*, as women. Their presence represented a triumph over orthodox political thinking and social reality which relegated them to the private, rural, domestic spaces.

Ultimately women were mobilizing for political reorganization and a shift in power relations, as they pertained to gender and race.

Thus, for women political performance did not merely provide an alternative interpretation of history, but also an alternative vision of how life ought to be lived in the future, as women.

In many ways for women, I believe the *toyi-toyi* and resistance culture came close to an idealistic utopian vision for complete social transformation in South Africa in the domains of race, class, and especially gender.

Endnotes

1. W. Serote, "Now We Enter History," in *Culture in Another South Africa*, (London 1989), 16-17.
2. *Weekly Mail*, 21 November, 1986, 15.

Appendix

Excerpts nos. 1-8 reflect the various rhythmic cycles in a *toyi-toyi* chorus. This performance was taken from the Women's Rally held in May 1990. [0 - 6:02]

1. *Toyi-toyi* chorus, vocal sound "*ihow.*"
2. *Toyi-toyi* chorus, vocal sound "*hoes.*"
3. *Toyi-toyi* chorus, vocal sound "*ihow.*"
4. *Toyi-toyi* chorus, vocal sound "*hoes.*"
5. *Toyi-toyi* chorus, vocal sound "*qa.*"
6. *Toyi-toyi* chorus, vocal sound "*hoes.*"
7. *Toyi-toyi* chorus, vocal sound "*ihow.*"
8. *Toyi-toyi* chorus, vocal sound "*hoes.*"

Excerpts nos. 9-14 illustrates how freedom songs, slogans and *izibongo* interlock as part of a *toyi-toyi* performance. [6:06 - 8:04]

9. Freedom song, ANC Cultural Evening, 16 June, 1992. [8:05 - 8:30]
10. Political slogan, "*Amandla, Awethu...*" ANC Cultural Evening, 16 June 1992. [8:05 - 8:30]
11. Freedom song, "*Oh Sivulele,*" ANC Cultural Evening, 16 June 1992. [8:31 - 11:17]
12. Political slogan, "*Amandla, Awethu... Viva African National Congress, Viva...*" ANC Cultural Evening, 16 June 1992. [11:18 - 11:27]
13. Slogan and praise interaction, "*We are Aligned.*" [11:28 - 11:54]
14. *Isibongo*, "*Fallen Heroes,*" composed and recited by Andile at the ANC Cultural Evening, 16 June 1992. [11:56 - 13:07]
15. *Isibongo*, "*We Shall Remember You,*" composed and recited by Andile at the ANC Cultural Evening, 16 June 1992. [13:08 - 14:43]

Excerpt no. 16 gives an overall impression of what a *toyi-toyi* performance would sound like in its entirety from a central point in the procession. [14:44 - 22:32]

16. *Toyi-toyi* performance, ANC Mass Action, 25 July 1992.

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 Durban, 21 March 1990.
 Women's Rally, May 1990.
 Durban, 15 June, 1990.
 ANC National Mass Action, Durban, 8-10 May, 1991.
 Sharpville commemoration, Durban, 21 March, 1992
 Veronica Mkari, 16 May, 1992.
 AZAPO, 14 June, 1992.
 Cultural Evening, Durban, 16 June, 1992.
 ANC Mass Action March, 25 July, 1992.
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 Santana Ntombela, Head of Southern Natal Department of Arts and Culture, ex-MK exile, April, November 1993.
 Zandile Cele, Industrial Court Interpreter and ANC member, December 1993.
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