

# *Young, Gifted and Black* \*

Oral Histories of Young Activists in Cape Town and Durban in the  
early 1970s

By  
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\* Acknowledgement to Nina Simone's song that was very inspirational during this period: (W. Irvine/N. Simone) Ivan Mogull Music Ltd. EMI Tunes Pic.

*This dissertation is dedicated to Krishna Rabilal, who was murdered on 30 January 1981 in, Matola, Mozambique by the South African Defence Force. We honour his heroism and memory through recording the stories of some of his contemporaries.*

*It is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained... the individual who has not staked his life may, no doubt, be recognised as a person; but he has not attained the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness.*  
(Hegel: *The Phenomenology of the Mind*)

## **Declaration of Originality**

I, Carmel T. M. Chetty (Student No.: 202520212), declare that this research titled: *Young, Gifted and Black. Oral Histories of Young Activists in Cape Town and Durban in the early 1970s* is my own work and that all sources quoted have been duly acknowledged.

This research was duly given ethical clearance by the Department of Humanities in 2005.

Signed:           Carmel Chetty          

Date:           13 April 2007          

Supervisor: Crispin Hemson

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I wish to express my indebtedness to:

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  - Edminson Library
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<sup>1</sup> Jaffe, 1994: 182

## **Abstract**

This study highlights the contribution of activists from Durban and Cape Town in the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa in the early nineteen seventies. Historians tend to generally disregard this period, that followed the state crackdown on black political organisations and leaders, especially when writing on the 1960s Defiance Campaign and the 1976 uprising.

The respondents in this study developed their political consciousness during the period when internationally there was growing popular resistance to the Vietnam War, coupled with the emergence of the militant Black Power Movement in the USA. This was also the period of the development of the Black Consciousness Movement among 'black' university students in South Africa. The emergence of the dynamic Black Consciousness Movement gave young individuals the ammunition to explore a new identity that could help them discard the shackles of the oppressive consciousness drummed through apartheid schooling.

The thesis of this study is about the significant impact the deconstruction of racial identities had on the lives of young activists who resisted racial and class oppression, during the period incorrectly described as '*The Fifteen Year Night After Sharpeville*<sup>2</sup>'. It contends that revolutionary zeal evoked spontaneous learning. Powerful learning occurred when it was linked to the struggle against oppression. Under such conditions groups and individuals took responsibility for their own learning and developed skills and strategies that has largely stayed with them for the rest of their lives.

This study presents the oral stories of some activists from the Durban and Cape Town areas and explores the activities of these two groups, hundreds of miles away from one another who pursued activities that were largely similar. The focus is on the learning that emerged through the consciousness raising and the conscientisation processes that helped activists psychologically liberate themselves from racial indoctrination. It traces the

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<sup>2</sup> Jaffe, 1994: 182

development of their consciousness during their youth and examines how that consciousness impacted on their lives as well as their understanding of their social identities in the present.

The Black Consciousness philosophy drew individuals away from the preconceived notions rooted in the oppressive ideology of apartheid and created a new identity that promoted 'black' pride and solidarity. Although the groups operated almost 1700 kilometres apart, this study found that those activists who were exposed to philosophies like Freire's 'Education for Liberation' converged towards a common goal for revolutionary social change.

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## Introduction

My father, John William Perez, has always been an impulsive person. It was therefore totally in character when he came home one night and announced that a few students would be coming around the next day. He had offered our home as their base. This single unselfish act changed our lives dramatically and threw our family into the forefront of the student struggles in the Western Cape in 1973.

When the students, led by Johnny Issel, an executive member of SASO (South African Students' Organisation), arrived the next morning, they took over our home completely and used it as the nerve centre from which they directed their campaign against the university linking up with student struggles elsewhere in the country. It also served as a monitoring centre for messages of support and solidarity from all over the world.

Our home was a humble three bed-roomed, semi-detached council house. There were no spare rooms to use. My parents shared their bedroom with an old, blind aunt rescued after she was evicted from her home in Port Elizabeth following the enforcement of the Group Areas Act; the four daughters shared a second bedroom which snugly fitted two bunk beds and the two sons shared the third bedroom. It was necessary therefore that our sitting room was turned into an office for the students.

Our neighbour's mantra '*Share what you have, don't give what you can spare*' became our reality as everything in our home was shared with those in need who crossed our doorstep. Sharing as a way of life is alluded to by many writers who have focussed on the people of the Western Cape. Desiree Lewis in writing about District Six, states:

Stories abound of how people shared what little they had..... Sharing extended also to sharing responsibility for the raising of children of friends and relatives and taking in the destitute and the down and out... (Zegeye A. (ed.) 2001: 119)

My father spent his days at work and my mother had to put up with the never ending streams of students, noisy debates and constant ringing of the telephone. She never complained.

My parents, in particular my father, considered their role in the student campaign as an honour and a privilege. My mother had some regrets in later years when two of her daughters were forced into exile and she all but lost contact as she was constantly refused a passport by the authorities. But, on the whole she viewed that moment as an extraordinary introduction into the world of political struggle.

I don't think my father quite understood what he was letting himself in for when he offered our home to the students. Nevertheless he welcomed them and fully participated in all their campaigns and struggles.

My family was not unique in allowing our home to become an official meeting place for the student movement. Many other families in the Western Cape and Durban similarly allowed their homes to be used for the clandestine activities of political activists.

In Cape Town students also gathered around Father Clive McBride, James Mathews and the offices of *The Christian Institute*. In Durban the homes of many activists became sites of struggle. The Presbyterian Church in Merebank, Alan Taylor Residence in Wentworth and the SASO offices in Beatrice Street were important meeting places for student activists.

This study seeks to unravel some of the stories of the activists of the early 1970s. It is however only a part of a much bigger story of the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa.

## **Overview of the dissertation**

The study is structured into three sections. The first section consists of chapters 1, 2 and 3 that provide the framework around which the thesis is developed. Chapter 1 summarises the socio-political, educational framework of the apartheid era in South Africa, and further highlights those events internationally that influenced the activists in this study. Chapter 2 reviews the literature and theoretical foundations. Important ideas that developed during the birth of the Black Consciousness era are highlighted and the theories on social identity are explored. Chapter 3 describes the research design and methodology used, in respect of how the study was conducted and the analyses made.

The second section (chapters 4 and 5) presents the findings of the research. In Chapter 4, a tabled chronology of events in the 1970s guides the reader through the important events in the lives of the individuals and groups. The findings are discussed in three parts: The processes of learning; the impact on their lives and their understanding of their social identities and the implications for social justice educators today. Chapter 5 consists of two representative stories (geographical area, race, class and gender being the criteria). Each story is broken into three parts viz., early years, development of political consciousness and later life.

In the final section (chapters 6, 7 and 8) I discuss the findings and analyse theories associated with identity politics.

I conclude the dissertation with a short chapter (Reflections) on my experiences of doing this dissertation.

# Chapter 1

## Socio-Historical Background

An appreciation of the socio-historical context of this study is vitally important. The participants in this study were all members of racially oppressed groups born in the 1940s and 1950s. The context of their lives was closely related to the emergence of National Party rule in South Africa. Their lives were therefore integrally bound to both the legislation introduced by the National Party government as well as the resistance to that legislation. Legislation dictated where they lived, how they would be educated, who they would mix with and many other crucial aspects of their lives. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in a forward to the book *Growing up in a Divided Society* edited by Burman and Reynolds (Burman and Reynolds, 1986: xv), writes about what it meant to be born in apartheid South Africa:

It will decide, with a rigidity unknown to even the strictest Calvinistic predestination, where you are born and where you can live. It will determine what sort of health care is available to you; indeed it will determine your chances of survival or whether you will become part of the dismal infant mortality statistic. It will determine the probability that you will succumb to kwashiorkor, be potbellied, or suffer from easily preventable diseases. It will determine what sort of education you are likely to get and how well you can be expected to perform at school (assuming you are fortunate enough to get into one, if you are at the bottom of the scale). It will determine whether you can in fact hope to have a decent, stable home environment where father is not a migrant worker separated for eleven months of the year from his loved ones, who are expected to eke out a miserable existence in poverty-stricken, barren 'homeland' resettlement camps. It will determine whether you can ever hope to be treated as a human person of infinite worth because you have been created in the image of God.

The participants in this study grew up under those shocking, oppressive conditions described by Archbishop Tutu. As members of the oppressed majority their identities developed within the context of the political and social milieu of the time. This chapter highlights the legislative as well as the societal realities of apartheid South Africa providing a broad framework that spells out the context of life in South Africa from the fifties to the seventies. It explains the political hurdles individuals had to overcome before they could extricate themselves from their oppression.

A book titled *500 Years A History of South Africa* edited by Prof. C.F.J. Muller claims to be a book written 'for the student as well as the general reader' (Muller (ed), 1991: xii)

about 'the White man in South Africa' (Muller (ed), 1991: xii). In its section on *The Republic of South Africa, 1961 – 1978: Black Resistance*, it is silent on the period of 'black' resistance from 1966 to 1976 (Muller (ed), 1991: 531). No explanation is offered for this and the assumption that could be made is that in terms of *Black Resistance* nothing significant was happening in South Africa in this period. Hosea Jaffe in his book *European Colonialism. A History of Oppression and Resistance in South Africa* (Jaffe, 1994: 182) devotes a section to what he calls *The Fifteen Year Night After Sharpeville*. He writes:

...the 1960's seemed to be the 'PAC decade' even as the 1970s were to be the 'Black Consciousness decade' and the 1980's the 'ANC decade'. However, for all organisations and for the liberation struggle as a whole 'Sharpeville' was a prolonged period of darkness, which, though momentarily 'moonlit' by workers' strikes in Natal in the early 1970s, was to endure up to the Soweto student uprising in 1976.

These interpretations would mean that the uprisings in Soweto and other parts of South Africa in 1976 were spontaneous pockets of reactions to the government's education policies and had no link with past resistance movements.

My study into this period investigates the experiences of activists involved in that resistance from the late sixties to the early seventies. While the period is perceived by some writers and researchers as a period of capitulation to 'white rule' the evidence in this study seeks to provide some insight into what was happening in terms of resistance to the National Party rule.

In his Richard Turner Memorial Lecture Tony Morphet (Morphet, 1990: 3) refers to the period of the early seventies and says 'it identifies and signals a moment when there is a new sense of 'the grain'<sup>3</sup> of South African history and a new perspective of the possibilities of 'brushing against that grain'. This study will attempt to unravel a part of that story of young people who brushed 'against the grain'.

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<sup>3</sup> 'the grain' a quotation from Benjamin W. 1973:248-9 *Illuminations* '...A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.'

## **1.1 The Post 1948 Period**

### **1.1.1 The Political Context**

#### **1.1.1.1 Racial Segregation**

Racial segregation legislation introduced by the apartheid government was designed not only to separate the defined race groups into separate residential areas but also to ensure that the oppressed understood their inferior status in society. A brief introduction of some of those laws provides the reader with the social and legal context of the lives of the individuals researched in this study.

The respondents in this study grew up in the period of change from mixed areas to the implementation of the Group Areas Act. This act not only separated them from friends and family members but also ensured that there would be minimal contact between the defined racial groups. In Durban many of the respondents lived in mixed areas in their early childhood but were moved to designated racially defined residential areas when they were still young children. All the Durban Group, except one, (Betty Leslie grew up in Wentworth, an area set aside for ‘coloureds’) grew up in areas demarcated for ‘Indians’. During childhood they maintained ties with friends and family members classified ‘coloured’ living in the Wentworth area, through the common play areas or through the church. In the Cape all respondents grew up in ‘coloured’ designated areas and experienced the trauma of forced removals either directly or indirectly.

Racial segregation in South Africa did not start when the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948. Lewis Lewis, 1987: 261 explains this as follows:

The Nationalist Party did not invent segregation; in many cases they built on segregatory foundations laid well before 1948. What they did do, however, was to greatly extend it and refine it, in an exercise of social engineering on a massive scale, so that by the 1960's it affected almost every aspect of the private and public lives of all South Africans. And it was in the 1948 to 1964 period that they enacted the most important laws forming the framework of apartheid.

The laws that the National Party enacted brought about the period commonly referred to as apartheid. Amongst the laws that were introduced were: The Population Registration Act of 1950 that arbitrarily divided the South African population into racial groups; the Mixed Marriages Act which banned marriage between ‘white’ people and people of other

racial groups, the Group Areas Act which gave the government the authority to declare any particular area for the exclusive use of a particular racial group and a host of other legislation that entrenched segregation and took away even those limited rights previously enjoyed by small elite sections of people of colour (Lewis, 1987: 261).

One of the steps taken by the National Party government was to remove enfranchised 'coloured'<sup>4</sup> voters from the common voters' roll in 1956. (The South African Act Amendment Act (No. 9 of 1956) was adopted by 173 votes to 68 (Muller: 481) and validated the Separate Representation of Voters Act (No. 46 of 1951) (Muller: 485)). One of the reasons why the National Party government did this was because they considered 'coloured' voters a threat to the 'white' power base. This view is supported by the figures made available at the time:

....in 1951 there were already 183 552 coloured children at schools in the Cape, as against only 170 223 White children; that the coloured birth rate was considerably higher than the White birth rate; and that the number of coloureds was increasing owing to miscegenation with Blacks. By removing the coloureds from the common voters' roll, therefore, the government would ensure that the political power would remain in the hands of Whites.... (Muller (ed), 1991: 477)

The promulgation of the Bantu Authorities Act (No. 68 of 1951) abolished the Native Representative Council and provided for greater self government in the homelands (Muller (ed), 1991: 487). Verwoerd claimed that, 'The fundamental idea throughout is Bantu control over Bantu areas' (ibid.). However, his plan was more sinister. He wanted to increase the part played by headmen to reinforce the already collapsing oppressive tribal system:

By restoring the tribal system, which was disintegrating, and conferring power on the headmen, whose authority was crumbling, Verwoerd wished to ensure that he could count on the support of headmen in implementing the system of government which he planned to introduce (ibid.).

This point of view is supported by Tabata in his 1962 presidential address to The African People's Democratic Union of South Africa (APDUSA). He says:

...the fact is that cases are going to be tried by ignorant chiefs under tribal law – the same chiefs who are the servants of the herrenvolk agency. The introduction of that tribal law is one of the most sinister aspects of the whole plan. First, it is intended to deprive the population of the protection of law, as known in any civilised community. Secondly, it is designed to enable the chiefs to carry out any order against the people issued by the herrenvolk government. Thirdly...it is designed to

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<sup>4</sup> All racial categorisation will be placed between inverted commas to indicate this writer's abhorrence of all racial terminology. However, she recognizes that in the context of the historical realities racial terminology is sometimes unavoidable

abrogate the legal rights to property together with all those property relations which are established by law in any capitalist system.

In the above extract Tabata highlights one of the important aspects of apartheid South Africa – using the members of the oppressed to do the work of the oppressors. This was done openly as is described above and secretly through a well developed spy network.

### **1.1.1.2 Laws to Control the Movement of ‘Black’ and ‘Indian’ People**

Pass laws came into existence in the colonial world as a way of controlling the movements of the indigenous inhabitants. Van Zyl (Muller (ed), 1991: 137) writes:

There are serious objections to all pass laws, but they were considered necessary in most colonies to induce a stable way of life among primitive races and to combat vagrancy and thieving. The pass laws did immobilise the Hottentots and this meant that it was not easy for them to move around in search of better wages.

Pass laws were also used to ensure ‘white’ control over land and to keep ‘blacks’ as sojourners in the country of their birth. In order to stop ‘Indians’ from purchasing land in ‘white’ areas the government introduced the ‘Pegging Act’ in 1943 (Muller, 1991: 457-458).

There was resistance to pass laws in both the ‘African’ and ‘Indian’ community long before the Nationalist government came into power. The history of the struggle against the enforced carrying of passes could be a dissertation on its own. Suffice for this document is to highlight the burden imposed on the oppressed through segregation and the pass laws. Jack and Ray Simons explain the terror of urban life as follows:

Urban Africans were being herded into the segregated ghettos called locations. Here, isolated from the rest of the working class, they could be pinned down, supervised, patrolled, prosecuted for non-payment of rent, and raided for taxes, passes or prohibited liquor. Swooping down in the early hours of the morning, the police posses invaded without warrants houses and compounds, forced the occupants out of bed, arrested those who could not produce tax receipts, lodgers’ permits or passes, cuffed and kicked the victims into the waiting pick-up vans (Simons, 1983: 433)..

Though most respondents in this study did not experience the indignity of having to carry passbooks, these laws impacted on the way they organised their campaigns. Entry into ‘African’ locations was controlled and activists from other race groups found in these areas without the correct authorisation, were arrested and fined. In addition, those

classified 'Indian' could not settle in the Orange Free State and needed a special permit to travel through the Transkei. More importantly though was the fact that leading members of anti-apartheid organisations and close friends suffered the humiliation imposed by pass laws and all associates became part of the conspiracy to thwart the police in their efforts to enforce this law.

### **1.1.1.3 Legislation to Curtail Resistance**

The apartheid government implemented a host of laws to ensure that any form of resistance from the oppressed was crushed. The Unlawful Organisations Bill which later became called the Suppression of Communism Bill was introduced in the House of Assembly in 1950 and became law on 26 June 1950 (Suppression of Communism Act (no. 44 of 1950)) (Muller (ed), 1991: 493).. While the opposition parties in the House of Assembly agreed with the control of communists, they voiced concern that the government was using the curbing of communism to curtail all forms of resistance and placed too much power in the hands of the Minister of Justice (ibid.). The government responded with more draconian measures to stop resistance campaigns. The Public Safety Act (No. 3 of 1953) allowed the government to proclaim a state of emergency in any part of the country and the Criminal Law Amendment Act (No. 8 of 1953) imposed stringent penalties on those who broke the law by means of protests (Muller (ed), 1991: 496).

In 1962 the General Laws Amendment Act was introduced to 'plug every legal loophole and shore up every weakness in the structure of the South African Nazi dictatorship' (Jaffe, 1994: 182). This law singularly provided the state with unprecedented powers to control all manner of dissent. Jaffe says it turned the country into 'a prison house for opponents of apartheid' (Jaffe, 1994: 182). He lists the extensiveness of the law as follows:

....Section 21 enabled a death sentence or a minimum of five years in prison for 'sabotage', which was defined as damage to, or intent or advising to, damage, any kind of private or public property and services. It enabled listing and banning people from speaking in public, or attending gatherings, extending emergency regulations, censoring the press, imprisonment for possession of 'unlawful publications' or membership of 'unlawful organisations', house-arrests and detention without trial for ninety days, then one hundred and eighty days, then indefinitely (ibid.).

Those who chose to oppose the apartheid government lived with the daily reality that the apartheid state machinery could be used to make their lives unbearable. Activists in this study speak of how they organised so as to avoid arrest and detention as well as the trauma of detention, banning and exile.

#### **1.1.1.4 Response of the Oppressed Masses**

The oppressed did not just accept the imposed legislation. An insight into some of the resistance campaigns of the fifties and sixties gives the reader a perspective of the form of politicisation that may have influenced some respondents in this study. While there were direct influences on individuals in politically conscious families, some respondents developed a consciousness from their personal experiences of the draconian laws that controlled their lives. When individuals got involved in anti-apartheid resistance campaigns as young people, they were influenced by the forms of struggle set in motion in the nineteen fifties and sixties.

Despite all the measures enacted by the National Party government and with all the power it had at its disposal, the resistance movement against racial segregation and oppression legislation grew.

The state reacted against the political activists and arrested and charged 156 persons with treason in December 1956. The trial dragged on till 1961 when Mr. Justice Rumpff found that 'there was no proof that the accused wanted to overthrow the government by violent means, and acquitted them' (Muller, 1991: 498).

On the 21 March 1960, following protests against the Pass Laws, organised by the PAC, 69 people were killed and 178 were wounded in Sharpeville when the police opened fire on unarmed protesters (Muller, 1991: 499-500). In similar protest in Langa two people were shot dead. The police action resulted in protest action in cities across South Africa. The government declared a state of emergency, arrested 11 500 'blacks', called in the active Citizens Force in Nyanga and Langa and banned the ANC and the PAC (ibid.).

The government's actions to ban the two organisations set them on the path of guerrilla warfare. The ANC formed their military wing called Umkonto we Sizwe (the Spear of the Nation) and the PAC claimed an organisation called Poqo which was conducting minor sabotage acts in the Cape to be their Military wing (Gerhart, 1979: 252). In May 1964 police raided the secret headquarters of Umkonto we Sizwe at Rivonia and arrested its leadership. Mandela, Sisulu and others were sentenced to life imprisonment (Gerhart, 1979: 252).

The above selected incidences represent the thrust of political responses of the oppressed. They are by no means a complete picture but serve to highlight the era of resistance in which respondents in this study grew up in.

#### **1.1.1.5 Re-emergence of Political Organisations**

In the post 1962 period following the bans imposed on the larger political formations and the onslaught on political activity from the state, many anti-apartheid organisations were unable to operate effectively. Organisations were crippled by banning, arrests, imprisonment and exile of members and leadership. The NIC, The Non European Unity Movement (NUEM) and The African Peoples' Democratic Union of South Africa (APDUSA) were not banned but became ineffectual through the persecution their members suffered from the actions of the police state.

During the dearth of above-board political organisations the government tried to introduce its new dispensation for people of colour – segregated political entities and homelands. It created homelands to administer each tribal group separately, the SAIC together with Local Government Councils (LACs) to administer 'Indian' affairs and the coloured Persons Representative Council (CRC) to administer 'coloured' affairs. Lewis (Lewis, 1987: 272) explains:

Since the creation of a coloured 'homeland' along the lines of the African 'tribal' homelands was both impossible and impracticable, the government had to seek a new solution for an alternative to parliamentary representation for the coloured 'nation-in-the-making' (as they described it). The Coloured Persons Representative Council Act, which came into effect in 1968, replaced the wholly

nominated, purely advisory and entirely ineffectual UCCA<sup>5</sup> with a new body, this time with some limited legislative and administrative powers.

The oppressed adopted a strong non-collaborationist stand against all government created separate development structures thereby rejecting all homeland administrations and what were disparagingly referred to as dummy parliaments – The SAIC and the CRC.

It is in the period of the late sixties and early seventies when the respondents in this study developed political consciousness, that, disbanded political formations started to re-emerge. One of these was the NIC. Respondents in this study rejected the politics of sectarian organisations and were part of the formation of the Black Consciousness Movement and in particular the Black Peoples' Convention (BPC) which espoused 'Black' solidarity and non-collaboration with the state machinery.

In 1971 Mewa Ramgobin spearheaded the revival of the NIC. The first convention of the NIC was held at Phoenix Settlement on 2 October 1971 (Khoapa, 1973: 6). Shortly after its resuscitation, the NIC was faced with opposition from the newly formed BPC. The Durban Central Branch said to be 'by far the biggest and most active branch of the NIC' led by Strini Moodley and Saths Cooper disaffiliated and joined the BPC (ibid.). The challenge that faced the NIC was its 'all Indian stance' (ibid.). Black consciousness supporters were of the opinion that the NIC should be open to all. Though still outside the state-sponsored SAIC, there were fears from the youth that the NIC would be co-opted by the South African regime. Tensions developed between the NIC and the BPC following an anti-black consciousness paper delivered by Dr. Jerry Coovadia, an executive member of the NIC (op. cit.: 7).

The BPC was formally launched at the interim conference held in Pietermaritzburg in July 1972 (op. cit.: 11). Among the things the BPC pledged were to:

Work outside government-created structures... to establish and promote black business on a co-operative basis [towards]... economic self reliance for black people.... To apply itself fully behind attempts to fully establish trade unions for black people.... To redirect political thinking of black people; to form residents' vigilante committees... to operate openly as an overt peoples' movement...(op. cit.: 12-13)

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<sup>5</sup> UCCA – Union Council of Coloured Affairs

On 16-17 December 1972 BPC held their actual conference in Hammanskraal and elected Mrs. W.M. Kgware as president (op. cit.: 14).

In 1973 the NIC reverted its policy against working with the structures created by government and stated that its 'constitution did not prevent members from seeking positions on LACs and the SAIC, traditionally regarded as apartheid bodies' (Gwala, 1974: 71). By 1974 this policy was far clearer and the NIC rejected participation in SAIC elections and the congress decided to 'open its doors to all groups and remove the word 'Indian' from its constitution' (Mbanjwa, 1975: 116). The pressures from the youth were successful.

### **1.1.2 Educational Context**

*.....it's also funny you know when you... I remember going to St. Theresa's which was in the midst of this community that was racially mixed and having people of all kinds around at home and so forth and then going to St. Augustine's was actually a coloured school in a white area and passing through that area having stones thrown at us by these white kids and us throwing... and getting them... ja. At Livingstone was a more open political school. (Algonda Perez, respondent from the Cape)<sup>6</sup>*

Algonda Perez, a respondent in this study, brings home the inter-connectedness of the apartheid schooling system. An analysis of the prevailing educational context of the time highlights the might of the political power wielded over the educational process. In addition it explains how that educational process impacted on the consciousness of both the oppressed and the oppressor.

Bill Nasson emphasises the need to see South African education as a whole. He writes:

*In so a divided society, a satisfactory total picture of its educational systems is extremely difficult to obtain. One or other sectional African, coloured, or white account of South African schooling does not provide an adequate sample of the whole.... (Nasson in Burman & Reynolds, 1986: 95)*

While the writer recognises that the educational system needs to be viewed in its totality, a brief overview of 'the segregated schooling networks' (ibid.) (Christian National

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<sup>6</sup> The reason for using italics is explained in Chapter 3

Education, Bantu Education, Coloured Education and Indian Education) helps to establish an understanding of how these systems fed into one another.

### **1.1.2.1 Christian National Education**

In a forward to his seminal book *Education for Barbarism* I. B. Tabata refers to Christian National Education, 'as the cornerstone of the Nationalist edifice'(Tabata, 1980: 9). An understanding of the context of Christian National Education is important for understanding the context of the historical period this study is about.

The Nationalist Party came into power in South Africa after the 'white' elections on 26 May 1948 and remained in power until the ANC controlled government won power after the democratic elections on 27 April 1994. South Africa therefore suffered more than forty years of apartheid.

The Christian National Education policy emphasised Calvinistic style discipline and stated:

We believe that both these principles (Christian and National) should come to full fruition in the education of our children so that these two principles permeate the whole school in regard to its spirit, aim, curricula method, discipline, staff, general organisation and all its activities (Tabata, 1980: 32–33).

Hirson expresses the opinion that Christian National Education was designed to mould the Afrikaner for the 'future republic' according to the traditions of the Afrikaner 'volk'(Hirson, 1979: 41). Christian National Education was designed to instil in the 'white' youth their role as the rightful heirs to power over the 'black' population. This fact is evident in a pamphlet (set of 15 articles) on Christian National Education issued in February 1948 by prominent Afrikaner Nationalists. In articles 14 and 15 that are devoted to 'coloured' and 'native' education they state:

The white South African's duty to the native is to Christianise him and help him on culturally.

Native education should be based on the principles of trusteeship, non-equality and segregation; its aim should be to inculcate the white man's way of life, especially that of the Boer nation, which is the senior trustee.

...Owing to the cultural infancy of the native, the state, in co-operation with the protestant churches should at present provide Native education. But the native should be fitted to undertake his own education as soon as possible, under control and guidance of the state. Native education should lead to the development of an independent, self supporting Christian-Nationalist Native community.

Native education should not be financed at the expense of the white (Hirson, 1979: 42).

### 1.1.2.2 Bantu, Coloured and Indian Education

In the preface to the re-publication of Tabata's 1959 'Education for Barbarism' Ncube (Ncube, 1979 in Tabata, 1980) writes:

It is important to bear in mind that both 'their opportunities in life' or 'the sphere in which they live' are defined by the oppressor. By defining this frame of reference, the oppressor makes choices for the oppressed. He sees to it that their activities remain, strictly within the material and cultural frame imposed by the oppressive system. Thus their consciousness is transformed and guided by those who control the system. (Tabata, 1980: 6)

Hirson provides a table that shows the enrolment of African pupils in schools from 1955 to 1969:

**Table 1: African pupils in school 1955-1969 (M. Horrell (1964) & Survey of Race Relations in South Africa (SRRSA), in Hirson, 63)**

<i>Type of School</i>	<i>1955</i>	<i>1960</i>	<i>1965</i>	<i>1969</i>
Primary School	970 200	1 452 300	1 885 000	2 435 400
Junior Secondary	32 900	45 000	62 620	82 630
Forms IV and V	2 100	2 700	4 230	6 110
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 005 200</b>	<b>1 500 000</b>	<b>1 951 850</b>	<b>2 524 140</b>

(The figures for 1969 exclude pupils at school in the Transkei)

Hirson explains as follows:

In the first decade of Bantu Education the percentage of pupils in the secondary schools dropped slightly relative to the total enrolment for the year. In 1955 3.5 per cent of the total number of pupils were in the secondary school. By 1960 the figure had dropped to 3.2 per cent, and in 1965 was 3.4 per cent. Only by 1969 had the proportion returned to the 1955 level. (Hirson, 1979: 62-63).

The Bantu Education Act was promulgated in 1953 putting into law the recommendations of the Eiselen Commission<sup>7</sup> (Hirson, 1979: 44). Tabata describes the intent of Bantu Education as 'to rob the African of education, cut him off from the main stream of modern culture and shut him into a spiritual and intellectual ghetto' (Tabata, 1980, 37).

<sup>7</sup> The Eiselen Commission was appointed in 1949 to propose ways in which education could be altered. (Hirson, 43)

The Verwoerdian policy of education was made clear in June 1954 when Verwoerd addressed the Senate. He said:

When I have control of Native Education I will reform it so that the Natives will be taught from childhood to realise that equality with Europeans is not for them.... People who believe in equality are not desirable teachers for Natives.... When my department controls Native education it will know for what class of higher education a Native is fitted, and whether he will have a chance in life to use his knowledge.... What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice? That is quite absurd. (Hirson, 1979: 45)

This shows quite clearly that 'Schooling was inferior as a matter of principle' (Hirson, 1979: 46. ). The Coloured Affairs Department (C.A.D.) followed a similar pattern set by Bantu Education. Prior to 1963, most schools (72%) for 'coloured' people were controlled by the missionaries. After 1963 the missionary schools fell under the control of the C.A.D. and the teachers had to follow the approved syllabi of that department (Hirson, 1979: 219-220). Teachers were under obligation not to 'belong to or further the aims of, any political organisation, nor encourage resistance to the laws of the state.' (ibid.)

The Theron Commission report of 1976 highlighted the following problems in 'coloured' education:

....although coloured school enrolment had greatly expanded, state expenditure had not kept pace. The result was a shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate or non-existent facilities, low achievement levels, overcrowding in classrooms, and a high drop-out rate (Lewis, 1987: 276).

Low achievement levels were also reported about 'Indian' education. Fatima Meer writes:

....there has been a sharp drop in the matriculation pass rate of Indian pupils since 1962. In 1961, 74% of those who wrote passed, in 1963 62% passed, in 1964 the pass rate had declined to 48% and in 1967 to 34%. There has been a slight incline since and last year just over 40% of those who wrote passed (Meer in Randall (ed), 1971: 29).

The entire structure of the education system rested on ensuring that the aims of the state 'to reinforce cleavages between the white groups and between whites and non-whites to maintain the racial ordering of society' (Welsh in Van Der Merwe & Welsh (eds), 1972: 14) were realised.

Participants in this study were schooled in the sixties. In the Cape the children witnessed the removal of fellow classmates who were classified as 'Bantu' and experienced first hand the trauma of families being removed to racially defined areas. In Durban, schooling was completely separate for the race groups. They played together outside of school but their relationships became distant after a while because they were forced to attend separate schools.

### **1.1.2.3 The Response of the Oppressed Masses**

In his analysis of Bantu Education, Hirson comments that 'until the 1970s it even seemed that the government's plan was successful' (Hirson, 1979: 62). But, he notes that 'the entire edifice was built around a contradiction that could not be resolved' (ibid.). He explains:

Those students who did manage to pass through the educational mesh and reach the secondary schools, or perhaps the universities, received sufficient instruction to inform them that they were neither different nor inferior. They were both the products, and the living refutation of the philosophy of Bantu Education. (ibid.)

The oppressed in South Africa have a history of organising and responding to situations like those imposed by the National Party government. In the fifties and sixties the political organisations of the oppressed organised against the imposition of the Bantu Education Act. The ANC and the Congress Alliance (the South African Indian Congress, the South African Coloured People's Organisation and the 'white' Congress of Democrats) launched the 'Resist apartheid Campaign' while The Cape African Teachers Association (CATA) affiliated to the All African Convention and the NEUM, called a national conference to discuss the Bantu Education Act (Hirson, 1979: 47). However, none of the measures of resistance adopted offered any real threat to the State.

One of the government's aims in introducing Bantu Education was to ensure that it wiped out old traditions and notions of equality of the races. Hirson cites an article written by Phyllis Ntantala in the journal 'Africa South' that illustrates the government's determination to 'wipe out the old tradition'. He writes:

At Lovedale, said Ms. Ntantala, the Cuthbert Library, 'one of the biggest and the best school libraries in the country' was dismantled, the books sold, and the library building converted into a

storeroom for the Departmental books. The campus sites were also allowed to deteriorate and most of the maintenance staffs were dismissed. All the chores were allocated to the pupils, and compulsory manual work was introduced both before and after school hours. (Hirson, 1979: 55-56)

There was resistance from the students.

Ms. Ntantala lists:..... 30 senior girls were expelled from Shawbury in the Transkei in 1957; 200 men sent home on the eve of examinations at St. Johns College; over 300 students at Lovedale staged a walkout in February 1959 and went home. (Hirson, 1979: 56)

The resistance spread. Hirson lists the following incidents as evidence of disturbances that grew but were not reported after the banning of radical journals:

In 1960, 420 students were sent home from Tigerkloof School in the Cape. A carpentry block was subsequently burnt down, students were detained and eight were eventually sentenced..... in 1961 when in addition to demonstrations at schools over food and disciplinary issues, students protested against the official festivities held to celebrate the proclamation of the new Republic of South Africa. Once again there were riots and expulsions across the country. In the Transkei the demonstrations took a more serious turn because the territory was in a 'state of emergency' and all meetings were prohibited. At St. John's College, the students refused to disperse and destroyed government vehicles before attempting to burn down the school library. 207 students were arrested and of these 21 were fined (from £15 to £25) and 86 were sentenced to strokes. (Hirson, 1979: 56)

Contrary to what the National Party government intended, their policies did not cow the oppressed into submission but rather brought about situations of confrontation and rebellion.

Resistance also meant more oppressive measures from the state. Teachers were targeted.

Tabata provides insight into the state's attitude to the teachers:

Those who were trained under the old system, more especially the university graduates are regarded as highly dangerous in the new set-up.

..... Obviously a special creature, a Bantu-ised teacher is necessary for Bantu education. Meanwhile the old undesirable teacher, whose services are required in the interim, is being broken in. He is being humiliated and hedged around with obnoxious regulations. He is completely deprived of professional status and belongs body and soul to the N.A.D.<sup>8</sup> (Tabata, 1980: 41)

University graduates were viewed with suspicion by the state and measures were taken to try to take control of all institutions.

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<sup>8</sup> N.A.D. Native Affairs Department

Traditionally universities have been sites of struggle against oppressive regimes around the world. In South Africa, English speaking universities represented liberal traditions. The University College of Fort Hare before 1960 was a non-racial institution to the extent the government of the day allowed it. This is explained by Beard (in Van Der Merwe & Welsh (eds), 1972: 157):

Within the confines of Fort Hare itself, it was the official policy of the College Council (the governing body) that there be no racial or ethnic discrimination, the sole criterion of status being that of position, whether staff member or student, whether lecturer, senior lecturer or professor. Consequently the university community comprised to a significant degree a racially integrated society within, and largely protected from, the White, racially dominated society which surrounded it.

Students at the above mentioned universities waged ongoing struggles against the policies of the apartheid government. The apartheid state tried to take control of universities with the intent of separating all students into ethnic institutions. The Extension of University Education Act (No. 45 of 1959) established 'own university colleges and prohibited the so-called 'open universities' of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand from accepting members of other races as students' (Muller (ed.), 1991: 484). Five colleges were established for 'blacks': University College of Zululand (for 'Zulus'), University College of the North (for 'Sothos'), the University College of Durban-Westville (for 'Indians'), the University College of the Western Cape (for 'coloureds') and the existing University College of Fort Hare (for 'Xhosas').(ibid.)

By the time the respondents in this study were ready to enter universities, the 'bush colleges'<sup>9</sup> were already established. Bobby Marie, Roy Chetty, Vivienne Taylor and others attended at the newly established University of Durban Westville. Algonda Perez had to obtain special permission to attend at the University of Cape Town.

Jaya Josie, a respondent, linked up with the University Christian Movement through his involvement in the Methodist Church. Steve Biko and other students from the Alan Taylor residence in Wentworth developed links with the group in Durban.

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<sup>9</sup> Bush College is a term commonly used to define those universities set up to keep 'black' students out of 'white' universities.

In the Cape individuals linked up with students from the South African Students Organisation (SASO) at the University of the Western Cape.

For many years it appeared that radical students from English speaking universities were the only vocal voices mouthing anti-apartheid slogans. They mimicked the radical movements and ideologies of students internationally. Halisis (in Pityana, Ramphele, Mpumlwana & Wilson, 1991: 107 – 108) analysed the sixties as the decade of student protest as follows:

Often termed the decade of protest, the 1960s rocked the universities of many industrial as well as non-industrial countries. .... Students organised themselves into formidable campus-based movements; they formulate radical ideologies coloured by their own youthful experiences and developed strategies and tactics designed to confront inequalities in their respective societies....

Students played an important role in actively engaging the state on political issues that affected them. Through their actions they inspired others to do likewise. Maria Engel, interviewed for this study, explains our presence at one of the demonstrations:

*.... the first thing that I remember - it was also when the UCT students had that thing at St. George's Cathedral and we were there..... and the teargas... No water canon [then].... They chased the students into... the church<sup>10</sup>*

The period of student activism impacted on the consciousness of individuals in this study. Through their involvement with issues that challenged the authority of the apartheid government, the students from the liberal 'white' universities attracted the support of the oppressed youth who viewed them as courageous.

An explanation of the development of student organisations provides the reader with an understanding of the status quo at universities and the realities within student movements in the early seventies.

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<sup>10</sup> The reason for using italics is explained in Chapter 3

### **1.1.3 Student Organisations**

#### **1.1.3.1 The National Union of South African Students (NUSAS)**

NUSAS was formed in 1924 with students from nine university colleges to ‘bring students together on the basis of their studenthood, to advance their common interests and to provide a forum for the examination and resolution of their difference’(Curtis & Keegan, 1972: 96).

The history of NUSAS from 1933 to 1945 is fraught with a strong desire to achieve student unity between Afrikaans and English speaking students. This pursuit was largely unsuccessful. Afrikaans speaking students were strongly influenced by Afrikaner Nationalism and stressed their cultural differences and separation. They desired to establish themselves on an equal footing with English speaking students as well as the desire to ‘no longer be ashamed of themselves’(Le Roux M., 1972: 86). This resulted in the break away of Afrikaans speaking students from NUSAS (Curtis & Keegan, 1972: 98-99).

In 1933 the University of the Witwatersrand proposed that Fort Hare be admitted to full membership. This proposal was referred to a commission and resulted in the following amendment to the constitution:

NUSAS is a federation of the SRCs of *European* Universities and University Colleges, and of pro-NUSAS branches at *European* University Colleges (Curtis & Keegan 1972: 100-101).

This amendment ruled out the admission of Fort Hare on ‘constitutional’ grounds (ibid.). The reason for this move was to ensure that Stellenbosch University, who had made it clear that it wanted ‘no native, coloured or Asiatic person [to] be admitted to the membership of NUSAS’ (ibid.) should remain within the NUSAS fold. Nevertheless, Stellenbosch withdrew their affiliation in 1936.

From 1945 to 1956 the pursuit of student unity included unity with ‘Black’ students. In 1962 NUSAS stopped its efforts to achieve unity with Afrikaans speaking students and

adopted 'a commitment to unity with Black students'(Curtis & Keegan, 1972: 100). However, already in 1945 a proposal that 'Fort Hare be admitted to NUSAS Council' had been carried by eleven votes to three (Curtis & Keegan, 1972: 102). The constitution was once again modified and the objectives stated that NUSAS would 'represent students of South Africa nationally and internationally' and 'defend democracy...' (Curtis & Keegan, 1972: 103). The amended objectives recognised amongst others 'the fundamental rights of all to be free'; 'equality of educational and economic opportunity for all in South Africa' and to develop consciousness 'of the deficiencies of our present democratic system in South Africa, and to seek searchingly as possible how they can be remedied' (ibid.).

From the 1950s the politics in NUSAS emerged as a conflict between a radical/black alliance and a liberal/conservative alliance which finally culminated in a black/liberal alliance (Curtis & Keegan, 1972:110). Legassick (in Curtis & Keegan, 1972: 110-111) explains as follows:

The success of student leaders in holding English-speaking whites and non-whites together in NUSAS was largely due to their enunciation of two principles to lie at the base of policy, which finally gave cohesion to the organisation..... These two principles, sufficiently vague to be flexible, and yet sufficiently concrete to give NUSAS a direction which, as a 'forum' it lacked before, were the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the concept of 'democratic education' in a 'democratic society' as *inseparable* goals.

NUSAS could not move out of its liberal confines to adopt a more radical stance as it was always under the scrutiny of the Nationalist Party government. It therefore adopted an anti-apartheid stance that was sometimes forced into radicalism by divergent pressure groups (Hirson, 1979: 66-67). Neville Curtis critically analyses this stance:

After 1959 liberalism had established within itself a myth of moral impeccability that made it unable to see itself as an integral part of white racism, and of the white racist establishment. At the same time the myth of the common society precluded recognition of the real and actual divisions which apartheid was creating (in Hirson, 1979: 66).

In 1968, like other anti-establishment student groups in other parts of the world, NUSAS embarked on protest action against the government. The protest started when the minister of education prevented Archie Mafeje from taking up his appointment as a senior lecturer at the University of Cape Town. The protest action spread from the University of Cape Town to other English speaking campuses around the country. Students were attacked by

conservative elements from their own campuses as well as students from the Afrikaans campuses (Hirson, 1979: 67-68).

A problem that increasingly emerged was the dichotomy between recognition of students at the newly emerging tribal universities commonly referred to as 'bush colleges' and rejection of the system that created them. Curtis & Keegan comment that 'while English-speaking students saw the real need for contact with students at these colleges, whatever conditions prevailed on them, university staff feigned not to know that they existed' (Curtis & Keegan, 1972: 115).

On 'black' university campuses students were involved in a different type of protest at about the same time. Their demands were for the right to affiliate to NUSAS (Hirson, 1979: 68). Students had to face severe disciplinary action for protest action and many students were expelled (ibid.).

Hirson (Hirson, 1979: 68) explains why 'black' students fought their administrations over their right to affiliate to NUSAS:

In seeking affiliation, the black students were demanding the right to associate with organisations of their own choice, and the more intransigent the government showed itself, the more determined the students seemed to become....

However, Hirson recognises that 'white' and 'black' students had different emphasis in their struggle for freedom:

The white students were preoccupied with the whittling away of democratic rights: the Blacks' concern was to secure the most elementary of such rights. The white students did not often feel the need to take their political demands outside the campus: the Blacks were always conscious of the fact that they came from an oppressed majority, and they could not divorce the demand for national liberation from their own student demands..... (ibid.)

These differences in emphasis would contribute to the disillusionment of 'black' students with NUSAS:

..... They were demanding equality, and that drew them to NUSAS: the realisation that this equality could not be obtained in any alliance with NUSAS forced them to adopt new political solutions. The split was inevitable, but the reasons were 'felt', rather than understood. (ibid.)

In 1967 Steve Biko was a delegate to the NUSAS congress in Grahamstown. Appalled by the segregated residential facilities, Biko moved a private motion that conference adjourn until such time as they could get a non-racist venue. The debate following this motion lasted through the night and brought Biko to the realisation that he 'had been holding onto the whole dogma of non-racism almost like a religion, feeling that it was sacrilegious to question it...' (Wilson, 1991: 23). Woods quotes Biko as follows:

I began to feel there was a lot lacking in the proponents of the non-racist idea, that much as they were adhering to this impressive idea they were in fact subject to their own experience back home. They had this problem, you know, of superiority, and they tended to take us for granted and wanted us to accept things that were second-class. (Woods, 1987: 153-154 in Pityana et al, 1992: 23)

### **1.1.3.2 University Christian Movement (UCM)**

The segregated Student Christian Association (SCA) was disbanded in 1965 and the non-racial University Christian Movement was formed in 1967. About half of the membership of this new body was 'black'. Because of its Christian ethos, it was, unlike NUSAS, allowed to operate on 'black' university campuses (Hirson, 1979: 70). 'Black' student leaders used this organisation as a vehicle to communicate emerging radical ideas amongst 'black' students.

The radicalisation of the University Christian Movement resulted in frightening away many white members and the loosening of 'the ties with the founding churches' (Khoapa, 1973: 187). The polarisation that resulted from increased confrontation between 'black' and 'white' finally led to the dissolution of the organisation in 1972. The reasons put forward were:

That the UCM itself had over the past few years advocated the need for black-white polarisation;

That the Methodist and Presbyterian churches had finally withdrawn their support from the UCM without giving their reasons fully and clearly to the UCM in spite of the avenues that have existed for that;

That the UCM has had to operate against increasing pressure from the government and power structures in the universities. (Khoapa, 1973: 188)

The crucial role played by the University Christian Movement is explained by Irving Hexham <sup>11</sup>:

The importance of U.C.M. and its publications was that it was led by a group of dedicated men who were in the forefront of theological thinking and tried to apply their radical theology to the situation in South Africa. More importantly, it was out of the efforts of this group that the South African black consciousness movement was born. (It would be going too far to say that U.C.M. created black consciousness and the black student movement in South Africa, but it certainly gave these movements a powerful thrust in the early days of their development.) Significantly, in their introductory leaflet *SASO 1972 — South African Students Organisation* (Durban: S.A.S.O., 1972), this organisation credits U.C.M. with having played a crucial role in their development and in the contemporary black-consciousness movement out of which grew the protest movements of 1976.

### 1.1.3.3 South African Student Organisation (SASO)

The University Christian Movement created the opportunity for ‘black’ students to discuss and consolidate the emerging ideas for a break away from white-dominated organisations. At the 1968 University Christian Movement conference at Stutterheim, a black caucus<sup>12</sup> was formed. That caucus tasked the University of Natal – Black Section (UNB) students with the responsibility of calling a conference of black students. The conference held at Mariannhill in December 1968 resulted in the formation of SASO. SASO was formally inaugurated in July 1969 at Turfloop.

Khoapa quotes the following historical background from SASO’s 1972 information pamphlet:

The emergence of SASO was a manifestation of a mood which had been spreading in the black campuses ever since the collapse of other black students’ organisations which preceded SASO.

The complexity of the South African scene makes it impossible to have a pluralistic organisation that satisfies the aspirations of all member groups. Social and political stratifications in the country coupled with preferential treatment of certain groups results in different aspirations prevailing in different segments of the community. Thus it often becomes almost impossible to show allegiance to both sides of the colour line. Attempting to keep both opposing segments more often than not results in internal strife within the organisation. This is the mood that black students have decided on several occasions to go it alone.

Dissatisfaction with the white-dominated NUSAS led to the establishment of several black student organisations. The Durban Students’ Union and the Cape Peninsula Students’ organisation were fanatically opposed to NUSAS initially and adopted the emotional slogan of the Non-European Unity

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<sup>11</sup> First published in *The Reformed Journal*, April 1980; republished in *The Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, No. 32, September 1980

<sup>12</sup> ...about 40 blacks from Fort Hare, Ngoye, Bellville, theological seminaries, Turfloop, UNB (University of Natal Black Section), and teacher training colleges resolved themselves into a black caucus and debated the possibility of forming a black student organisation.(Khoapa: 20)

Movement (NEUM) – ‘non-cooperation with the collaborators’. The CPSU refused to cooperate with NUSAS in their protests and their forms of activity. They saw NUSAS as a student wing of the imperialist front whose interest was to control the blacks. (Khoapa, 1973: 18)

SASO was the ‘spearhead of Black Consciousness’ (Khoapa, 1973: 187). The organisation set as a priority ‘a much more intimate involvement with the black community’; declared that ‘we are **black** students and not black **students**’ and popularised the slogan ‘black man you are on your own’ (Khoapa, 1973: 20-21).

SASO attracted the attention of the authorities and suffered resultant harassment from the apartheid government. Members wishing to travel were refused passports, were detained and interrogated by the security police and SASO T-shirts were banned.

SASO made its non-collaboration stance very clear when the conference in July 1972 at Hammanskraal expelled the 1971-72 President, Temba Sono. Sono had called for ‘open-mindedness towards Bantustan leaders, white liberals and even towards security police’ arguing that by carrying passbooks and attending government universities students had already compromised themselves and meant that ‘we have to accommodate even contradictions in our struggle’ (Khoapa, 1973: 24-25).

SASO was the first organisation to use the term ‘black’ as a way of unifying the oppressed. They declared that:

Black people are those who are ‘by law or tradition, politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society and identifying themselves as a unit in the struggle towards the realisation of their aspirations’. (Khoapa, 1973: 42-43)

The term ‘non-white’ was ‘specifically used in a derogatory sense to refer to ‘sell-outs’ or ‘collaborators’ or ‘lackeys’ (ibid.). Though there was some initial reluctance by largely ‘white’ organisations<sup>13</sup>, the term ‘black’ was thereafter adopted into general usage.

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<sup>13</sup> The Institute of Race Relations scrapped the term ‘non-white’ and accepted the term ‘black’; The newspaper The Rand Daily Mail resisted at first but capitulated and took a policy decision to use the term ‘black’ after they were expelled from the SASO conference. (Khoapa: 43)

Table 2 indicates the enrolment of students at ‘Black’ Universities from 1961 to 1972. The low figures indicate that university students formed a very small section of the ‘black’ population as a whole. [Though it is difficult to get accurate population figures for this period because of the separate homeland system, Kaufman (1997: 11 in ‘Reproductive Control of South Africa’ <http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/wp/97.pdf>), illustrates graphically that the ‘Black’ population in South Africa in 1970 numbered between 10 and 15 million.] Through their adoption of community based programmes SASO was able to reach out and build political awareness in the oppressed communities. One of the aims in the SASO constitution stated:

...to heighten the sense of awareness and encourage them (students) to become involved in the political, social and economic development of the black people (Khoapa, 1973: 25)

**Table 2: Students at Black Universities (SRRSA in Hirson, 63)**

<i>University</i>	<i>1961</i>	<i>1965</i>	<i>1968</i>	<i>1970</i>	<i>1972</i>
Fort Hare	335	263	451	610	942
Turfloop	129	276	613	810	1 164
Ngoye	51	161	368	591	837
<b>Total (African)</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>1 432</b>	<b>2 011</b>	<b>2 943</b>
Western Cape (Coloured)	156	416	669	936	1 219
Durban Westville (Indian)	120	1 008	1 407	1 654	2 004

### **1.1.4 The International Context**

Three people referred to in this study viz. Jaya Josie, Jane Lawrence and Daya Pillay spent time overseas for various reasons. Events in the global arena in the 1960s and 1970s impacted on the identities of South African youth. An understanding of the world of the youth in the late sixties and early seventies throws some light onto some of the international influences that are relevant for this study.

Some of the respondents do refer to the hippie culture that was popular in the late sixties.

What was this culture? Manhard Schlifni (Schlifni,

<http://www.nerdshit.com/htmls/transformational.htm>) describes the hippies of the sixties:

The sixties revolution created a society based on ecstasy, i.e. the experience of individual freedom (Leary, 1998). The hippies were a generation in human history that learned how to 'change their own realities'. They wanted to experience ecstasy and freedom - freedom from self-imposed limitations as well as limitations imposed on them by society. Hippies belonged to an individual-freedom movement which was not based on geography, traditional politics, class, or religion.

Hippies were associated with the anti-war movement which was strong during this period. The American youth demanded an end to the Vietnam War. Hippies, also called flower children, espoused a philosophy of peace and non-violence. The significance of the term is explained by Schlifni:

The term 'flower power', a symbol of the non-violence ideology, was coined in 1965 by Ginsberg at an anti-war rally in Berkeley. It was Ginsberg's strategy of encouraging a non-violent response to violence protesters encountered. (ibid.)

The anti-war movement was not just confined to the USA. In France, the anti-war protests developed beyond just student action. Students went on strike on March 22, 1968, after the police arrested five university and high-school students in Paris. Following this incident support for the students grew and by May 6, the student unions called an unlimited student strike. The strike action assumed its own momentum and by the evening of May 10, a large march had swelled to over 60,000. After the police attacked the marchers, support for the students grew. On May 13, the CGT (the major union federation, dominated by the Communist Party) and the CFDT (a union federation of left-Christian origins) called a one-day general strike and a mass demonstration. Over half a million workers and students supported the march through Paris. Worker Strike action snowballed and at its height over ten million workers were on strike.<sup>14</sup>

The impact of this mass strike action on French society was far reaching. Tony Cliff reports that on May 22, 1968, the French Prime Minister, Pompidou, told the national assembly: 'Nothing will ever be exactly the same.' (Cliff: *In the Thick of Workers'*

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<sup>14</sup> explanation adapted from <http://www.geocities.com/youth4sa/may68.html> may 1968

*Struggle: Selected Works*, Volume 2, London 2002, pp.129-143) The actions of the French students had international implications.

Students at predominantly 'white' South African universities were affected by the actions of the students in other parts of the world. Hirson considers the world-wide student revolts as having been inspirational to radical students in NUSAS (Hirson, 1979: 67). While students in other parts of the world were, in the opinion of Van Der Merwe & Albertyn, 'involved in a wide range of issues', South African students, they contended, concentrated on 'domestic affairs and more particularly, race policy' (Van Der Merwe & Albertyn in Van der Merwe & Welsh, 1972: 10).

In 1969 and 1970 Leila Khaled put the Palestinian liberation agenda on the front page of newspapers around the world when she was involved in two hijackings. In an interview with Philip Baum, Leila Khaled agreed that she became a well known figure after the first hijacking and had to have plastic surgery before the second hijacking ([http://www.asi-mag.com/editorials/leila\\_khaled.htm#](http://www.asi-mag.com/editorials/leila_khaled.htm#)). The second hijacking was foiled and Leila was captured and then released in exchange for the hostages. The fact that Leila was a Palestinian woman brought the feminist agenda to the fore as comparisons were made and she was hailed as an icon for female political activists.

While the capitalist world described the actions of the Palestinian hijackers as terrorism, they referred to themselves as freedom fighters. This term became a popular term for defining guerrillas involved with fighting against oppressive regimes. In South Africa amongst 'Black' activists Leila was hailed as a heroine for her actions. Johnny Issel, an activist named as a trainer by respondents from the Cape, proudly named his eldest daughter Leila in honour of Leila Khaled. This act made activists aware of Leila Khaled.

Though there was this kind of tacit support for liberation organisations in other parts of the world, protest action amongst the youth in South Africa during this period remained largely non-violent.

Non violent protest action also involved music as an expression of youth culture. The enormous power wielded by the hippie movement was witnessed at the Woodstock Festival, held at Max Yasgur's farm in Bethel, New York, on 15, 16, and 17 August, 1969, which drew 500 000 people (Schlifni: <http://www.nerdshit.com/htmls/transformational.htm>).

The youth of the sixties and seventies developed an identity which was articulated through music that exposed social problems and challenged societal norms. Schlifni explains:

The expression 'Age of Aquarius' usually refers to the hippie and New Age movement of the 1960s and 1970s. For instance, Hair first opened on December 2, 1967, at Shakespeare Public Theatre in downtown New York City. The musical Hair - with its song 'Aquarius' and the line 'This is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius' - brought Aquarian Age associations to the attention of a worldwide audience. This show challenged many of the norms and values held by the US society at that time. It caused controversy when it was staged - publicity was provoked by male and female nudity, the desecration of the American flag and the use of obscene language (ibid.).

There has been a great deal of research into music as an expression of youth culture. While it was originally seen as a homogeneous phenomenon, studies have shown that the popular music audience was not as homogeneous as had been assumed (Roe, 1996: [http://www.icce.rug.nl/~soundscapes/DATABASES/MIE/Part2\\_chapter03.html](http://www.icce.rug.nl/~soundscapes/DATABASES/MIE/Part2_chapter03.html)). Nevertheless Roe emphasises that 'in the past 40 years the research shows that the core of most European youth subcultures has been provided by various forms of music' (ibid.).

The counter-cultures that developed around the youth of the sixties and seventies questioned authority and promoted an alternative form of spirituality. They were strongly anti- the status quo and rebelled against the prevailing social order. Schlifni explains:

The members of the counterculture, a loose confederation of rebellious ways of life, were united in opposition to the dominant system and many of its agendas. They wrote and spoke passionately about overturning the system and the establishment and bringing 'power to the people'.

...Radical hippies of the 60s were usually anarchists, Marxists and socialists in the social sense of the word. They were for universalist, rational and progressive ideals, such as participatory democracy, tolerance, self-fulfilment, and social justice.  
(<http://www.nerdshit.com/htmls/transformational.htm>)

Spirituality and religion played an important part in the identity formation of the youth. They sought alternative forms of worshipping and challenged the traditional beliefs of

their parents. Christian evangelism was strong and attracted the youth with a new form of worship that used music and language that the youth could identify with. The following extract provides some insight into the religious influences of the time:

By the late-1960's, the youth counter-culture had reached its peak. Drug use flourished, 'hippies' were the centre of the media's attention, and most striking of all, significant numbers of these youth were becoming Christians. Onlookers knew these young people by various names: 'Jesus Freaks,' 'Jesus People,' and 'Street Christians.' A large proportion of these youthful evangelists for Jesus were only a short while removed from drugs, 'free love,' and alienation from 'straight society.' They spoke of a 'Jesus Revolution' and believed that the endtimes were near (Enroth, 1972:12 <http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/jpusa.html>).

Spiritual reawakening was also associated with sensitivity training - also referred to as T-groups and encounter groups. Atkinson, a critic of sensitivity training, describes it as 'a technique developed steadily over the past fifty years that has proven successful in changing a person's world view, that is, his or her values, fundamental beliefs, and even religious convictions.' He explains further:

Sensitivity training is based on research on human behaviour that came out of efforts during World War II to ascertain whether or not an enemy's core beliefs and behaviour could be modified by the application of certain psychological techniques (Atkinson, 1999: <http://www.newtotalitarians.com/WhatIsSensitivityTraining.html>).

In this research study, respondents from Cape Town talk about their involvement in sensitivity training. The following description is similar to the kind of training offered at the Christian Leadership Centre in Kensington, Cape Town:

T-groups were thus built on the premise that in small unstructured groups, removed from work and home environments (the so-called 'cultural island'), group members would, over the course of several weeks, come to face their own behaviours via feedback from other members and occasional proddings from a generally passive trainer (Highhouse, 2002). Additional goals of the sessions were to help break barriers that blocked effective communication, disrupt power relations and help participants learn to see one another as equals (Drotning, 1968). (<http://www.mcluhan.utoronto.ca/academy/historytheoryod/T-groups%20-%20a%20review.doc>)

In this section I have outlined the national and international historical contexts in which the events in this study took place as individuals and groups developed their consciousness. In the following chapter I develop the theoretical foundations for this study and review the relevant literature used.

## Chapter 2

### Theoretical Foundations and Literature Review

#### **2.1 Introductory Comments**

Key concepts used in this study are oppression, consciousness, and social identity. For the purposes of this study I concur with the definition of oppression as expounded by Iris Marion Young. She agrees with the commonly held view that ‘oppression is the exercise of tyranny by a ruling group’ (Young in Asumah & Johnston-Anumonwo, 2002: 37) but adds that oppressed people ‘suffer inhibition of their abilities to exercise their capacities and express their needs, thoughts and feelings’ (ibid.). She explains the five faces of oppression as: ‘exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence’ (ibid.). Oppression occurs when a group that has power uses that power to keep the other group down. This study delves into the consequences of institutionalised oppression in South African during the years of National Party rule.

Consciousness refers to an awareness of oppression. Consciousness contributes to the development of social identities that define the membership of particular groups. Associated with those identities are understandings of ones belongingness and who one is. (Hogg & Abrams: 7)

This study focuses specifically on the nature of the consciousness of the youth activists and its transformation in the particular historical moment alluded to previously. To explore this consciousness, I draw on Black Consciousness writings, explore the role of sensitivity training and examine the Social Identity Development Theory of Hardiman & Jackson.

The study forms an important contribution to the development of social justice education in a South African context. The young activists in this research project filled leadership vacuums during a period when it was neither popular nor safe to tackle social justice

issues. Their experiences will be invaluable to present day social justice educators who still face similar challenges from a society where ‘self-interest overrides communal sanity and compassion’ (Kohl in Ayers, Hunt and Quinn (eds), 1998: 285).

Understanding the role of black consciousness in the identity formation of the ‘black’ youth in the early 1970s is an essential component of this study. Black Consciousness advocated that its supporters had to:

Cease measuring themselves in Eurocentric terms, discover or rediscover the values of Africa and other areas of the world outside Europe, be proud of their ‘blackness’, create a culture which does not depend on ‘white values’ and, in general, realise that ‘black is beautiful’.( No Sizwe, 1979: 122)

I believe that we are all products of the conditions we live in. ‘Black’ South African youth were primed, through the South African education system, to become enslaved to the concept that they were inferior to their ‘white’ counterparts. Black Consciousness provided them with the impetus to challenge that slave–master relationship and develop an alternative identity that helped them to take a stand against oppression and to break out of their ‘cycle of socialisation’ (Harro, 2000: 16)(see Appendix 9).

Writing about the experiences of adolescents and young adults in the early nineteen seventies would not be complete without a re-examination of the relevant literature that influenced their thinking and practices. Central to understanding the thinking of those young adults is an understanding of the writing of Paulo Freire and Frantz Fanon. Nekhwevha (in Kallaway (ed), 2002: 134) writes:

Paulo Freire profoundly articulated with and influenced South African student, teacher and community struggles against apartheid education in the early 1970s and 1980’s. In this regard, Freire’s key work, the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, played a seminal role in educational thinking within the liberation movement in South Africa.

In addition to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire’s *Cultural Action for Freedom* was a work also celebrated in this period. The latter work focuses on the educational process. Freire says that the work shows: ‘...if our option is *for man*, education is cultural action for freedom and therefore an act of knowing and not of memorization’ (Freire (b), 1972: 13).

Paulo Freire methods in literacy education programmes were widely adopted. Anne Hope<sup>15</sup> is mentioned by Jaya Josie. He says: ‘There was this woman called Anne Hope... organised these literacy classes using the Paulo Freire method. So she used to take us through that....’ Hope is also referred to by Wilson as the person who ran courses in Freire’s educational method (Wilson L. in Pityana N. B., Ramphele M., Mpumlwana M. & Wilson L., 1991: 35). A report in the column Weighed and.... Geweeg en... in Pro-Veritate Volume 12 No.1 (*The Star* 14.04.73) reports about the Christian Institute’s director of group studies Anne Hope’s departure from South Africa and concludes with the following comment:

Miss Hope studied under Brazilian educationist, Paulo Freire, whose ideas are revolutionising adult literacy efforts in the Third World..... Disa Digital Imaging Project of South Africa.htm

Anne Hope provides a direct link from Paulo Freire to South Africa.

The admiration that the novelist and poet Edouard Glissant and the Algerian novelist, Assia Djebar experienced when they mentioned to some ‘black’ American students that they had known Fanon is akin to the status Fanon enjoyed among young ‘black’ South African activists of the seventies (Macey, 2000: 14-15). Both his works *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* were almost obligatory readings for those who espoused Black Consciousness.

Moodley refers to the influence of the writings of Senghor, Memmi, Fanon. Cleaver, Carmichael and Freire. She writes:

They expressed the humiliation as well as the dignity of the colonised and the power of the powerless. Their main concerns dealt with the psychology of oppression and the exorcising of colonial humiliation. (Moodley in Pityana et al, 1992: 147)

An insight into Black Consciousness is important for understanding the context of identity development and consciousness of the youth of that period. The activists in this study developed an awareness of their oppression and defied their oppressors by breaking out of their oppressive consciousness and fighting against the system both at a personal as well as at a social and institutional level. Hardiman & Jackson’s Stages of Social Identity

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<sup>15</sup> Anne Hope was a member of the Grail, a lay Catholic sisterhood, and coordinator of groupwork at the Christian Institute, also serving on one of SPROCAS commissions. (Wilson in Pityana et al : 35)

In addition to Black Consciousness theories and Hardiman and Jackson's oppression model, I explore theories of learning through the critical emancipatory approach developed by Freire, Jarvis, Boud and Griffin. The theories of learning developed by Freire were experimented with and developed in workshops attended and conducted by activists in this study and informs the basis of the methodology.

## **2.2 Black Consciousness**

The three fundamental tenets of the Black Consciousness Movement of the early 1970s were:

- reinventing a personal identity that looked positively at the physical attributes of being black as well as engaging in psychological warfare against any notion of inferiority;
- uniting all the oppressed groups as a strong single force and
- fighting the institutionalised racism of the apartheid Government Machinery<sup>16</sup>.

Biko answered the question *What is Black Consciousness?* as follows:

In essence this is an attitude of mind and a way of life. It is the most positive call to emanate from the Black world for a long time. Its unadulterated quintessence is the realisation by the Black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their oppression – the blackness of their skin – and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. It is based on a self-examination which has ultimately led them to believe that by seeking to run away from themselves and to emulate the White man they are insulting the intelligence of whoever created them Black (SASO Newsletter September 1971).

In the above excerpt Biko enunciates one of the cornerstones of Black Consciousness which was the solidarity of the oppressed. Black Consciousness in South Africa sought to unify the oppressed under one banner. Since the oppressive regime used colour as its most oppressive mechanism, Black Consciousness inverted this notion to positively unite the oppressed into a single force to overthrow the regime.

An article by Steve Biko titled *Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity*, Biko outlined his view on the relationship between 'Blacks' and 'Whites':

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<sup>16</sup> adapted from various SASO and BPC publications and the writings of Steve Biko

In all aspects of Black-White relationship both in the past and at present we see a constant tendency by Whites to depict an inferior status to what is Black. Our culture, our history and in fact all aspects of the black man's life have been battered nearly out of shape in the great collision between the indigenous values and the Anglo-Boer culture (SASO Newsletter September 1971).

Black Consciousness rejected the notion that the oppressed were in anyway inferior and highlighted the richness of the history that was being downgraded by the Nationalist apartheid regime through their educational policies and practices. In Biko's view Black Consciousness re-inculcated pride that was hitherto denigrated by the oppressive forces in the country.

Biko realised that the 'most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed' (ibid.). The Black Consciousness leaders developed their ideas from reading Fanon and Freire. Fanon highlighted the importance of a 'psychoanalytical interpretation of the Black problem' (Fanon, 1967: 12). He recognised the deep complexity of an oppressed mind. He wrote as follows:

We understand now why the black man cannot take pleasure in his insularity. For him there is only one way out, and it leads into the white world. Whence his constant preoccupation with attracting the attention of the white man, his concern with being powerful like the white man, his determined effort to acquire protective qualities – that is, the proportion of being or having the composition that enters into the composition of an ego (op. cit.:51).

Freire too wrote about the confused minds of the oppressed who perceive themselves 'as opposites of the oppressor' and aspire 'not to liberation, but to identification with its opposite pole' (Freire (a), 1972: 22) Freire said that the oppressed adapt to the 'structure of domination in which they are immersed...' and 'suffer from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being' (Freire (a), 1972: 24). He explained the duality as the oppressed being 'one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalised' (ibid.).

In South Africa the Black Consciousness Movement used the ideas of Freire and Fanon as well as proponents of Black Consciousness in the United States of America. An understanding of Malcolm X's analysis of the way 'white' oppressors debased the 'black' identity is crucial for appreciating the essence of Black Consciousness in South Africa. Malcolm X wrote in his autobiography:

...This 'Negro' was taught to worship an alien God having the same blond hair, pale skin and blue eyes as the slavemaster.

This religion taught the 'Negro' that black was a curse. It taught him to hate everything black, including himself. It taught him that everything white was good, to be admired, respected and loved. It brainwashed this 'Negro' to think he was superior if his complexion showed more of the white pollution of the slavemaster...(Malcolm X, 1968: 257)

Biko suggests the way forward. Writing as Frank Talk he says:

From this it becomes clear that as long as blacks are suffering from inferiority complex – a result of 300 years of deliberate oppression, denigration and derision – they will be useless as co-architects of a normal society where man is nothing else but man for his own sake. Hence what is necessary as a prelude to anything else that may come is a very strong grass-roots build-up of Black Consciousness such that blacks can learn to assert themselves and stake their rightful claim (SASO Newsletter: Volume 3, No. 3: August 1970).

The Black Consciousness Movement therefore advocated that 'blacks' go it alone so that they could re-invent an authentic identity that was not constrained by the expectations and desires of the 'white' oppressors. Through education programmes and sensitivity training workshops people were encouraged to rediscover their blackness and identify with 'black' brothers and sisters in all spheres of life. The Black Consciousness Movement rejected the notion of farcical racial integration and association with 'white' liberals. Biko explained as follows:

Does this mean that I am against integration? If by integration you understand a breakthrough into white society by blacks, an assimilation and acceptance of blacks into an already established set of norms and code of behaviour set up by and maintained by whites, then YES I am against it. I am against the superior-inferior white-black stratification that makes the white a perpetual teacher and the black a perpetual pupil.....

If on the other hand by integration you mean there shall be free participation by all members of a society, catering for the full expression of the self in a freely changing society as determined by the will of the people, then I am with you..... (ibid.)

## **2.3 Sensitivity Training and Encounter Groups**

The influence of Sensitivity Training is very important in analysing the way social consciousness developed in the youth in this study. The Cape Town group were exposed

to this training at the *Christian Leadership Centre* and through the *Christian Institute*. The Durban group got indirect influences from this kind of training. Jaya Josie talks about his experiences of sensitivity training through his involvement in the *University Christian Movement*:

... because in the *University Christian Movement* we went on this sensitivity training ... with the *Christian Institute* and *Alex Borrairie*... used to have– sensitivity... and then we used to attend. A lot of these guys from America used to come with notions of ‘I and thou’ all these theological things....  
17

This study does not analyse the value of the sensitivity training as most respondents only have vague recollections of the impact of this training on the development of their consciousness. This section seeks to provide the reader with an understanding of what this kind of training entailed.

Central to sensitivity training was the process of self disclosure and intimate engagement with feelings. Personal interaction was on the basis of total honesty about everything including revealing the private and laying bare even that which could hurt other participants. The brutal honesty in personal engagements was deemed to be necessary for developing authentic relationships.

Schmidt explains:

At best, T-groups fostered the development of ‘people’ skills in those who took part in the workshops. One trainer highlights how group members, in a relatively short time, learned constructive ways of dealing with conflict, appeared to exhibit stronger self-directedness and developed warm connections with one another (Fortune, 1970). Also lauded was how group sensitivity training tended to ‘speed up’ one’s lifelong learning (Drotning, 1968).

.....The T-group years, like human adolescence, were a time of experimentation, rebellion and rapid growth in the lifespan of OD[Organisational Development] – and a necessary period of maturation.( Retrieved January 2006:  
<http://www.mcluhan.utoronto.ca/academy/historytheoryod/T-groups%20-%20a%20review.doc>)

Sensitivity training was used by church organisations like the *Christian Institute* to develop in participants an awareness of their political realities. This method of training came under the scrutiny of the state and the *Schlebusch Commission* investigated, amongst other things, sensitivity training at the *Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre*.

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<sup>17</sup> The reason for using italics is explained in Chapter 3

Numerous *Pro Veritate* publications of 1973 outline reactions to the publication of the *Schlebusch Commission Report*. The *South African Council of Churches* (SACC) set up its own enquiry. Professor Brian Johanson, a theology professor at the *University of South Africa* testified to the SACC commission about sensitivity training. His testimony provides us with an insight into the way the progressive sections of the church viewed sensitivity training at the time. A report from the *Rand Daily Mail* (15 June 1973 published in *Pro Veritate*, Volume 12, No. 2, page 24) explains Professor Johanson's testimony. He said:

Self discovery can be a painful but necessary and very valuable experience. This happens often when others reflect back to us something of what we are.

- It contributes to a clearer self perception in the individual of his own potential and capacity to help others.
- It contributes to a greater awareness of how others feel.
- It contributes to a resolving of problems between people through understanding the principle in which human relationships function.
- It recreates the redemptive fellowship – the essential character of the Christian community.

The progressive sections of the Christian Church in South Africa used sensitivity training in their leadership training workshops and seminars. An aspect of the training created the illusion that no one was in charge. In the words of the researcher, Blumenstiel, '...technically speaking there are no bosses. There are 'participants' and there is a staff.'(Blumenstiel in Back (ed), 1978: 150). This lack of a clearly defined authority figure encouraged a democratic ethos. Participants developed a greater awareness of corporate responsibility and were encouraged to work without hierarchical structures.

Some members of the Durban group did for a short while create a commune. Bobby Marie refers to this commune. Like encounter groups, communes were an expression of 'new life-styles'(Zablocki in Back (ed), 1978: 97). Zablocki argues that 'encounter groups and communes are expressions of cultural and demographic events of the decade 1965-1975'(Zablocki in Back (ed), 1978: 97). While encounter groups sought to uncover the self in relation to the group, the commune developed that interrelationship further by participants living together as a family for longer periods. The encounter group operated in isolation from the daily grind. In the commune, the members lived their daily lives in their normal pursuits. The commune Bobby refers to was quite different to the communes investigated in the United States. Most people who lived in that commune still frequented

their family homes that were close by. In this instance, the commune was an expression of breaking away from traditional structures and norms.

## **2.4 Social Identity Development Theory**

Social identity development theory was developed from Jackson's black identity development theory and Hardiman's white identity development theory (Hardiman & Jackson in Adams, Bell & Griffin (eds.), 1997: 23). Crucial to understanding this theory is recognising Hardiman & Jackson's premise that 'once systems of oppression are in place, they are self-perpetuating'(Hardiman & Jackson in Adams, Bell & Griffin (eds.), 1997: 17). They define social oppression as existing 'when one social group, whether knowingly or unconsciously, exploits another social group for its own benefit' (ibid.). They list the following key elements as conditional:

- The agent group<sup>18</sup> has the power to define and name reality and determine what is 'normal', 'real', or 'correct'
- Harassment, discrimination, exploitation, marginalization, and other forms of differential and unequal treatment are institutionalised and systematic. These acts often do not require the conscious thought or effort of individual members of the agent group but are rather part of business as usual that become embedded in social structures over time.
- Psychological colonization of the target group<sup>19</sup> occurs through socializing the oppressed to internalise their oppressed condition and collude with the oppressor's ideology and social system. This is what Freire refers to as the oppressed playing host to the oppressor.
- The target group's culture, language, and history is misrepresented, discounted, or eradicated and the dominant group's culture is imposed (ibid.)

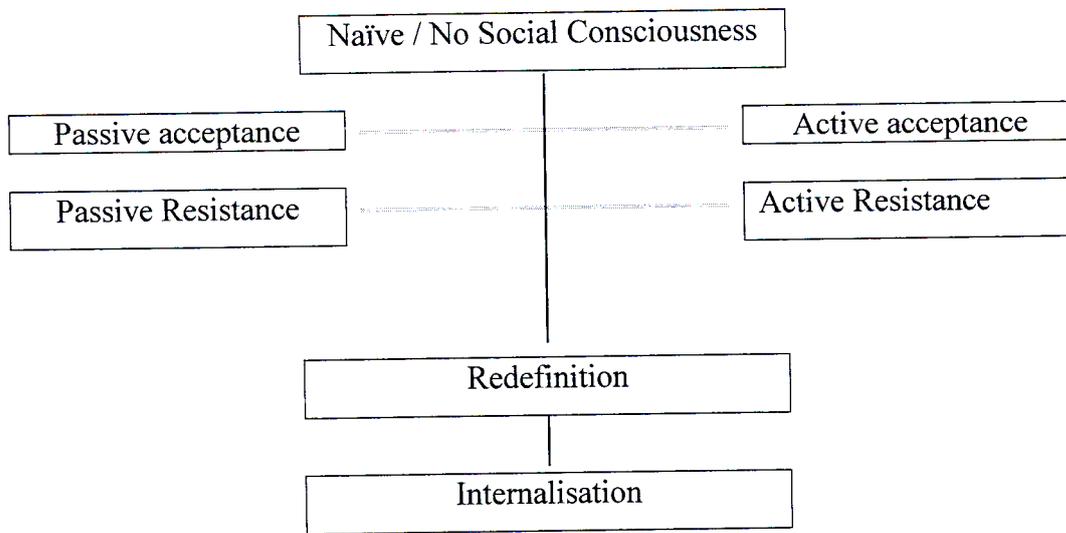
Hardiman & Jackson designed the Social Identity Development Model (SIDM) to describe 'the process that the oppressor and oppressed move through in the struggle to attain a liberated social identity in an oppressive environment'(op. cit.: 19). While the model is designed to assist in understanding the stages from an oppressed identity to a liberated consciousness the designers caution that 'In reality most people experience several stages simultaneously, holding complex perspectives on a range of issues and living a mixture of social identities' (op. cit.: 23).

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<sup>18</sup> 'Agent group' is a term for the 'oppressor group'

<sup>19</sup> The 'target group' is a term for the 'oppressed group'.

**Table 3: Stages of Social Identity Development (Hardiman & Jackson, 1992)**



Below is a brief explanation of the stages of social identity development provided by Hardiman & Jackson (op. cit.: 23 – 29). I use Harro’s *Cycle of Socialization* (Harro in Adams, Blumenfeld, Castañeda, Hackman, Peters and Zúñiga, 2000: 15 -21) (see Appendix 9) to underscore Hardiman & Jackson’s Model.

#### **2.4.1 Naïve / No Social Consciousness**

This is the stage where there is no awareness of the social complexities associated with appropriate social group roles. This lasts up to about the age of three or four. Parents and primary caregivers are the chief role models who introduce children to expected behaviour in their social groups. Harro explains the process of socialization:

Immediately upon our births we begin to be socialized by the people we love and trust the most, our families or the adults who are raising us. They shape our self-concepts and self-perceptions, the norms and the rules we must follow, the roles we are taught to play, our expectations of the future, and our dreams. These people serve as role models for us, and they teach us how to behave. This socialization happens both intrapersonally (how we think about ourselves) and interpersonally (how we relate to others) (Harro in Adams et al, 2000: 17).

### **2.4.2 Acceptance**

During this stage there is (conscious or unconscious) internalization of what Hardiman & Jackson call 'the dominant culture's logic system'. The superiority associated with an agent identity and the inferiority associated with a target identity is accepted either passively (unconsciously) or actively (consciously) by the individual psyche. Appropriate social behaviour is learned from various sources.

Harro explains:

We are inundated with unquestioned and stereotypical images that shape how we think and what we believe about ourselves and others. What makes this 'brainwashing' even more insidious is the fact that it is woven into every structural thread of the fabric of our culture. The media...., our language patterns, the lyrics to songs, our cultural practices and holidays and the very assumptions on which our society is built all contribute to the reinforcement of the biased and stereotypes we receive....( Harro in Adams et al, 2000: 18)

Many people (both agents and targets) who actively accept their assigned social roles, devote their lives to maintaining the status quo as either dominants or subordinates. Those who are triggered to recognise their unearned privileged status (agent identity) or inferiority status (target identity) start the difficult road towards resistance.

### **2.4.3 Resistance**

At this stage there is greater consciousness of oppression by both agents and targets. They are faced with choices. Those who choose to ignore the contradictions that become apparent in their status, maintain and support the oppressive system. This route is sometimes easier as there are rewards for this. Harro explains:

....People who try to contradict the 'norm' pay a price for their independent thinking, and people who conform (consciously or unconsciously) minimally receive the benefit of being left alone for not making waves, such as acceptance in their designated roles, being considered normal or 'a team player', or being allowed to stay in their places. Maximally, they receive rewards and privileges for maintaining the status quo such as access to higher places; attention and recognition for having 'made it' or being the model member of their group; or the privilege that brings them money, connections or power (Harro in Adams et al, 2000: 19).

For agents in resistance there is great trauma and guilt as they re-evaluate their roles as oppressors and search for a way to make amends. Targets in the stage of resistance start

to recognise their roles in colluding with their oppression. They learn to rid themselves of internalised inferiority and move towards a more positive self view.

#### **2.4.4 Redefinition**

The most important task for both the oppressor and oppressed who reach this stage is to build a new self image that is free of the oppressive consciousness they were socialised into. At this stage the individual develops a positive self image. There is understanding that no group is better than another. Targets at this stage may develop the need for greater involvement with their own group as they reassert an identity that is free of the influences of the hitherto agent group.

#### **2.4.5 Internalisation**

In this stage individuals integrate their redefined identities into their daily lives.

Hardiman & Jackson caution:

As long as a person lives in an oppressive society, the process of uncovering previously unrecognised areas of Acceptance and Resistance will be ongoing even though their predominant consciousness may be in Redefinition or Internalization.

And conclude:

There is essentially no exit phase for this stage; the ongoing task is one of lifelong exploration and nurturance.

Harro provides a cyclical model he calls the *Cycle of Liberation*. (See Appendix 10)

While he cautions that there is no single entry point, ending, or any particular sequence, it 'describes a ...process that seems to occur in most successful social change efforts....'.

(Harro in Adams et al, 2000:464)Marx (Marx, 1992: 8) suggests that concepts of identity 'are subjective mental constructs'. He explains:

Race, nation, and class are situational categories, used by activists and commentators to interpret how social relations are ordered and can be changed. These categories encapsulate ideology as it is lived through. They are more than ideas; they are a way of experiencing historical situations in which one or another or a series of identities suit people's interests and are purposefully adopted by elites (op.cit.: 8-9).

The participants in this study shared a common experience of identifying themselves closely with the ideology of the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s. The way the individuals defined themselves within that ideology, enabled them to overcome the

psychological burden of racial oppression. Hardiman & Jackson's development model provides a framework through which the development of that identity can be traced.

Black Consciousness was the precursor to Hardiman & Jackson's Social Identity Development Model. Before Black Consciousness became popular in South Africa, the emphasis was on integration of racial groups in a manner that did not recognise the power dynamics at play. Black Consciousness recognised the power imbalances in the apartheid society and forged a new direction for breaking out of that cycle of oppression. Hardiman & Jackson were able to generate a model that explains rationally the movement from an oppressed identity to a liberated consciousness. While it is not always a clear-cut journey through the various stages, the model provides an important guide for tracing the development of consciousness.

## **2.5 Learning Theory**

Jarvis (1992: 17) explains that the process of learning 'is located at the interface of people's biography and the sociocultural milieu in which they live...' In this study, there is a close correlation between the processes of learning and the development of a political consciousness to overcome oppression. The most important motivating factor for learning was overcoming oppression.

The learning was contextualised in action for liberation and Freirian ideas radicalised the learning process with innovative teaching and learning styles. The inadequacy of the Apartheid schooling system was recognised by the activists and new learning, founded on personal experience and knowledge, was used to transform the individual thinking and develop new directions to challenge the status quo.

Theories of learning pertinent to this study are further expounded in the discussion of the findings in Chapter 6.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research Design and Methodology**

This research project is a qualitative study that investigates the lived experiences of activists in two communities in the early 1970s. The research aims to unravel the processes of learning that impacted on the consciousness of these activists, and to explain how that awakened social justice consciousness impacted on the lives of the individuals concerned.

The two questions this research aims to answer are:

***What were the processes of learning that emerged as young activists in the early 1970s sought to extricate themselves from their oppressive conditions?***

and

***How have these processes of learning impacted on their lives and on their understanding of their social identities today?***

I firstly explore the methodological foundations of the study and then outline the research process.

### **3.1 Methodological Foundations**

#### **3.1.1 Oral History**

Henige (Henige, 1982: 106) asserts that ‘‘Life history’ is essentially a spoken autobiography in which the informant is asked to relate at some length those parts of his life that seem to *him* most interesting and important’ whereas ‘Oral history’ he claims recounts the personal experiences of the informant ‘in the context of the larger problem’ on which the historian is working. Oral history is more appropriate for this research as it focuses on individual experiences at a particular moment in time.

Henige (Henige, 1982: 107) expresses the current view that ‘oral history provides an opportunity to explore and record the views of the underprivileged, the dispossessed, and the defeated – those who, by virtue of being historically inarticulate, have been overlooked in most studies of the past’. While the participants in this study do not fall into the category of being ‘underprivileged’ under the present dispensation, the stories they tell are valuable insights into the period when they were ‘the underprivileged’ and ‘the dispossessed’.

There are different approaches to the writing of oral histories. Plummer (Plummer, 2001: 17) reminds us that:

The world is crammed full of human personal documents. People keep diaries, send letters, make quilts, take photos, ... They are all in the broadest sense documents of life....

While Plummer acknowledges that this method is ‘as old as history itself’ (Plummer, 2001: 28) he asserts that ‘Oral history.... can now almost be seen as a global, fragmented social movement hell bent on tracking, retrieving, recording and archiving the multiple worlds of our recent past’(op. cit.:28 – 29). He further explains:

We now have thousands of stories in the UK alone: the lives of old criminals in East London Underworlds like ‘Arthur Harding’ (Samuels, 1981); the voices of the truly marginalised disabled people at the start of the twentieth century, often institutionalised and forgotten (Humphries and Gordon, 1992; Walmsley, 1998); the lives of both staff and their patients living and working in large mental hospitals through the twentieth century (Gittings 1998) – stories that may never have been heard had not oral history taken an interest..... (ibid.)

The achievements of oral history research are wide ranging. Henige (Henige,1982: 108) refers to the popularity of the oral history approach and outlines its usefulness in the recording of resistance to colonial rule:

...oral history is beginning to gain popularity among historians of oral and partly oral cultures. This is demonstrated by such publications as *Oral History and Yagl-Ambu*, published in Papua New Guinea, and several others devoted to Oceania and the Third World generally. In part this rising interest reflects the intellectual and ideological outlook of many historians of these areas and in part the more practical fact that studying the past few generations in oral societies permits a more fruitful integration of oral and written materials.

Oral histories have been used in a range of academic disciplines like sociology, anthropology, medicine and psychiatry (Plummer, 2001: 18). Plummer (ibid.) quotes Robert Redfield for his ‘sensitising’ view on the essence of oral history:

the essential element in every definition is the same: a human or personal document is one in which the human and personal characteristics of somebody who is in some sense the author of the

document find expression, so that through its means the reader of the document comes to know the author and his or her views of events with which the document is concerned (Redfield, in Gottschalk et al., 1942:vii in Plummer, 2001).

Plummer emphasises the ‘first order’ nature of accounts recorded in oral history research and expresses the view that they should be taken seriously ‘on their own terms’ so that they provide ‘first hand, intimately involved accounts of life’(Plummer, 2001: 18).

In this study I have adopted the method which develops the ‘individual personal stories’ as ‘the essence of the methodology’(Wieder in Kallaway (ed.), 2002: 199). Like Wieder & Fataar, I am acutely aware that ‘...life stories are seldom simple – people are complex and their stories are not clear chronological journeys’(Wieder & Fataar, 2003: 31). In this approach to telling the individual stories I ensured that individuals were given the opportunity to talk of their experiences extensively. I acted as a conduit through which the stories could be told with minimal interruptions.

While the stories in this study are historical in nature, the primary purpose of the study is to examine the learning processes in the development of the individual consciousness. The individuals tell their own stories.

I have chosen this method as I believe that the stories of people who lived through important moments in history give insight into the real life experiences not always captured accurately in history books. In the words of Sideris:

...reconstructing past struggles from the point of view of the ordinary people involved can help to get beyond the sentimental and romantic notions of political organisation and struggle, to convey the complex reality and contradictions. This is important in getting a more comprehensive picture of resistance....(retrieved March 2004 from:  
<http://www.und.ac.za/und/ccms/publications/criticalarts/v4n2a3.htm#top>)

These are short stories pertinent to two communities at a particular moment in South Africa in the early seventies. The stories do not tell an entire life story but rather focus on the period of the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa. This method of oral history and testament reviewed by Plummer is, he purports, most relevant for ‘archiving the multiple worlds of our recent pasts’ as they ‘capture the rich, vivid voices of subjects in history who might otherwise have been lost’(Plummer, 2001: 29).

In the preface to 'African Voices', a book of interviews of thirteen African writers, John Stotesbury of Finland and Raoul Granqvist of Sweden comment: 'Any transcription of an interview is, needless to say, an approximation. It is not possible to catch the 'voice' of the speaker in all its nuances' (Granqvist & Stotesbury, 1989: 8). However, the oral researcher attempts to capture that voice in as an authentic a way as is possible. Wieder's high praise of Crain Soudien's work is precisely because Soudien was able to 'portray a picture of apartheid Cape Town that made (him) feel as if (he were) present' (Wieder, 2002: 174).

Wieder adopts part of his methodology from the work of Studs Terkel because he considers it important that the people he interviews tell their own stories. He quotes the Chicago Sun-Times journalist, M.N. Newman, who compared Terkel to Steinbeck when he spoke to Tony Parker about *Working*:

What Studs did in *Working* was present us with a panorama of the human race, or the American part of it, in and around the middle of the twentieth century. It has sociological value, it has historical value, it has revelatory value – and above all it has value because it speaks of the human spirit to the human spirit (Parker, 1996: 51 in Wieder, 2002: 66).

I believe this study has important historical and educational value for our country. Each story reflects an individual character and style that is exclusive. Woven together in this collection, common threads are elevated through analysis that explain an important moment in our history and provides insight into learning processes used to overcome an oppressive consciousness.

### **3.1.2 Oral histories and the context of apartheid**

It is important to recognise the value of the oral tradition in present day South Africa where our traumatic past is still in the process of being recorded and archived. Plummer (Plummer, 2001: 39) refers to how the 'historical moment' plays its role in any life's shape'. This study focuses both on the individual life story and the historical forces at play.

Apartheid was a time of repression and fear. The activists in this study were involved in practices that were intended to assist in the overthrow of the apartheid order. They worked clandestinely and did not maintain records that could be used as evidence against them by the state. This study provides an opportunity for these activists to give oral testimony of a historical period that contributed greatly to the present day political dispensation in South Africa. Sideris explains:

...clandestine activities do not lend themselves to detailed and meticulous documentation for the benefit of future historians. They do however form a very powerful and rich source of reminiscence and historical information. It is these areas, inaccessible to conventional methods of investigation, that the method of oral history allows the historian to explore.

In the light of these problems and the bias of official South African history and official records, oral testimony is very often the only alternative source for researchers attempting to construct a more comprehensive picture of the past and wanting to correct official history (retrieved May 2004 from: <http://www.und.ac.za/und/ccms/publications/criticalarts/v4n2a3.htm#top> ).

Wieder asserts that ‘oral history and testimony are synonymous’ (Wieder, 2002: 66). Barbara Truesdell explains that through oral history we ‘gather data not available in written records’(retrieved May 2004 from:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~cshm/techniques.html>)

Plummer refers to the importance of appreciating the historical context:

... life story research at its best always brings a focus on historical change, moving between the changing biographical history of the person and the social history of his or her lifespan. Invariably the gathering of a life history will entail the subject moving to and fro between the developments of their own life cycle and the ways in which external crises and situations (wars, political and religious changes, unemployment situation; economic change, the media and so forth) have impinged on this. A life history cannot be told without a constant reference to historical change..... (Plummer, 2001: 39 – 40)

### **3.1.3 Memory**

Henige (Henige, 1982: 110) expresses the view that, ‘Whether we like it or not, memory eventually makes cheats of us all...’ This opinion reflects in part the difficulties associated with using personal recollections for research. I am mindful that ‘Memory is a subjective instrument for recording the past, always shaped by the present moment and the individual psyche’(retrieved May 2004 from: <http://www.indiana.edu/~cshm/techniques.html>). Many academics question the reliability and validity of oral history. They argue that ‘oral testimony is often too subjective, inaccurate, contains

distortions and that individual memory is unreliable and subject to subsequent changes in people's perspectives.' (retrieved May 2004 from: <http://www.und.ac.za/und/ccms/publications/criticalarts/v4n2a3.htm#top> )

Van Manen says that '...it is not of great concern whether a certain experience actually happened in exactly that way.' He contends that 'We are less concerned with the factual accuracy of an account than with the plausibility of an account – whether it is true to our living sense of it' (Van Manen, 1990: 65). For Van Manen the point of phenomenological research is 'to 'borrow' other people's experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience in the context of the whole of human experience' (Van Manen, 1990: 62).

An important consideration in writing the stories as they are told is to be aware of the complex way in which memory works. In their review of the teaching life of Alie Fataar, Wieder and Fataar are conscious that Fataar's granduncle, Alie Fataar 'knows how he wants to be remembered' (Wieder & Fataar, 2003: 33). They therefore present that story but also interrogate it. They cite Frisch (1990) and Friedlander (1998) who both address questions related to the personal story. Frisch examines 'what happens to memory as it becomes history' and Friedlander analyses 'the difficulty of communication' (Wieder & Fataar: 2003: 32). I have been mindful of such complexities.

In the interview I conducted with Maria Engel and Terry Grove who were interviewed jointly, they helped one another with memory recall and getting the chronology right. For example:

Maria Engel: *I remember. Was it at night?*

Terry Grove: *Yes it was at night but I can't.. the only thing that I can remember of the Christian Leadership Centre course was the black history. Do you remember we had the black history?*

Interviewer: *Who conducted that?*

Terry Grove: *I can't remember. We did transactional analysis, meditation...*

Maria Engel: *Meditation.... Trevor De Bryun did that...*

Terry Grove: *Who's Trevor De Bryun?*

Maria Engel: *That tall minister*

Terry Grove: *Trevor is he a minister?*

Maria Engel: *He was a minister yes. He was a Methodist minister. We had a lot of Methodist ministers from... the course I discovered was run by the Methodist Church.*

Through delving into the memory of individuals there are subjective influences that could be ambiguous and even contradictory. Plummer contends that 'it does not matter if the account can be shown to be false in particulars' because 'what matters ...in the life history research is the facilitation of as full a subjective view as possible, not the naïve delusion that one has trapped the bedrock of truth'(Plummer, 2001: 20).

This research presents multiple voices from two geographical areas. The varied voices from divergent areas provide an opportunity to establish validity and reliability to the extent data of this nature can. I explore those aspects of the stories that I believe are relevant and truthful. The stories should be judged on their plausibility rather than their representation of indisputable truth. I recognise that social realities can be reconstructed in numerous ways depending on the point of view of the individual. A period of more than thirty years has lapsed since the nineteen seventies and the memories of the individuals are tinged with subjective influences. I therefore present all the stories of the respondents and interrogate those voices in the section on Findings and the Analysis of the data.

#### **3.1.4 Insider/Outsider Voice**

In this study I enjoy the status of being both an insider and an outsider both as an individual and as a group participant. Some of the participants are related to me and, except for a period of sixteen years of exile, I have had fairly regular contact with them in the last fifteen years. However, I met the majority of the participants, after a period of thirty years, when I conducted their interviews. I have had some contact with a few of the participants in social settings. I was an activist in Cape Town in the early seventies and

underwent the same training with the participants at that time. I married an activist from Durban whose group had developed its own style of training, consciousness and activism.

My being privy to certain group secrets and codes of conduct made it easier for me to pose questions in a way that brought out information not readily shared with total strangers. Michael Fraser found this in his research in the gay community. He revealed that many respondents shared intimate segments of their lives with him because he had revealed his sexual orientation of being gay with them (Fraser, retrieved May 2004 from: [http://www.coe.uga.edu/quig/proceedings/Quig93\\_Proceedings/fraser.93.html](http://www.coe.uga.edu/quig/proceedings/Quig93_Proceedings/fraser.93.html) ).

I am an outsider in the Durban group because I was not living there during the period under investigation. Wieder highlights the benefits of being an outsider. He cites Corinne Glesne who in her book *Becoming Qualitative Researchers* presents the position of an insider 'being incapable of seeing past her own involvement' (Wieder, 2002: 173). Being an outsider in the Durban group gives me that objective distance. However, I am in the fortunate position of being an outsider who is trusted like an insider because of my long association with the Durban group.

While the closeness and distance have both advantages and disadvantages in conducting research, I have strenuously attempted to avoid my 'personal prejudices, stereotypes, myths assumptions, and other thoughts or feelings that could cloud or distort the perception of other people's experiences' (Goodson (ed), 1991: 122). I do believe that my personal involvement in the activities of this period has had more advantages than disadvantages for this particular research project.

A personal biographical adventure was unavoidable as the stories being told are interwoven with my own. Plummer is of the view that 'the documentation of our own experiences and life stories are excellent starting points for research, and are productive points to return to again and again' (Plummer, 2001: 34). Van Manen also writes about using personal experience:

To conduct a personal description of a lived experience, I try to describe my experience as much as possible in experiential terms, focusing on a particular situation or event. I try, as Merleau-Ponty

says, to give a direct description of my experience as it is, without offering causal explanations or interpretive generalizations of my experience (1962,p.vii)( Van Manen, 1990: 54)

I view my personal involvement in the activities in a positive light. As Ely points out, 'familiarity with one's setting can be an advantage'(Goodson (ed), 1991: 124). However, Ely cautions that 'there are certain issues that arise from familiarity with the subject of which the researcher must be aware'(ibid.). She raises a researcher's 'presumption of understanding' as an important issue:

... 'insider' expertise must be validated. Knowledge of others' hearts, minds, and experience simply cannot be assumed, regardless of familiarity, or perhaps especially when one is familiar with their sub cultural landscape. When dealing with familiar terrain, self-exploration is crucial for the qualitative researcher. 'Am I talking about them or am I talking about me?' The question must be asked time and again (Goodson (ed.), 1991: 125).

I found my personal knowledge of events in Cape Town sometimes a hindrance which was not obvious during the interviews and only emerged when I started doing the transcription and analysis. On comparing the interviews I conducted with the Durban participants and those of the Cape Town participants I find that I was not as thorough with the Cape Town interviews. The following extract shows how at one stage I was off guard and I found myself being questioned and drawn in:

*Terry Grove: Yes because we heard.... I also remember that SABSA... and the South Africa Black Scholars Association had close contact with SABSA and in the same way that you were trained as literacy coordinators at Christian Leadership Centre, I remember Johnny and them also trained us as what were we called? Literacy facilitators or something, no coordinators....*

*Carmel Chetty: I don't remember*

*Terry Grove: I think it was coordinators using the Paulo Freire method.*

*Maria Engel: Now how do you get to be with Johnny Issel in this thing?*

*Carmel Chetty: I organised it*

*Maria Engel: Is it?*

*Carmel Chetty: I remember it because this phone call is fixed in my mind. I phoned Jane and I phoned her again and I phoned her again and she got fed up with me and then after we had arranged that seminar she was arranging these courses at Christian Leadership Centre and she then told us about it and we all... I organised this whole group to go there and join the group that she already had. But I don't think either of you were involved in the Saturday things with Father Clive McBride...*

*Maria Engel: Yes we used to go there.*

The above example highlights the difficulties of being an insider. Having been part of the processes being investigated, my interviewees naturally wanted to include me in their accounts. There were times when I found it difficult to maintain the distance of a researcher as the stories told involved me personally. As I interviewed the individuals in this study I was reminded of many aspects of my own life that I had not focussed on for many decades. I realised, through this process, the need for a reflexive analysis so that my story does not take over the focus on the stories I have researched. It gives me the space to adopt an objective stance for the purposes of this study. It also helps me not to confuse my personal views with the stories as they have been told by the individuals. It allows the reader to view me in an appropriate space outside the actual research study.

### **3.2 The Research Process**

The research design outlined in the research proposal has evolved during the research process. This is in keeping with the findings of Oberle (Oberle, 2002 retrieved 2006 from:

[http://www.upei.ca/research/ethics/guidelines\\_qualitative\\_research/guidelines\\_qualitative\\_research.html](http://www.upei.ca/research/ethics/guidelines_qualitative_research/guidelines_qualitative_research.html)) who is reported to have said that ‘the research design tends to emerge as the

study proceeds, as the researcher responds to the participants and shifts the original research question as information emerges from participants in the course of the research’.

While there has been minimal change in the original research question, I have had to adapt to the situations I found during the research process. The process is explained hereafter.

The primary method of data collection for this research has been the recording of oral histories of young activists of the early 1970s. To delve into the minds of people who were activists in the 1970s is an arduous task not only because their involvement took place more than thirty years ago but also because memory is tainted by the way individuals want to be remembered. I therefore used a two-pronged approach for data collection:

- I interviewed the individuals concerned and
- I explored the literature of the period that is still available to corroborate some of the stories that were told and also to understand some of the practices of the time.

### **3.2.1 The Interviewees**

The first step in the research process was choosing the individuals to be interviewed. I selected four males and two females from amongst activists who lived in the Merebank/Wentworth areas in Durban. The second group of participants from Cape Town were selected from activist groups that were involved in training at the Christian Leadership Centre in Kensington in Cape Town. This group consisted of one male and four females. Selection was largely done on the availability of persons to participate in the study. Neither gender nor race considerations were used as criteria for selection.

I found an eagerness amongst all participants to have their stories told. Maria Engel, my sister, expressed some reservation at first about her importance in the research and was afraid that she would not remember anything at all. She felt more at ease when Terry Grove suggested that they be interviewed together. I accepted this as a fair compromise. This compromise is explained more fully later. Only one person Coastal (Kamba) Govender from Merebank, declined to be interviewed.

The eagerness to have their stories told stems in some way from the fact that four activists from the Merebank area who were part of the 1970s period of activism have died. Krishna Rabilal was killed by South African soldiers in the Matola Raid in Mozambique in 1981. In the post 1994 period Welcome Tys and Roy Naidoo died of natural causes while Satish Juggernaut was killed in a plane crash. Most of the respondents are now over the age of fifty and realise the transience of life.

During the interviewing process individuals mentioned other activists who were important link people in various stages of their development. Where it was possible, these people were contacted via email but could not be interviewed directly (i.e. person to person). In the Durban group Daya Pillay serves as the link person between the Black

Consciousness Movement and the Congress Movement while Steven David is the link between the Merebank area, Wentworth and Chatsworth. In the Cape Alan Liebenberg serves as the link with the broader Black Consciousness Movement's involvement with the *Christian Leadership Centre*, the *Christian Institute* and the *South African Black Scholar's Association* (SABSA).

### **3.2.2 Additional sources to support memory**

Bobby Marie, who was the second interviewee, provided me with photographs, a creative writing book from his matriculation year at school as well as documentary evidence of his banning and detention (see Appendix 3). I used the photographs (See attached in Appendix 4), for the individual interviews to invoke memory recall. I also used my personal knowledge of the period and information gleaned from other interviews to rouse individual memory.

Though I asked participants to make memory notes and keep memory journals, none of the participants submitted any such information.

Sandra Weber of Concordia University asks. 'Can a picture provoke a thousand words?' (retrieved May 2004 from: <http://www.iirc.mcgill.ca/about.html>) I believe that the pictures and photographs did add an important dimension to assist in memory recall. Vivienne Taylor expressed amazement at the pictures and then remembered some of the methods they used for self study and for training other people:

*..... there's Reshi there... and these are the type of beds we would sleep on bunk beds and it used to be freezing cold there - Eston in winter compared to Durban... It was such an amazing experience for us to have our own vehicle that we could use to take people out and do training. You've got pictures here of us involved with training young kids and giving them an alternative educational experience, trying to expose them to recreation and learning ... different from what they had experienced also from poverty and deprivation not having opportunities to get together talk as young people so that was one side of it. But we also had workshops called.... in our communities in the...we used the Presbyterian Church. We had a coffee bar on the basement of the church, the Presbyterian Church.....*

Sections of Bobby Marie's matriculation creative writing book (see Appendix 2), provide an insight into his consciousness at the time.

### 3.2.3 Interview process and procedures

I conducted all interviews and transcribed them personally. I have interrogated my personal involvement in this research. I kept a journal in which I recorded my thoughts and experiences as I conducted each interview. I note after my interview with Betty Leslie:

*I went to meet Betty at her home in Silverton, Pretoria. After supper we sat down for the interview but there were numerous interruptions from her grandson, children and visiting friends. Betty spoke slowly and did not go into a lot of detail.*

The primary method I used was in-depth interviews. I tried to understand ‘the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience’ (Greef in De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delpont : 298). While the interviews were generally unstructured, each interview consisted of common questions that ensured that comparisons could be drawn between the individuals and the groups.

Questions posed in the various interviews were largely similar. They started with a background of childhood experiences and went on to experiences at school, the development of political consciousness and the impact of the social justice consciousness on individual lives. (See Appendix 8 for a sample of the interview questions.) I used open-ended questions that allowed the participants to express their own point of view and brought out the person’s background and involvement in training programmes and political activities. While I guided their thinking with appropriate questions, the participants were encouraged to tell their own stories.

While my questions were designed to evoke explanations of the processes of learning individuals went through, those questions sometimes evoked other responses as they triggered other memories in the individual consciousness. For instance, Jaya Josie looked at the photographs of youth workshops and remembered their mothers who attended as cooks:

*George and Neville came. Because this was the youth.... We were trying to conscientise the youth. We tried to conscientise the.... So we tried to get all of them at the coffee bar to come. Bobby’s Ma used to come and cook. And aunty used to make... She was a real camp mother. When I think about all those things it’s amazing that we were so well organised you know....*

When conducting the interviews, I used the family background as a way of getting the participants to feel relaxed during the interview process. Speaking of their families, I believe, allowed the individuals to focus on the familiar and gave me an opportunity to gauge the individual styles in responses. This helped me to understand the individual and manage the interview so that the individual remained focused and relaxed.

A single interview was conducted with each participant. All interviews were randomly organised according to times convenient for the participants. They were long in duration. The shortest was 2 hours and the longest 4-5 hours. No follow up interviews were found to be necessary.

I interviewed my husband, Roy Chetty first. This provided me with the background information I needed to interview the other participants. My interview with Roy served as a pre-interview study. I had general knowledge about the Durban group during the period being investigated, but required more specific details that he was able to provide. Such information is not available in books. Thereafter I interviewed members of the Durban group now resident in Gauteng in the following order: Bobby Marie (male), Reshi Singh (male), Betty Leslie (female) and Jaya Josie (male).

In Cape Town I interviewed individuals in the following order: Harold Dixon (male), Jane Lawrence (female), Algonda Perez (female), Vivienne Taylor (a female member of the Durban group), Maria Engel (female) and Terry Grove (female) (interviewed jointly due to time constraints and a request from the interviewees).

Participants were informed of the names of other participants where information gathered needed to be verified. All participants signed a letter of consent in which they gave permission for their names to be used. (see Appendix 7 for a sample of the letter)

The interviews were conducted so as to ensure that the participants' spoke freely. My intention was to take cognizance of Studs Terkel's point of view. He writes: 'I want them to talk about what they want to talk about in the way they want to talk about it, or not talk

about it in the way they want to stay silent about it. I'll keep them to theme ... but that's all.'(Parker, 1996: 166 in Wieder 2002: 66)

As Wieder uses the 'popular tradition of Terkel and the academic tradition of Thompson'(Wieder, 2002: 66) I too wanted my interviews to explore the hearts and minds of the activists/ youth of the early 1970s while revealing the sociological, historical and human experiences they had.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim. The shortest transcript of Betty Leslie consisted of nine single spaced pages and the longest, that of Jaya Josie, consisted of fifty-one single spaced pages. They were returned to participants for corrections. No corrections were requested to the original transcripts. Respondents who acknowledged receipt expressed satisfaction with the transcript.

The participants did not have knowledge of the research questions before the interview. They spoke from memory and very often during the interviews, corrected information they had given as another aspect of the story alerted them to something they had said which did not make sense chronologically. Different participants also filled in gaps in the memory of other participants. For example in the interview with Bobby Marie he is constantly correcting dates. He comments:

*You see to '71 and... '71 was our matric year. Between '70, '71, and '72 - three years - was that one period? because we.... When the cops closed us down, we decide to go to university. We were all meeting different people and the range of influence was an enormous thing. The closed Merebank group.... It emerges again in '73 but was the Community of St. Steven the intervening until ASH? I don't know. I'm not sure. I don't even have any documents from that period... '.*

Roy Chetty fills the gap that Bobby could not recall. He says:

*...we felt that we needed to get involved in the liberation struggle and we wanted to get closer to the BC group with the purpose of using it to achieve these aims. We didn't really know too much of it at that stage. Quite early on then round about this stage we also called ourselves - a shift away from ... The Community of St. Steven, we'd called ourselves Black Action Group.*

While participants were told the identities of other participants, each was interviewed separately (except for Terry Grove and Maria Engel) so each story is unique. I have been able to cross check the stories of the activists with one another as they did not hear one

another's stories<sup>20</sup>. Sideris uses Thompson's argument that 'the general rules for examining all evidence for reliability can be applied to oral sources as well. That is, they can be checked for internal consistency, cross checked with other sources and other interviews, and as with all sources the researcher must be aware of potential bias.'<sup>(retrieved May 2004 from: <http://www.und.ac.za/und/ccms/publications/criticalarts/v4n2a3.htm#top>)</sup>

All participants admitted to having difficulty with accurate memory recall. When reading the stories of the different participants a thread does emerge as their stories dovetail with one another. I have provided a rough chronology of events derived from the stories. (See Table 4 )This chronology is important for tracing the development of consciousness and understanding the education processes they went through.

Three email submissions were received. This is explained in the questionnaire section below.

### **3.2.4 Questionnaires**

I designed an open ended questionnaire for participants no longer resident in South Africa. Three participants could not be interviewed directly. They made submissions via email. Steven David (a male Durbanite now resident in the USA) and Alan Liebenberg (a male activist still resident in Cape Town but due to practical difficulties I was unable to interview), both did not use the questionnaire but made written submissions using the questions as guides. Daya Pillay (a male Durbanite now resident in Canada) responded to the questionnaire but found it restrictive and repetitive. I make this assumption as he did not answer some questions and just wrote 'see above', referring to previous answers.

Though secondary participants, as there was no direct person to person contact, the stories told by these individuals are invaluable.

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<sup>20</sup> The only exception here was with Maria Engel and Terry Grove

I am mindful of Van Manen's warning that:

Writing forces the person into a reflective attitude – in contrast to face-to-face conversation in which people are much more immediately involved. This reflective attitude together with the linguistic demands of the writing process place certain constraints on the free obtaining of lived experience descriptions..... And so, the researcher needs to be attuned to the tendency of subjects to include explanations and interpretations with their descriptions of lived experiences (Van Manen, 1990: 64,66).

It is my contention that since the majority of the participants in this study are highly educated individuals, reflective explanations and interpretations have been inevitable even in the tape recorded interviews.

Steven David and Alan Liebenberg go into great detail on issues they consider important. Daya (Joe) Pillay is more restrained in his responses to questions. Steven's style of writing is very similar to the way he speaks. However, it is the detail that has been given in written submissions which indicate that more thought has been put into what has been put on paper. In the interview situation respondents had little time to reflect as they were put on the spot.

The stories from email submissions have been clearly identified as such. As secondary submissions they are presented primarily as supportive evidence. Jaya Josie and other Durban participants refer to Daya Pillay. Daya Pillay provides some answers to questions that they pose. Steven David lived in Chatsworth but participated in the activities of the activists in Merebank. His submission also provides an insider/outsider analysis of the activities in the group. Alan Liebenberg's submission provides an extreme example of the problems experienced as a result of the Mixed Marriages and Group Areas Act on the people in the Cape. His experiences at school and development of consciousness in the Black Consciousness Movement add a further dimension to the oral stories. His involvement in SABSA and other youth groups provide insight into the roles of those organisations.

### **3.2.5 Focus Groups**

Though suggested in the proposal, no focus groups were held. It was felt that the stories as presented could be judged for accuracy by comparing them. Many participants expressed the wish for focus groups as they felt their memories were not always reliable and wanted the guidance of others to help them in memory recall. This was deemed not to be necessary as the stories do develop their own chronology and blend together. An additional reason was that there could be practical difficulties to organise such groups and inevitably not everyone would be able to attend. I believe that no new data would emerge from such a process.

### **3.2.6 Ethics and Confidentiality**

In the book *Doing Qualitative Research: Circles within Circles*, Margot Ely notes the following:

Striving to be faithful to another's viewpoint is striving to be ethical. Striving to maintain confidentiality is striving to be ethical.....( Goodson (ed), 1991: 218)

The period of South African history that this research project investigates was a time of conflict and extreme suffering. Most of the activists interviewed had experienced arrests, interrogation, detention without trial, banning and exile which caused great personal trauma. Coastal (Kamba) Govender, an important activist of the period declined to be interviewed because he thought the experience would be too traumatic. I therefore approached the prospective interviewees with great sensitivity taking cognizance of their past experience.

Bobby Marie, before his interview, expressed reluctance to speak of traumatic events related to his banning and detentions. I assured him that the period covered would focus on the early seventies primarily and he only needed to speak of that which he was comfortable about. Harold Dixon and Jane Lawrence both spoke extensively of their periods of detention quite freely.

All respondents were given the assurance of confidentiality in aspects they divulged that they did not want to be shared with others. However, the nature of the research is such

that while it focuses on the educational processes used to raise consciousness, it also entails checking and cross checking details of historical significance through the memories of those being interviewed. All interviewees in the particular group (either from Cape Town or Durban) were told who the other interviewees were and at times it was necessary to verify information by revealing what was said. In such instances permission was first obtained. In all instances permission has been given to use the actual names of individuals. Since this document is historical in nature, no names of places or people spoken of have been altered.

Where individuals expressed opinions about people not in the research that was not verified by other participants, such information has been left out.

An attempt has been made to verify all data collected. Where written sources were available they were used to corroborate the stories that are told. An example of this is Jaya Josie's reference to the SASO conference at Alan Taylor Residence which is also described by Barney Pityana in the August 1971 SASO Newsletter. Jaya says:

*Then I think Reshi had the car so we went down to the SASO office and said we've got this play we've been doing and we'd like to put it up and then we met Keith Mokoapa. He was SRC president and he said, 'Oh it'll be wonderful. We're going to be having the SASO conference.' (I think it was '71 at this time.) 'and its ok after that and you guys will be welcome to come to the SASO conference.' So we went to the SASO conference. It was held in Wentworth. I think Reshi and I must have gone to the SASO conference. That was my first experience of a student being part of a student group as such. That's when Temba Sono was elected as president of SASO. Solitaire! Solidarity! blah blah.. he had a whole thing like that and we thought what a great philosopher, an ideal guy.*

Barney Pityana reporting on the second student council in 1971 writes:

....the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual conference [was] held at Alan Taylor residence, Durban in July... venue had to be altered from Fort Hare.  
....Delegates had the pleasure of attending the opening night of the TECON drama festival....  
....The following were elected to the executive Committee: President T. Sono (UNIN).....(Pityana, 1971: 3-4)

### **3.2.7 Supporting Evidence**

Alice Kessler Harris suggests that 'oral data does not exonerate the historian from searching for and using written documents exhaustively'(Grele with Terkel, Vansina , Tedlock, Benison & Kessler, 1991: 5).Extensive research into the period through SASO

Newsletters, a matriculation year creative writing book of Bobby Marie (see Appendix 2 ), photographs relevant to the research period (see Appendix 4, Appendix 5,), newspaper articles of the relevant period, conference reports of UCM, SASO, BPC, Institute of Race Relations, the Christian Institute, SPROCAS and Pro-Veritate publications and numerous history books, particularly all the publications of *Black Review* and numerous booklets and pamphlets from the period has been conducted.

Excerpts from *The Sentinel* (see Appendix 12 ) publication provide insight into the activities of the people in Merebank in the early 1970s. *The Sentinel* was a quarterly publication set up by the student activists in Merebank in the period being studied. This publication was referred to by participants in this study.

### **3.2.8 Analysis of data**

This research aims to present oral histories of individuals from the two communities at a particular moment in time and to assess how that moment impacted on their lives. While the researcher recognises how her own background impacts on the interpretation of the data, 'The researcher's intent... is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world.' (Creswell, 2003: 9)

The stories are presented verbatim with questions left out so that each story flows without any interruptions. Minor adjustments have been made to ensure that the sentence construction makes sense. Parts of the stories not relevant to the research question have been kept intact as they reflect the stories the individuals wanted to tell.

Harold Dixon goes into detail about his detention and interrogation. This could be perceived as irrelevant to the research questions but in my opinion impacted on his personal development and consciousness and has therefore been included. Jane Lawrence talks about her detention as a consequence of her involvement and views it as important for the way her choices impacted on her life.

In the presentation of the data in Chapter Six, only two stories have been selected for inclusion. I selected Roy Chetty from the Durban group as I believe that his story is clear and easy for anybody to understand without the need for explanatory notes. In addition, he serves as a link between the ASH (Association for Self Help) group and the other groupings in Merebank during this period. Furthermore, he provides a link to the Cape Town group. I have selected Algonda Perez from the Cape Town group as I believe she provides a contrast to Roy's story in terms of gender, class, race and political choices. She is also representative of activists whose parents encouraged anti-government sentiments in their children. Roy grew up in an a-political family. The remaining stories are included as appendices to this document.

Each story is prefaced by a brief family background to provide a context and understanding of the factors that helped shape the individuals. It has sometimes been necessary to write short introductory lines to aid the reader so that the story flows. Such writing is italicised. In cases where the stories are too fragmented or long, I have written summaries aided by the text from the interview. Such interpretations are italicised. Below is an example of this process:

Extract from Jaya Josie's interview:

*You know I think we were fortunate when I was growing up. Merebank was always a community. It was a very mixed community. People in Wentworth and Merebank lived in one community. There was no 2 townships. So you will find that I've got cousins who are classified coloured living in Wentworth. You know, Auntie Connie's children... and then others classified Indian are living in Merebank. So at some point this whole community like Auntie Connie is coloured but she married my uncle, my mother's cousin and so there was a lot of that mixing and that's common in Merebank. So people feel we now go and visit and they're called Zanzibari's or coloured you know because they were living in Merebank and their fathers were Indian and so on. So Merebank had and it was very mixed and there were lots of Africans.*

This is what I wrote as a summary in the section on Jaya's family background:

*Jaya remembers Merebank as being a very mixed community. People in Wentworth and Merebank lived in one community. There were no 2 townships. He has cousins who were classified 'coloured' living in Wentworth, and then others classified 'Indian' lived in Merebank.*

In Chapter Six all writing that is **not** spoken by the participants is italicised whereas in the rest of this document all quotations from the participants are italicised. The italics

(other than in Chapter Six) help to differentiate quotations from participants and quotations from other sources. In Chapter Six the italicised writing distinguishes my words and interpretations from that of the speakers. Where there are quotations from secondary sources (see explanation below), the quotations are boxed so as to differentiate them from primary sources.

All interviewees were first language English speakers. In a few instances interviewees used Afrikaans words to emphasise a point they made. In cases where Afrikaans words are used by respondents interpretative footnotes are used to aid the reader.

Data was coded for similarities and differences. The research questions guided the selection of data presented in the Findings and the Data Analysis. I firstly explored the individual childhood consciousness and selected the processes of learning individuals referred to. I then explored how the processes of learning related to changes in consciousness. Finally, I linked that changed consciousness to their understanding of their identities at present. Broad categories for encoding were: experiences in childhood consciousness and schooling; the role of reading as a process of learning; alternative education initiatives; adult influences on identity development; the role of the progressive Christian Church and youth groups in the various stages of the development of individual consciousness, the role of Black Consciousness in the development of identity and the impact of a social justice consciousness on the lives of the respondents.

I did not include data that tended to over-emphasise a point already made, or which did not relate in some way to the research question, or which was derogatory to individuals who did not have an opportunity to respond.

Lee & Fielding (in Hardy & Bryman (eds) 2004: 539) agree that code-and-retrieve strategies work well for data to be compared and contrasted across cases that primarily involve interviews.

Stories are presented in three sections viz.: The Early Years, Raising Political Consciousness and Later Lives. The stories from Durban and Cape Town are clustered separately.

Hardiman & Jackson's Social Identity Development Model provides a framework for a detailed analysis of the data.

The two geographical areas of Cape Town and Durban provide the opportunity for a comparative analysis of similar groups in divergent settings. Gender considerations are also developed throughout the process of analysis.

### **3.2.9 Consideration with regard to the reliability of data**

Due to my relative inexperience in the process of data collection, I made some fundamental errors that need to be explained and interrogated. The first mistake was the joint interview with Maria Engel and Terry Grove. The data collected from this interview is very valuable but cannot be used as a primary source because the process of the interview was different to the individual interviews that relied solely on their own memories. Maria and Terry assisted one another with memory recall and therefore I will use their data only as a secondary source of information.

The second difficulty is with the email submissions. This was explained in the questionnaire section. While the data from these submissions is invaluable, they will also be used as secondary submissions as those respondents had the benefit of being able to give considered responses to questions and were not placed on the spot as other interviewees. The following diagram shows the status of data from various sources in this study:

**Secondary Source:** Joint Interview Between Maria Engel and Terry Grove (Cape Town Group)



**Primary Sources: Interviews conducted individually:**

Roy Chetty	}	<b>Durban Group</b>
Bobby Marie		
Reshi Singh		
Betty Leslie		
Jaya Josie		
Vivienne Taylor		
Harold Dixon	}	<b>Cape Town Group</b>
Jane Lawrence		
Algonda Perez		

**Secondary Sources:** Photographs, Bobby's creative writing books,



**Secondary Source:** Supporting Literature



**Secondary Sources:** Email Submissions

Daya (Joe) Pillay	}	<b>Durban Group</b>
Steven David		
Alan Liebenberg	}	<b>Cape Town Group</b>

## Chapter 4

### Findings

This chapter highlights the patterns that the life stories show. It is divided into two sections. The first section reflects on the processes of learning and the second section indicates the implications of a social justice consciousness on the lives of the respondents.

The analyses are preceded by a chronology of events that serves to assist the reader in understanding the unfolding stories in a more structured way. The chronology was developed from the stories as they were told and may therefore not necessarily be entirely accurate. Times have been approximated. Where it was possible, historical documents were sourced.

**Table 4 Rough chronology of events from 1967 - 1975**

<b>Year</b>	<b><u>Events as they occurred in Cape Town</u></b>	<b>Year</b>	<b><u>Events as they occurred in Durban</u></b>
		<b>1967</b>	Merewent Youth Council Jaya's involvement in University Christian Movement Christian involvement in Sunday School and youth groups in various churches
<b>1969</b>	Silverbridge Youth Club formed - spearheaded by Mr. John Perez but run by the youth from Silvertown at the Bridgetown Community Hall.  Death of Imam Haroon  The Labour Party wins Coloured Persons Representative Council elections under the slogan 'A vote for labour is a vote against apartheid'.	<b>1969</b>	Beginning of ecumenical youth group in Presbyterian Church  Tony sent to America by Presbyterian Church  Presbyterian Church Youth group from Cape Town visits Durban
<b>1970</b>	Jane sent to America for training by Methodist Church.	<b>1970</b>	Formation of Community of St. Steven  Merebank Ratepayers Association take City Council to court over selling prices of houses.

			Vivienne, Vis, Satish, Krish and Kamba complete matric
<b>1971</b>	Father Wrangmore fasts on Signal Hill	<b>1971</b>	<p>Organisation of bread boycott</p> <p>Clemency for political prisoners Campaign</p> <p>Study group in basement of Presbyterian Church</p> <p>Coffee Bar and increased interaction with Wentworth youth</p> <p>Resuscitation of NIC in Durban</p> <p>Student groups get involved in MRA activities.</p> <p>Passion Play and other drama productions</p> <p>Trip to Drakensberg – start of police surveillance</p> <p>Bobby, Roy, Steven and others complete matric and group embarks on a trip to Cape Town</p> <p>Vivienne attends UDW</p>
<b>1972</b>	<p>Students at University of Cape Town embark on protest action</p> <p>Members join Young Christian Workers and Young Christian Students</p> <p>Weekly Saturday meetings arranged with Father Clive McBride begin and continue into 1973.</p>	<b>1972</b>	<p>Bobby, Roy and Myron start at University of Durban Westville</p> <p>'Black' universities (including UDW) on strike</p> <p>Formation of Black Action Group</p> <p>NIC conference and collaboration debate</p> <p>Contact with SASO, TECON and attendance at conferences and seminars</p> <p>Meetings at Alan Taylor Residence with Black Consciousness leaders</p> <p>Sentinel Newspaper is launched in Vis Pillay's garage.</p> <p>Merewent BPC branch formed. (includes students from Alan Taylor Residence as members)</p> <p>Jaya goes to America on behalf of SASO</p> <p>Expulsion from Presbyterian Church premises</p>

			Literacy training in the Paulo Freire method
<b>1973</b>	<p>UWC students on strike</p> <p>Contact is made with SASO</p> <p>UWC student base at the Perez residence</p> <p>Protest action in support of UWC students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Door to door petition campaign</li> <li>▪ Mass meetings at Athlone Stadium and Turfhall Sports Ground</li> <li>▪ Pamphleteering</li> </ul> <p>Carmel attends sensitivity training run by the Christian Institute at Stellenbosch</p> <p>Leadership Training at Christian Leadership Centre in Kensington – Group 1</p> <p>Literacy training in the Paulo Freire method from Johnny Issel</p> <p>Formation of SABSA</p> <p>Terry is detained by the security police</p> <p>Henry Isaacs and Johnny Issel (leaders at UWC) are banned</p> <p>Group visits Durban and meets with the Durban group in Merebank</p> <p>Group meets Steve Biko at King Williams Town.</p>	<b>1973</b>	<p>Commune at Sambulphur Road</p> <p>Formation of ASH</p> <p>Set up of Creative Art Society</p> <p>Durban Workers Strike - Saths Cooper &amp; TECON group arrested and charged with racial hostility.</p> <p>Sharpeville Day Memorial in Durban</p> <p>Public meeting on non-racial sports organised by Sentinel.</p> <p>Jaya meets the Cape Town group Jaya arrested in Port Elizabeth</p> <p>Jaya Josie is banned and restricted to Durban.</p> <p>Daya makes contact with IUEF in Geneva on behalf of SASO and BPC</p> <p>Daya gets some training in underground work from the ANC in London</p> <p>Cape Town group visits Durban</p>
<b>1974</b>	<p>Leadership Training at Christian Leadership Centre in Kensington – group 2</p> <p>Algonda attends UCT</p> <p>Ongoing discussions and exchanges with Durban group.</p> <p>Protest Action against erecting maisonettes in backyards of Bonteheuwel homes.</p> <p>Demonstration at OK bazaars objecting to 'coloured' only admissions in its restaurant.</p>	<b>1974</b>	<p>Reshi and Roy Meet SASO exiles in Botswana</p> <p>Pro-FRELIMO rally at Curries Fountain in Durban</p> <p>Bus boycott campaign</p> <p>Formation of Bus Passengers Association</p>

	Arrests following pro-FRELIMO rally in Durban. Harold and other SASO members are arrested.		
	Algonda and Carmel leave Cape Town. They marry activists from Durban.		
<b>1975</b>	Continued detention of SASO/BPC activists Pro-FRELIMO trial commences	<b>1975</b>	Roy, Carmel, Jaya and Algonda leave South Africa and become refugees in Botswana. Pro-FRELIMO trial commences

#### **4.1 The processes of learning that emerged as young activists in the early 1970s sought to challenge and extricate themselves from their oppressive conditions.**

In order to answer the first question being posed in this study, I look at the learning processes and relate this to the development of consciousness that enabled individuals to extricate themselves from an oppressive consciousness inherent in their repressive conditions.

Jarvis regards learning as ‘the process through which human beings develop within their growing and then ageing bodies and continue to do so until they die.’(Jarvis, 2000: 11) It is, he says a ‘complex process’ (op.cit.:13). The kind of learning that this study focuses on is reflective learning which Jarvis says is ‘a way of life’(op. cit.: 25) and can lead to ‘conformity or change’ (op. cit.: 14). For the activists in this study the processes of learning that they went through resulted in change from an oppressive consciousness to a liberated consciousness. In the following sections I look closely at those processes of learning and the development of consciousness.

##### **4.1.1 Childhood consciousness**

Most respondents admitted a naivety in their early childhood as they were unaware of their class or race position in the world. Many of them grew up in areas that were racially mixed and played with children of different racial groups. A level of consciousness of race and class emerged only when they met people outside their familial framework of

reference. Roy Chetty realised his deprived status when he met relatives who lived in better conditions:

*I think I've always known that we were poor. ... and my stay in Mt. Edgecombe made me realise quite early on that those of us in Mt Edgecombe even though we lived reasonably comfortable lives that we were people who were not well off. Those who were outside of the Mt Edgecombe complex saw those of who were of Mt Edgecombe as those who were of the labouring classes -what was stupidly called farm areas . ... and when one visited other places one began to see quite early the disparity in life style. You could see the difference in getting up in the morning, brushing your teeth with charcoal from a communal tap - brushing your teeth with toothpaste in a bathroom in places like Westville or Mayville. Some of the differences when you saw in places like newly built Chatsworth you envied that because it had an internal flush toilet. In Mt. Edgecombe you had to go to a communal toilet about 100m away from where you stayed. So, those were some of the distinctions one knew. One didn't dwell on that because all of us lived the same way so in that sense the entire population of the barracks was at a particular class. ... We didn't look down on each other and there was a sense of community and some belonging. That is just something one noticed when one was out of Mt Edgecombe.*

Similarly Reshi Singh noticed differences in living conditions between himself and 'white' people:

*I used to help my auntie and uncle who were hawking - selling fruit and vegetables in the van and we used to go into the white areas to sell because the white people were the customers. That's when we sort of see the difference. You know the tarred road, the beautiful gardens, well kept homes, cars in the driveway, parks... and I think it undoubtedly raised questions as to how come we're battling in terms of our area not having these things and yet they are benefiting from having these kind of things. And I think these little things start sparking discussions, started raising consciousness not that we were very bright politicians at that stage.*

In Durban friendships across racial groups continued. The boys in particular played soccer together but began to playfully joust about racial categorisation. Bobby says he was called 'curry guts' and he called 'coloured' boys 'mixed brains'. This indicates a passive acceptance of racial categorisation. The name calling indicates an understanding of racial stereotypes.

Roy reported that in his early childhood he was oblivious of racial stereotypes and name calling until he was with a friend walking through the barracks where they lived and a 'white' girl of about their age called them 'coolies'. He didn't understand the reference then but his friend clearly did as he smacked the girl and they ran away. This kind of resistance was rare as most of them had little contact in early childhood with 'white' people and did not quite understand 'whites' as people in preferential positions.

Don Foster who researched the development of racial orientation in children, writes as follows:

Since the earliest research in the United State (Clark and Clark 1939; Horowitz 1939) it has been recognized that children become aware of racial categories at a very early age. This finding has been supported by a good deal of subsequent research (Goodman 1964; Porter 1971; Vaughan 1964) and although frequently neither parents (Goodman 1964) nor teachers (Davey 1983) believe this to be the case, it is now well established that by age three, many children have acquired the rudiments of racial awareness. This rudimentary consciousness develops particularly rapidly between the ages three and four and is firmly established by six, the usual school going age (Katz 1976) (Foster in Burman & Reynolds (eds), 1986: 159)

Research in South Africa supports the findings reported above (Foster in Burman & Reynolds (eds), 1986: 164).

Bobby reported that parents had nothing to do with them when they were growing up and they were largely left to do as they pleased. Bobby came from a caring family evident from his '*clean feet*' and '*clothes that were never patched*'. Yet, he remembered that families did not worry about how they filled their days. Both Reshi and Jaya tell of stealing fruit and generally being mischievous.

The many antics of the boy children appeared unnoticed by parents. None of the female respondents reported such behaviour. This male socialisation is in keeping with what Adams and Coltrane write:

...we expect and encourage boys to pursue our cultural ideals of masculinity. From early in their youth, we teach them (through for instance, toys and sports) to symbolically correlate competition, violence power, and domination with masculinity (Adams & Coltrane in Kimmel, Hearn & Connell, 2005: 237).

It is clear from all the accounts from the participants in the Cape that the period of their childhood was a period of enormous social change. While they intermixed racially at school, 'African' children and neighbours were forcefully removed to other schools and townships while they were at primary school. Harold's family supported their neighbours by providing water when water cut-offs were used as a means of forcing the evacuation of 'African' families. From a young age many of the respondents from the Cape were conscious of a form of resistance to the status quo. Jane's family was fearful of resistance.

When respondents in this study from the Durban area entered school, they attended schools that were exclusively for their own racial group. They were therefore separated from playmates from other racial groups when they entered school.

Jane reported a blissful upbringing in District Six. Jane's idyllic childhood memories are contradicted by what Terry says about her father's views. Terry does not remember District Six but believes her father did not regard District Six as a fitting place to bring up children as it was developing into a slum. Richard Rive throws some light on these opposing memories. He writes:

Of course we all knew it was a slum. None of us who grew up there will deny that. It was a ripe, raw and rotten slum.....

.... Today time has sufficiently romanticised and mythologized the District's past. It is now a mark of social prestige to have 'come out of that' ..... (Rive in Jeppie & Soudien (eds.), 1990: 111)

Jane passively accepted the social conditions she was born into while Terry's father, in spite of a political consciousness, moved into a racially segregated area for strategic reasons. While Terry believes her family actively resisted oppression, that act of moving into a 'coloured' township, indicates a level of acceptance of the status quo at that time. The ambivalence is indicative of the difficult political climate at the time.

#### **4.1.2 Socialisation, Schooling and the development of rebelliousness**

The complexities of the South African schooling system have been previously acknowledged in this document. This study provides further evidence of that complexity. Bobby Marie highlights the strangeness of an identity that recognised both his position of privilege and deprivation at school. His privileged status he defined by his clean feet and his deprivation by his bare feet:

*...teachers used to insult kids who came without shoes for one and who had dirty feet. Now I had clean feet. So among the bare feet I was always better off and the teachers always pointed to that.*

Nasson (Nasson in Burman & Reynolds (eds), 1986: 95) explains the complex world of childhood socialisation in apartheid South Africa. He maintains that fundamental to understanding the child is appreciating the child's world and his/her exposure to the

teaching and early learning ‘about human polarisation, pain, injury, power and powerlessness’. Nasson maintains:

... the most radical differences in children’s learning experiences are tied as closely to social class as they are to race (ibid.).

The impact of both class and racial categorisation was unavoidable in apartheid South Africa. That fact is attested to in the oral stories in this study and is supported by

Nasson. He writes:

Schooling becomes a disinheritance of the instinctive social communication of early childhood. Since education is a crucial layer of experience for the majority of children, its racial and class categories impose themselves to leave an early, formative imprint. Being moulded as an Afrikaner, African, coloured or Indian pupil is to live within barriers of thought and experience (Nasson in Burman & Reynolds (eds), 1986: 106 – 107).

Some of the Cape Town respondents reported of how parents tried to instil in them the oneness of human beings but at school that identity was undermined by teachers and fellow classmates alike. Terry Grove’s remembrance is significant:

*I found school difficult because it was ... I was getting a different education at home and what I was being taught at school you know my father would debunk it - the rubbish that they taught us at school - especially the history...*

It has been previously shown in this study that the apartheid schooling system was designed to inculcate in learners of the oppressed an inferior identity that acknowledged the position of ‘white’ power. Bobby Marie explains how they viewed ‘white’ children when they were young:

*When the white children used to come with the missionaries about a dozen of us would run around them and want to play with them because they were different and they were very unique.*

In the Cape the meanings given to physical traits by an oppressive racial consciousness was very prevalent. Algonda Perez describes the import of hair texture and skin colour in the community she grew up in:

*... the comments always when Maria and I walked with mummy ‘Oh you have such lovely fair daughters’ and mummy used to get cross about this but it was a thing in the community .... Maria was ‘Oh your daughter has such beautiful hair’....: All the attempts from the age of 12 to this hair... went to Aunt Margaret and Aunt Margaret applied straighteners to make your hair straight....*

Betty Leslie from Durban experienced the trauma of being the dark one in the family. She experienced discrimination at school and from relatives:

*As a dark skinned coloured you are..... I found I was even more disadvantaged. In a class we were forgotten by a teacher - that type of thing. In the family some members would not pay attention to you or make a fuss about you. My mother was so called coloured and my father was Basotho and we remember very clearly that we used to go and visit my mother's side of the family. At some stage my mother's family actually ostracised her because they felt she was taking the family backwards to quote them, instead of lightening the genes. And I particularly was the darkest in the family so we'd also have our sibling fights and I'd be called 'black cat peanut butter'.*

It was at high school that many of the activists in this study first challenged their oppressive realities. This is evidenced in the stories from the Durban respondents. They engaged in acts of rebellion firstly in small ways like wearing long hair and jewellery. While most of the school boys expressed their individualism through wearing grey longs cut in the fashionable bell-bottom style, Kamba Govender was more daring and is fondly remembered by schoolmates for his long hair and purple suede shoes. Roy Chetty reminisces:

*If one remembers that those were the times of the Beatles and John Lennon and so on and all of us sported long hair, bell bottom clothes, funky t-shirts and that kind of thing. We were all influenced by the films, the media, Woodstock... 'Soul to Soul' the movie so we were... I think all of us built into that...*

Bobby adds:

*It was Woodstock time and we were growing our hair, and things like this.... and the anti establishment ideas, personally were very interesting and I wasn't getting that from the church, you know like my attitude in school was just to rebel and it was a connected rebellion, it was like this, .... You'd be angry if you were forced to cut your hair. And that was a form of politicization ....*

Bobby Marie's creative writing book provides some insight into that rebellious tendency. He used the creative writing exercises to voice his defiance. An essay titled *To obey or not obey* (See Appendix 2) is indicative of their anti-establishment pose. He used a lesson he learnt from his learners in his Sunday School class to question parents' assumptions and concluded: 'I believe that if I am not true to myself I will not be able to be true to anybody else'. The following extract from our interview (taped while we viewed his creative writing book) provides insight into his insubordination at school. The bracketed text indicates that the person is reading the diary.

**Bobby Marie:** .....this was 71 and this was my school diary, it probably says a little bit about my political life....

**Carmel Chetty:** (War, war, war) Have you noticed that you actually write in the small i which is very American today, ... children do that a lot today...

**Bobby Marie:** *No our school... .. as you can see, I sat right in the front with my teacher, I actually got involved, she sent me to the office for something, you see she wrote that...*

**Carmel Chetty:** *(3 articles)*

**Bobby Marie:** *You see... Obviously I wasn't writing them... I was then writing in reply....*

**Carmel Chetty:** *(Stored in the departments of my mind. Ha, ha.....)*

**Bobby Marie:** *It's hard to say when they would come out. So she didn't see it as, I was having a great time then... I was becoming very...*

*.....You see the influence of the BC, we were probably writing poetry then...*

**Carmel Chetty:** *(black against white, white against black...)*

**Bobby Marie:** *So ya, You see I wrote this in pencil .....*

**Carmel Chetty:** *Why?*

**Bobby Marie:** *You see, that got me into trouble....*

**Carmel Chetty:** *(The pupil has failed to submit his free writing more than once. He refuses to date his work and makes impertinent comments on the book. To be reported to Mr Khan, deputy vice principal. )*

**Bobby Marie:** *Now, I think I got a hiding for that. Then I wrote, 'The merits of free writing' in reply to her.*

Bobby's poem titled *i am dead* dated 5<sup>th</sup> March 1971, the year in which he wrote the matriculation examination, portrays a burning desire to rebel. It is written in lower case letters and reads as follows:

lord i am dead  
whose fault is it?  
you gave me society, parents, relations and friends  
they gave me laws, a church and a country to defend  
i am obedient, i listen i conform  
but now lord i find i am dead  
whose fault is it

i am no more a rebel  
i've stopped being radical  
the laws of my country determines my life  
i no more stand to question  
my parents i obey  
but still lord I feel i am dead  
whose fault is it

VOICE: *If thou desireth life  
Start rebelling stop conforming*

is that really you lord?

is it really you lord?  
lord i love you. i am alive! alive! alive!  
three cheers to you lord.

It reflects a confused, questioning mind seeking permission from his faith to rebel.

Nasson (Nasson in Burman & Reynolds (eds), 1986: 94) refers to teenage rebelliousness as 'adolescent contempt for overbearing adult authority' and labels it as the 'mini politics of educational rebellion'. The early rebelliousness of the youth was an important contestation against the authoritarian voice of educators and laid the foundation for later rebellion against the state.

Jane refers to the omnipotence of truth as recognised by the education system:

*I've come out of the system schooling where there was only one truth and that one truth was the authoritative truth of the teacher.*

Youngsters questioned the authenticity of the truth espoused by teachers and parents alike. Teachers were regarded with suspicion by their students. Algonda Perez attended Livingstone High School in the Cape. The school provided an environment that challenged the political status quo. However, Algonda is critical of teachers who were hostile to Black Consciousness. She reports:

*.... at that time [a teacher] was so derogatory about Black Consciousness that I ... because he said terrible things about Black Consciousness – 'What do you people know? You are 17 years old. What do you think you are you going to teach us?' .... and that ... put me off because he .... and yet he could have, if his attitude had been a bit different about bringing us in rather than pushing us out - there could have been a very different outcome at that time....*

Schools in Durban were antagonistic to the development of political thought. An exception to this at Merebank High was the history teacher who was remembered by Jaya Josie and Bobby Marie for having set up a Gandhi library. Roy Chetty explains some of the difficulties they had at school and the constraints under which they conducted their activities:

*Certainly our conscious life time was spent rebelling against anything that the apartheid regime had come through. Even its agents through school inspectors who would come and make speeches at school would get heckled.... So you had very few teachers who would speak out against apartheid. A lot of them were people who acquiesced with the whole thing and others who promoted them...*

Schools were places where the Department of Education sought to ensure total control. Teachers were fearful of making any kind of political input and deliberately maintained a strictly non-political profile. Yet, at Merebank High School Bobby Marie was not betrayed by his teachers who he testified, knew he had stolen the South African flag:

*... ..I had stolen a flag off a wall and it had .... and three teachers approached me. All of them had seen me do it. The one just smiled at me and moved on. The other just said 'Do you know the story of the three monkeys?' I didn't know it then and he just said, 'Find out about it' but he didn't see anything and ... all the teachers knew that I did it. The principal would have got reports that I did it and the police came and interviewed people but nobody in the school told them I did it...*

Glaser (Glaser, 1998: 302 – 303) refers to Nozipho Diseko's study to analyse the ambiguous political climate at South African schools in the late sixties and early seventies as follows:

Nozipho Diseko in her study of SASM<sup>21</sup> is dismissive of Harold Wolpe's suggestion that the high school environment provided a partially protected 'space' in which ideological opposition to the apartheid system could take hold. She points out correctly, that the Department of Bantu Education was highly vigilant in keeping politics out of schools. Nevertheless, Diseko under-estimates the more subtle forms of political space which schools offered. There were opportunities for discussion and debate, even if informal. High schools were also important in bringing together literate, inquisitive youths with similar social backgrounds and grievances. The state run schools were not total institutions. Inspectors, however pervasive, could not be everywhere at once. Some teachers adopted cautiously critical approaches and students themselves could not be prevented from discussing what they read in books and newspapers.

The activists in Merebank did more than just challenge educators they considered to be quislings, they actively involved themselves in community campaigns. The bread boycott was conducted while they were at school. Roy Chetty explains:

*During this time also the bread prices went up. And we were still at school. And we then mobilized in the school with the students not to buy bread - make roti - and so provide an alternative. We used the coffee bar where, overnight, we made handwritten, crayon written posters, mini posters to put into students' desks that morning. And, because we were prefects in the school we had the run of the school in the morning. We were in charge of the classes and so on, so we could go to each class and put them in. So little things like that just added to the campaign. It wasn't a very big campaign.*

Schools were important places for building networks and exploring ideas. Nasson (Nasson in Burman & Reynolds (eds), 1986: 93) recognises the importance of the school as a space for discussion and consolidation of ideas:

In one important sense, the common adolescent culture of the classroom is the pupils' own. It consolidates peer comradeship and shared moral and cultural meanings which serve their interests; their desks are their own, their satisfactions and customary practices are their own.

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<sup>21</sup> SASM – South African Student Movement

This reality is borne out by the stories in this study. Camaraderie that developed between the learners in the classroom was extended to the arena outside of the school.

#### **4.1.3 The role of Reading**

All the respondents in this study talk about reading as an important part of their growing up. None of the respondents relate their love of reading to experiences at school but rather to a home environment that encouraged reading or a personal interest for reading that developed separately to the school system in cases where parents were illiterate or semi-literate. A love for reading developed in their childhoods and nurtured in them a need to understand the world around them. Algonda Perez refers to the natural part reading played in her life:

*...You know daddy used to come home and read the newspaper with his feet on the table reading the newspaper in Bridgetown in particular... and me sitting next to him and reading there next to him also. ...*

Though South African newspapers of the time were very controlled and careful about the way they reported the news, news could be gleaned from newspapers like *The Rand Daily Mail*, *The Post*, *The World* and *The Leader* (a local Durban newspaper). Glaser (Glaser, 1998: 304) explains:

*...students were exposed to newspapers, particularly *The World* and *Post*, with politicising local and foreign news. Civil rights struggles and ghetto riots in the United States and anti-colonial struggles in Africa received regular news coverage. The newspapers even ran some penetrative local news and commentary which slipped through the censorship net. Informally and privately, then, many students discussed these issues.*

Besides reading newspapers, respondents refer to reading in general. Vivienne Taylor explains:

*I had grown up reading the classics and in our home we had.... we didn't have fairy tales and stuff... books that typically children would read. We had books on philosophy, ...and all these type of things and when other young girls were reading fairy stories or youth stories I was reading those books or reading Charles Dickens or the Brontes or whatever because those are the books we found and so our English was really very different from the typical young person's English and pedantic at times and that sense set us apart from our contemporaries....*

Jane Lawrence, an enthusiastic reader, found herself completely encapsulated by the range of literature available in the USA during her stint there. She says:

*I read a great deal over there and oh I read all those books oh Malcolm X's book... Is it Alison's book 'The invisible man' 'Call me by name'. I went to a lot of black theatre but I've never ever done in South Africa. . I've never had access to books because we never had these books. Paulo Freire's book also 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' ....*

*...there were so many books and I just kept reading all these things ...*

Through reading, individuals were exposed to revolutionary ideas. Discussion groups were held and literature was passed around so that everyone in the group read common materials. Bobby remembers:

*....the church literature was very interesting..... in groups of the commune literature.... Roy was reading a book call the War of the Flea. ... I remember borrowing it from him.' The war of the flea' was a study by the US army on guerrilla warfare in Vietnam and it was doing the rounds. So the idea of guerrilla warfare was read and it was a time of different and growing movements emerging from the 60's.*

Sometimes what was read was beyond the comprehension of the individuals but that realisation only emerged in hindsight. Terry Grove's opinion is pertinent:

*...I think sometimes when we were too young to actually handle those things and understand some of the things if I think back you know you couldn't possibly have internalised. Some of the things that I read you know that I'm rereading now I only now really understand or it's taken me a while you know. So we had all this knowledge we were sort of - we were like sponges. I think sometimes we were parroting things that we didn't understand but I think we were fortunate in a lot of instances in that we had good guidance.*

Literature sometimes brought respondents into conflict with their teachers who did not accept alternative literary practices. Terry's spat with her teacher over Oswald Mtshali's poem (see Appendix 11) serves to show how the narrow confines of the Eurocentric mind of the educators of the time caused clashes in the classroom:

*I think something that happened at school now.... You remember Oswald Mtshali also brought out the book 'Songs of the Cowhide Drum' ... and there's the 'Pigeons at the Oppenheimer Park' and I recited this poem at school and I was accused by my English teacher- she said this isn't a poem and that I wrote it myself just to be... difficult because there's never been poetry like that. Poetry is you know the normal Robert Frost and other English poets that we were taught at school. So for me I think Oswald Mtshali 's book was also for me affirmative in terms of my thinking and I didn't dare actually take my father's<sup>22</sup> stuff to school (laughter)... that she could think that I wrote this you know.... That I'm that smart - sorry Oswald Mtshali.*

<sup>22</sup> Terry's father is the writer/poet James Mathews.

In South Africa, any materials considered to be subversive by the state were banned. In spite of this, individuals found ways of accessing reading materials and audio tapes. Jaya Josie outlines how Bobby's aunt provided them with literature:

*Bobby's aunt for example Poomoney, she was enormously influential. Bobby and I used to sit with her. She gave us these books on Marxism. She didn't like the way we were going with Black Consciousness so we'd sit with her and have these long debates with her. She don't talk about religion and oh and she'd give us these books about Lenin and Bobby used to hide it in the bathroom there....*

The apartheid state could not keep tabs on all literary material that came into the country and much slipped through. Jaya Josie explains:

*In Victoria Street there was this guy. I remember buying the story of Mao and Marx and things like this and we had it at home. You could actually read the Penguin stories... but Black Consciousness was still the basis for us.*

There was often desperation amongst activists for radical reading materials but even when they were available in bookshops, they could not afford to buy such material. They found other means. Jaya Josie describes their actions:

*... we used to steal books, did they tell you how we used to steal books?... at the William Bookshop, at the Methodist Bookshop..... Yes, yes, we used to take the books and put it away and the guys... .. and the black guys would see us, ... Yes some radical books, and in those days,... in religious bookshops cause you couldn't get them elsewhere, ...*

#### **4.1.4 Further education initiatives**

It was through their personal experiences of oppression and the recognition that they needed to challenge that oppressive consciousness that individuals were drawn together and formed cohesive youth groups. Bobby describes their consciousness:

*We begin from the time of youth club. We been having this sense that whites were treating us differently and we wanted to be equal. But now - I'm not sure whether that politicisation came from there or whether it came direct from my aunt you know - because a lot of.... as a group of people we met, but we met only because, we're already thinking politically.....*

Schools provided a platform where they met and conspired to rebel but at a limited level. It was rather outside of the schools in their youth forums that greater self development occurred. As their consciousness matured they started to challenge the status quo. They questioned what was considered the norm. Reshi Singh explains:

*A lot of this also happened because of our involvement in the church youth programmes where we were trying to look beyond just trying to be youngsters in the community enjoying life. It was part of*

*the whole growth but also becoming consciously aware of us being in an Indian township wondering why there's a coloured township on the other side, an African township on the other side....*

In the Cape, the youth congregated at Reverend Clive McBride's house. In the discussions, questions about oppression and black consciousness were raised. Harold Dixon explains:

*Clive McBride he sort set us got us off - took us to the struggle - where should we justify our struggle - where should the church be in the struggle for liberation and the upliftment of the black people in South Africa.. That's when he got us focussed and we could get a lot closer to the work and to the struggle ... he could get us sort of focussing and get us emotionally charged up about us seeing what was happening around us...*

In Durban the Community of St. Steven initiative was set up by the youth with the acquiescence and assistance of the Presbyterian Church. Bobby describes what he remembers of its genesis:

*...here was the Community of St. Steven which was a mix of church linked ideas which never talked about God in the religious sense but in a secular or an ecumenical sense but their models were Christian models. Christian laid groups in the States and in South Africa.....*

Roy Chetty comments on the choice of name:

*St. Steven as I understood was supposed to have been a martyr who was stoned to death for his political beliefs or his beliefs and he was stoned to death and so the group which appeared to outsiders to be a Christian group took on that name. We were also linked to the church in the sense that we had a base provided for by the church in which one could meet, talk, ....*

It was in those youth forums that ideas were debated and study groups were formed. Radical ideas from the progressive church movement as well as ideas from the international arena permeated into the discussions in the groups and crystallised in greater community involvement and the search for alternative education initiatives. As a consequence of that search, the youth in the Cape attended leadership training courses organised by the church and the Durban group organised their own training.

Through their active involvement, the people in this study rejected the constraints of their formal schooling and developed processes of learning that liberated them from the oppressive consciousness inherent in the apartheid schooling system. They rejected the notion of getting educated to occupy jobs but rather pursued alternative education agendas that could aid them to develop the skills relevant to a life of activism against the

apartheid order. The learning the activists engaged in was both personally transformative as well as emancipatory.

Mezirow (Mezirow in Mezirow & Associates, 1990:xvi) defines transformative learning and emancipatory education differently. While he defines transformative learning as,

The process of learning through critical self-reflection, which results in the reformulation of a meaning perspective to allow a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative understanding of one's experience. Learning includes acting on these insights.

He defines emancipatory education as:

An organised effort to precipitate or to facilitate transformative learning in others.

The participants in this study not only developed a personal liberated consciousness but actively sought to pass their knowledge onto the wider community. They conducted seminars and workshops in which they trained the next layer of activists who were still at school. In Durban, this was evident in the formation of the *Creative Arts Society* for the younger teens and in Cape Town, there was the formation of SABSA (South African Black Scholar's Association) as well as drama and discussions groups.

By the time individuals entered the universities, they had already developed a consciousness that made them reject that form of apartheid tertiary education. Bobby Marie says: *'I remember when I went to university, there was no doubt in my mind that my job was to close the university down.'* Bobby was in fact expelled from the University of Durban-Westville within months of starting there.

The fact that activists in this study completed the matriculation certificate was indicative of their intellectual achievement as scholars. They parted ways with many of their childhood friends because those friends did not make it academically to complete matriculation or were kept behind when they failed a standard. Roy Chetty, speaking of dropouts from school, says, *'The system was not as forgiving as it is now.'* The system was indeed extremely vicious. The late Krishna Rabilal was unable to go to university in

spite of outstanding passes in all his subjects. An excerpt from a booklet published to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death states:

Having a dislike for Afrikaans, he refused to study it and as a result received a conditional merit pass in his matric examinations. Although receiving academic accolades he refused to pursue further formal studies and sought to work to support his parents.<sup>23</sup>

Many of the respondents in this study suffered the difficult decisions of choosing between supporting impoverished families by getting regular jobs or pursuing their political struggles. The fact that some of their friends and family members were forced out of the school system at an early age made an impact on those who continued their schooling. Bobby Marie and Roy Chetty refer to the impact of having family members and friends who were forced to leave school.

Despite having been highly successful students, while they were at school only Vivienne Taylor completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Durban-Westville. The question of why such successful high school students became dropouts at university is pertinent. The answer does not lie in the traditional adolescent problems associated with dropouts, but rather is related to their heightened political consciousness.

Bobby Marie's reflection is significant:

*You know, because already in matric, we were politicised, so there was no thought in mind that my form of activity was to find a career. We were describing ourselves as professional revolutionaries or whatever even before we reached University, so it began to move very fast. I remember we used to have some heavy discussions in our group on Guerrilla Warfare, no links at this time outside with any groups. We talked about UGM<sup>24</sup>, you know, ...*

#### **4.1.5 Alternative education practices**

The groups were influenced by alternative education practices through one or two innovative teachers at school, experimental teaching styles adopted from the University Christian Movement and creative spontaneity from individual group members.

The groups displayed their creativity in the way they conducted seminars and developed their consciousness as individuals, as group members and citizens.

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<sup>23</sup> Krish Rabibal Memorial Booklet: page 1

<sup>24</sup> UGM – Underground Movement

A photograph of the period (see Appendix 4) reveals teaching styles that actively involved the learners. The learners are cutting pictures from magazines and making collages. The group had moved away from the old fashioned banking concept of education and were using methods that involved both the learners and the facilitators in a partnership of learning. Paulo Freire promoted this method. He advocated the problem-posing method that he said:

...as a humanist and liberating praxis, posits as fundamental that men subjected to domination must fight for their emancipation. To that end, it enables teachers and students to become subjects of the educational process by overcoming authoritarianism and an alienating intellectualism; it also enables men to overcome their false perception of reality (Freire, 1972(a): 58).

In classrooms around South Africa in the nineteen sixties and seventies, the common practice of many teachers in deprived communities was the practice of chalk and talk<sup>25</sup>. In spite of that kind of exposure in their schooling, the participants in this study moved away from that form of teaching and developed innovative teaching and learning practices. Jaya describes the origin of those practices:

*We were part of the University Christian Movement, the UCM. I was part of the UCM and UCM used to organise these sessions and the Christian Institute at that time. And the Methodist Church and the Christian Institute organised them in such a way that people became.. we would drive these workshops and things like that. ... and I think we adopted the methods from there.....*

Vivienne reflects on some of the workshops that they conducted.....

*.....we would have workshops for these adults on how to conduct these activities very similar to the way that we had workshops with young people. Because remember this was the early seventies and that was unheard of for poverty stricken, low income people from Indian communities to get together with African and coloured communities to look at how they could have joint action to address common problems....*

..... and analyses the practices they were involved in:

*.....in retrospect I think though there were lots of different activities that we got involved in but if you look at in isolation from who we were it could be termed community or social development type project because it brought together people who were disempowered economically, socially and we were trying to say, 'Ok how we could together get out of this and improve your situation and not doing it for people but together working with them ...'.which they could do. But, because we had a strong political background, I think many of us linked who we were and our own search for an identity and place in South Africa. The need to change our material conditions, our social economic conditions so our individual empowerment, our individual sense of who we were and need to empower ourselves is very closely linked to what was happening in our community and as we moved*

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<sup>25</sup> Chalk and talk refers to teaching practices where the teacher talked and pupils listened. The teacher wrote on the chalkboard and the pupils copied down.

*out of that community into the university arena into working arenas and so on we can link to other aspects.....*

Reshi Singh explains how they used their combined strengths:

*... I think it just became... it came to the forefront because I think we were fortunate to have a group like this. I think we were very fortunate because Jean studied to be a teacher and I think Steven at that stage was quite involved with looking himself towards an education profession. Charles as well I think because we were involved in this whole development aspect of looking at kids and all we somehow felt ourselves doing things for example building charts and pictures to depict situations to depict poverty, whatever the theme was. I think it came for the fact that it was more than one person having to think. A kind of combined effort to see what we all could contribute towards having to present a programme or towards presenting a project, get more involved in some kind of project that we thought would get the consciousness....*

The Paulo Freire methods for literacy training were widely adopted across South Africa.

Terry Grove refers to that training and speaks of how Myron Peters from Durban impressed her when she visited one of his classes in Durban:

*It is actually strange that years later when I studied adult education we had to do an assignment on what was the genesis of the interest ..... And I remember going with Myron to Tintown to literacy classes and being so interested in how prepared he was and his manner teaching, and always coming early and impressing and saying you can't waste people's time. For me that is such a.. it's a clear memory that I have of why I'm actually today still involved in adult education.....*

The training developed their skills to impart knowledge but also developed their personal consciousness. Algonda explains:

*I was asking probing questions about things that made me think about these different things here and actually seeing myself as a leader... the literacy campaigns. Now we didn't actually teach anybody to read but through the learning of how to do the Paulo Freire methods... that all contributed....*

Sensitivity training was the vehicle through which consciousness raising exercises were conducted. Algonda Perez refers to her experience of the sensitivity training:

*Quite often the sensitivity training made you quite introspective but also so that you could be more sensitive to others and I think I had quite a very paternalistic attitude towards African people until we lived in the Christian Leadership Centre with African people... and they had to actually leave because police came and said they don't have a permit to be in the area. So we had a discussion amongst ourselves.... [Charles] was in my group and I remember one particular session speaking about 'I think Charles feels...' and being told, 'Don't think for Charles... Charles can speak for himself' but it is quite eye opening you know... you don't speak on behalf of other people you have your own opinions.....*

Jane Lawrence was the group trainer at the Christian Leadership Centre. She shares her feelings of what sensitivity training was about:

*..... I got involved and it was again an opportunity for me to teach and also to make use of the different.... oh the whole sensitivity training courses that we had at the time.... although it created a lot of controversy. People felt it was an opportunity to indoctrinate people - which of course it was - it's absolutely right to focus on the I and what am I feeling - get in touch with your feelings and to look into yourself and see the power you have. So I enjoyed that very much coordinating that and giving people the opportunity to be part of a group and to be able to listen to each other - basic social skills and to hear the pain and anguish and the richness of each others lives also. So, that was wonderful also for people to see how creative they could be. We weren't meant just to be followers but that in each person there was such a wealth of information, such a wealth of experiences and background also that we all draw from each other and in that way we live together.....*

In the Durban group, Jaya Josie was involved with sensitivity training through his interaction in the University Christian Movement. However, the Durban group did not actively participate in such training exercises. Vivienne's explanation provides some insight:

*We did.... we had lots of this but first at that time people talked about socialism about materialism and there was quite a sort of hard core - it wasn't exclusive - it was a hard core materialist dimension and the soft things about feelings and sensitivity training and so on did not seem as important in terms of intellectual discussion and debates and that type of thing. But, it did permeate how we interacted because we had retreats for instance at Botha's Hill in Durban where we could go away as a group. ....*

Vivienne's explanation could suggest that they were a rather serious bunch. Yet, in Bobby's submission, he differentiates their experience from others because they knew how to relax. He explains how they combined socialising with serious work in the formative coffee bar period:

*The way we would run that would be... it would be a social thing. Like one week it would be study, and the other week would be social. And I think that attracted - must have attracted my friends. Because it was social and we would have dances and all that you know.....*

#### **4.1.6 The role of the progressive Christian Church**

The role played by the progressive Christian Church in the anti apartheid struggle has already been referred to in this document. This section explores that role in the development of the heightened political consciousness of the respondents in this study.

The Presbyterian Church in Merebank was a non-racial church and served as an important venue where individuals met. It was a coincidence that friends from school, playgrounds and churches converged there. But, it was through the availability of the church venue and its liberal stance towards the youth that those set of coincidences converged to develop the activists in the Merebank, Durban area. Likewise the teenagers in the Cape formed a youth club in the home of the Perez family and as individuals in the group were selected by Christian organisations for leadership development programmes, other members of the group were drawn in.

The Pro Veritate publication of 15 August 1969 (page 2) provides some insight into the thinking in the anti-apartheid sections of the Christian Church. The editorial, titled ‘*SPRO-CAS An Essential Project*’, welcomes the *South African Council of Churches* (SACC) and the *Christian Institute of Southern Africa*’s initiative in setting up commissions to enquire into the ‘Christian alternative for apartheid’. Further, the editorial denounces the political situation as follows:

....There it was clearly and unambiguously shown that the course being followed at present with regard to the political and social arrangement of our national life was a divergence from the Christian way which sooner or later inevitably had to lead to a disaster for South Africa.

The churches represented in these bodies actively sought an alternative to the prevailing order and worked directly with the youth. It was the Methodist Church in the Cape through the *Christian Leadership Centre*, and the Anglican Church through Reverend Father Clive McBride, who created the opportunities for the youth to raise their political consciousness. In Merebank, Durban, the Presbyterian Church under the leadership of Pastor Prakasim allowed the youth to congregate on the church premises, develop the *Community of St. Steven* and open an innovative coffee bar. Through these church initiatives, the youth were given opportunities to develop a critical consciousness.

The strong influence of the churches was evident in Jaya Josie and Bobby Marie wanting to become ministers in the Methodist and Presbyterian Church respectively. Both of them were influenced by Reuben Philips’s experiences at the Federal Theological Seminary

(Fedsem<sup>26</sup>). Jaya extols the virtues of Beyers Naude and Archbishop Dennis Hurley with whom he had close associations. While other members of the Durban group knew these individuals, it is through Jaya that some of those ideas permeated into the Durban group. Jaya explains the development of the relationship after they were introduced by his Minister, Rev. Olden:

*He introduced us to them- people in the Christian Institute and so on. That's when we started attending group sessions. We got exposed to..... basically it was Reshi, Bobby and I at that particular stage. Then we got exposed ... Seminars were organised by Archbishop Hurley. Archbishop Hurley really shocked us because he went into this radical theology. Bobby and I were into wanting to become priests at this stage ...So Archbishop Hurley came up with this big theses some of the Catholic theologians like .... And linking up palaeontology with - you know the evolution of consciousness - and all those kind of things. ...., and Hurley was very keen on that kind of thing. There were very interesting debates between Hurley and ...Beyers Naude because Beyers used to come and organise these things....*

The role of Rev. Beyers Naude and the *Christian Institute* was particularly strong in the Cape. It was significant that on their post matriculation trip to Cape Town the Durban group came into contact with the radical ideas of the *Christian Institute*. Roy Chetty recalls:

*We met people from the Christian Institute as well on that trip. That trip was quite a radical Christian tour because it took us to the Christian Institute. We had lunch at the Christian Institute one day....*

Hexham (Hexham, 1980: Retrieved from:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Enurelweb/papers/irving/apart.html>) explains the role of the

Christian Institute as follows:

The Christian Institute of Southern Africa was established in August 1963 as an attempt by 280 Christians, many of them recognized church leaders, to present a Christian witness to South Africans and to combat all forms of racism. Over the years, the Christian Institute has been increasingly critical of the policies of the South African Government and in turn has been harassed by South African security organisations. The Christian Institute is dedicated to non-violent change in South Africa and to the creation of a critical Christian conscience.

The *Christian Institute* conducted the sensitivity training programmes and provided logistic support to many anti-apartheid organisations. Roy's memory of their visit to the

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<sup>26</sup> Fedsem was established in 1920 in Alice and trained ministers from seven denominations: Anglican, Methodist, Congregational, and four Presbyterian Churches. It was both inter-denominational and inter-racial. In 1974 the government served the seminary with a notice of expropriation and it moved to St. Bede's, Umtata. Kaiser Mantanzima resented the presence of students at the seminary and they were forced to move to Pietermaritzburg until a new building was erected in Imbali. It closed in 1993. (Denis, Mlotshwa & Mukuka, 1999: 15)

premises in Mowbray is very significant because it shows the broad linkages that the *Christian Institute* had.

Black Theology was a radical theology that incorporated the ideas of Black Consciousness into Christian church teachings. Rev. Clive McBride, an Anglican priest resident in Kensington in the Cape involved the youth from different areas across the Cape Peninsula and introduced them to the ideas of Black theology. More importantly, he encouraged the youth to engage in self development and made them understand that the answers were within themselves. Algonda Perez refers to this kind of learning which she still uses in her work today:

*....so I have situations where the university of Stellenbosch dean - even when I was sick here he was in a difficult situation and he asked for advice. What he doesn't realise is that I don't tell him what to do, I ask him questions and he arrives at... that's my basic philosophy is that the person has the ... the students come to my office - I never tell them that - I allow them to think - I'm helping them to think - you ask questions....*

Harold reflects on Clive McBride's teaching:

*He used to get us to that situation where we as young adults were looking for... a form of identity. He got us to identify that we are part of that struggle as Christians - which led us to the leadership centre, the Christian Leadership Centre...*

At the *Christian Leadership Centre* the activists from the Cape underwent intensive training for three months that involved sensitivity training, self reflective learning and meditation within the teachings of the Christian gospel. Harold reflects:

*...it was very difficult it was very baring of the soul and in that Carmel I had a relationship with you... for me it was always like sister and brother. ...you were always a sister to me because of... I bared myself to you. I ... what this thing did to us is you could be yourself.... and it was in a very trusting atmosphere. It was never thrown wide open to the ...It was inside there and absorbed and forgotten. ..It was absorbed and it was forgotten. From that, I've learnt a lot on how to move forward how to move on. I still remember very bad experiences in my life but I move forward. I'm not saddling on them I'm not standing still....it happened, I won't forget about it but I move on....*

All of the respondents who underwent this training do not remember a great deal about the course but still remember their interactions with the various churches. Part of the training involved visiting a different Christian Church every Sunday. For all of them it was the first time that they had engaged in any way with religious practices other than that which they had grown up with. Harold Dixon's reflection on this is pertinent:

*...all of us, every Sunday we had to go to a different church to be able to see how different religions ... practice the worshipping of God. .... up till now I always say 'Yes we believe in God, but I cannot say that the Presbyterians do not believe in the same God that I believe in. Perhaps their way of worshipping could be different. It is a bit different- but they still worship their God....*

That experience of differences in religious practices was a revelation to those who had been brought up in conservative religious families. Algonda recounts that experience:

*This is something that was also a huge shift for me. Remember we were brought up to believe that there is one true faith and it's a sin to go to other peoples churches. You couldn't even look when you passed. And then being exposed to people, deeply religious people who also had similar consciousness about apartheid and the injustice. That was quite an eye opener. But it was all people of the same Christian base. It was only later that I became exposed to people and actually through Mervyn and going to Durban that people could be of Hinduism or Islam....*

While always welcomed at every church service, the group caused some disruptions as they questioned the practices they met. An example was when they went to the Dutch Reformed Church. Maria recalls:

*In all the churches we were always causing problems. In one church we refused to sit where the women had to sit. The Dutch Reformed Church - we refused to sit where the women had to sit....*

This was an act of resistance which indicates a development of consciousness.

In Durban individuals from diverse religious backgrounds congregated under the Christian banner. Fellowship in the Christian philosophy was used to develop a political message of unity. Reshi Singh provides an interesting perspective:

*I am a Hindu. I wasn't a strong practising Hindu and I wasn't in any way influenced by Christianity to the extent where I would have changed my religion and become Christian or Moslem. I think this was one of the beauty of us when we were working in the community. Our group we began to realise that religion actually was more an oppressive mechanism rather than a liberating factor because the Calvinistic Christianity government that we lived with oppressed people. ... I think the whole idea is to unite people around the whole factor of oppression and discrimination irrespective of whether you are Moslem, Hindu or Christian ...*

There was no intent on the part of the participants in this study to convert their comrades to Christianity. Bobby explains:

*... and we were politicised and for the church thing we would find a way of rationalising our politics with the church thing. Now Roy would be there and he would hear all these Christian things and I don't ever believe came anywhere near those Christian side of things, you know, ... because he was like... and China was there and China would just laugh at it, you know, ... and he was never, he never took any of it, either the politics or the Christian thing. For us, at this stage, at one stage in*

*Christianity, ... that is Methodist Christianity and ... politics became integrated and that was the link with black theology.*

American influences were brought into the groups through youth leaders who were sent by the Christian church groups to be trained in the USA. They were Tony Govender in Durban and Jane Lawrence in the Cape. Jane talks about her American experience:

*America opened my eyes to so many things. It was the most exhilarating experience and yet it was also a very destabilising experience. It was a shock to my system really. First of all, at the time that particular period the nineteen seventies it was exactly 1970. I lived in ... then there were just so many it was the heart of summer- just so many demonstrations back then. There was the Jesus revolution- everybody walking around- there was the hippie revolution and there was the anti-Vietnam demonstrations. So, for me it was such an incredible experience. I mean here I come out of District Six - out of this repressed country where in our homes it... I would say we were not as articulate in articulating our political wills.....*

Jane developed confidence to question what was happening in South Africa and imparted that renewed wisdom to the people she trained. She enunciates her new self image:

*I think that's what gave me so much confidence. From now on it doesn't matter what happens at... This power... this is the power that I have and I have to live by this power now. So I think that was the most exciting period of my life that really to come into a... don't let anybody push you down - don't let... there's another world out there...*

Following their development of a stronger 'black' identity, the youth began to question their relationships with 'whites' in the progressive church structures and campaigned against the church for their collusion with the status quo. They discovered that not all of the oppressed viewed their oppression in the same way. They found that oppressed people in the church leadership, whom they had previously respected, colluded with the 'white' church leadership and did not support their efforts to expose the church's complicity. They consequently developed a critical consciousness that not only began to understand the dynamics of oppression in an overtly political sense but also questioned the collusion of the 'white' dominated church structure in the oppression of its affiliates and its cooperation with the apartheid state. They began to understand the subordination of oppressed church members to the behest of the 'white' leadership. These were valuable lessons that brought home the complexity of an oppressive consciousness as well as the assumptions of privilege and power even amongst those who voiced disdain for the apartheid order.

From the Presbyterian Church venue in Merebank, members organised and planned activities to raise consciousness and voice their opposition to the apartheid order. However, their strong stance against the state saw them lose favour with the liberal minded church and they were denied the use of the church premises. Hardiman & Jackson (Hexham, 1980: Retrieved from: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/%7Enurelweb/papers/irving/apart.html>) acknowledge that ‘the Resistance stage results in losing benefits acquired when they colluded with the Acceptance consciousness...’

The power of consciousness raising is explained by Hart (Hart in Mezirow & Associates, 1990: 70):

.... Consciousness raising is therefore a programme for social groups that have been considered marginal, that have been denied full social membership, and whose reality and experience is not reflected in mainstream analyses and theories. Consciousness raising is a process of reclaiming social membership – not in the sense of adjusting to the normative view that produced a situation of marginality in the first place but in terms that tend to abolish all special claims and privileges for any identifiable social group.

As the Durban youth developed greater consciousness of their oppression and how oppressive forces operated, they not only actively opposed mainstream government structures and policies but questioned the very organisations that gave them space to be born. However, it must be noted that the group did not set out to subvert the church but found that church teachings were not reflected in its practice. Consequently, both Bobby and Jaya did not enter the church ministry but adopted a stronger political identity diametrically opposed to the church as a structure. The church was unable to contain the youthful dynamism it had originally nurtured.

#### **4.1.7 Learning through actively campaigning**

The respondents in this study started on political campaigns while they were at school. The bread boycott in Merebank, alluded to previously, was a small campaign while the clemency appeal to free political prisoners was a much larger campaign and more directly targeted against the state. In the Cape, Terry Grove and Alan Liebenberg were still at high school when they were detained by the security police for their activities in the

South African Black Scholars' Association (SABSA). Algonda Perez and Alan Liebenberg were challenged at school because of their involvement in the Black Consciousness Movement.

Being part of the very new philosophy of Black Consciousness meant that respondents had to develop their understanding quickly in order to defend their practices in hostile environments. In the Cape, activists practiced their skills by conducting conscientising sessions on public transport and through participating in street drama. Alan Liebenberg expounds:

*After being part of hundreds of 'conscientisation' sessions in people's homes, on buses and trains, we had processed and internalised many ideas on struggle in a general sense....*

Harold Dixon describes how they conducted the protest theatre and street drama:

*We did a lot of street drama. I remember at one stage when you were personally involved and I think you and Milly - and we took over OK bazaars... A lot of dramas and the conscientisation drama is that we would park in the bus, sit in the bus there into town... some would sit in the front and we would have this conversation of conscientisation talking about non-whites and coloureds and blacks - talk about the struggle, revolution and talking about colour consciousness... Loud and arguing with one another.....*

Terry Grove remembers Alan Liebenberg's involvement in protest theatre on the buses and proclaims, 'I think we had a lot of pluck'. That bravado was also evident in the way they adapted popular freedom songs into more militant renderings. Terry Grove refers to changing the popular song 'We shall overcome':

*But we changed the words. We sang 'we shall overrun' remember? And when they sang 'we walk hand in hand' we sang 'and we'll walk gun in hand' ....*

Since the Black Consciousness Movement was, still in its formative stage, there were not many people in the movement at that stage and campaigns were not very large or dramatic as they became in the late seventies and eighties. Maria Engel's remark '*We were just a handful - we weren't very many*' explains this. However, in spite of working with limited numbers in hostile environments, the activists persevered in their campaigns and thereby strengthened their resolve and their commitment to change. Algonda Perez

and Harold Dixon's description of their experiences in Bonteheuwel highlights the way lessons were brought home through active campaigning Harold describes the campaign:

*My first major, major thing was conscientising the people of Bonteheuwel. They were busy building some kind of maisonettes. Some people didn't realise why the maisonettes were happening so we went out there campaigning against the maisonettes in the area. It was an over populated area already and then they would bring people in from District Six where the group area act... group areas declared white District Six ... then they wanted to bring this people in from District Six and Plumstead. So they decided this is a built up area let us just put in new houses. And then we decided to campaign in conscientising the people against the maisonettes...*

The valuable lessons Algonia learnt:

*I remember the Bonteheuwel, the shacks... and how we went at four o'clock in the morning. I think for the first time I became aware of what workers had to go through in order to you know to live and it also opened my eyes going into people's homes in Bonteheuwel, the poverty and all the kinds of... we were quite sheltered in that way in that we weren't exposed. And something that I remember that sticks in my head giving out those pamphlets and you know in our own home at 5 o'clock in the evening you walk in there's the smell of cooking and in these homes in quite a lot of them there was no cooking going on. I ... thinking about that why was there no cooking and in later years I thought no food to be cooked. ....*

In Durban, respondents developed their skills as they involved themselves with the appeal for clemency for political prisoners launched by Mewa Ramgobin from the NIC. It was at a clemency meeting in Merebank that Steven David first made contact with the Merebank group. His illuminating insight is relevant:

*On the way home from Church on a Sunday I bumped into a classmate who pressed me to accompany him to a 'Prayer for Clemency' event at the Natraj Cinema in Merebank. Then I had no idea what 'clemency' meant, 'prayer' was enough to attract me. The meeting was stringently political. It was held a few weeks prior to the 10 year celebration of Republic. I knew nothing about any of the Robben Island personages or why they were revered. The speeches by Mewa Ramgobin, Fatima Meer, and others were totally out of my world experience. They spoke with far greater authority than the priests and bishops I was accustomed to. I did not understand most of what they said, but what filtered through I knew to resonate with things deeply felt in my consciousness. It seemed they were articulating forms of feelings and truths that lay percolating in my innermost recesses. Almost suddenly I became aware of the forms of a whole new world. I was accustomed to large church gatherings and the one-way traffic of sermons. But here in this cinema hall of hundreds, people – some old and many my own age or at least a bit older – stood up, made comments, asked questions, - irrespective of how incoherent or confused they sounded. They were all taken seriously. I felt catapulted from home, church and school to a vast new horizon. Their truth enkindled immediate and strong responses of applause and yeas in me. This was the epiphany in my political awakening.....*

Those years were early years in the political consciousness of the activists but it was also important because that appeal campaign coincided with the apartheid state's celebration of ten years of being a republic. The heightened consciousness following the campaign

resulted in Bobby Marie stealing the flag at school and in Chatsworth Steven David was so moved by his initiation into politics that he introduced stink bombs into the hall where the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations were being held.

In the Cape, much of the conscientisation was conducted through the kinds of street drama previously described and regular drama in theatres and halls. Plays written by Adam Small and James Mathews were popular means for conscientisation. In Durban, the Community of St. Steven also used theatre for the explicit purpose of raising the consciousness of the audience. Jaya Josie explains:

*Theatre was very important in conscientising and getting through to the communities. We went to Chatsworth, to KwaMashu, we went to - we even went to Cape Town. Bobby and Myron went to Cape Town to train people in theatre....*

The content of the plays in Merebank was developed through workshops. Jaya explains:

*...we did a radical play which we workshopped, ...it had everything church, politics, labour, oppression, workers mobilizing etc. communities struggling. We workshopped this play - we did it and we wanted to take it to the churches....*

Vivienne recalls more about the content of one of the plays they developed:

*....we were all involved. I was involved in the church and with Jaya and Jean. And then we got involved and Jaya got involved in theatre. ... I think Jaya tried to bring all of us young people together to say ok let's do an alternative version of the play... of ....I can't remember what it was called at that stage - about crucifixion - passion play - but he did a totally different version of it and we were all involved in it.... Jaya was directing this and we all had a role to play.*

Actively campaigning brought activists directly into conflict with the security police. Here too there were important lessons learnt. How to behave during interrogation and understanding one's rights were important instructions given to all activists. Harold remembered Johnny Issel's advice:

*Find out what they know. Tell them what they know. Tell them to put it down in writing - at least you can push the thing out longer. If you make a statement they have to question you. Don't ask, don't answer questions without stuff that is written down. Just write down and stick to what you write down. Make sure what they ask you. They will tell you it's nine o'clock and you affirm yes nine o'clock....*

In the early years of development, individuals and groups used any organisations they thought could to advance their struggle for political freedom. Maria describes their attendance at political meetings:

*We went to mass meetings. Every mass meeting and we were there whether it was the white people or the black people - mass meeting we're there....*

Likewise, in Durban respondents describe their involvement with a cross section of political people. Jaya remembers their links with people in the Labour Party while Roy refers to the range of activities they were involved with:

Jaya:

*In fact the guy who was very good from a political perspective was Norman Middleton from the Labour Party. Because he worked in the Wentworth area... He had linkages from the Congress Movement and the people from the NIC. So we said fine.*

Roy:

*I recall standing in Gardiner Street on the grounds of the gardens of the City Hall facing Gardiner Street and standing next to people like Archbishop Hurley holding up placards calling for clemency for political prisoners. There was a whole range of meetings being addressed throughout Durban. We used to attend those. I attended several and ironically some of the people who influenced us and we listened to them and whom we had no ideological relationship at all but people spoke out then and young people listened to in order to get ideas, were people like Alan Paton. I had gone to meetings that Alan Paton addressed in town; gone to meetings addressed by Norman Middleton; we'd also gone to the Mewa Ramgobin - also in '71 embarked on a campaign that was his campaign, he campaigned for clemency for political prisoners....*

The respondents learnt by actively engaging in struggle. Through their engagement with politics at a practical and theoretical level, they developed ideas that liberated their thinking both individually and collectively. This development was also visible in Algonda's recollections. Algonda was able to be critical of her own stereotypical behaviour in relation to Afrikaans. She says:

*Part of growing up was daddy's total anti stance against Afrikaans and it was quite funny all these people talking Afrikaans and who were part of the struggle. It was quite a big shift in my mind because Afrikaans people are either uneducated or white was my understanding and here I was meeting people - these people spoke Afrikaans and this was another step in your consciousness - changing what you believed.....*

Not everybody could identify with the resistance to oppression. Respondents learnt of spies from amongst them who maintained a subservient consciousness and reported the group's activities to the security police. Algonda and Jane both referred to the reality of discovering close acquaintances who turned out to be spies. Algonda:

*One of the bad things of struggle was learning also that there were spies amongst us. I remember the incident with Jakes<sup>27</sup> .... because it was part of learning about betrayal as well and that is also part of your consciousness - becoming more careful about who you associate with so that you can achieve what you set out to achieve. ...*

Jane remembered:

*The most awful thing during that time was living with this suspicion that even though we were all... there must be an informer here because informers are everywhere. And then you tell yourself don't worry about it but I think we were never free of that. Somebody's reporting back that's what's happening....*

#### **4.1.8 Black Consciousness**

Black Consciousness was adopted as the vehicle through which individuals broke out of their psychological oppression. Jane Lawrence was first introduced to Black Consciousness when she studied in the USA. However, when they set up the leadership training at the *Christian Leadership Centre* their emphasis was Christian rather than Black Consciousness. It was only because the participants themselves had already become involved with the Black Consciousness Movement that they were catapulted into accommodating Black Consciousness into the course. Jane explains:

*... we had a whole team of people, people who came and did different courses over the three months. I think the emphasis very much, at that particular stage, was on Christian leaders as such. I didn't realise that there was this cauldron was bubbling - the whole black consciousness thing....*

All the respondents in this study engaged with the fundamental tenets of Black Consciousness. Through self designed educational programmes they set about not only conscientising themselves but strove to do likewise in their communities. Maria Engel remembers her first attempt at conscientising girls at an elitist 'coloured' school in Cape Town that she attended:

*....you preached all these things to me and I went on the Monday to school and I remember preaching this to all these pure white people standing in front of me there at Immaculata and telling them that they're not white but black..... and all the things was based on what you had told me - not that I had really been there you know ... And I will never forget this one girl, Julia standing in front of me and saying, 'This has got nothing to do with us.' And I tried because now we had this whole thing that you've got to conscientise the people around you and so now of course I had to conscientise these posh people - from Heathfield and Fairways and those places ....*

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<sup>27</sup> Jakes was a UWC student who frequented the Perez home. When it was suspected that he was a spy, he was given false information which he acted upon and was exposed.

In apartheid South Africa, forging links across racial divides was extremely difficult. Yet, in the stories that follow, solidarity of the oppressed was fundamental to their quests as young people in the communities where they found themselves. Once the groups became part of the Black Consciousness Movement, they forged links across all oppressed racial groups. The Black Consciousness Movement provided them with the opportunity to fulfil their dream of 'Black' solidarity and a move away from racial labelling which respondents found so obnoxious.

Jaya Josie talks of the way Black Consciousness helped individuals to rid themselves of their feelings of inferiority and forge links across racial divides:

*....for me that was the main issue you know - Black Consciousness really made us become people who believe in ourselves. Now for me that is Black Consciousness and the other part of it is solidarity - black solidarity. I've never seen Black Consciousness as an anti white thing at all. I saw it more as something as how we could mobilise communities. I feel quite aggrieved that some people have taken it up and are trying to bring it closer to Africanism...*

Bobby Marie links Black Consciousness with cultural liberation:

*.....what I learnt in the Black Consciousness Movement which resonated with what I was beginning to pick up in the Black Theology movement, which was very different from the politics of being black, but more the cultural liberation ideas. So I actually had two strong links... .. It was the oppression in the country on the political level but a deeper one on issues of cultural liberation.....*

All the respondents in this study talk fondly of their association with Steve Biko. The Durban group had ongoing discussions with Steve Biko through their contact with Black Consciousness activists who lived at the Alan Taylor Residence in Wentworth. The Cape Town group made contact with Steve in King Williams Town when they returned from a trip to Durban.

Bobby Marie questions whether Steve Biko was responsible for their politicisation:

*The informal discussions with Steve Biko and people from medical school was a source. But, you see did that politicise us or were we politicised....*

Roy Chetty answers Bobby's query:

*We wanted to use - for want of a better word - to use the BC movement. But the movement itself - Steve Biko in particular( one doesn't want to say this just because he's now no more around to corroborate this) was very excited for the fact that there was this group in Merebank and Wentworth which was already there. ... And , it was already implementing in action what the BC movement wanted to do in getting across - breaking the barriers of apartheid - Wentworth / Merebank section*

*for instance. ...and he used to come down to Merebank... and have discussions with us. In as much as others came as well but one felt particularly pleased as well- here was the leader of the BC movement taking a particular interest in our group.*

Reshi Singh explains Biko's involvement with their intellectual development:

*I think people like Steven Biko and them obviously at that stage if I have to reflect now was much more advanced in terms of their whole consciousness. We were actually gaining from what they had already read and thought and wrote about. He would come and discuss with us and we would discuss issues of politics, the whole social evil of apartheid and discrimination and I think that started now to get us involved much closer within the community. ... But what happened was, is that some of the people started interacting with organisations like SASO and BPC*

Joining the Black Consciousness Movement marked the start of a redefined consciousness for the activists. Jaya Josie's change in name manifested his reawakening. Likewise, the members of the group adopted liberatory definitions and rejected apartheid terminology. The word 'black' replaced the ethnic labels imposed by the state. Their dress and hairstyles were defined by greater African cultural expression. The music, drama and poetry spoke of oppression and freedom. The 'Community of St. Steven' changed to become 'The Black Action Group'. This formation appears to have had a short lifespan as few respondents made any reference to it. It was however important for setting up a more clearly defined political agenda that actively engaged in protests against the state. The name indicates a 'Black' identity.

#### **4.1.9 The Gender Question**

The groups developed an agenda to raise consciousness but some respondents are critical of their attitude to women at that time. Though they speak with hindsight, their observations are very valuable. There was an understanding at the time that through fighting the political struggle the gender question would automatically be addressed. In general, it was accepted that women were equal partners to men. Vivienne acknowledges this. She says, '*You had the freedom to argue and you had the freedom to really argue intellectually, politically your points of view at that level, at that part no distinction and in that sense the group was a very good training ground*'. Ramphela (Ramphela in Pityana et al, 1992: 216) also refers to 'black' women in leadership positions. She writes: '*...where women of ability made themselves available for leadership and other*

meaningful roles, they made important contributions and were accepted fully as colleagues by men'. However, men assumed positions of leadership and women largely accepted a subservient role. Vivienne explains:

*...there was this thing that for me to do something I had to be accompanied by a male. It was taken for granted within ASH that that would be the status quo. If I had to go somewhere, it wouldn't be accepted that I could go on my own or take a role other than as part of the group.*

*I think that was the latent gender hierarchy within the group. Although it played itself out in a very subtle way because all of us prided ourselves on being liberated but there were these subtle nuances that brought home to you the reality of that you were a woman and you didn't have the freedom...*

Some respondents now believe that they were not being completely honest at the time. They paid lip service to feminism but continued to assert their dominant positions as men. Ramphele (Ramphele in Pityana et al, 1992: 220 – 221) critically analyses challenges to male privilege during the Black Consciousness era:

*...challenges to male privilege did not represent a systematic departure from traditional gender relationships, but only served to undermine this tradition for the benefit of those who were prepared to take risks in challenging sexism at a personal level. Interpersonal relationships remained largely unchanged, with the man as the dominant partner, and many women remained trapped in unsatisfactory relationships that violated their dignity as people.*

There was a range of activities that activists engaged in. This study shows how women participated in these struggles equally with their male counterparts. The nineteen sixties marked the onset of the feminist revolution. Evelyn Reed (Reed, 1970:7), an active feminist and socialist of this period succinctly describes the status quo at the time:

*Just as Afro-Americans are striving to find out why they were they were thrust into servitude and how they can speedily free themselves, so do these newly awakened women want to know how and why they have become subjugated to male rule and what can be done about it.*

Awareness of racial oppression alerted women to their own oppression and made them question many practices. Vivienne speaks of her experiences with the group in Merebank:

*I always recognised that even when I was growing up that being a young girl, being a young woman, defined you in a very specific way. And, even within the context of growing up in Merebank as a young girl, working, associating, being part of the group - Community of St. Steven initially and then the Association for Self Help. At times it would be a very lonely state to be in because the things that one wanted to do had to be conditioned by - because perceptions around what it is possible for a woman to do and what is not possible for a woman who is so young to do...*

Betty Leslie talks about her difficulties in getting literature. However, she did not see it as gender discrimination but rather as part of the security measures at the time. The following extract from our interview conveys her understanding:

**Betty Leslie:** ...at some stage I felt they were very secretive. They used to pass around literature and it NEVER used to get to myself and Yvonne and there was another young lady who's in Australia right now. We never got the literature. We had discussions with Tys and that's where I used to pick up that they had a document in circulation and they were discussing....

**Carmel Chetty:** And were they excluding you, you think because you were a girl?

**Betty Leslie:** It could be many reasons because they were very close to each other. They saw each other - lived together and I think trusted each other and did many things together. Even got into trouble if you remember that flag burning. So there was some kind of brotherhood that kept them together. They trusted that. A banned document you know it's safer if only we know of it. I think they were possibly not sure of me.....

Throughout this Betty uses the term 'they'. She mentions three of the females who did not get the literature directly. Tys, who was trusted, was a male. Jaya Josie agrees that their gender consciousness was limited. He explains:

.....our gender conscious was very low as a group..... We always had these discussions of how we would treat women and we wanted this equality. For me it was easier because of my experience. I think for some of the other guys it was a bit more difficult..... We didn't have the kind of gender consciousness that you see women as.... if you had a relationship it would be a relationship between someone who is dominant and someone who is..... You would assume it automatically and even in SASO that was the case you know....

Reshi Singh concurs with some of what Vivienne and Jaya say:

The issue of gender I must admit, wasn't very strong within our whole philosophy. Yes, we did interact. We had women in the group and things like that but I don't think for me personally, I don't think I was ultra-sensitive and highly conscious at that stage like now I am because I've slowly developed. I slowly learnt about the whole gender differences, the issue of gender inequality. Because we did have women, we worked with them. They were part of the group and things like that...I think somehow I don't know if the other guys are going to say this.... but I think somehow we still felt that we were a bit more stronger and a bit more leaders than women, that we had to protect them and things like that. Although people like Vivienne and Jean did oppose that. They did challenge, there were conflicts like anything you can't deny that....

In the Cape, respondents did not express strong opinions on the gender question. Racial and gender oppression were addressed simultaneously. Jane explains the confusion she felt at the time:

.....it was also very confusing for me at the time trying to decide now should I now be feminist or should I rather be.... should I be conscientising black people? What is it now? Where is it? But at the same time and all the different arguments that were going now on around that - First be a woman then be a person. First be a person then be a feminist. First get the whole racial thing sorted out.....

For the activists in Cape Town, Jane Lawrence was a strong influence in their development of gender consciousness. Algonda Perez acknowledges this:

I identify very much as a woman and the cause of women. And Jane's raising of our consciousness around the role of women....

## **4.2 The significance of lives committed to social justice**

All the activists in this study look back proudly on their years of activism. Some of them continue to be social justice activists to the present while others incorporate social justice into their work situations. To consider the second question in this study, I will firstly consider the impact of that youthful commitment to social justice on their lives and then explain their understanding of their social identities at present.

### **4.2.1 Impact of Social Justice consciousness on their lives**

I firstly detail the group activities that arose from their social justice consciousness and thereafter outline the impact on their lives.

#### **4.2.1.1 Covert versus Overt Political Activities**

The constant presence and interference of the security police made the Merebank youth conscious of the need to work in smarter ways that would not have them in the police spotlight. While Daya's group adopted an underground route, Jaya introduced his group to the ideas of Saul Alinsky who wrote the book *Reveille for Radicals*. Jaya Josie describes their ideas for community action:

*.....I got the book, the Alinsky book. ... and I brought it back. That's what ASH was based on, those principles of Alinsky. What started off, the urban township ghetto organising groups and ASH was one of the first real community based programmes. And that's why the Institute of Race Relations published it because it was a very organised way. Although the cooperative thing of bulk buying was - Merebank had a tradition with the cooperative stores - an old tradition - but here it was starting again with communities that were in transition... And it was also giving acknowledgement that amongst the Indian Communities and the coloured Communities there was poverty. We actually did a survey in Tintown and Minitown to establish the level of poverty and income levels. That was quite advanced so when we were there we wrote our own questionnaires. All the guys went out house to house getting people to answer the questionnaires and we took the results and we prepared a project proposal...*

It was Alinsky's ideas that encouraged the group to set up the Association for Self Help (ASH). They conducted an in-depth analysis of the needs of the community and set up self help and education programmes. To alleviate the poverty they set up a bulk buying scheme. To eliminate the illiteracy they set up a literacy programme that followed the Paulo Freire method. They conducted consciousness raising education programmes and

started a crèche. The group hoped ASH would serve a dual purpose of creating opportunities to conscientise the communities and enable them to continue political work without the constant attention of the security police. Bobby explains:

*...we were supposed to keep clean and keep it away from any kind of political things because we were working with people. We would probably have discussed that...*

Vivienne elaborates:

*...as Jaya made the trip to the US in 1971 and met with Black Power people and Black Power organisations some of them were involved in .... Alinsky type community activity and community empowerment processes. And he came back with a lot of the literature and experiences of what was happening - politics of liberation - and shared that with us. The possibility... you know that people were able not just to find themselves in terms of their own consciousness but also were able to act in a different way to change their life, their social and economic conditions collectively - was something that happened - that really helped us to construct ASH and focus on how we could link politics with local action...*

Some activists in Merebank became critical of ASH as they perceived it as reformist and not in line with the overthrow of the state which they perceived as their objective. Neville Alexander's (Alexander in Pityana et al, 1992: 249) analysis voices their concerns quite succinctly:

Self-help and other community projects for their own sake are basically reformist conceptions. They merely beautify the ghetto and become thus an essential part of the established order of racial oppression and exploitation....

Two venues were acquired in Sambulphur Road. The first venue served as a kind of commune where some group members lived and organised from. The second venue was known to only a few people viz. Vis Pillay, Roy Chetty, Coastal (Kamba) Govender and the late Krishna Rabilal. It was used to run the newspaper, *The Sentinel*. It also had as its intention the beginnings of underground activity and served as a base from which the bus boycott and other community actions were planned and executed.

Daya returned from overseas with a more militant message to organise underground activities. While Roy recalls one incident when Daya discussed with himself and Vis Pillay about pamphlet bombs in dirt bins, Daya's activities continued without the knowledge of most of the Merebank ASH group. Daya details his actions as follows:

*I went back to London and got some training about underground work, and left for South Africa. I did not let anybody know that I was returning to South Africa. But, when I disembarked at the Durban Airport my bag again was missing. The next day the special branch interviewed me. They took my passport away and they hinted that my baggage was with them. All this convinced me that I had to tread a very narrow line. The security branch was waiting for me to make a false step, so they could get me with all my contacts, and I had to make sure that that was not going to happen.*

*I worked as a salesman in Durban and later owned and operated a second-hand furniture store in Beatrice Street. Many activists that weren't known to the special branch met at this store. Krish Rabilal, who worked with me at this store, was one such person. He later joined me in exile and was killed in the Matola Raid. Patrick Msomi was another. He was an organiser for BAWU. Pat, my brother Ivan, and I formed the first Natal Military Command for the Armed Wing of the ANC. We had leased a farm and set up the conditions to begin the struggle, when Shadrack Mapumulo, a contact between us and the ANC was arrested. We had no choice, but to flee the country and wage the struggle from outside.*

Following discussions with the ASH group, the Cape Town group started consultation about setting up a similar project in the Cape. However, increased security police interference resulted in the project never reaching fruition.

In Merebank the ASH group disintegrated after a few years. Various suggestions were posited for this:

Bobby's view:

*.....You know our work became very focused then especially with ASH because.... what we set up was actually way beyond us. It was way beyond us. We had no clue what we were doing you know and we were taking on things that we had very little skills - just like confidence. And I was very preoccupied with that until '75. Then I began to move because I was becoming - you guys were gone then..... And I just felt it's been 3 years and I need to move on to do something else and then I got involved with setting up a newspaper.*

Reshi's view:

*The group identity started falling apart and not only because of the fact that .... For different reasons... One was the pressure from the state, the banning of the people, the house arrest. So the group started disintegrating then. People lived in exile, yourselves and then of course other factors started becoming started playing a part. We started getting married. We started becoming parents. We started now becoming people who started looking at personal responsibility. As a group, we were very free in our thoughts towards community responsibility where we find nothing belonged to us. We need to give everything away. But we needed to put our efforts and our work in terms of others towards the community rather than self. But as we started becoming older, becoming husbands and wives of... we now began living in our own homes, outbuildings. The group formation no more became a strong point in our lives...*

Daya's underground group survived for another year. They purchased a farm for their underground work but continued working at jobs in the city. One member was

unexpectedly arrested and the rest of the group were forced into exile in Mozambique. Krishna Rabibal was one of twelve people killed on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1981 when South African troops and mercenaries raided the house they were living in, in Matola, Mozambique.

#### **4.2.1.2 Detention, Banning and Exile**

Being arrested, detained or banned was a reality all those who opposed the apartheid state understood. Many of them did not dwell on those aspects of their lives when they responded to the question of how a social justice consciousness had affected their lives. I outline a brief summary of those consequences from my own memory for the benefit of the reader:

- Jaya Josie was banned in 1973 and fled into exile in Botswana in 1975.
- Bobby Marie was banned and detained several times in the 1970s and 1980s
- Betty Leslie went into exile in Lesotho.
- Harold Dixon spent many months in detention from 1974 to 1975.
- Jane Lawrence was detained in the 1980s
- Roy Chetty fled the country into Botswana in 1975 after he was detained several times and advised that he could be used as a state witness in the Pro-Frelimo trial.
- Algonda Perez went into exile in Botswana.
- Terry Grove was arrested when she was still at school.
- Alan Liebenberg spent a great deal of time in detention in the 1970s and 1980s.
- Daya (Joe) Pillay went into exile in Swaziland from where he was abducted by the South African security police and released in exchange for the return of South African agents in Swaziland.

Opposition to the apartheid state resulted in great trauma for every one of the activists interviewed for this study. When the state came down on political activists they were vicious and thorough. Harold Dixon was arrested in 1974 after the state clamped down on the activities of SASO/BPC following the Pro-Frelimo rally at Currie's Fountain in Durban. He went into great depth in his interview to explain the months of his detention

and the psychological games played by the security police. His one regret is that he did not get a chance to join Umkonto We Sizwe, the military arm of the ANC. He says: ‘....if it wasn’t for the formation of the UDF<sup>28</sup> I would’ve gone over to join Umkonto we Sizwe...’

Daya Pillay did join the military wing and suffered when he was captured from his exile home in Swaziland by the South African security police. He refers briefly to this incident: ‘In 1981, I was abducted from Swaziland and detained, tortured, interrogated and returned to Swaziland. Fortunately, my arrest didn’t lead to any other arrests....’ That fact, alluded to casually, is what tormented many activists during periods of detention. They did not want to be responsible for the arrest and torture of anybody else and those who succeeded to live through their detention without implicating anybody else were very proud of not having revealed their sources in spite of extreme forms of interrogation and torture. Harold explains his state of mind when he finally agreed to make a statement to the security police:

*When I made a statement it was 2 days before they started the trial when Saths Cooper were charged and all the others were charged and then they told me, ‘Right you make that statement that implicate Saths and people’ and I can go home... so if I make a statement, then they’re going to keep me here as a witness - then I got to... then I still made a statement.... Because so many people is being charged so I thought my statement must have been very incriminating... time was of no essence. I lost track of time. I didn’t know - also I didn’t understand that they must submit it to the attorney general. I always thought that they’re a law unto themselves they decide who to charge and that....*

*...who did I incriminate in this thing and I can’t remember who the guys are charged - this guy Saths Cooper – I didn’t know him much, I couldn’t say much about Saths. I just informed them that I met Saths at a graveyard in Merebank, Wentworth. There’s a graveyard somewhere there ....*

The experiences of those arrested in either the seventies or eighties are very similar. For many of them the loss of control of their own lives was most frustrating. Jane explains her exasperation and confused feelings:

*....the most terrible thing for me on that experience was, I blocked my children out of mind so.... because it I didn’t want to be so angry and didn’t want to be made weak. I thought - no if I think about them and then I’m just going to get weak and I must be strong. It was the most terrible... we lived under such terrible fear in that cell. We were 22 women. ...*

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<sup>28</sup> UDF United Democratic Front

When she was eventually released she regretted the time lost from her life: *'When I got out of that - for having had two weeks of my life stolen - Two weeks where I had very little control over my life.....'*

Only Harold spoke of the intimidation and beatings he suffered at the hands of the security police:

**Harold Dixon:** *.....they took me up again..... sitting there - they switch the light off ....*

**Carmel Chetty:** *You can't see who it is?*

**Harold Dixon:** *They switch the lights off because.... They took me to town<sup>29</sup> ....*

**Carmel Chetty:** *Were those prisoners or were those cops who beat you up?*

**Harold Dixon:** *Cops. They didn't use prisoners... then they said right you don't want to talk then make a statement. Then what we're going to do is lock you up with prisoners. We don't know what's going to happen to you guys. One by one.... and then they told me Maphetla also... I think he's from Durban... They said, 'Maphetla was coming out.... They raped him.... He's in the hospital now. They had to stitch him up...' I also wrote down things there for them and they weren't satisfied. Make another statement. And I said this is it. There's my statement. And then they sent me to a magistrate. Then I said... I'm not sure but the days I got beaten up I don't see a magistrate..... They took me to John Vorster Square. After my first statement they took me through to ..... what's this place? A sort of police station on the farm.....*

Though Harold's memories of what happened during his detention are sometimes confusing, the brutality of the police is clear. It is surprising therefore that out of that rather bleak period in his life Harold was able to remember proudly what he considered an unexpected positive consequence on his family's awareness following his period of detention. His grandfather lived in an area that was declared 'white'. Following Harold's detention, his grandfather was spurred to take up the fight to hold onto his property.

Harold explains:

*...here my grandfather who was very much what I called a non-white at that time and then ..... he started... because I ended up in prison, they started a movement in Lansdowne - sort of an anti-eviction movement. And all those people who rallied around - all those houses got kept - their children are still living in that houses. A lot of whites moved in around them....*

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<sup>29</sup> euphemism for being beaten up.

#### 4.2.1.3 Commitment to social justice

Having developed a consciousness about oppression, activists in this study have devoted their lives to the eradication of oppression. That struggle to eradicate oppression has taken on different forms with the different activists. Bobby analyses his continued commitment to struggle:

*.... my political optimism lives out the democratic revolution at the various stages people categorise it into. I always feel that I am only happy if I am engaging in breaking down and rebuilding structures and attitudes that place people at a disadvantage....*

Many of the activists became disillusioned with the Black Consciousness Movement and joined other political groupings. Whatever their choices in terms of political homes, all of them continued the fight for equality and justice. Roy Chetty explains:

*I think I am fortunate enough to say that my consciousness of my youth - in my view has stayed with me for the rest of my life and it will stay with me for the rest of my life. It has made me a principled person. The principles that I had then of not collaborating with the SAIC or anything to do with the SAIC or with the state structures then still remains with me. The principle of committing ones life in so far as one can to the betterment of society and for eradicating oppression still remains with me. So, I think that what I learnt then was a life lesson. It wasn't something that one picks up at some youth club and one forgets because what we underwent was more than just experiences - it was gaining or using the route of organisations to gain the strength, energy, learnings and teachings to sustain us for views that are relevant for us and for other people for future generation years.....*

The belief in a better future continues to drive the choices they make. For example, Reshi Singh continues the fight for social justice through his work:

*I think for me personally it played a very important role in that it got me thinking about the whole human aspects and oppression and injustices because when I started becoming conscious about my surroundings, I think it built a strength in me that even up to this day I cherish and hold very dear. That strength is to always be conscious of the fact in whichever way I contributed to or can contribute to how achieving some sense of development and also to kind of relate all of this to people that I'm dealing with in this very stage of my work area with youths from disadvantaged communities who themselves have very little even at this stage in terms of skills and work and employment.*

For the activists in this study commitment to struggle always took priority over personal considerations in the choices they made. Bobby and Steven show how a social justice consciousness affected their choices:

Bobby:

*...later I had to make a choice whether I support my mother or not and I said well what I'm involved in is not for myself. I'm involved and the fact that I do not have a job for... ASH was like we took one salary and split it in three and so there's still no money so why am I not looking for a job to attend to my parents? Later for five years I was banned. It is only in '82 when I started working for the unions that I had a job with an income. And throughout this and even that time I reasoned that*

*thist is justified to organise my life on that basis. That I don't attend to my family because I'm involved...*

Steven:

*I was fired from my first job at Republican Publications for calling a white man, who addressed me by my first name, by his first name and refusing to apologise. I held my own with a Bank sub-accountant who objected to me addressing a white woman in the same terms and forfeited any advancements. Trained as a teacher at my own expense because I refused to be trained as an Indian teacher'. And taught in coloured schools as 'temporary' staff with no prospects for advancement.....*

After the democratic elections in 1994 opportunities arose for some to join the ruling elite but they weighed their options carefully. Jaya clarifies his position:

*...You know I was talking to Barney[Pityana] the other day and I said, 'How come we didn't join this black empowerment?' There were some guys who did. And I think with consciousness, and with the kind of conscientisation process that we've been through, you can see that the people you know who'd been through that ,who really believed in it and accepted it, are people who are still very much concerned with what's happening to the ordinary folk...*

*....I could have become part of the black empowerment deal - become a director. But I deliberately left that to go to the FFC because I see the FFC as a way in which I can use my knowledge in public finance to make some impact - and we are making some impact because at least we are addressing the issues of constitutional rights, economic rights of people. They even quote our recommendations in court cases when people don't get housing and things like that. There is that kind of... and I think that is an important part ....*

The drive to ensure that social justice is realised has continued to drive Terry Grove in the choices she makes. She clarifies her involvement:

*I'm a programme manager at the National Development Agency. I work with different communities initiating programmes to alleviate poverty. I'm involved in adult education. ... When I think of the serious side of my life it's all the social justice issues. I'm involved environmentally - involved in Namaqualand - ... we still are involved in trying to prevent the government from erecting another nuclear power station - Pebble Bed Modular Reactor.... You know it's environmental justice, women's issues , it's ... it dominates my life still....*

Jane continues to be a committed church worker and devotes time to female 'street children'. Social justice continues to be a part of her life:

*....I believe in the whole peace and justice role of the church and right up today we have a peace and justice in our church. And I know we have had ministers who have wanted to get rid of it and I've always.... no you have to.... if you have conflicts you can preach Jesus Christ - and preach and encourage people to be strong in their faith but it has to be in the context. It can never be in a vacuum. We had to respond to what is happening - so political and economical in the country - you have got to link it up otherwise it doesn't make sense - it really doesn't make sense. And a lot of people don't like it. I mean if they ask me to do a workshop, I will do it and I will look at the plan and what's in the newspaper - how we're responding to this issue, when you do it. I've been*

*involved with female street children for years and years now also and I do exactly the same with the female street children you know....*

#### **4.2.2 Individual consciousness in the present context**

The participants in this study regard their experiences in the Black Consciousness Movement as being important for their development of consciousness against oppression. They each define their present consciousness differently but continue to uphold the belief in a single humanity and in personal self worth.

Harold maintains a Black Consciousness view but couches it in an Africanist context:

*I still see myself as a Black African. I do not - at this stage... I do not want to be accepted by whites. Amongst our people I treat every black person as an individual but as an equal to me...sitting next to me is not a white man ....I will call him mister... because of his status that's as far as everything else is concerned he is my equal and the same with every other person - they're my equal. There's no such thing as I will first look at the person's colour and say hey you are this....*

Betty found that Black Consciousness made her more amenable to others but admits she has had to consciously fight against becoming anti-white:

*...it made me more open to accepting people as people easily. I also want to confess that at a certain stage in my consciousness it made me very racist - anti-white to the point of really being racist. And at some stage now in my life I find myself guilty, you know, of falling back to the old habits. They complain a lot at work about my being hard on the whites. But during my time outside in exile I met someone like Father Osmos, Father John Osmos who also found it very difficult to get through to me and he also said that he thinks that I still have that bitterness towards white people. But I think I'm still getting there with regards to this....*

For the activists in this study the term 'black' was a way of unifying the oppressed. It was also important for breaking through the psychological barriers imposed by the apartheid state. Roy's view is relevant:

*I considered myself black and did not.... and still do not regard myself as being Indian in terms of ones origins to the extent that it has any value or any relevance - but otherwise one has always seen the race label as being a divisive label. BC for us was an ideology as it were of togetherness - of uniting the oppressed people of South Africa. And to that extent it was an advance on anything else we had come across.....*

Activists have a non-racial outlook in terms of the way they view the world today and they continue to identify strongly with the oppressed. Reshi had no difficulty in continuing to identify himself as a 'black' person as a way of expressing his solidarity with the oppressed:

*I think I still would see myself as being black and I think a contributing factor to that is the fact that in terms of deprivation, poverty, imbalances we... I still find the majority of the black people suffering this kind of consequences in South Africa because the privileged class - the privileged group of people that we know have been white. They still have the privileges. They're still very much in control of the economy. They still run with the whole ...world of South Africa. And as much as we would say that we now need to recognise that we are equal but in real terms we're not. So yes, I would still very much believe that we need as black people to be conscious of this. And I think people are - the youth are conscious of this. It's not in any way propagating any racial hatred to any extent because I don't think we'd like to go backward rather than forward but in the process of moving forward I think I make an effort to make the youth realise that there's still much more to be done for us to be able to believe that we are equal.*

Though Bobby no longer holds a Black Consciousness view on race, he acknowledges that internationally race continues to impact on people's lives:

*The political views on race are still very strong. ... but it is my view that race shapes. I'm looking more in terms of black/ white because I've been looking at it more internationally. I visited India recently and you meet a lot of people who have been talking... You begin to look at the whole problem of European .....*

*In fact, I don't look at the black position anymore the way I used to. I think even the way we think about change has always been shaped by the intellectual debates of Europe. Not only our oppression but our struggle for liberation has been guided by..... Someone in the BC movement has raised in a very crude and straight forward way - the communist party - they're all whities anyway. But if you look at Marx, the whole Marxist ideas emerge in first world Europe in the industrial revolution - completely ignorant of what was happening elsewhere in the world. Its science itself is structured both as knowledge but as a culture of European life and modernisation is on the basis of European culture and the exclusion of bodies of knowledge, the exclusion of cultures of life styles of values continues up to today ... globalisation by global corporations but global corporations that operate from the first world. But Japan becomes so American in the way it does its business. So I don't think the question of not colour but culture....*

All the participants in this study engaged in struggles with their own consciousness, and in raising their awareness of racial oppression have been able to recognise other forms of oppression. Hardiman & Jackson (Hardiman & Jackson in Adams, Bell & Griffin: 16 – 17) found through their involvement with people who experienced other forms of oppression (isms), that the social identity development model they used for courses on racism described corresponding processes in relation to oppressions other than racism. I believe that the stories in this study show that overcoming psychological oppression in the area of race contributes to understanding oppression and recognising discrimination, stereotyping and labelling in other forms. Reshi's awareness of the growth of his gender awareness illustrates that development in one sphere:

*I don't think I was ultra-sensitive and highly conscious at that stage like now I am because I've slowly developed I slowly learnt about the whole gender differences...*

Reshi extends that consciousness to other spheres:

*I think we'll always be involved in some sort of development work-making people conscious about themselves, their environment and their rights...*

*...Identity... about community, responsibility, about family, about health, about AIDS, something that I think somehow fits in with this whole consciousness that I'm talking about. It very much fits in with that. Ja so I think that it's still very relevant today in terms of what I found relevant in my youth.....*

Bobby expressed the view that from the time they became politically aware, they interpreted everything politically:

*Everything had a political interpretation whether it was the church, whether it was culture, theatre....*

In addition, Bobby asserted that even in those very early beginnings their consciousness was shaped by an awareness of all forms of oppression:

*We probably went through the best, ... We went through the church which gave us philosophy and theology. There was philosophy, asking deeper questions about who we were and the church left itself, was more a question of humanity and relationships. But there were other issues that were clearly intellectual at a very early stage....The question of gay people.... I've heard about and come across the question of women. You know that was all in that early themes and issues. Okay so there was that church stuff, there was the Black consciousness stuff, there was the congress stuff and the BC stuff was... Paula Freire as organising... Now that's when we.... a lot of us started to mature and really begin to shape our skills....*

There was a definite rejection by all participants to the 'coloured/Indian' label inherited from the apartheid regime. Vivienne provides insight into their quest not only to bring together the oppressed groups but also to reject the imposition of an oppressive identity and develop a national identity:

*...But not just in terms of force of numbers in bringing all oppressed people together but also in asserting an identity that was different from the narrow ethnic identities that were being imposed on one. So there was this solidarity of all oppressed groupings but also the need to assert a South African identity that transcends the ethnic identity that was being imposed by apartheid onto you and I think for us it was really a moment in our political development that we used.*

Vivienne concludes that that grounded identity is what has remained with her:

*...we had that type of bravado to go in and do things that were not being done and we had no fear whatsoever. We just had the view, we wanted to be heard and we looked at the best way to make our point of view and I think this experience, growing up in this way, trying to forge an identity that was distinctive, an identity that more linked to how we saw ourselves rather than an imposition, an imposed identity, was what helped. Because once you have that type of grounding it can't be taken away from you....*

Algonda's conflict with racial categorisation was highlighted when she first joined the ANC and continues to the present:

*.....when I joined the ANC years later - that was a very important part of it - people came and said to me 'coloured' and so forth that was the worst insult because we grew up in a different era of course. You're supposed to be proud of this coloured... I'm proud of being black! I kept having strange arguments with them. That period was what gave the confidence to me to argue and even though these were supposed to be leaders of the ANC and important people, I could stand my ground and argue about my identity as being a black person and why I rejected the term coloured and all those type of things. That firmly established.... And when I think today people are supposed to, you know, affirmative action, employment equity act ...and I think it is so unfair when all our lives we got to respect that...*

Betty Leslie finds her personal views on race are in conflict with the requirements she has to conform to in her job situation in the defence force. She explains her difficulties with the 'coloured' label:

*....I find it difficult to work with it. I'm forced to work with it. My job... every September I get what's this?... targets, racial targets for representivity within the defence force, 64% have to be African, 10% have to be coloured...  
...and then I'm forced to ask, 'How many coloureds have applied?'  
....Ja so you've got to do it....*

*..... I'm not sure if I'll ever resolve it because it was demanded that we, for the next twenty years, look at people in these racial categories until we've levelled the playing fields. So it's going to be a battle for quite some time.....*

The sensitivity to oppression has made Terry and Roy voice frustration with the new dispensation in South Africa:

Roy:

*In my view there is still a need for a concerted and a consolidated... a very definite struggle for... to bring about equality that we all struggled for - economic, social equality - even political equality. It was also in the days of struggle... it was unthinkable for us that we could have the kind of leaders we have... The leaders in this country don't think of themselves as being servants of the people. We struggle and everything we learnt of in the early days of our youth with Paulo Freire and the writings of and readings of the list - lessons and lectures - Malcolm X and so on were on an egalitarian society. For us that always meant leaders should always be part of the people, with the people and their earning power and their fortune should be pegged at the same level as ordinary people.....*

Terry:

*...to me the struggle is not yet over you know and especially the way the government - the decisions this government is making.... Ja it's not what we struggled for - so for me the struggle is still incomplete.....*

## Chapter 5

### The Stories

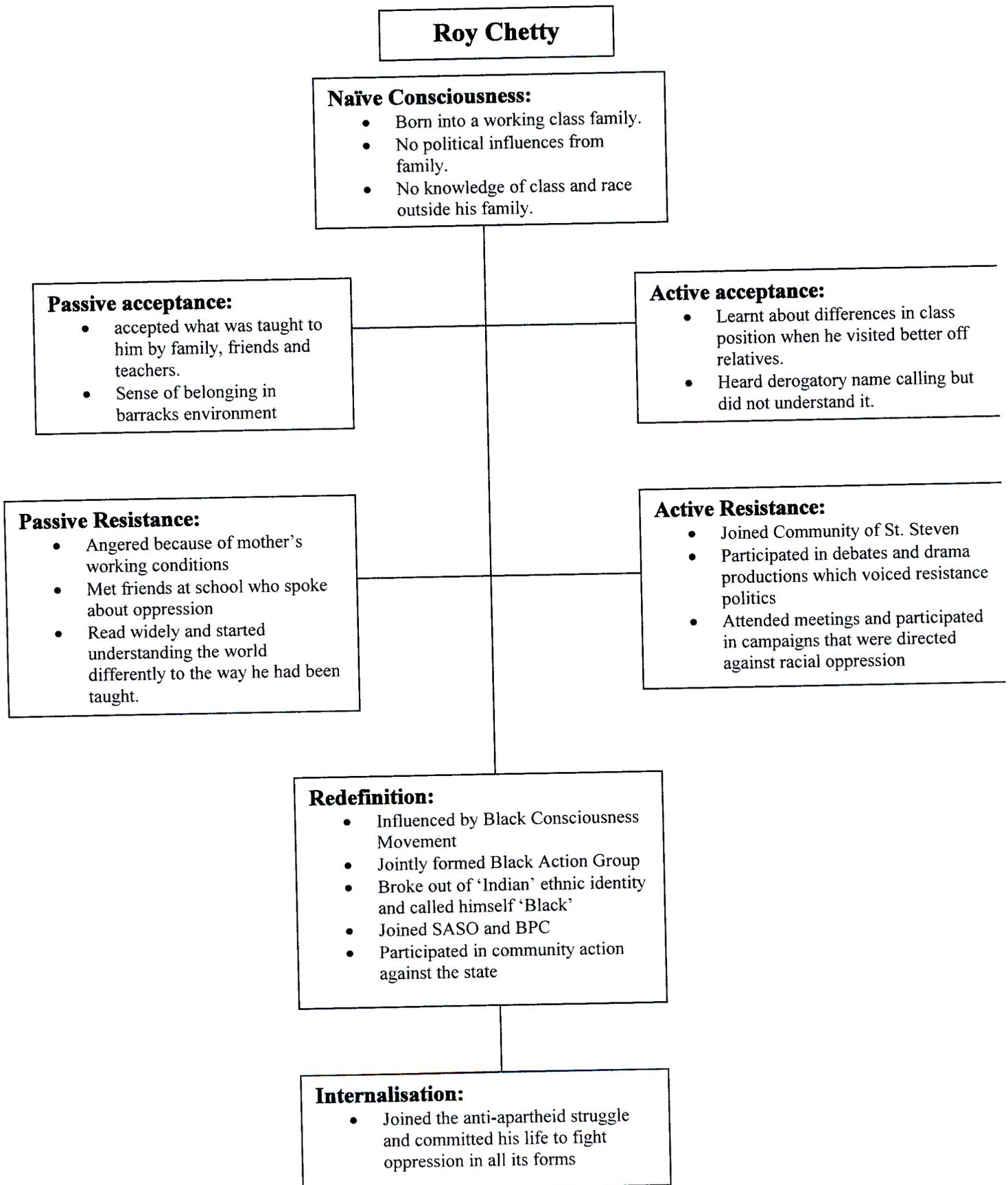
As it became known, via the grapevine, that I was doing this research, I received a great deal of interest from many individuals who were active during that period. This study is by no means exhaustive as many individuals could not be contacted during the limited time available to do this research. Individuals who must be mentioned who were part of the story and are referred to by individuals in this study are: Vis (Ivan) Pillay, Kamba (Coastal) Govender, Myron Peters, Segie Naidoo from the Durban group. Individuals referred to by Cape Town participants but not interviewed were: Johnny Issel, Christine Xunta, Danile Landingwe, Henry Isaacs and Father Clive McBride.

I will tell the oral stories of fourteen individuals whom I interviewed.

<p><b>8 are part of the Durban group. They are:</b> Roy Chetty (My husband and life partner) - male Bobby Marie - male Reshi Singh - male Betty Leslie - female Jaya (Mervyn) Josie - male Vivienne Taylor (nee Josie) - female Steven David (interviewed via email) - male Daya (Joe) Pillay (interviewed via email) - male</p>	<p><b>6 are part of the Cape Town group. They are:</b> Harold Dixon - male Jane Lawrence - female Algonda Perez (my sister) - female Terry Grove (nee Mathews) - female Maria Wood (nee Perez - my sister) - female Allan Liebenberg (interviewed via email) - male</p>
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Only two stories are included in this chapter. From Durban I have chosen Roy Chetty and from Cape Town Algonda Perez. These choices were extremely difficult as each story has merits of why it should be selected. The criteria I used for selecting these two stories are firstly for contrast: Cape Town / Durban; male / female; working class/middle class; of Indian descent; classified 'coloured' during apartheid and secondly because both stories provide fairly clear journeys through Hardiman & Jacksons stages of identity development. The other stories can be viewed in appendix 15. Below is a brief summary

of Algonda and Roy's journeys through Hardiman & Jackson's stages of identity development.



## Algonda Perez

### Naïve Consciousness:

- Born into a middle class family.
- Parents have a consciousness of resistance

### Passive acceptance:

accepted what was taught to her by family, friends and teachers.

### Active acceptance:

- Learnt about physical racial features from community members
- Experienced implementation of group areas act at school
- Noticed poor children living in squatter camp next to school

### Passive Resistance:

- Parents inculcated notion of oneness of human beings
- Parents actively voiced anti-government opinions
- Mentally questioned what influential adults said about the status quo
- Learnt more about oppression from influential teachers

### Active Resistance:

- Exposed to the ideas of the Black Consciousness Movement
- Joined SABSA
- Participated in student and community struggles

### Redefinition:

- Influenced by Black Consciousness Movement
- Rejected the 'coloured' ethnic label imposed by the regime
- Identified self as 'black'
- Rejected Euro-centric notions of beauty

### Internalisation:

- Actively campaigned against apartheid regime
- Joined the ANC
- Strong feminist who continues to fight against racial and gender oppression

## **5.1 The Early years**

### **5.1.1 Respondent from Durban**

#### **5.1.1.1 Roy Chetty**

*He was brought up in Mt. Edgecombe (about 12km outside Durban). His official name is Dhavendaren Chetty and Roy is what he refers to as his 'calling name'. He was born in Clare Estate but after the untimely death of his father in 1957 when he was just 3 years old, his family moved back to the home of his maternal grandparents in the sugar mill barracks. While he, his mother and his sister were cared for by their grandfather, his eldest brother was taken in by his maternal uncle who was a teacher living in Clairwood. Following the death of his grandfather in 1965, his family were forced to vacate the barracks and they found a house in Merebank in 1967.*

*He attended Natest Primary School on the Natal Estates and started his high school education at Merebank High in 1967.*

*Roy talks about his childhood experiences:*

I think I've always known that we were poor. I always knew that growing up. My stay in Mt. Edgecombe made me realise quite early on that those of us in Mt Edgecombe, even though we lived reasonably comfortable lives, that we were people who were not well off. Those who were outside of the Mt. Edgecombe complex saw those of us who were of Mt Edgecombe as those who were of the labouring classes - what was stupidly called farm areas. So one knew that and when one visited other places one began to see quite early the disparity in life style. You could see the difference in getting up in the morning brushing your teeth with charcoal from a communal tap and brushing your teeth with toothpaste in a bathroom, in places like Westville or Mayville. Some of the differences you saw in places like newly built Chatsworth - you envied that because it had an internal flush toilet. In Mt. Edgecombe you had to go to a communal toilet about 100m away from where you stayed. So those were some of the distinctions one knew. One didn't dwell on that because all of us lived the same way. So in that sense, the entire population of the barracks was of a particular class. We didn't look down on each other and there was a sense of community belonging. I would probably put my earlier awakenings to being mindful of that - about noticing differences. My consciousness doesn't spring from when I was in Merebank. I could have been just about anywhere.

By the time - about 1960 - my mother had to work in the clothing factory. I think already the need to support her family arose so she took on a job at a clothing factory and soon after possibly round about '64 '65 my sister left school to also get into the clothing factory. I think more than anything else, that was the

beginning of my consciousness which was probably from the sheltered surroundings I found myself in; 2 members of my immediate family had gone to the factory to work and one always felt that - in those days one felt it very acutely. And I think I still do. When one thinks of women working one began to understand the hardships that face them and that I think to a large extent shaped me into whatever I've done with the rest of my time. The fact that in Merebank and other places I joined people only helps to - organisationally helps to work with people and to try to find a way to better understand the world and what was going on. I think my own sense of economic oppression was also stark.

I should probably indicate as well that Mt. Edgecombe might not have been all that idyllic. The racial differences also understood by me already then at a primary age. My grandfather had to work at the Sugar Mill and his task was a menial task. There was a discrepancy between Whites, Indians and even the Africans in Mt Edgecombe at that stage. The Indians were herded to live in barracks. The African population, which I've now recognized as being migrant workers of some sort, were living in hostel type situations not far from the Indian areas and the Whites were living a type of colonial life in substantial homes. Some of those houses are still around in the Mt Edgecombe area the last time I looked. They were probably a bit like the railway homes that Whites occupied. So far as my memory serves me, those of us who were not working at the mill had limited contact or no contact with the White population so there was the only sense in which we thought of them was in terms of the 'bogie'. For instance the estate manager of the barracks was a white person by the name of Beasley. He was feared especially after my grandfather passed away we thought Mr. Beasley might pounce upon us and find us there. But otherwise one knew there was a racial difference and later on a class difference. There was in Mt. Edgecombe already a school for the Whites, a school for the Indians, and one could see those differences. But we lived separately so to that extent they were not too much a part of my shaping but one understood there was that type of difference already then.

I think my early school days std. 6, std. 7 were fairly normal study student days. I think I began to flex my own world, my independence - to vocalise or to face resistance at various little forms from about standard 8 onwards when I would talk. I used to be hitherto a fairly quiet, shy boy. I think I grew out of my shyness round about possibly '69, '70, '71. My awakenings would have been round about '69. I owe my early organisational membership to the *Merebank Youth Council*. Already early on already round about '67 when I was in Merebank a friend of mine, Scotty introduced me to the *Merebank Youth Council*. And that began my interaction with other organisations.

Even in a place like Mt Edgecombe my love for reading grew. In Mt Edgecombe we had a library there. I used to attend with my aunts and sister. So that love for reading and books is still with me. In Merebank I continued with that trend of books.

The *Merebank Youth Council* was useful also helping to bring me out of my shell in the sense that it organised annual speech contests and there was in addition to the social, the table tennis and the discussions one felt part of belonging to something.

Unfortunately now looking back one would not think it was the most radical of places but all of us started somewhere. The speech contest was named after Robert Kennedy and I think some of the members of the Youth Council at that stage were very impressed and inspired by Robert Kennedy who came down to South Africa around about '67. So that speech contest ran for quite a while. I was a member round about then possibly '68 possibly right into 1971. It went through various stages. I do recall taking part, though miserably, in one of those speech contests. But, it was the kind of places that one went to. At least it helped one to focus on public speaking. There was no real training or anything like that. One just got in front and spoke like you did at school. And eventually one prepared for a speech and wrote down a speech and went to make it and talk. Now one just speaks from the knowledge one has and from conviction and not from a particular topic which used to be then rather stupid like '*Is the East better than the West*' or '*Is the West better than the East*' and that kind of thing. But those were that kind of debates, topics that used to go in those days along the hippie culture. All of us took part in it and we took part in it quite seriously.

A lot of the organisational work was done to great detail and the organisers of these, the executive of that, were not political or in a sense radical political students. They were ordinary high school students probably round about matric or had just about finished matric and they would set up this. The kind of thing - the growth process of young people - part of the development of the young people in a fairly a-political way, which just meant to be better equipped for coping with adult life.

## **5.1.2 Respondent from Cape Town**

### **5.1.2.1 Algonda Perez**

*The childhood stories of the Perez sisters are integrally bound through familial connections.*

*Carmel, the writer of this dissertation, was born in Black River, Cape Town and Algonda and Maria were born in Bridgetown in Athlone, Cape Town. Their parents were John and Lillian Perez. They were sandwiched in the middle of a family of six children, Carmel being the second eldest and the eldest daughter and Maria the third youngest.*

*All three sisters attended St. Theresa's Primary School, a Catholic school in Welcome Estate, Athlone in the Cape. Carmel and Algonda attended St. Augustine's Secondary School. Carmel completed her teacher training at St. Augustine's while Algonda completed her matriculation at Livingstone High School in Lansdowne. Maria attended the Immaculata High School, one of two girls only 'coloured' Catholic Schools.*

***Algonda speaks of their experiences when they were growing up:***

I think we were very different in that we had parents who would discuss things with us for one and told us... of discussing in 1961 declaring a republic and other things, I remember saying to daddy 'Why don't you just declare war on the whites' and he said, 'Oh my child you don't know what war is.' These are things that stick out in my memory of growing up.

We had the Barry's who were close family friends coming in,... and our friends from the church, the African friends also down in Silvertown, Mr. Van Aux. These were people from across the racial spectrum. I think this made us different to everybody. Not particularly in our eyes, but in the community's eyes.

I remember having a consciousness of things happening of what was going on around in the greater community and that I think comes from our parents ... and things like at St. Theresa's where we were at this school in the middle of a squatter camp... and the children begging at the fence at lunch time break and how I used to feel guilty that I had food and they didn't and I used to give these children bread.

I think partly also religious background. Our family was very religious and that justice and peace - I remember always hearing about justice and peace in church. I remember long ago having a discussion with Fr. Albeus<sup>30</sup>. I don't know which trial was going on at that time and Fr. Albeus said, 'At least the judges will be fair' and I remember the outcome of this, in my opinion the judges were not fair. I can't remember the exact trial but I remember the discussion with him. It was a false thing but my sense of betrayal at the end of that when the judiciary was not impartial. Those are the things that I remember that made us different from the rest of the community.

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<sup>30</sup> Fr. Albeus was an Irish Catholic priest who was a family friend.

I read in the newspaper. You know daddy used to come home and read the newspaper with his feet on the table reading the newspaper in Bridgetown in particular, and me sitting next to him and reading there next to him also. Those are things that I remember that I'm aware of...

I remember on an occasion we were with Fr. Albeus at Strandfontein and we wondered onto the Muizenberg side of the beach. These policemen came with dogs and chased us off the beach because this is the white beach and Fr. Albeus came down to say 'Oh sorry we didn't see the signs' and - there were no signs. Those kinds of things are still stuck in my head.

Another thing is we couldn't go on those swings and slides.... We weren't allowed to go there. These things stuck in my mind and it is part of what made me so determined as a very young child to do something about it.

I think at school one of the things that stuck out in my memory was when the republic came up then they wanted us to sing at St. Augustine's. I remember I was standard 8. They wanted us to sing the anthem and I refused and I had to stand up and the nuns were so angry. 'It's your country,' they said but I said, 'But it's not my anthem.'

It's also funny you know when I remember going to St. Theresa's which was in the midst of this community that was racially mixed and having people of all kinds around at home and so forth and then going to St. Augustine's was actually a 'coloured' school in a 'white' area and passing through that area having stones thrown at us by these white kids and us throwing... and getting them... .

## **5.2 Raising Political Consciousness**

### **5.2.1 Respondent from Durban**

#### **5.2.1.1 Roy Chetty**

It's part of growing up. One doesn't set out as wanting to take a political route. The Youth Council was a place for friends to gather in as much as it was a club. I think this is some characteristic of my early life and probably later as well. I seem to have had a whole mix of friends at different levels. On entry into Merebank all my immediate friends, my neighbours and I used to kick ball and we used to play billiards, table tennis and so on. So I had a whole circle of friends around where I lived. I had another level of friends at the Youth Council. Simultaneous

with that I would have friends at the classroom level. So there were probably about three or four different levels of friends. And then that seems to have gone on my entire time in Merebank and they would all be separate and I would possibly be the one person who would be in all of those different things.

But I think round about eight, nine and ten when some of my friends didn't make it... They were in my class in standard six, seven and possibly eight, dropped off because of the streaming of the school where one was being pushed into advanced grade and ordinary grade. So already in classrooms friends were being separated at that level. And at the other end you've also got friends who didn't pass standard eight. The system was not as forgiving as it is now. There were definite and very distinct cut off points. So students for one reason or another, may not have made it into the next level. So I lost a bit of friends along the way due to that. So some of the fellows I played table tennis with then became distant friends ...

Standard nine and ten brought me into a different class with a whole new set of friends as well so that I can't really say how but I think it is the classroom connection that pushed me into contact with people with whom I became friends for the next few years until about '74. So from about '69 to '75 I had a range of friends and this class of people were students who were doing standard nine and ten met again for the purposes of study ....

It was through study purposes we began to meet and I think apart from that we also round about the same time a youth leader had come from America and he was known to people in my class - people like Bobby, Bobby Marie and Myron. This youth leader was Tony Govender who had come back. He was from Merebank. He was part of the Presbyterian Church. He was the youth leader in the Presbyterian Church who had been sent to America probably for some training or on some church visit. He came back full of hope and full of stories and I recall very distinctly attending a meeting down in the basement of the church, where Tony addressed us and was full of enthusiasm when he reported on his trip.

One thing led to another and we all tended to gravitate around there. Tony, a part of his mission was, if I understand it correctly, because he was the direct link with the Presbyterian Church, was to have a youth group around him. In addition to the youth in the church who attended normal Sunday school, Tony was open to having a whole lot of other people around him. I think we took advantage of the situation, maybe not deliberately, but we gathered as friends - Tony was part of the group. We became a group at that point which I think round about that time gave itself a name, *The Community of St. Steven*. The leading lights of that group apart from Tony, was Mervyn Josie and Reshi Singh.

These were the youngsters of about the same age. Those of us who were slightly younger would've been Roy Naidoo, Segie Naidoo, Myron, and later on much later on round about '71 Anand Naidoo, Segie's older brother joined us. He joined a group that was quite well formed by then. But in the early days it was just the youngsters - those of us who were studying, especially in '71 possibly even as early as 1970. Tys, Welcome Tys joined us. He was part of the church structure, the youth of that church. Betty was there - Betty came with another friend, one Yvonne and someone else. There were about 3 of them from Wentworth ... I mustn't miss out when I say Mervyn I must also include at that stage Vivienne Josie and Jean Josie. Neville was still much younger.

St. Steven, as I understood, was supposed to have been a martyr who was stoned to death for his beliefs and so the group which appeared to outsiders to be a Christian group, took on that name. We were linked to the church in the sense that we had a base provided for by the church in which one could meet, talk, .... there was no formal meeting as such but we just hung around together until we got permission to renovate some lower level hall.

The group also began to form itself round that activity and this basement was renovated and it was painted in largely black with a lot of psychedelic colours. It was the time when we were also under the influence of the external media, influence of hippie culture and so a lot of the love peace signs and the psychedelic motifs and the décor of the hippie period were with us. We painted it and the chaps there were quite artistic and each one did quite a lot. It had lights. It had luminous mounts of fluorescent lighting with hippie pictures and drawings. I don't recall working too hard in that place but obviously other fellows had worked very hard to get it into the shape that it was in because it turned out to be a very comfortable place.

We were able to use it as a study base and for all of our matric year we studied and used that as a place to work through and towards the exams. We worked well into the night and throughout the night at studying. Some were at different levels of study. Some were in matric and others were in eight and nine and so on.

If one remembers that those were the times of the Beatles and John Lennon and all of us sported long hair, bell-bottom clothes, funky t-shirts and that kind of thing. We were all influenced by the films, the media, Woodstock, 'Soul to Soul' the movie. So we were I think all of us built into that.

During the time of the study group and as the group developed, we began to focus as well on the need to be non-racial and to link hands with the youngsters of Wentworth. The basement proved to us that we had a spot, a meeting place. Somewhere the idea of a coffee bar came on and it looked like an easy thing for

us to operate - coffee bar together with hotdogs and coffee. So you had music. Not anything discoish but there was music and strobe lighting all of that with dancing and it was a place to be in - it was a club. It brought in young people. People knew it to be a fixture which was a place to be and people came through. It was self-funding - it generated its own funds.

We had some youngsters who would come visiting us from Cape Town - part of the Presbyterian Church and I think round about 1969, 1970. We had groups of youngsters coming, particularly during the Christmas period. There would always be kombi loads of people coming in....

In 1971 we made a conscious decision, having just completed our matric exam, that we would then raise the funds to hire a kombi to take us down to Cape Town. Many meetings were held, cake sales were held, funds were raised and we went to Cape Town. I think all of us were there and we went down to Strandfontein. But first we went to Reverend Volkwyn and having spent one night in his garage it was just a kombi load - Hi-ace - he then took us onto the church site and we camped at the site for about 2 weeks I think. On this site we met with the people who came and spoke with us, lots of the church type, reverends, youth groups and what have you.

One of the characters impressed us with saying that although he was required to say baas he always said baasted (bastard) at the end. The fellow was fairly prominent then. He used to make big speeches. But that was the tone. We met people from the Christian Institute as well on that trip. That trip was quite a radical Christian tour because it took us to the Christian Institute. We had lunch at the Christian Institute one day.

So we got a fair amount of exchange with people and already by the end of '71 felt we were reasonably radical. We were still the group and we were already a group in search of - well we had a cause - but we were in search of finding out ways of how we could bring about.... already then I think uppermost in our minds was a non racial democracy in the country. So we were already beginning to focus on that.

Side by side during that time we had come into contact and probably about for me the first of an ANC person. She had been Bobby's aunty Poomoney Poonen who used to come in. We knew her. We knew she was one of those people who was hounded by the police and she would talk to us.

I think round about '71 the group also went down to the Drakensberg and we were a non racial group taken then by Murkott who was at that stage courting Jean Josie. That night we were somewhere around Giant's Castle and we decided

to camp on the side of a stream, and camped virtually in a bush. There was no real camp site or anything like that. There was a whole lot of us. We put up for the night and round about 9 'o clock we were all rudely disturbed. They introduced themselves as people from the Northern Natal, Ladysmith branch of the special branch and they got a report that there was a multi-racial crowd out there and they were sent to investigate. That was our first encounter with the special branch as they then set about taking down our names and addresses.

I think just about one person was smart enough to give a false name ... there might have been others but Jean gave a false name. She called herself something like Singh or something like that. We discovered that because just about a week when we got home, the special branch from Durban came knocking at each of our doors wanting to interview us about that trip and why we went and who we were and what have you... So we tried to explain and I tried to explain in turn when they came to me that we were a youth group of people who had got a lift and we went there and it was nothing else but one of the questions they asked me was, 'Who was this Singh?' and I just pretended I did not know this person. I said I just met her for the first time. And I know they went to Mervyn's house and they asked him about this person and they also said they did not know. So it was that kind of a situation, our first brush with the special branch and how thorough they would be about something as silly as the trip to the berg.

During this time this group also put on plays, passion plays round about Easter and we would... I think initially they were not passion plays they were just plays, thought provoking plays, mainly just in the Merebank area. Round about '72 we did a passion play which was then taken to places in Chatsworth and to Kwa Mashu. At Kwa Mashu I think it was at the Kwa Mashu Hall, we had done the play there. This was all part of taking a message of resistance and also cutting across the different townships. I think the play would also have been in the Wentworth area.

Round about 1972 it was time for us to get to university. Even before this the group began to get a feeling of its own strength. Having been involved in the different activities, the group decided to try to make contact with the Black Consciousness group, the SASO grouping.

The motivation I think at that stage was that we... I don't know which came first but fairly early on I recall I saying very deliberately that we wanted to use the BC group to - for purposes of - I don't how we vocalised it or how we put it in that way - the Liberation Struggle - that we felt that we needed to get involved in the liberation struggle and we wanted to get closer to the BC group with the purpose of using it to achieve these aims. We didn't really know too much of it at that stage.

Quite early on then round about this stage we also called ourselves - a shift away from The Community of St. Steven - we'd called ourselves Black Action Group. This group was going to become a radical group which would be a pressure group on other organisations and other bodies. One of the things was that the group would try ... and see.... I think round about 1972 a fair amount of things happened round about 1972.... This action group constituted itself again with more youngsters with more people from the Wentworth area. Eugene Skeef is a name that sticks in... and there was another young man who was with him who had come up with Eugene, a chap who was virtually speaking with fire each day. And they joined us. It was this group as it was, together with the chap from Wentworth, Eugene and his friend that chap that made up the section that virtually attached itself or offered itself to the BC movement.

It was this group which went to the Presbyterian Church retreat at Eston which is just outside of Pietermaritzburg. The Presbyterian Church has a retreat there and we'd gone there for a weekend workshop which was completely organised by ourselves. And we had a whole range of things that we wanted to do. And that became a place we frequented over the years. We took the creative art students and helped form them at that retreat. This Black Action group formed itself during that particular time.

One of the things that this group did was when the Presbyterian Church was having a national meeting, a conference of sorts at Eston, this Black Action Group decided to go and demonstrate at the venue calling for them to become much more non-racial. I think that would be the thrust of it that the pro white section of the Presbyterian Church was being condemned and the group had gone up there as an act of conscientising.

The people who used to visit us from Cape Town were also attending this conference. One of the things we realised was - that was a night demo - we felt that the chap who was with us and with whom we had visited as well in '71, when he arrived for that conference, he didn't readily join ranks with those of us who were demonstrating there. He tended to be a little more guarded in his approach so there wasn't a ready embracement of our ideas by that section - by the black section - so they probably thought we were just too radical. We were shouting for a black agenda. That was one of the things we did at Eston . We would have done other things in the course of time but I think as we got integrated with the BC movement, our work tended to focus on the agenda of the BC movement. The Black Action Group virtually got swallowed up into the movement, Black Consciousness.

There was a general progression. I think The Community of St. Steven... what we can say... at some point we did run into difficulties with the church because during the time when we were putting up the plays and the coffee bar the church elders at the Presbyterian Church were becoming very uncomfortable with the youth there and they thought we were attracting the attention of the police. They did have night meetings and I know they would have these meetings and they would call upon Tony and Mervyn to explain what was going on and give an account. And at the end of it they took a decision that we were banned from using the place. So they closed the coffee bar effectively. But The Community of St. Steven didn't owe its name or its allegiance to the church so it could have stuck in the background.

I think it was just a general progression because for us to be a Community of St. Steven, meant that we had to consider ourselves as a church group first and foremost and quite a few of us were not Christians. Apart from myself, Reshi, Segie, Anand a fair number of us were not. So, later on when other people joined us as well it wasn't... we always considered ourselves probably ecumenical, but religion wasn't such a strong thing in the group.

University was the following year and I don't think university itself would have brought about the Black Action Group. Black Action Group might have formed as part of again the kind of influences that we were getting in from the BC movement. But remember I'm also missing out chunks here.

Remember 1971 was the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the South Africa white republic and brought with it a whole lot of political activity as well. The activities: first of all we had the kind of activities during the course of '71 our matric year ... There was resistance and protest at the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary by black people. The churches were also showing a resistance to this. There was a call for clemency to be shown to political prisoners and to those on Robben Island and a huge campaign was mounted. We joined that campaign. We assisted where we could. We stood and demonstrated.

I recall standing in Gardiner Street on the grounds of the gardens of the City Hall facing Gardiner Street and standing next to people like Archbishop Hurley holding up placards calling for clemency for political prisoners. There was a whole range of meetings being addressed throughout Durban. We used to attend those. I attended several.

Ironically some of the people who influenced us and we listened to them and whom we had no ideological relationship to at all - but people spoke out then and young people listened to in order to get ideas - were people like Alan Paton. I had gone to meetings that Alan Paton addressed in town. Gone to meetings

addressed by Norman Middleton. We'd also gone to Mewa Ramgobin who also in '71 embarked on a campaign that was his campaign, he campaigned for clemency for political prisoners. He also went about talking at various venues and he had come to Merebank to hold such a meeting.

At the same time there was a move to revive the NIC. Again Mewa Ramgobin was doing that. That's when I began to work a little with the Indian Congress side of it. In that kind of campaign I had other friends in class as well people who were outside of class and I began to interact with people like Kamba Govender, Vis Pillay, Krish Rabilal, Satish Juggernaut. But with the campaigns launched by the congress types I assisted with those and attended those meetings as well. So that's another section to the development of youth at that time. Side by side with that, all of us, including *The Community of St. Steven* people, plus the people initially associated with reviving the NIC, all of us worked in MRA<sup>31</sup> then. We used to attend the public meetings of the MRA and at that point in 1970, '71 there was a campaign to take the city council to court over the selling prices of the houses of the residents.

The city council was not pegging a price, putting a price onto their houses and the people wanted to know what those prices would be so that they could get title to those homes. So that became quite a battle which had to go to the high court. That brought about people like D.K. Singh, the attorney and also an NIC stalwart who addressed numerous public meetings at the Natraj cinema, a huge cinema that attracted a lot of people. The MRA then would have these meetings and they would have their annual general public meetings at this meeting.

We used to attend some of them and then one of those they called for young people to join them and we, almost all of us from the youth, joined. So we were already then showing that we were wanting to work within the community. A whole bunch of us including Vis Pillay, Satish, Spider Juggernaut, Krish Rabilal, Kamba, joined the MRA and attended their meetings which were held very regularly. We were learning the ropes of what was going on. In those days there was a battle between the Local Affairs Councils, the LACs, and the community residents' associations. The LACs were given limited representations on the city councils countrywide and there was always a huge fight very healthily, a non-collaboration fight when people rejected the LACs. So we used to go into the council mainly to challenge these chaps who were on the LAC and were also on the MRA.

As young people we took on that challenge and I think we were very successful in limiting the kind of damage this LAC member in Merebank could do then. We

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<sup>31</sup> MRA Merebank Ratepayers Association

also provided the labour and we were the foot soldiers for the MRA during that time in its fundraising drive and going and explaining to the people in Merebank what the court action was all about and collecting money from people – R5 from every house or R10 or something like that which we did and part of it was also a fundraising - holding shows in support of the MRA.

During this time also the bread prices went up. And we were still at school. And we then mobilised in the school with the students not to buy bread but make roti and so provide an alternative.

We used the coffee bar, where, overnight we made handwritten, crayon written posters, mini posters to put into students' desks that morning. And because we were prefects in the school we had the run of the school in the morning. We were in charge of the classes and so we could go to each class and put them in. Little things like that just added to the campaign. It wasn't a very big campaign. It was the kind of thing that we were doing already at a school level.

The bus campaign that came about round about 1974 . During this time we were working quite a lot in 1974 with the MRA. The people who worked solidly were Vis, Krish, Satish, Spider, Kamba and myself. We did it... the community of St Steven's group were not too excited by maintaining that kind of work. They were still getting caught up at that point with ASH. We were with the MRA and part of being with the MRA meant that we were delegates to the Western Durban Civic Federation in Chatsworth and we would go to meetings there. It was part of the civic movement because there was a western driven civic federation which included the Clare Estate, Overport area and Sydenham.

But during this time in 1974 we realised that bus-fares were going up. Private bus companies were putting up their prices from about 5c to 10c for a single trip to Durban and we thought we must get the MRA or the ratepayers associations to protest to get the bus company to order to reduce the fare – the bus company refused. The MRA didn't want to tackle that issue head on. They were still dealing with it at a very low level. When we realised that they were not going to do that we youngsters broke away from the MRA in so far as the transport sub-committee was concerned, and we set up and we called a public meeting in which we discussed this. The public meeting was held, if memory serves me right, in Raj Mahal Hotel, in the hall there. We discussed the issue and this public meeting called for people to join up, become members of the committee. People were elected. We had a string of people. There was an Auntie Joyce from the labour movement, from the clothing factories, she was on the committee, Pastor Singh was also on our committee and he provided us with venues at the Methodist Church Hall in Junagarth Road and the other people who were on it were definitely people like Krish who was the secretary of the Bus Passengers'

Association. The Merebank Bus Passengers' was Vis, myself, Kamba. So that was a little thing that we had which meant we had to negotiate, interact, confront with the bus owners on these issues which we did. We also had several meetings in which they challenged us to run the bus service and see if we could run it at the prices that they were running it. So there was a whole range of things.

At the same time this particular group decided to run a newsletter called '*The Sentinel*' and we contributed to that journal. '*The Sentinel*' ran for a while. It was the beginnings of that group and kept that group going for a while.

At that stage we had rented an outbuilding in Sambulpur Road - a secret hideout from which we ran the campaign. We made posters and one morning we put out huge posters all over Merebank on Dharwar Road and places like that. We wanted to target bus owners so that was just to send the message early on to workers going to work at about 5 'clock in the morning that there was a resistance campaign building up there.

Round about the time ASH was being formed, ASH also rented out property in Sambulpur Road near the Merebank High School - so that was also another secret spot and that was used very much and especially when we shifted base from the coffee bar that became the base. The chaps actually lived on site whereas the one which we had for the bus passengers association that was used more as an organisational place - we didn't sleep there. We used it for having our secret meetings and getting out.

*Sentinel* was also run from there but again *Sentinel* was also run at a small level because we didn't have typewriters in those days. Only one person had a typewriter and that was Satish. And as Vis said the other day<sup>32</sup>, Satish did the typing and everything from his house.

And during this time Satish's father, Thirubeni was also one of our members. Thirubeni was a colourful person in his own right. Here we had an old man who was prepared to join up with us and be part of us and including Mr. Singh was also an old person. So the validity of what we were doing - they were able to identify with it. In as much as we were radical it also indicated that we were not out of step with what the community wanted.

At that point we were young people and we had already known there was a political crisis in the country. We knew that and I think all we were doing at that point was trying to build ourselves and trying to give ourselves some kind of

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<sup>32</sup> this reference is to Vis Pillay's eulogy at Satish Juggernaut's funeral

organisational capacity and depth with which to do things. I think it was still too early days to say that we would organise to do this and do that.

I do seem to recall that at one point we had gone to Eston and part of that discussion - though I might be wrong - that discussion would have been then already evaluating or discussing the formation of ASH. Because one of those workshops was to discuss the formation go into details, the nuts and bolts of it, what it meant or part of it meant having to and this would have come after our interaction with the Black Community Programmes, BC and SASO. It would have come after that. It would also come subsequent to us interacting with the students at Natal University Medical Section UND and residents. So having the whole experience there of BC which would have been all of 1972 and 1973.

There was something that was done very well by BC group was the Sharpeville Day Memorial. That was the day of poetry, drama and theatre done at Alan Taylor residence. We used to go to that. Each year there was a Sharpeville Day Commemoration. I think in one year in 1973 Vivienne and I organised one in Durban Kajee Hall in Leopold Street. This is again another layer.

The whole BC experience was tremendously rich. It's going to take some time for me to unravel which came first and sometimes it's all a blending of the kind of experiences we were having and the enrichment - where our lives were enriched by other people. A lot of these things that one decides to do doesn't come from ones own realisation. You realise you're on a track and you are being influenced in various ways by all kinds of people in as much as others also felt inspired that here was a group out in Merebank and they would want to work closely with.

We were not the only group. Remember that in a place like Durban we had another very dynamic group sitting in Durban and that was made up of Saths Cooper, Strini Moodley.... the Overport group. There was a whole lot of chaps around there because those were university students from Salisbury Island who were also going through their own experience. They had already gone into the BC movement long before we did. They were part of it already.

During the BC period our entire group used to go to various workshops and seminars run either by SASO or Black Community Programmes at Edendale in 'Maritzburg. There was a hall there - in fact that's the Edendale Hall where the BPC was formed in 1972. We used to go to that venue and at that venue the writings of Paulo Freire were discussed and his teachings and so forth. We were trying to learn - all of us were trying to imbibe and trying to understand what this meant - liberation, education and so on. Literacy was something which came as part of the Black Community Programmes which was being pushed later on

by the Black Community Programmes to SASO<sup>33</sup> for instance. SASO began to implement Black Community Programmes and we came to be part of that. And we'd gone in for training then. That would have come in the 1972 period.

But coupled with that there were a whole lot of ideas going around. You had the writers of black theology who were putting up their views - James Cone... a lot of this influence came directly as a result of when one joined, you interacted with people from SASO. Our own readings would have been whatever we could read from around us. But in as much as one could say one tried to read but I think this reading came at a level especially at the time that we were trying to understand what kind of programmes we needed to take. We were not an intellectual group. We had not set ourselves to be that... to a large extent for much of this time we saw ourselves as a black action group.

The love for reading and so on that is there but we have the limitations of being under an apartheid state where books were banned and one couldn't have books and we didn't and a lot of it was what we could hear, the speeches people made.

People like Freire one could still read that - that wasn't as far as I knew, banned. His writings were being discussed. I think the driving force for us during this time was our own experience, our own social experience, our life experiences rather than anything we would have read. We did not take to this or that struggle because of writings but because of our gut feeling. But a conscious decision we did make, especially those of us who were part of the Community of St. Steven, was that we wouldn't go into the Indian politics even if it was with the guise of the congress movement, the NIC. Assist as I did at some level with the Indian Congress but I never - I think I was even in some of the founding meetings of the Indian Congress branch in Merebank - but I never became a member of them. Instead what we did find was that by September/October 1972 Vis Pillay and his brother Daya joined the BC fold, joined the BPC as members of the BPC branch in Merebank. We were able to have that kind of effect on people to get them to join. However, I think they continued at some level. Nobody was that strict about which parties people belonged to. But they had joined and Daya Pillay had gone with me to Hammanskraal for the first - not the founding conference - but the second - the annual conference which was to start later in December 1972. A kombi load of us went from Merebank. Tom, Segie's brother drove us there in his kombi.

We wanted to use, for want of a better word, to use the BC movement. But the movement itself - Steve Biko in particular - one doesn't want to say this just

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<sup>33</sup> SASO - South African Students' Organisation

because he's now no more around to corroborate this - but he in particular was very excited for the fact that there was this group in Merebank and Wentworth which was already there and it seemed to be saying all these things and it was wanting to learn and wanting to be part of the BC movement. And it was already implementing in action what the BC movement wanted to do in getting across breaking the barriers of apartheid Wentworth/ Merebank section for instance. He was particularly excited and he used to come down to Merebank - in particular himself - to come and have discussions with us. He was a regular visitor to Merebank in that sense. In as much as others came as well but one felt particularly pleased as well. Here was the leader of the BC movement taking a particular interest in our group. So we had a very strong relationship with the BC movement. We became part of that.

It is a very easy, natural thing for me. I embrace BC with no reservations. I still have no great reservations about the way it was espoused then. BC to me meant, quite apart from anything else, one was attracted to it because it said in very clear terms to all of us that all those who were oppressed - and it wanted to cut across racial labelling and wanted to cut across all kinds of ethnic lines. The only distinction it had was then about those who were White. But everyone else on the Black side - and that was an easy thing for us to identify with and cut across every kind of ethnic barrier and the so called racial barriers as well. I considered myself black and did not and still do not regard myself as being Indian in terms of ones origins to the extent that it has any value or any relevance but otherwise one has always seen the race label as being a divisive label. BC for us was an ideology as it were, of togetherness, of uniting the oppressed people of South Africa and to that extent it was an advance on anything else we had come across. One knew of nationalist organisations, the ANC, NIC. So these sectarian organisations did not hold any charm for us. I particularly spurned all of those and had never even have I ever flirted with them unlike some people in the BC movement who used to attend and also be members of Black Consciousness - of BPC and NIC at the same time. Again those were for reasons of being politically expedient. They wanted to go up there to ensure that a certain political message was pushed in these organisations. I myself was very uncomfortable with that and definitely would have nothing to do with that and kept away from the NIC because of the Indian label and coupled with that was the nonsense being pushed by the NIC of a debate that was ensuing about the NIC participating in the SAIC. What we did is the Black Action Group was to pamphleteer or to issue pamphlets at an NIC meeting in town. We went in specifically to try and put a message which was actually..... I can't recall the issue but I think it would have been some message to stop the NIC from taking the SAIC route.

Let us not underestimate and take into consideration the richness of the '71, '72, '73 up till the time we left - the period of BC in the country. The kind of cultural

richness, the liberatory richness, the poetry, drama , the speeches - because not only were these locally but some of the best thinking people in the country - committed revolutionaries - that we all had the benefit of - tapes and records of speeches made overseas. People like Angela Davis, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X. These were available to us. What we lacked or lost out in not being able to read the literature, I think we got inspired by these speeches and the courage and determination of the people out in America. I think that sustained a hell of a lot of us because we thought in terms of a way forward - what we would do.

In the music of that period, the Osibisa, the music virtually captures or summarises the feeling of young people: 'We are going heaven knows where we are going but we know we will....' Its that kind of thinking that we couldn't be on the wrong path as long as we continued with it we would get there. How and where and why and what have you - that would come along the way.

One felt the apartheid regime just at the level of life in terms of school, in terms of living and so on... One couldn't see a direct or deliberate way. I think what they did in order to keep us down, they had the machinery of policing and the special branch which we found later on in the period from 1972 onwards when we came under heavy police surveillance, that's when one felt that. Certainly our conscious life time was spent rebelling against anything that the apartheid regime had come through - even its agents through school inspectors who would come and make speeches at school would get heckled. So you had the agents from the apartheid system and you had the teachers. You had very few teachers who would speak out against apartheid. A lot of them were people who acquiesced with the whole thing and others who promoted them. Those who worked in the state department at schools - I mean if you're a school planner you're already viewed with suspicion. Although I don't think we had too much negative feelings against the lecturers but certainly people who worked in places that are now like Truro House, one viewed them with a great deal of suspicion and the chief inspectors of schools were the people who implemented the apartheid system of education and that's where it was meant to grind us in.

During the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Republic the school flag of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary flag was stolen, taken off its pole after it was hoisted, and Bobby was one of those who stole it and disappeared with the flag and it was that kind of resistance and everybody knew these were all acts of defiance. The schools were the areas where we were marshalled and kept in check, kept in place. So the propaganda that came in, came in at the school level.

You could be in a school with this kind of oppressive situation but if you come from a relatively middle class family you're going to try to steer away from the

difficulties. You can be angry about it but you're not really going to take any real decisive action or not be an open rebel. So there is a class content to it.

We viewed the people in town as being chaps from a privileged background and we found that the fact that they were involved in politics as a kind of radicalism of the youth just rebelling against this and that rather than being involved. So we tended to despise them because they're not from the townships... they don't understand - they have rich parents and what have you..... They in turn were being hostile to us. It was unfortunate and unnecessary but you got in some cases somebody like Saths for instance didn't have any nice things to say about the Community of St. Steven. He would say, 'What is this ? This is a church group' and carry on that type of thing. With somebody like Steve Biko somehow grasped the idea of the Community of St Steven and I think he recognised the group as the Community of St. Steven.

## **5.2.2 Respondent from Cape Town**

### **5.2.2.1 Algonda Perez**

Livingstone was a more open political school. It was just what happened with the rise of SABSA and all those things and Sheik Mani and Alan Liebenberg and all of us forming like a Black Consciousness clique at that time and that spilled over and was totally frowned upon by Livingstone. There again I was in the minority because my matric year I was quite isolated because these were all Unity Movement people and here I was coming from a Black Consciousness way of thinking and I got excluded from some clubs that they had at the school.

Livingstone teachers organised... We used to go to ... in Gugulethu... involved in exchanges, student exchanges and actually going into Gugulethu. But I remember something that made me feel... the group that used to come and join us at Livingstone and I remember them being asked to sing... I got so angry about that. It was like putting a label on people because you are African you must be able to sing and then we come with our violins and our pianos....

...and then we had this discussion and we were told that.... Every time that we had these exchanges we let them go onto the stage once and they sing 20 songs so what we must do is limit them.... so get up on stage and say we now call upon.... to sing one musical item.... kind of thing. I felt so ashamed because it was almost like patronising.... it is so funny how these things stick in your head and when you have emotions the emotion is there.

The strike at the UWC and the students coming to our home and it was at that point that I was exposed to Black Consciousness. That was my matric year. '72 was the year of the strike, so it would be the year before my matric year. We got involved with Jimmy Mathews, Johnny Issel, Danile - Julius made a very, very deep impression on me because of his outlook on life....

I'm not a person who goes for big theories but it's practical things to try to help to make the community different. I remember the Bonteheuwel shacks... and how we went at four o'clock in the morning. I think for the first time I became aware of what workers had to go through in order to live.

It also opened my eyes going into people's homes in Bonteheuwel, the poverty and all the kinds of... we were quite sheltered in that way in that we weren't exposed. And something that I remember that sticks in my head giving out those pamphlets and you know in our own home at 5 o'clock in the evening you walk in there's the smell of cooking and in these homes in quite a lot of them there was no cooking going on. I ... thinking about that 'Why was there no cooking?' and in later years I thought, 'No food to be cooked'. ....

And then the campaign we got involved in this *Day of Joy* - that we broke up because we said you can't organise a *Day of Joy* so we went and joined the celebrations.....at the cathedral the hall of St. George's Cathedral. It was the people there who organised it.

... the literacy campaigns. Now we didn't actually teach anybody to read but through the learning of how to do the Paulo Freire methods... that all contributed....

Theo Kotze. ... we met Beyers Naude at that time. I remember he was involved. What has just struck me about all this - how easily our parents got involved. You know it's not easy to open up your home to students which is what daddy offered. He didn't have to.. the students climbing on your furniture and messing up your house and things like that. Mummy was there but she very willingly...

....and even going to the extent of a Muslim - asking Mrs. Abduraman across the road to cook for them. I remember that.... Ashik Mani...

One of the bad things of struggle was learning also that there were spies amongst us. I remember the incident with Jakes<sup>34</sup>.... because it was part of learning about betrayal as well and that is also part of your consciousness - becoming more

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<sup>34</sup> Jakes was a UWC student who frequented the Perez home. When it was suspected that he was a spy, he was given false information which he acted upon and was exposed.

careful about who you associate with so that you can achieve what you set out to achieve. ...set up this huge trap for him and the police arrive at the place where the demonstration was to have been.

Part of growing up was daddy's total anti stance against Afrikaans and it was quite funny all these people talking Afrikaans and who were part of the struggle. It was quite a big shift in my mind because Afrikaans people are either uneducated or white was my understanding and here I was meeting people - these people spoke Afrikaans and this was another step in your consciousness changing what you believed.....

This is something that was also a huge shift for me - remember we were brought up to believe that there is one true faith and it's a sin to go to other peoples churches. You couldn't even look when you passed. And then being exposed to people, deeply religious people, who also had similar consciousness about apartheid and the injustice. That was quite an eye opener. But it was all people of the same Christian base. It was only later that I became exposed to people and actually through Mervyn and going to Durban that people could be of Hinduism or Islam.

Christian Leadership Centre I found it quite disturbing in some ways because you had to look within yourself. Quite often the sensitivity training made you quite introspective but also so that you could be more sensitive to others and I think I had quite a very paternalistic attitude towards African people until we lived in the Christian Leadership Centre with African people... and they had to actually leave because police came and said they don't have a permit to be in the area. So we had a discussion amongst ourselves....

Charles was in my group and I remember one particular session speaking about 'I think Charles feels...' and being told 'Don't think for Charles... Charles can speak for himself...' But it is quite eye opening you know. You don't speak on behalf of other people - you have your own opinions.

It was quite a change for us living away from home because you are living on your own in a different... I was at UCT at the time and there were a lot of influences at UCT. .... you had to apply for a permit to get in and you had to prove that the subjects offered were not offered at UWC.

To accept the 'black' identity was quite a thing - not for us because I think we were young and enthusiastic and all that but for our parents - and I remember

one incident when you<sup>35</sup> wanted to have your hair plaited and what an incident it created in our home. 'You are not African,' was the comment mummy made. I remember her, 'You don't have features like Christine Douts who looks African.....' There was Christine plaiting your hair and Christine left the house furious and that made me start to think about what is the blackness in me. Especially because of the fact that I had a fair skin and all my life up to then had been like a big thing and here suddenly I was shy of being fair skinned. I wanted to be blacker than what I was. This is funny... the comments always when Maria and I walked with mummy, 'Oh you have such lovely fair daughters' and mummy used to get cross about this but it was a thing in the community. To fit into what people saw of themselves - it's their image and here you come along, we come along and you have these ideas of Black Consciousness and actually taking it to quite extremes in some ways - but your hair doesn't change who you are it's how you perceive yourself but of course when you're young it's quite different.

I remember Ben Palmer - the one who got stabbed to death - Ben and Ruben Hare them one year, one day travelling to Gugulethu without a permit and they were sitting there at a shebeen. They of course justified this being at a shebeen as being with the people. But they were just getting drink and small children came running to say the police are coming. And the bottles all disappeared and they took us outside back out of the township and it was all supposed to be about black experience which is kind of the more lumpen side of being black.

When I joined the ANC years later that was a very important part of it - people came and said to me 'coloured' and so forth that was the worst insult because we grew up in a different era of course. You're supposed to be proud of this coloured... I'm proud of being black. I kept having strange arguments with them. That period was what gave the confidence to me to argue and even though these were supposed to be leaders of the ANC and important people I could stand my ground and argue about my identity as being a black person and why I rejected the term coloured and all those type of things. And when I think today people are supposed to - you know affirmative action, employment equity act - and I think it is so unfair when all our lives we got to respect that.

We were handing out pamphlets and an African man stopped me and he said 'Do you know what this is about?' And I said, 'Yes it's about black people standing together to do something about their oppression.' And he said, 'Do you know who started this?' And I said, 'Ja SASO etc etc.' And he says, 'No my girl there's more to it than this. I'd like to have time to tell you.' But then he moved on. I saw his photo when I came back from exile. It was Oscar Maphetla. He was

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<sup>35</sup> refers to Carmel Chetty

trying to tell me about the history and it is only years later when I saw his photo in the paper that's I when I made the link because this stood out so clearly. I was handing out pamphlets and then suddenly somebody stops you, grabs you and tries to talk to you about this. I remember being impatient with him because I wanted to get on and distribute these pamphlets....

[A teacher] also at that time was trying to tell me but he was so derogatory about Black Consciousness because he said terrible things about Black Consciousness, 'What do you people know you are 17 years old.... What do you think you are you going to teach us?' That kind of put me off. He could have, if his attitude had been a bit different about bringing us in rather than pushing us out, there could have been a very different outcome at that time.

## **5.3 Later Life**

### **5.3.1 Respondent from Durban**

#### **5.3.1.1 Roy Chetty**

Quite apart from the black ideology BC had another attraction for us and I think it depends on the interpretation of the BC leaders of the time, but there was constitutionally SASO and BPC stood for black communalism. As far as I was concerned and as far as others were concerned it meant the same thing as communism. It was just another way of disguising given the Suppression of Communism Act in South Africa. Communalism could mean all kinds of things and people wanted to turn it to whatever it is but as far as I was concerned, and as green as I was, as far as communism was concerned I was already of the view very strongly that capitalism was not the way for us and we needed to go for a communist society. I interpreted the aims and objectives of SASO and BPC as being one of communism and I think I got assisted in this process unwittingly by the state who were forever comparing and demonising communism. I think the more you demonised it the more attractive it sounded to me. I made every effort thereafter in later years, to try and understand what is meant by that. We haven't got there, far from it.

What we've got is a change in the leadership of the country. Economically the country is still very close to where it was with very few changes at boardroom level of the major corporations. In essence economically the country is still where it was. Those people who were factory workers are still very much slotted as factory workers. They're still at that level. The thin caste of people have been pushed promoted into the managerial positions which is built into the whole

black empowerment and black transformation which the government has as its cornerstones, as its policies. In essence the state is very much as it was. The state has through the ruling party deliberately and consciously taken the route against communism. It has taken the capitalist road and it meant for us that while there is a change, there is a freeing of political prisoners and political prisoners have become the leaders in this country. Unfortunately they've won what they have inherited.

I'm yet to be convinced that their route is the kind of route that persons like us who struggled for have achieved or are anywhere near that given the kind of programmes that are in place. In my view there is still a need for a concerted and a very definite struggle to bring about equality that we all struggled for - economic, social equality, even political equality.

It was also in the days of struggle unthinkable for us that we could have the kind of leaders we have. The leaders in this country don't think of themselves as being servants of the people. We struggle and everything we learnt of in the early days of our youth, with Paulo Freire and the writings of and readings, lessons and lectures Malcolm X and so on, were for an egalitarian society. For us that always meant leaders should always be part of the people, with the people and their earning power and their fortune should be pegged at the same level as ordinary people. The communist party regulations as it were on the wage of a public servant should be pegged at not more than an average worker, average artisan. The average pay of an artisan should still remain.

It is a tremendous tragedy in this country to exacerbate the kind of problems we've had. So we are far from it. It is still going to require young people, people of our generation to continue the struggle in this country.

What we struggled for when we struggled, we struggled without any money and without any expectation of any money. We struggled for the common good of people. We attended meetings and we did it on a shoe string budget. We never even dreamt of flying around. We either hired a bus or a kombi to take a whole group of us there or we hitch hiked. Several of us would hitch hike to some of the national conferences of SASO for instance. That meant sleeping at night on the side of the road to go to these conferences. The youngsters then grew up with a vision of struggle of wanting to improve society.

The kind of vision that is being put out now even though a lot of money is being pumped into the youth council and the state departments by the state, all of that is used to perpetuate some sort of culture of consumerism. It's such a lot of waste. The government of the day which has all the tax payers resources under its control in my view or in the view of a whole lot of struggling people in this

country, is squandering the hard work and hard earnings of ordinary people. In utilising its money like the corrupt sun kings of the French, the pre-French period, people who carry on as if they are living in the court of King Louis XIV or so. It is far too much. There is an obscene level of spending public money for personal benefits of a few. The teachings of the struggle stalwarts have all but been forgotten and there is a determined effort it seems to set a great distance between an egalitarian way of life and a way of privilege.

I think I am fortunate enough to say that my consciousness of my youth, the consciousness that I gained in my youth, in my view has stayed with me for the rest of my life and it will stay with me for the rest of my life. It has made me a principled person. The principles that I had then of not collaborating with the SAIC or having anything to do with the SAIC or with the state structures then still remains with me. The principle of committing ones life in so far as one can to the betterment of society and for eradicating oppression still remains with me. So I think that what I learnt then was a life lesson. It wasn't something that one picks up at some youth club and one forgets because what we underwent was more than just experiences - it was gaining or using the route of organisations to gain the strength, energy and learnings, teachings to sustain us for views that are relevant for us and for other people for future generation years. There are still massive lessons that need to be learnt. The youth in this country unfortunately have been led astray because there is far too much focus on a kind of *jol* mentality, a *banghra* mentality in the Indian community and elsewhere it's the disco and partying and drinking and that all needs to change.

It doesn't help at all for the government to talk about people not remembering the heroes of the past and people don't know who Steve Biko was and so and that's only because that consciousness has not been developed in the young people by this government. This government is far too cosy with the mining bosses than it is with its liberation heroes. It tends to honour its own and tends to disregard everyone else. It's very selective in the kind of people and organisations it promotes. This government tends to regard any of its left organisations or radical organisations as ultra left. It tends to rubbish criticism. So we have a long way to go.

One of the most glaring things, one of the easiest things I could have done would have been to join the ruling party, the ANC, and then to become part of the status quo. But thanks to my early learnings, my readings and so on I have deliberately chosen not to, to stay true to my beliefs and not take the petty bourgeois route of this government. We knew it was going to take this - we had analysed that the ANC would be nothing more than a petty bourgeois nationalist organisation long ago.

I had tried to remain with what I thought would be the most radical organisation that one could get in terms of ideas anyway. I have been a member of the Unity Movement and I joined over the years friends of this organisation. This is the organisation that one is trying to develop. Very early on in my exile period I had taken a conscious decision then to opt for the socialist route and to be a revolutionary for socialist ideals. Part of this meant that in the early days of the cold war, organisations like the ANC and the SACP were linked to the Soviet Union which is a very Stalinist and my own leanings, my own tendency within the communist movement was a Trotskyist leaning which was in line with the thinking of Fourth International and that was the kind of leaning one tried to live ones life and the kind of contacts, arrangements, life choices one makes thereafter was tailored or shaped by these early decisions. The spirit of uncompromising nature that developed earlier on remains with me to now and in that sense the political changes as they come and so far as they do not dovetail ... you live with the consequences of being marginalised and oftentimes you think that perhaps that were one not so resolute at one point and one had given ground a little we might have had an opportunity of working within but one spent such a lot of time condemning the Bantustans in the past for working within the system, that those of us who found ourselves outside decided to stay out hoping that come the day of the revolution we would have been able to sway the masses of people to take the true road to liberation.

Unfortunately we had not taken into consideration or had not prepared or had not sufficient resources to combat the combined resources of business which had given full support to the Congress Alliance to bring about the new liberal regime which we have. So even though one struggled in the early 1990 to 1994 period against the neo-liberal agenda, and one had hoped to sway the masses of the people to think out other ways or to think in terms of the historic struggle, the forces of capital deployed sufficient resources in millions of rand into promoting the legends, who were now prepared to collaborate with neo-liberalism. And that is the battle that has been lost by principled people -including the black consciousness movement who have also come off very badly against the Congress Alliance. This is also an indicator to political observers/commentators that not only has the socialist movement suffered similarly in this country and suffered because all of these view points ran counter to the views that were already compromised set into place by Kempton Park, and other horse trading by the ruling clique.

So the unfortunate situation is that in this country in spite of this government having all kinds of celebrations and memorials to people like Steve Biko, it daily crushes the ideas that Steve Biko stood for.

If the state itself does not in its daily interaction give meaning and life and flesh out or give effect to the constitution, the constitution unfortunately is exactly what it is - just a piece of paper and it's a paper that has no value or little value to someone who is being kicked out of their homes or hasn't got money for food, is unemployed, destitute and so on. That paper is meaningless. It salves the consciences of the rich and the intellectuals in this country. It means absolutely nothing. Nothing because to even challenge anyone who oppresses or goes against the constitution is a very expensive business for an ordinary person and almost impossible matter. The constitution is not what we struggled for. We may have what is called a constitutional democracy but that constitution if it is not forced upon this government, if it is not implemented by this government in every way, is actually a useless document.

Apartheid in name has not disappeared in this country. This country through the guise of the constitution again tends to still push the idea of racial categorisations in this country. Something that we in the '60's '70's '80's '90's had fought and fought very hard against. It is something we cannot swallow and it is something we cannot accept that this government under one guise or another still tend to still perpetuate the idea of races in this country. People like us cannot stand terms like coloured and Indians and what have you in this country, used as loosely and as stupidly as government officials do. It is something that has gone into the mindset that appear not to change. So a lot is still there. The economic oppression is there and to a large extent people in the townships still feel the effects of racial discrimination.

I think gender has got its own advocates. Those people who are sitting in government who are part of the gender lobby feel quite pleased with themselves that they've done fairly well. They tend to think in terms of there is always room for more, more improvement and I think that will be an ongoing struggle, the gender issue. But I think if during the days of struggle one saw a political, economic struggle as being the main struggle so if those struggles were sorted out, if a resolution had been found for those, a true revolution would have occurred in this country, the gender issue would also go the same way.

In as much as this country perpetuates chieftainship, it is also perpetuating in some way resistance by chiefs to the women power - women leadership in rural areas for instance. So the gender advocates have done perhaps even better than the political advocates in this country.

## 5.3.2 Respondent from Cape Town

### 5.3.2.1 Algonda Perez

I think partly and to a large extent I am who I am today because of those things because you learn things as an activist. The decisions I make today and the way I decide, were formed in those years already. I have a deputy dean who acted for me during this period<sup>36</sup>. All of us make clinical decisions but you come in with a completely different perspective and you see the politics of the issue - you make a very different decision as a result. I think that is a part of it. Through years of activism and struggle you learn to do those type of things and you learn to look at issues not just in front of you but you look around issues as well -look at what could possibly come around.

I remember having a discussion with Johnny Issel many years back and he had a *what if?* list...What if this happened what do we do... And that was part of the training that I still do today. If I go into an executive meeting they always call on me if they have to make decisions because of my ability to analyse from a different angle. Even the vice chancellor recently had a problem around the university about drugs. The vice chancellor was being accused of not doing enough. He called me to discuss what strategies I could undertake to raise the profile of the university. I'm sought after for that kind of skill which started off in those days during the struggle. These are the things I use. I'm sought after for that kind of skill that I have.

Leadership didn't come naturally to me and I've seen that what happened throughout my life was I was forced into the position where I had to take the leadership role. Things like my confidence - everyone thinks I'm so confident - but it's kind of I have to whip up courage to go in front of lots of people to speak. They think I do it so easily and they compliment me on it but I don't. It's the boom boom of your heart before I go. Even in front of students standing up - students are easier - but I think I got that from my early years .... If it is necessary, to do it.

My self image is not all that great but I know that I am the leader in the faculty at the moment and that people expect something from me so I do it. I do have the courage to do it.

I see myself very much as a mother. When students come to me, I regard them as if they are my child. I identify very much as a woman and the cause of women. Jane's raising of our consciousness around the role of women that till today - I work in a very chauvinist environment where often I am the only woman

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<sup>36</sup> Algonda was hospitalized just before her interview.

present. They tend to want to say you're one of the boys. I am a woman. I don't want to be seen as a lady because that is for me a very derogatory term because being a lady is someone who is the pretty one of the group. I like to see myself as a strong black woman. That is the identity that I try to live up to all the time. It is very difficult.

People look at you and they put you in a certain box. Yusuf Chitka said to me people undermine me all the time. They never expect me to come up with the things I do because they take one look at me and they put me in a box and then I come up with things that they had never ever thought of. They can't put a label on me and so I manage to gain their respect. I have situations where the university of Stellenbosch dean - even when I was sick here - he was in a difficult situation and he asked for advice. What he doesn't realise is that I don't tell him what to do. I ask him questions and he arrives at... that's my basic philosophy ...

When I left the country I was quite young. I was 18 years old. I grew up in exile. There are lots of people who guided me. Till today I have huge respect for Oliver Tambo. He is one of the people who shaped who I am today. I used to watch him at the meetings and I consciously adopt the style today in meetings and things. He would sit there quietly and be the chairperson asking everyone their opinion and he wouldn't say... and then at the end he would just ask questions and he would come up with this consensus nobody in the room can disagree with. I try to do it so that you don't have people fighting with one another about issues that should be uniting us.

In my studies I was quite older than other students because I studied quite late. The students looked up to me quite a lot because, one, I was in the liberation struggle, I came from South Africa. Politically the students from Burundi and Algeria or the rich African countries came to me and asked about some of the issues. From that point of view I was pushed to be a leader in that situation being older, being married and living in my own flat. They would come to me about advice, especially the women about relationships and things like that. That was part of pushing me into adopting a leadership role in that sense as well.

Because there were few people in my profession in the whole of Africa, coming to Zambia I was pushed to be a leader in that. I had to be the manager. I didn't have management experience. The first time I learnt management skills was when I went for formal management training to manage our services. Other than that when I went through the formal training a lot of what I was doing was confirmed as the best practice kind of thing. It was so funny in that management training I scored the highest in the class and it's all people who came from managing health service from around the country and I think because of all this training from quite young to be in leadership positions that I - I can't say

confidence because I'm not confident within myself - but kind of courage to be responsible and do the things that managers do - observing what other people do and practising.

Coming back from exile people expected me to perform this role without them knowing me. When I came back from exile I was asked to lead the health services in the SACP. I was secretary general of the health section of the SACP and from there I was appointed to the delegation that interacted with the Department of Health and I was with the Department of Health. Because I wrote well they let me write the preamble so that it was acceptable to both delegations. I was expected to take a leadership role. I remember having a discussion with Chris Hani about this. He says to me, 'You will do this. We need a policy on health for the SACP. We expect you to come up with.' I don't know anything about health policy. I don't know anything. And he says, 'Then you go and learn.' It was just expected that you do and learn from other people.

The biggest thing that I learnt was that you never do things on your own. You can't do it on your own. So if you're not very smart - like I'm not very smart - then you surround yourself with smart people and then what you do is to motivate them to do the work and that is what I still do today. I don't think I'm very smart, but I get a group of people around me to think. There was never an executive committee at the health sciences faculty. I got together an executive committee because I couldn't do what Padayachee did - manage the faculty all on his own. I couldn't do that. I didn't have the strategic thinking skills to do that. But what happened was I called together this executive committee with all the top people in the faculty - and not all people will agree with me - some people are quite heavily sometimes opposed to me. What they help me to do is think through issues and to help me to manage the faculty.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Discussion of the findings**

This chapter discusses in detail the findings in chapter 5. Firstly, I interrogate the processes of learning that emerged as the activists sought to extricate themselves from their oppressive conditions. Thereafter, I examine the impact those learning processes have had on their lives and their understanding of their social identities today. Finally, I extricate the aspects of the pedagogy that are relevant for our present circumstances in South Africa. As a guide to the discussion, I have tabulated (in no particular order, and the tabulation is by no means exhaustive) what people learnt. (see Appendix 13)

#### **6.1 Processes of Learning**

The word ‘process’ suggests two meanings. Firstly, it is a progression from one state of being to another state of being and secondly it points to a particular method. I use Hardiman & Jackson’s model to trace and interrogate the progression in consciousness of respondents from oppression to liberation. The analysis of the learning involved in the development of that consciousness also includes the methodology, practices and general influences experienced by the activists of that period.

Learning involves knowledge, education and wisdom closely related to the culture and politics of the society. Jarvis (Jarvis, 1992: 17) explains that the process of learning ‘is located at the interface of people’s biography and the sociocultural milieu in which they live...’ In this study, there is a close correlation between the processes of learning and the development of a political consciousness to overcome oppression. The most important motivating factor for learning was overcoming oppression. I therefore firstly explore the processes involved in the development of a political consciousness in terms of its

progression from oppression to liberation, and thereafter the methods of learning used in that development.

Race and class were the primary forms of oppression around which political consciousness developed. In the South African context, race and class were inextricably entwined. Apartheid legislation formalised race as the principal basis for the development of individual consciousness. Class aspirations to improve social positioning were hampered by the inflexibility with which racial oppression was implemented. Classes were defined and existed within racial categories. Jack and Ray Simons (Simons J. & R. 1983: 610) writing about race and class in apartheid South Africa, explained, 'A rigid racial hierarchy obstructs the birth of a free society.' They further expound their thesis as follows:

...civic status is determined at birth and for life by colour rather than by class, by genealogy rather than function; a person can move up or down the social scale within its primary colour group....( Simons J. & R. 1983: 618)

It is my contention that the vehement rejection by the respondents in this study to the apartheid racial divisions resulted not only in their class alienation<sup>37</sup>, but also in their non-collaborationist outlook. The Hardiman & Jackson model (Hardiman & Jackson in Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997: 18) is used to unravel the intricate processes of development of racial and class identities. They provide the framework for analysing the development of consciousness.

### **6.1.1 The development of consciousness**

Harro (Harro in Adams et al (eds), 1997: 16) used the Cycle of Socialisation (see Appendix 9) to explain how socialisation helps to maintain oppression. In order for individuals and society to be liberated from oppression, that cycle has to be broken. This section uses the Hardiman & Jackson (Hardiman & Jackson in Adams, Bell & Griffin, 1997: 23) framework (explained in chapter 3) to trace the development of consciousness that emerged as the youth in this study sought to break the cycle of socialisation.

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<sup>37</sup> By class alienation I mean a distancing from middle class values and a closer alignment with working class struggles.

In trying to use Hardiman & Jackson's theories in this study, I have found some difficulties. Dealing with human subjects entails dealing with the unpredictable. It is difficult to try to box humans into various stages. Hackman,( Hackman, 1999 retrieved from: <http://www.ibiblio.org/ism/articles/hackman.html>) who wrote the following extract, supports my view:

It is important to note that much of the theory regarding social identity and social identity development examines identity in a static condition, artificially constructed for the sake of an in-depth examination of the intricate processes that comprise the formation of individual identity. These discussions, however, are not really 'real' in that they do not take into consideration the dynamic, constructivist nature of power, identity, and culture.

In spite of these constraints, I have found that the Hardiman & Jackson model, with its foundations in racial consciousness, provides an excellent basis from which to analyse the development of the political consciousness of the South African youth of the seventies. Due to the length of this document, I will not repeat the stages outlined in chapter 3. I will rather analyse the stages of development evident from the findings in respect of race and class.

### **6.1.1.1 The Acceptance Stage**

#### **6.1.1.1.1 Development of a racial identity**

The respondents acknowledged that when they were young children, they understood that the dominant group regarded them as racially (and socially) inferior and treated them as such. Institutions like schools and churches as well as some family members, peers and the community at large socialised them into accepting their inferior status without question. They received messages of inferiority from caregivers and educators who themselves had an internalised consciousness of inferiority.

However, alongside those negative messages, were other important counter- messages that rejected the stereotypical inferior meanings advanced by the regime. Given the permanent resistance to racial oppression in South Africa (even in the period of the silencing and imprisonment of leaders, and the banning of political organisations) parents, family members, teachers, some church-leaders and sections of the media

routinely passed on messages about the brutal, oppressive nature of the ruling regime. Thus, at an early age, many of the respondents understood that the apartheid government was not of, or for the people who were classified as 'non-white'. Hardiman & Jackson (Hardiman & Jackson in Adams, Bell & Griffin (eds) 1997: 25) acknowledge that 'negative/ oppressive messages are held simultaneously and in contradiction to more positive messages about their social group conveyed by same group adults or peers'. I think that in the South African racial context those politicised messages of resistance (positive messages) are of crucial importance for contextualising the consciousness of some of the respondents.

The state institutions of power were geared to socialise targets into accepting their so-called racial-differences, and hence inferiority and oppression. The fact that the oppressed population could not openly challenge the all powerful police state ( at a time of heightened repression) may have given the impression of the targets accepting their oppression. I believe, there were in fact contradictory messages that were not easily comprehended in the consciousness of the young minds.

While it could be suggested that all children learn contradictory messages, I believe that those contradictions were enhanced in the minds of some of the respondents in this study and therefore led to them developing an acute sense of discomfort about any form of collusion with oppression.

This study shows that within the subordinate discourse there were clear expressions that rejected and questioned the messages of inferiority spread by the dominant group. Recognition must be given to the resistance that accompanied that oppression. Understandably, it went through various stages of strengths and weaknesses, as the tyranny of the state was pervasive. Nevertheless, even during periods of apparent total dominance, the oppressed were not unquestioning about what was happening to them. Collusion with the status quo in terms of expected behaviour was not just a passive acceptance of what the dominant 'white' ruling class wanted target groups to believe about themselves. It was also an important strategy for survival. The oppressors had

powerful mechanisms to punish those who challenged their authority. Tatum's (Tatum in Adams et al: 13) explanation is relevant: 'Survival sometimes means not responding to oppressive behaviour directly'.

Negative and positive messages about race present in the consciousness of the young minds and the non-collaborative stance of some significant adults enabled respondents to be open to alternative messages they received once they were more aware of and understood the machinations of the apartheid regime more clearly. The important point to note is that resistance to racism was present in some primitive form even in the early years regarded by Hardiman & Jackson as the Acceptance Stage.

#### **6.1.1.1.2 Development of a class identity**

In this study, Roy, Bobby, Reshi, and Harold were of working class parents (target identities) while Vivienne, Jaya, Betty, Algonda, Maria, Terry and Jane came from middle class families (agent identities). The contradictory messages received about their racial inferiority were compounded by target or agent class status. In terms of class, the respondents learnt their status in terms of their religious groupings and the status gained from the jobs their parents did as well as the way they were treated by relatives, neighbours and schoolmates.

Class position in the South African context was somewhat confusing. While some respondents in this study could be viewed as middle class by virtue of the fact that their parents were teachers and nurses, in reality those professionals also earned apartheid-salaries, and economically speaking, the middle class children in this study were only slightly better off than the working class children.

In spite of financial difficulties, professional people were viewed as upper classes in the racial communities where they were forced to reside. Although outside the racial grouping all people of a particular race were viewed homogeneously by other racial groups (because of racial profiling and the stereotypical images that were popularised by the regime in power), the professional classes enjoyed the status of upper classes within

their own racial grouping. Particular Christian religious affiliations also provided a higher class status.

There was variance in the way middle class individuals viewed themselves and the way they were viewed by their communities. Language and reading were class identifiers that distinguished them from the working classes where they lived and attended school.

Moving into a council house was a moment of class elevation for some as for the first time they experienced indoor plumbing and privacy. Although their families were still working class, they had moved away from the under-classes who occupied the slum areas and barracks. This elevation in living status did not result in them perceiving others as their inferiors but rather developed in them an identification with those who remained in degrading living conditions.

The class-consciousness that emerged in the stage Hardiman & Jackson described as the Acceptance Stage, was a narrow awareness of poverty related to personal experience as well as an awareness of classes of people who were better off. However, in school, there was no class differentiation and in the communities, there was no evidence of strong class antagonisms.

Although alienated in terms of class by an inferior racial status, respondents in the acceptance stage of consciousness learnt of their privileged or dominated positions as either targets or agents. However, both middle class and working class respondents experienced similar poverty and felt inferiority more strongly than any superiority that may have been assigned to some of them by the loose class structure of the impoverished communities. While class positions existed, they were of secondary importance in the consciousness of the young children.

## **6.1.1.2 The Resistance Stage**

### **6.1.1.2.1 Conflicting perceptions related to a racial identity**

I am of the opinion that children born to parents who are in the resistance stage of racial consciousness grow up with feelings of antagonism towards their oppressors, as that would be the socialisation in the home. It has been previously stated that some respondents in this study experienced the resistance to racial stereotyping and prejudice from parents and family members who were politically conscious. They therefore grew up with the feelings Hardiman & Jackson associate with targets in the resistance stage. Hardiman & Jackson (Hardiman & Jackson in Adams, Bell & Griffin (eds) 1997: 26) say their 'identity is defined in opposition to the oppressor'. Tatum's (Tatum, 1997: 55 ) reference to 'black' parents who are 'race-conscious' provides useful insight. She says:

...if Black parents are what I call race conscious – that is, actively seeking to encourage positive racial identity by providing their children with positive cultural images and messages about what it means to be Black – the impact of the dominant society's messages are reduced.

At school, conflict between the messages of collusion and resistance caused anxiety. When they were old enough (by the time they reached high school), the respondents were able to break the pattern of collusion at school and translate that conflict into active resistance.

For those who did not get messages of resistance from their own families, resistance came through a process of conscientisation that raised questions about internalised messages learned at the acceptance stage. Conscientisation was firstly a gut reaction to confronting oppression through attending anti apartheid meetings and learning about the state's onslaught against the oppressed masses. Thereafter there was a redefinition of consciousness accompanied by involvement /participation in struggle.

### **6.1.1.2.2 Convergence of class and racial identity**

Resistance to class oppression came in different forms. For most respondents resistance to class and racial oppression was almost simultaneous. Poverty was equated with racial oppression. Resistance to racial oppression resulted in resistance to poverty and led to ideas to fight for an egalitarian society that was free of class antagonisms.

During the period of active resistance, activists went through a period in which they suspended their middle class aspirations because of their acute sense of striving for a liberated racial consciousness. The alienation of class-consciousness was an unconscious act that emerged from their quest for liberation from racial oppression and their involvement in revolutionary politics for change.

The suspension of a class identity was a significant development that happened quite naturally in the lives of the respondents. As I analysed the stories I noticed the lack of class-consciousness in the period of their lives when they were politically active. They all speak proudly of their involvement with the Black Consciousness Movement and the redefinition of their racial identities. Middle class aspirations are lacking in their stories.

I note a few indicators that suggest the suspension of middle class aspirations. Bobby and Roy gave up their university studies following the 1972 'bush'-university strikes and pursued a clear political path antagonistically opposed to the apartheid regime. Jaya gave up his job in the bank to fund-raise for SASO internationally even though this meant that his family had to struggle without his essential financial support. This was in opposition to the middle class careerist route that some of their peers chose. All of them engaged in radical politics that could have led to detention, long gaol sentences and even death. It is my contention that this level of revolutionary involvement is indicative of a suspension of middle class aspirations and alienation from a clear middle class identity that usually aligns itself more closely with the ruling elite.

Marx and Engels (Marx & Engels, 1975: 42) acknowledged in the late nineteenth century that 'lower strata of the middle class... sink gradually into the proletariat... The proletariat is recruited from all classes of the population.' I believe this acknowledgement supports my contention about temporary class alienation. The apartheid system was responsible to some extent for lumping together all classes under one racial definition resulting in the middle classes being more closely aligned to the working classes (at least during the period of political struggle).

### **6.1.1.3 The Redefinition Stage**

Hardiman & Jackson's analysis of this stage of development reflects the processes that participants went through as individuals and as members of groups. Black Consciousness gave greater clarity to identity development and active engagement against the state. It redefined the state's racial profiling to create a Black Consciousness discourse that challenged the fundamental basis of those notions. Both those who grew up with a passive resistance consciousness and those who had had no political conscientisation in their childhood, developed a clearer sense of self through the Black Consciousness ideology. As a group, they confronted the racial oppression at an individual, social and institutional level.

Black Consciousness provided an alternative way of looking at racial profiles that brought to the fore the numerous ways in which racial target identities were undermined by the power dynamics in that oppressive society. Black Consciousness in South Africa, boldly, advanced the solidarity of all racially oppressed groups through its use of the term 'Black'. Kumashiro (Kumashiro, 2000: 42) cites the use of the term 'queer' to argue that 'when many members of a community begin to supplement the meanings of identities or structures in the same way, the associations change'. This research supports that idea.

An important aspect of racial consciousness in South Africa was the state's classification of the oppressed into separate groupings for the specific purpose of divide and rule. In the Cape, there was clearly antagonism to the 'coloured' label from politically conscious parents. The bold, provocative language of Black Consciousness (so well articulated by the likes of Malcolm X) captured the hearts and minds of the 'black' student leaders in South Africa. The boldness, and strident tones of the Black Consciousness rhetoric left no doubt that this was the language of a fearless generation determined to struggle for freedom, and ready, if needs be, for martyrdom.

Black Consciousness was important for naming subordination and domination in South African society, and attempted to redefine the oppressed with positive terminology while identifying the oppressor negatively. It thereby usurped the assumption of privilege from the oppressors and drew attention to those who colluded with oppression. Wildman and Davies (Wildman and Davies in Adams et al: 52) draw attention to the importance of language in maintaining the invisibility of privilege:

...the very vocabulary we use to talk about discrimination obfuscates these power systems and privilege that is their mutual companion. To remedy discrimination effectively we must make the power systems and privileges they create visible and part of the discourse.

The language of Black Consciousness provided clarity to racial identity development. Language became a weapon groups used to fight against oppression. Through the new language, Black Consciousness sought to create a new person. They used their newfound power to redefine and rename themselves and their oppressors, and gave new meaning to confronting oppression in all its forms. At this stage, the respondents sought to deepen their understanding of liberatory ideologies through further readings on history, feminism, Marxism, etc..

#### **6.1.1.3.1 Understanding resistance and redefinition in the Black Consciousness era**

In the previous section, I indicated that some respondents in this study were born into families who challenged oppression and therefore developed identities of passive resistance from the first moments of consciousness. If that assumption were correct, then those respondents would not redefine **their racial identities** in the same way as those who confronted the internalised subordinate identities as their consciousness developed differently. Nevertheless, in the previous section I said that **all** respondents developed a sense of self-worth through the Black Consciousness ideology. This needs an explanation.

The reason why even respondents whose identities developed with an understanding of oppression reinvented themselves is related to the power of institutionalised racial oppression that permeated the consciousness of everybody in the society. Black

Consciousness provided the means where individuals could engage in solidarity with the oppressed. It gave a new cultural message that opposed Euro-centrism. The previous generation of activists had not had the benefit of anti-racist consciousness as espoused by the Black Consciousness Movement. Indeed, being born into a family of resistance did not inoculate you against the forces of racism. The Black Consciousness philosophy provided the necessary tools for redefinition that not only rejected messages of inferiority but also built a new stronger independent self-image.

The psychoanalyst, Erik Erikson is quoted by Tatum (Tatum in Adams et al : 10) to show how identity is rooted in the social, cultural and historical context:

*We deal with a process 'located' in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture..... In psychological terms, identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them.*

Black Consciousness drew individuals (including those with a struggle-tradition) away from preconceived notions rooted in the oppressive ideology of apartheid and created a new group identity that promoted 'black' pride and solidarity.

#### **6.1.1.4 The Internalisation Stage**

At this stage, the new identity that evolved through redefinition is incorporated into all aspects of the person's life. Hardiman & Jackson suggest that this stage continues for the rest of the person's life. The process involves a continuous re-examination of consciousness and confronting lapses into previous stages of consciousness.

I agree with Tappan (Tappan retrieved from:

[http://www.colby.edu/personal/m/mbtappan/Tappan\\_TCR\\_inpress.doc](http://www.colby.edu/personal/m/mbtappan/Tappan_TCR_inpress.doc)) who said, 'In the end, any solution to the problems of privilege and oppression must focus as much on structural/systemic change as it does on personal transformation.' Groups and individuals who reach this stage of consciousness actively engage with programs to eliminate all forms of oppression.

#### **6.1.1.4.1 Consciousness in Post-Apartheid South Africa**

I have argued that during the stage of active resistance there was a suspension of middle class aspirations as respondents immersed themselves in the anti-apartheid struggle. It is important to clarify what happened once the anti-apartheid struggle was over and a new dispensation emerged in South Africa.

After 1994, when the ANC led government took office, latent middle class aspirations came to the fore. This is an important observation for appreciating Hardiman & Jackson's Social Identity Development theory. There is no exit point but regression to a former state of consciousness is possible.

It is my contention that those in this study have sustained the internalised redefined racial consciousness. The prevailing internalised consciousness about oppression ensures that they continue to be sensitive to other targeted groups still fighting for liberation. Hardiman & Jackson acknowledge this. They say, '...it becomes easier for the person with an Internalization consciousness to have empathy for members of other targeted groups in relation to whom they are agents.' (Hardiman & Jackson in Adams, Bell & Griffin (eds.), 1997: 29) They are therefore able to understand their privileged status in the new dispensation and are likely to continue to engage with social justice issues.

#### **6.1.2 Linking consciousness and learning**

Hardiman & Jackson's model explains the development of consciousness and the process of change. However, it does not suggest how the learning<sup>38</sup> happens. Macduff (Macduff (1993) in Imel, 2000 retrieved from <http://www.ericdigests.org/2001-3/change.htm>) contends that a common thread in the literature about the complex process of change is that it is a process that involves learning. Though that statement appears rather simple, I find that it is an important acknowledgement for this study. Crucial to being able to

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<sup>38</sup> what 'learning' consists of here may be partly a matter of language. Does one simply treat changes in consciousness as a form of learning – or of 'unlearning'? (acknowledge: Crispin Hemson)

extricate themselves from oppression, was being able to change consciousness dramatically and in very fundamental ways. That change of consciousness required learning. In the following section, I discuss the ‘how’ of the learning processes i.e. the methodology, practices and general influences that contributed to the change of consciousness.

### 6.1.2.1 Learning for social change

Individuals in this study confronted their own oppressive consciousness and developed within groups that provided succour and solidarity. The identity development was contextualised in the racist realities of apartheid South Africa and that enabled activists to construct a convergence towards a common goal. That goal was for revolutionary social change. The group context facilitated the paradigm shift that not only changed personal perceptions and assumptions but also crafted a new direction for the anti-apartheid struggle.

This section analyses the methodological learning processes and develops arguments that try to explain the kind of learning that contributed to the maintenance of a liberatory consciousness and aided its transfer to other spheres of life. I raise questions about learning for revolutionary change as opposed to learning for social transformation. The table of factors that assisted and impeded learning is included as an easy reference guide.

**Table 5 Factors that assisted or impeded learning**

<b>Factors that assisted learning</b>	<b>Factors that impeded learning</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Spirit of rebelliousness</li> <li>➤ Determination of the group members to pursue freedom and liberty</li> <li>➤ reading</li> <li>➤ involvement in struggle</li> <li>➤ assistance from significant adults involved in struggle</li> <li>➤ assistance from the progressive church</li> <li>➤ courageous politically conscious teachers, church and community leaders and other significant adults</li> <li>➤ Paulo Freire’s innovative ideas for learning</li> <li>➤ Training received from University Christian Movement and other progressive organisations</li> <li>➤ Confronting and overcoming fear</li> <li>➤ A network for the circulation of radical reading material</li> <li>➤ Increased political awareness</li> <li>➤ Innovative teaching styles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The general poverty of township activists (during period when funding was not available)</li> <li>➤ harshness of the regime</li> <li>➤ difficulties associated with acquisition of reading materials</li> <li>➤ banning of literary works and individuals</li> <li>➤ imprisonment of individuals</li> <li>➤ The regime’s spy network</li> <li>➤ Banking style of education conducted in schools</li> <li>➤ Fear</li> <li>➤ Stereotypes, prejudices and bias</li> <li>➤ Autocratic leaders who espoused hegemonic control</li> <li>➤ Group thinking as opposed to independent thinking</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Learning for a purpose</li> <li>➤ Teacher becoming a facilitator and joint learner</li> <li>➤ Working with available resources</li> <li>➤ Independent thinking</li> <li>➤ Joint leadership and absence of hierarchical structures</li> </ul>	
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### **6.1.2.2 Some educational practices**

Fundamental to consciousness-raising was the development of political awareness and personal self worth. How was this done? What were the processes that emerged? To answer these questions I contextualise the learning, explore the educational practices and outline the strategies that facilitated the learning process. [It must be noted that while many of these practices appear to be rather commonplace in the present era, they were innovative and revolutionary in the 1970s.]

#### **6.1.2.2.1 The group context**

The learning took place within the context of groups of adolescents and young adults.

Erikson (Erikson, 1968: 130) realised the nature of the adolescent. He noted:

...indeed, it is the ideological potential of a society which speaks most clearly to the adolescent who is so eager to be affirmed by peers, to be confirmed by teachers, and to be inspired by worth-while 'ways of life' ...

Understanding the group as the centre of the training ground contextualises the identity development. In both the Cape and Durban individuals developed within the context of groups who sought alternatives to the status quo in the church and the community.

Comradeship and trust developed between the individuals in the groups. The comradeship was an essential ingredient for the action for change that emerged later.

Research has shown that group action for change generates greater involvement than individual action. Hamilton (Hamilton, 1992: 47 ) quotes Almond & Verba (1965) and Ross & Lappin (1967) to support his contention that people feel they are more effective when they work with a group on common community issues. In the context of this study, respondents acknowledged their affinity to their groups and their greater development and involvement because of the supportive structures of the groups.

The initial objective was developmental. The intention was to identify suitable candidates for leadership roles in the church and the community. Being part of a leadership programme suggests that individuals who came together were there because they had already been identified as potential leaders in the anti-apartheid struggle. They therefore had a common ideological viewpoint that was anti-apartheid.

The group ethos was strongly in favour of political and social change. A strong group identity contributed to greater confidence for individuals to develop positive self-images. The strong group identification was reinforced through democratic practices developed at seminars and workshops and strengthened by experimental communal living arrangements. In the Cape, the arrangement was a formal one while in Durban the experience was largely informal.

Living together as they did (for three months), the Cape Town group, set in motion a new spiritualism that ran counter to traditional church teachings and dogmas some of the respondents had grown up with. Being separated from traditional family and community influences, allowed individuals to be open to alternative ideas and able to readily challenge the status quo.

#### **6.1.2.2 Debates, Meetings, Seminars and Workshops**

Learning processes evolved from the involvement of individuals in youth work. It started even before overcoming oppression was identified as a basic goal.

Informal debates within the structures of small youth groups created opportunities for introducing new ideas. Debates raised minor social problems but were important as they led to the discussion of issues that were more complex. Increasingly, the need to consult sources outside the immediate experiences resulted in reading that was more purposeful. This exposed individuals and the groups to ideas that were in the national and international arena.

Public political meetings were the sites for the emergence of interest in community and political struggles. The debates, largely of a theoretical nature, assumed less importance as the immediacy of the problems that emerged in the public arena got priority from the groups. While debates were important avenues for raising consciousness, actual participation in community and political struggles provided greater meaning for identity definition. However, the importance of theorising through debate and acknowledging different opinions remained important for the development of democratic participation.

Seminars and workshops had two purposes. On the one hand, they were developmental and on the other hand, they were skills orientated. In both instances, there was a strong political ethos. The developmental processes focussed on relationship issues. Relationship issues were firstly introspective, starting from the self, and proceeded to interrelationships in the group and led to greater involvement of social and societal problems that the groups identified with. The consciousness-raising of the individual developed to the extent where the individual and the group identified completely with the social problems of the community and the society. Social action for change was a direct consequence of the consciousness-raising exercises.

The skills training emerged from the needs identified by the social action. For example, if a decision was taken to distribute pamphlets to raise awareness, individuals would be tasked with the design and distribution of the pamphlets. Skills needed for these tasks would then be developed.

#### **6.1.2.2.3 Important tools/strategies that facilitated learning**

Formal/Informal discussions, seminars and workshops were conducted around relevant themes and social problems. The common objective was generally to raise awareness and plan appropriate action. Fundamental to the learning process was its link with experience and action. Unlike traditional sites of learning in schools and universities, the learning came from the actual experiences of oppression, reflection on those experiences and planned action. In other words, the learning was not just an academic exercise but was based on real issues related to self-identity, development of self-actualisation and linked

to the political struggle at both a local and national level, not discounting influences in the international arena.

#### 6.1.2.2.3.1 Full Participation

The most important aspect of the discussions and seminars was the inclusion of all participants. There was emphasis on free expression and involvement of everybody in both discussion and action. Power rested in the hands of all participants as everybody was regarded as important. Although participation was voluntary, every effort was made to ensure that the environment was conducive to full participation. Myles Horton (Hamilton, 1992: 19-20), who experimented with non-formal education with people struggling to gain power, found that full participation was an educationally sound motive. He believed that 'The perspectives and insights of all participants are important in helping the group to better understand complex situations.'

#### 6.1.2.2.3.2 Inclusive Facilitation

The teacher/facilitator role is complex. Fenwick relates the views of Boud and his associates:

Experiential learning often involves strong emotions. Therefore, a key responsibility of the facilitator of such learning is creating an environment of trust, authenticity, integrity, and mutual respect - as well as patience with each other on the part of all participants: learners as well as facilitator. For many people personal self-disclosure is uncomfortable, and inappropriate in group settings... <http://www.ualberta.ca/~tfenwick/ext/pubs/print/ERIC-new2.htm>

In addition to an environment of trust, was an environment that recognised that learners had experiential knowledge. The descriptions of the processes of learning of respondents revealed that each one accepted responsibility for learning and teaching. Although Jane was recognised as group leader, she was also a participative learner. There was greater emphasis on joint group leadership rather than hierarchical organisational structure.

Freire recognised that the contradiction between teacher and student needed to be resolved. The teacher would no longer be 'merely the-one-who-teaches' (Freire, 1972a: 53) but would also be the learner and in turn, the learner too could be the teacher. The learning process in this study was guided by this premise. Griffin (Griffin in Adams et al:

285) explains: ‘Leading discussions requires teachers to trust the process that students need to go through to deepen their understanding of social justice issues’.

#### 6.1.2.2.3.3 Innovative learning materials and audiovisual aids

A photograph of a workshop conducted by some of the respondents in this study reveals groups involved with making collages and facilitators fully participating in the process. ‘Learning by doing’ is an important educational strategy supported by leading educationist like Illich (Illich 1974: 44) who said: ‘Most learning is not the result of instruction. It is rather the result of unhampered participation in a meaningful setting. Most people learn best by being ‘with it’...’

In their submissions, Roy and Jaya refer to records and tapes of the speeches of leading revolutionaries of the time. Even though some of those recordings were banned, activists found ways of obtaining them and using them for educational and propaganda purposes. In addition, there were popular alternative movies.

Poetry, art, music and drama were generally the educational tools of the youth of that period. The intention was to conscientise the ‘masses’, as well as popularise the freedom struggle.

#### 6.1.2.2.3.4 Language

In a previous section, I analysed how language was effectively used to redefine an oppressive consciousness and its link with the maintenance of power. The Black Consciousness Movement recognised language as the source of great power. The writings of the period bear testimony to this. What is important is that the language taught to activists, challenged preconceived notions of the norm in terms of race and gender. Black Consciousness explored the power and privileges as well as subordination inherent in language usage. The Black Consciousness discourse not only challenged the existing norm but also set its own standards and created a new politically correct language.

By recognizing the power of language, Black Consciousness made it easier for participants to identify with influential writers like Freire, Fanon and Illich. Language became both a tool for analysis and a weapon for debunking previously accepted norms.

### **6.1.3 Critical evaluation of the learning processes**

#### **6.1.3.1 Experience, Reflection, Learning and Transformation**

Boud, Keogh and Walker (Boud, Keogh and Walker, 1985: 18) define experience as follows:

.... Experience consists of the total response of a person to a situation or event: what he or she thinks, feels, does and concludes at the time and immediately thereafter. ...It could be provoked by an external agent or it could be an internal experience, arising out of some discomfort with one's present state. In most cases the initial experience is quite complex and is constituted of a number of particular experiences within it.

It is my contention that at workshops and seminars respondents were immersed in linking experience to social meaning. This linkage provided the opportunity for delving into the dynamics that entrenched the status quo as well as developing creative ideas for challenging social conditions. There were no blueprints for solutions. The reflective discussions created the blueprints.

The question that arises is whether it was primarily the experience of the respondents, or whether there were other factors that contributed to the learning processes that emerged. It could be argued that many people with the same experiences of oppression did not learn in the same way. Fenwick refers to Kolb and other theorists who maintain:

... that although all adults are exposed to a multitude of life experiences, not everyone learns from these experiences. Experience alone does not teach. Learning happens only when there is reflective thought and internal 'processing' of that experience by the learner, in a way that actively makes sense of the experience, that links the experience to previous learning, and that transforms the learner's previous understandings in some way.

<http://www.ualberta.ca/~tfenwick/ext/pubs/print/ERIC-new2.htm>

I believe that an important factor responsible for transforming understanding was the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement during this period. What did the Black Consciousness Movement do differently to their contemporaries and fellow activists that

contributed to the emergence of revolutionary fervour suppressed effectively by the apartheid regime in the sixties?

As has been previously stated, the most important aspect about Black Consciousness education initiatives is that it was rooted in identity development. Within a short period, the Black Consciousness Movement successfully debunked notions of inferiority and simultaneously built up individual and group consciousness for liberation. It provided a trigger and a sustainable theory for individuals to analyse critically, leading assumptions about their individual realities and consciousness. As the Civil Rights Movement in America in the nineteen fifties and sixties, 'shaped the way scholars and activists have come to understand oppression and its other manifestations' (Bell in Adams et al, 1997: 7), the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa from the late nineteen sixties was responsible for reshaping consciousness and introducing Freire and Fanon's teachings to direct the oppressed into action for liberation.

In this study, respondents developed a radical consciousness directly related to their desire for liberation. Fenwick cites Saddington<sup>39</sup> who works with three basic orientations of educational practice to examine different dimensions of experiential learning:

*progressive*, focusing on the individuals' responsibility towards their society, and viewing education as a problem-solving instrument of social and political reform;

*humanist*, focusing on the learner at the centre of a process of discovery and self-actualization, in a drive towards personal enrichment, integration, psychological development; and

*radical*, focusing on societal and individual liberation through questioning and reinterpreting the very cultural assumptions of experience, and moving to action for transformation.  
<http://www.ualberta.ca/~tfenwick/ext/pubs/print/ERIC-new2.htm>

The learning was radical not only because it questioned and acted upon assumptions of experience, but because it advocated challenging the very foundations upon which the society rested by promoting revolutionary change. Conscientisation was a central theme in the transformative, revolutionary learning process. Freire (Freire, 1972b: 51) defined conscientisation as:

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<sup>39</sup> Saddington was a T-group trainer in the 1970s who worked with some of the activists from the Cape in this study. He is mentioned in Terry's submission.

The process in which men, not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality.

Through their personal conscientisation, individuals could reflect on their roles in the maintenance of their oppressive realities and could thereafter actively participate in the transformation of their personal identities and contribute to actively changing society.

Boud, Keogh and Walker (Keogh and Walker, 1985: 19) stated:

The capacity to reflect is developed to different stages in different people and it may be this ability which characterises those who learn effectively from experience.

The people in this study developed that kind of capacity to reflect effectively and therefore were able to fight psychological racial oppression and build programmes designed to support the challenge to overthrow the apartheid state.

In his analysis of conscientisation, Freire (Freire, 1972b: 51) expounds on human existence *in* and *with* the world:

It is as conscious beings that men are not only *in* the world, but *with* the world, together with other men. Only men, as 'open' beings, are able to achieve the complex operation of simultaneously transforming the world by their action and grasping and expressing the world's reality in their creative language.

Being 'with the world' and 'with other men' highlights our existence not just as individuals but also as people integrally bound to communities and society. In this study, that context of comradeship with members of the groups and the local community was crucial for the raising of consciousness and the building of action around specific programmes. As that comradeship extended beyond the localised groups, the consciousness and learning was exposed to national and international influences important in the learning processes that were enriched by ideas outside of the immediate parochial confines of the school and the church. While transforming the world remained largely focussed on the South African struggle, activists developed ideas from experiences of struggles in other parts of the world. Alternative theological discourses as well as Feminist, and Marxist influences (amongst others) permeated into the groups indirectly through members who travelled abroad as well as through their innovative reading programmes.

### **6.1.3.2 Learning through struggle**

For Freire, action was an essential consequent of reflection for the achievement of liberation. He said, 'Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men upon the world in order to transform it' (Freire, 1972a: 52). It is my submission that the ability to critically reflect and develop appropriate strategies for group action enabled the groups to internalise and redefine their consciousness more effectively.

Social action for transformation required the groups to develop tactics to enhance their knowledge in a number of areas. Activists developed the skills needed as they engaged in struggle. The learning emerged from identifying their needs in the sphere of struggle and conscientisation as well as taking the initiative to learn the appropriate skills and acquire the relevant knowledge. While the churches and organisations provided some support, the learning process was essentially self-directed.

Jarvis (Jarvis , 1992: 130) quotes Knowles (Knowles, 1975: 18) who describes self-directed learning as:

a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and other resources for learning, choosing and implementing learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes.

Although Jarvis is critical of Knowles' definition saying, 'it is so broad as to be almost meaningless' (ibid.), it is ironical, in view of Knowles' conservative educational leanings, that Knowles' definition appropriately encapsulates the kind of learning practices of the deeply political and ethical community-based respondents in this study. The inadequacy of the apartheid schooling system spurred on the groups to design learning strategies and content appropriate to their needs. Though they had little formal training, they were able to take the initiative, diagnose their learning needs, identify human and other resources for learning, choosing and implementing learning strategies and evaluate outcomes. This reinforces the contention of Griff Foley (Griff Foley 1999 p. 1-2 retrieved from: <http://www.ualberta.ca/~tfenwick/ext/pubs/print/ERIC-new2.htm>) who writes, '... some of the most powerful learning occurs as people struggle against oppression, as they struggle to make sense of what is happening to them and to work out ways of doing something about it'.

Foley further contends that the process of learning is not just 'an individual psychological change' (ibid). Fenwick reports that Foley embedded that change in community action:

First, the initial participation is sparked in a gradual community awareness of the need to act. Second, the learning process is entangled with opportunities for collective action, the ways people come together, the spaces that emerge for this transformed consciousness to flourish and formulate action, and the ways the community develops an activist discourse. Third, much of the significant change is people learning connections between them: recognizing the universality and solidarity of their experiences, while learning their diversity of experience and ideology (and how these differences could be exploited by others). Fourth, much significant learning is embedded in their activity and not articulated as learning by the people. Fifth, emancipatory learning is not cumulative but embedded in conflict, and developing in unanticipated ways. The learning itself is as continually contested, complex, ambiguous and contradictory as the struggle between dominant and insurgent forces. (ibid.)

Learning that was 'embedded in conflict' sometimes resulted in group members adopting different strategies and choosing different directions. At times, there were periods of contestation and conflict as group members chose different directions. There was recognition that there was not necessarily only one solution to obtain a particular outcome. A unity of purpose did not mean that everyone needed to agree on everything or adopt the same strategies.

### **6.1.3.3 Contestation between reform and revolution**

In my discussion, I have extrapolated a theory about a change of consciousness that led to a suspension of middle class aspirations in favour of commitment to revolutionary struggle. In addition, I contend that learning through struggle invokes particular revolutionary fervour and dedication not easily emulated in less overtly hostile environments. It is necessary to develop these viewpoints further.

During the time of active revolutionary struggle it was anathema to suggest any kind of reformist solution for the racial problems in South Africa. Consequently, activists maintained a strong revolutionary profile for the period of struggle against apartheid. As in other struggles through the ages, 'radical and reformist views existed side by side' (Frolich, 1987: 45). The revolutionary idealism downplayed any reformist middle class inclination, as it was inappropriate for the time. I am of the view that the lowering of the 'liberty' bar, or the restructuring of the essentials of the ANC's Freedom Charter

by the post apartheid government has allowed for or condoned latent middle class aspirations to come to the fore.

Empirical evidence suggests that indeed Black Consciousness teaching grounded revolutionary consciousness in opposition to any kind of reformist solution and thereby set the standard as 'all or nothing' during the years of struggle. However, in the post apartheid period some of the respondents (together with a whole layer of a political activists and professionals) not only facilitated the negotiated settlement and subsequent electoral victory of the ANC, but continue to support the ruling ANC government even though it implements neo-liberal policies that militate against almost every socio-economic right struggled for, in the belief that 'a period of ever growing prosperity was on its way' (ibid.). Therefore, in some instances, revolutionary zeal has been replaced with reformist optimism.

This study has shown that revolutionary zeal evoked spontaneous learning. I believe that the goal of attaining power is an important dimension that promotes the kind of learning evident in this study. In the present period in South Africa when reformist democratic forces have the hegemonic control of the society the quest for power is subverted into a mere fight for civil liberties. Thus, the attainment of power by oppressed groups endures as a more distant view. Social justice learning is then contextualised in reformist struggles.

#### **6.1.3.4 Hegemonic control impedes learning and the sustenance of revolutionary zeal**

It is my contention that to maintain a critical/revolutionary consciousness it is essential that learning is not constrained by blind obedience to the hegemonic diktats of political organisations. It is important to maintain a questioning mind that challenges infringements of social justice irrespective of who the perpetrators are. In this study, there is evidence that the greatest learning occurred when there was a unity of purpose during the years of struggle against the apartheid regime. However, when some leaders adopted autocratic styles that sidelined some people, those individuals sought alternative

strategies of struggle. I believe that those who accepted hegemonic control lost their independent spirit and thereby their ability to think autonomously and creatively. Alternatively, those who maintained their independence developed stronger views in opposition to mainstream thinking. Those who maintained intellectual independence also maintained a revolutionary spirit and disinclination to reformist solutions.

## **6.2 Impact on their lives and their understanding of their social identities**

The central theme around which this study examines learning processes is contextualised in its emergence as activists sought extrication from oppressive conditions. I acknowledge that some of the respondents in this study are today not the revolutionary, zealous individuals who fought apartheid in their youth. Certainly, their interviews showed that they do still have a fundamental context in which they continue to challenge oppression in the various arenas they find themselves. However, the urgency of fighting oppression is missing. The engagement they now speak of is very different to the vibrancy evident in their submissions about their involvement in the period of the early 1970s.

It is my contention that once individuals have achieved ‘a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others and the society as a whole’ (Bell in Adams et al, 1997: 3), those individuals will continue to engage with social justice. However, that engagement may be less intense in the period when the reformist fight for civil liberties has replaced the revolutionary struggle for political power.

It is true that the respondents in this study do continue to engage with social justice issues. Critical awareness allows them to engage with oppression in its many forms. The strength of character that they developed in their youth that enabled them to overcome the subservient status imposed by the ‘white’ regime remains central to their personalities and Biko’s definition of Black Consciousness has come to be a reality. Biko wrote:

Merely by describing yourself as black you have started on a road towards emancipation, you have committed yourself to fight against all forces that seek to use your blackness as a stamp that marks you out as a subservient being (Biko in Stubbs (ed.) , 1978: 52)

It was through the total experience of Black Consciousness and the combined processes of learning through church and community groups that they gained self-confidence and pride in themselves. Harold's simple statement, '*Even at this moment I realise who I am,*' echoes the feelings of the others.

The apartheid regime hounded activists and many of the stories reflect the trauma of living in a police state. In that situation, choices were made for what was perceived as the greater good rather than for personal promotion. The respondents in this study took on the struggle as was described by Steve Biko (Biko in Stubbs (ed.), 1978: 108) . He wrote:

In a true bid for change we have to take off our coats, be prepared to lose our comfort and security, our jobs and positions of prestige, and our families, for just as it is true that 'leadership and security are basically incompatible', a struggle without casualties is no struggle.

Empowered with those principles activists were able to internalise an identity that they have stated has remained with them and has spurred them to engage continually with learning and human rights issues. However, their engagement with human rights in present day South Africa is different to the revolutionary style adopted during the anti-apartheid struggles. The political landscape of struggle has changed dramatically. Today affluent individuals (with a conscience) choose the kind of involvement they want to have in the various social justice struggles.

It is my view that the changes that took place in South Africa in 1994 resulted in some activists in this study becoming complacent about the injustice that has continued to plague South African society. For some, 1994 was the culmination of the struggle against oppression and marked the beginning of liberation. In the present era where the fallout from the neo-liberal policies of the ANC government is more apparent in the poverty around, some are more circumspect and share Alan's relationship of '*critical solidarity*' with the present regime. Some respondents remain disparaging of the present regime and

see their involvement as ongoing in the fight against oppression; including holding the ANC government accountable for human rights abuses.

In countries like Palestine where the struggle against oppression is still in progress, activists do not have the luxury of choosing their battles. They continue to fight against oppression with revolutionary vigour. Leila Khaled, mentioned earlier as an icon admired by activists in the Black Consciousness Movement and who is visiting South Africa as I write this document, highlights that reality. In a recent interview in the Sunday Times she said, 'We are attacked everywhere. Israel is attacking Lebanon, attacking Palestine. I think Israel has gone mad now and they are going to turn the region into war.' (Jacobson retrieved from: <http://www.sundaytimes.co.za/Articles/TarkArticle.aspx?ID=2146483>.) The reporter, Celean Jacobson, notes the fierceness in her voice. I find that indicative of an active fighting spirit.

The consciousness of respondents is such that they recognise the oppressive forces at work and understand the power structures but they do not live under oppression in its starkness. In contrast to the commitment in their youth, their level of engagement in social justice is more circumspect. Unlike the revolutionary Palestinians, they so admired in their youth, the South Africans now largely work to reform the status quo, not to overthrow the regime.

Contrary to Jarvis' (Jarvis, 1992: 142) contention that, 'while people have free will, they often exercise it in order to conform rather than in such a way that their actions reflect their own interests', the findings in this study show that, when confronted with institutionalised oppression of the magnitude prevalent in apartheid South Africa, some individuals, supported by groups, could put aside personal interest and strive for authentic liberation. However, in the post apartheid era revolutionary vigour and idealism has been replaced with the more pragmatic choosing sites of struggle and the levels of engagement.

## 6.3 Implications for social justice teaching and education

Teaching social justice education in post-apartheid South Africa poses different problems. The starkness of racial oppression during the decades of National Party rule provoked activists to respond with fortitude and courage. In the present epoch, oppression is less palpable and more insidious in its application. Class oppression is starker but because of the racial legacy in South Africa, class oppression is still couched in racial consciousness. There are important lessons that we can draw from both the development of consciousness and the learning strategies of the activists during the apartheid struggle that can assist in the promotion of social justice.

### 6.3.1 Developing a liberatory consciousness

I think the greatest feat of the period of this study was the ability of individuals and groups to rise above their designated oppressive status and direct their own learning practices for developing a liberatory consciousness.

The road to a liberatory consciousness is a complex one that can only be appreciated through actual practice. Groups in this study effectively used sensitivity training as a vehicle for raising consciousness. I reiterate the benefits described by Professor Johanson's testimony to the SACC commission in 1973<sup>40</sup> (*Rand Daily Mail* (15 June 1973 published in *Pro Veritate*, Volume 12, No. 2, page 24)(also outlined in Chapter 3 of this document):

Self discovery can be a painful but necessary and very valuable experience. This happens often when others reflect back to us something of what we are.

- It contributes to a clearer self perception in the individual of his own potential and capacity to help others.
- It contributes to a greater awareness of how others feel.
- It contributes to a resolving of problems between people through understanding the principle in which human relationships function.
- It recreates the redemptive fellowship – the essential character of the Christian community.

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<sup>40</sup>Professor Johanson's testimony to the SACC commission in 1973, *Rand Daily Mail* (15 June 1973 published in *Pro Veritate*, Volume 12, No. 2, page 24

The self-discovery explored in this document happened in the context of the local groups who provided the necessary backing. This study shows the importance of group support and collaborative action.

Although much of what Black Consciousness stood for previously has been appropriated to become an alienating Africanist philosophy, its importance as a medium for developing a strong self-image to challenge racial oppression and in effect the very notion of race remains relevant. Moreover, the practice in the 1970s of uniting the oppressed under one umbrella, could be adapted for recognising the oneness of human beings.

### **6.3.2 Using language for liberation**

In the early nineteen seventies language was effectively used to promote a non-racial discourse that challenged the premise on which racial separation was based. Black Consciousness terminology turned apartheid racial discourse on its head and established a basis for the unification of the oppressed.

In the present circumstances in South Africa, language of oppression has crept back into everyday discourse. An example of this is the continued use of apartheid racial terminology on the pretext of its usefulness for the application of equity.

Wildman & Davis analysed how language veils systems of privilege and concluded:

The very vocabulary that we use to talk about discrimination obfuscates these power systems and privilege that is their natural companion. To remedy discrimination effectively we must make the power systems and privileges they create visible and part of the discourse... (Wildman & Davis in Adams et al 2000: 50 – 52)

Social justice educators have to draw attention to how language maintains power and privilege. In addition, innovative strategies that challenge the language of oppression and promote a language of liberation should be developed. That language should liberate our minds from the constraints imposed by apartheid terminology and provide a new direction for thinking of ourselves as human beings first.

In the present epoch, the language games of those in power have become more sophisticated so that they subvert opposition even before it is able to form itself. For example in South Africa, capitalist exploitation is masked by language that talks about transformation while affirmative action veils inherent racist privilege. What is needed is to counter the state's hegemony over language and create a new language of liberation. However, I believe that a new language of liberation will only be effective if it catches the imagination of the oppressed classes and propagates their views.. Kumashiro's (Kumashiro, 2000: 26) provocative use of language like 'queer' and 'fag' effectively undermines the intent of the bigots but in my opinion loses its effect because it has to be explained before its message is understood.

I believe the process of struggle throws up its own solutions. Social justice educators need to be vigilant and recognise innovative use of language that can be used to fight oppression in all its forms. A current example of the way language is being reclaimed by communities is the use of the word 'shack'. *Abahlala base Mjondolo* is an organization that represents the interest of shack dwellers in informal settlements around Kennedy Road near Springfield in Durban. The slogan they display on their t-shirts says, 'Talk to us not about us.' While the authorities prefer to use the term informal settlements to salve their consciences, the residents state clearly that they live in 'shacks' and their demand is for real homes. While the state tries to use language that disguises the plight of the residents, they themselves want to shame the authorities into action by their use of the word 'shack'.

When interviewed by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Roberto Pombo, Subcomandante Marcos, the leader of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation said,

...It was when we got to the indigenous communities that language hit us, like a catapult. Then you realise that you lack the words to express many things, and that obliges you to work on language. To return time and again to words, to put them together and take them apart. (Marquez and Pombo in Mertes (ed.), 2004: 12)

### **6.3.3 Turn experience into action**

Linking experience to reflection and action is an important task of the social justice educator/facilitator. My personal experience of learning and teaching social justice in the post apartheid era in South Africa is that it lacks the kind of immediacy and revolutionary vigour evident in the period when the respondents in this study were active. This study has shown that through passionate involvement with the political struggle to overcome racial oppression in South Africa, activists developed an awareness that was strengthened through active engagement and a commitment to change. I do not believe that the richness of the involvement of that period can be artificially recreated. However, there are strategies that could be developed and used by social justice educators who have to work within the confines of a classroom.

The passion was rooted in the rediscovery of a positive self-image and the realisation that they could link up and be strengthened by other like-minded individuals. I am of the opinion that that kind of passion is possible. The challenge is to bring the immediacy and vibrancy into the classroom by making the experiences as real as possible. The groups used various strategies like drama, street theatre, poetry and music as part of their conscientisation programmes. The effectiveness of these strategies enabled groups to reach out to different people in diverse settings.

### **6.3.4 Abandon the classroom?**

From this study, it emerges that more learning occurred outside of the schooling system. In that respect, non-formal education initiatives proved to be more successful in attaining the transformation goals of social justice education. The self-motivation and learning strategies embarked upon provide ideas for creative social justice educators.

The respondents in this study developed in an authentic fashion very differently from the designs of present day social justice education scenarios. The individual experiences of life developed in individuals an anger that set them in motion to actively campaign to liberate themselves and their society. While present day social justice education uses the personal experiences and consciousness of the students, that experience is constrained by

the objective realities of a classroom and the need to perform for rewards like marks or examinations. It is my contention that through the institutionalisation of Social Justice Education a degree of authenticity has been lost. Fenwick writes:

We are witnessing the transformation of experiential learning from a progressive educational movement towards reconstruction as an object of institutional policy and professional good practice. <http://www.ualberta.ca/~tfenwick/ext/pubs/print/ERIC-new2.htm>

I believe that to restore experiential learning once again as a progressive education movement it should make greater efforts to link its practice to real struggles in communities. The respondents in this study acknowledge that they learnt through struggle. Emerging social movements could benefit from the involvement of social justice educators as they fight not only the government's neo-liberal socio-economic policies but continue to battle against oppressive, patriarchal systems inherited from the anti-apartheid struggles (Benjamin , 2004: 149).

It is ironical that decades after Illich espoused his philosophy of de-schooling society that we as social justice educators still find it difficult to conceptualise effective education strategies separate from schooling and formalised classrooms. Illich (Illich, 1974: 52) regarded revolutionaries as 'victims of school' because he said they saw 'liberation as the product of an institutional process'. A critical lesson from this study is that the most effective learning took place outside of the formal schooling system. Perhaps social justice educators have difficulty in conceptualising the traditional classroom as the source of a problem. This requires moving out of the comfort zones of academic power and privilege into a new area of learning and discovery. I am of the opinion that effective social justice education belongs outside the constraints of formalised schooling. This is an attempt to recognise that social justice education is needed where injustice is most stark.

What then is the role of the classroom in terms of such issues? Nothing? Does one then simply abandon formal education in terms of such issues? A scary thought for those of us committed to institutionalised control of learning. However, it is a promising prospect for the millions who will never have access to the institutions of higher learning. I think the

constraints of classroom teaching linked to examinations and marks needs to be rigorously debated and alternative inclusive strategies should be mooted.

### **6.3.5 Developing the capacity of independent thinkers**

It is important that social justice educators encourage independent thinkers who engage with the social problems and develop innovative ideas.

The previous apartheid education system discouraged independent thinking. Even the present system is constrained by its link to examinations and marks. It does not develop the type of critical reflective thinking that is necessary to challenge injustice. In *Education and society in Africa*, (1986), Bray, Clarke and Stephens state:

There is a substantial difference between teaching or learning a subject such as civics for examination purposes and actually employing the principles in one's life outside the classroom. Pupils often enter what they see as a different world with different rules when they move into the school compound, and when they return home. When they leave school they often do not or cannot apply the 'theories' they have learned in the classroom. (p. 27) (retrieved from: <http://www.adeanet.org/wgnfe/publications/abel/abel1.html>)

Titled, 'Introducing Critical Reflective Thinking and Transformative Learning into Church Leadership Development Programs in East Africa' (retrieved from: <http://www.adeanet.org/wgnfe/publications/abel/abel1.html>) the article cites research (Brookfield, 1986; Freire, 1973; King & Kitchner, 1994; Mezirow, 1991; Senge, 1990; Schon, 1987) that shows that critical reflective thought tends to encourage both cognitive and moral development. Freire's influence in the education development of activists in the 1970s serves as a useful measure of how effective that type of learning is.

Strong independent thinkers are able to effectively analyse the machinations of those in power.

### **6.3.6 Developing camaraderie**

Freire believed that orientation in the world means, 'humanising the world by transforming it' (Freire, 1972b: 21). Those who develop a critical consciousness find others who think like themselves to build alliances for transforming the world. Collective action is an essential component of the revolutionary process to change society. Part of

the revolutionary process is to build links with like-minded individuals for the specific purpose of collective action. Freire stated, 'Men are historical beings, incomplete and conscious of being incomplete' (op. cit.: 82). That consciousness of incompleteness is what draws together those in the process of transforming the world. The process of transformation is never completed. In Freire's words, 'To be authentic revolution must be a continuous event. Otherwise it will cease to be revolution, and it will become sclerotic bureaucracy' (ibid.).

The respondents in this study grew and developed because they had the support base of like-minded comrades and organisations as well as intellectual guidance from renowned writers and philosophers like Freire and Fanon. They were part of that student movement that found kinship with Freire's revolutionary ideas and linked Black Consciousness with Freire's vision for a liberated society. In addition, they critically analysed society and developed a clear view of the world they desired to live in. They took a stand. There could not be neutrality. Neutrality would have resulted in the maintenance of the status quo. Horton, who said, 'If one takes a critical analytic view of the social order, neutrality is not supported', held this view' (Hamilton, 1992: 16). Taking a stand meant being able to risk personal attack and rejection as the powerful forces around fought to maintain the status quo. Taking a stand opened possibilities for forming alliances.

During the period of engagement against racial oppression, activists developed ideas that supported and challenged various ideologies. In spite of divergent and often radically opposing views, comrades were able to work together for a common goal. Camaraderie developed through struggle.

### **6.3.7 Identifying groups/individuals who can act as change agents**

Agents of change are people who develop a consciousness of oppression and an acute sense of responsibility for fighting that oppression. I believe that the reason why some people accept agency is rooted in the individual psyche and his/her experience of oppression but more importantly in the context of group support and solidarity.

In my opinion, the most important message for social justice educators is that the respondents in this study learnt best when they were young, in the process of forming their identities and the system against them was most harsh. In addition, they developed within the contexts of local, national and international struggles for liberation. This in no way suggests the institution of a harsh regime as a strategy for developing young progressive leaders. On the contrary, it merely highlights the fact that youthful radicals are primary candidates for change agents.

Being youthful made it possible for them to be open to revolutionary ideas. Their learning was a direct response to developing alternatives to what they learnt about oppression and their own oppressive consciousness. The experience of racial oppression enhanced their capacity to develop processes of learning that suited their needs.

Being young meant that activists were more rebellious. The element of rebelliousness was a crucial factor that empowered individuals to delve into alternative possibilities and open new vistas. Targeting the youth has the advantage that they are disposed to change and can be organised as change agents. Adolescence is the period when much questioning about identity occurs.

Saranel Benjamin, an activist who worked for the Centre for Civil Society at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, analysed the membership of emerging social movements in South Africa and noted the following:

There are a number of young people joining movements as youth unemployment is increasing, young people are no longer able to afford school fees, and more young people are affected by HIV/AIDS....( Benjamin in McKinley &Naidoo (guest eds), 2004: 151)

Her analysis supports my contention that the youth today are suitable candidates to become change agents.

In this study, involvement in community work was very important. The community work did not just involve the youth but rather focussed on the problems identified in the

communities and directed those activities towards social change. The youth provided the drive but recognised that to be a movement they needed to involve everybody.

Community struggles give direction to social justice education. Benjamin's study noted that in some movements like the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF) pensioner-activists are 'dealing with the immediate effects of non-service delivery as increasing numbers of households come to rely on the income of pensioners for their survival' (ibid.). The various struggles throw up new challenges.

The people in this study benefited from having a basic level of education that enabled them to engage with reading materials and sophisticated ideas. Though educationally disadvantaged by apartheid education they could identify their strengths and weaknesses and build the capacity they recognised as essential for challenging their oppression. This does suggest that a basic level of education does assist learners to understand social justice. However, Freire has shown how consciousness raising can be tackled through literacy programmes. Such programmes were utilised by groups in this study for raising awareness amongst themselves and in their communities.

Class dynamics have changed and continue to change in the present epoch in South Africa. Guardians of the anti-apartheid legacy regard their struggle credentials as proof of their ongoing commitment to human rights. This study raises questions about levels of commitment and involvement in spite of consciousness about oppression. While former activists in this study continue to engage in social justice issues, their involvement changed as they adapted to their changed class positions.

Large areas of informal settlements in our country are indicative of the continuation of social oppression in stark and horrifying forms. A challenge for social justice educators is to reach out to these poor working class/ unemployed/ peasant communities. It is possible that similar groups to those that emerged during the apartheid era are seeking ways to extricate themselves from their oppressive situations and a layer of youth is ready to spread the message of social justice to communities ripe for a message of hope.

Those sections of society that our education system marginalises could be effective candidates to become successful change agents for social justice. Emerging social movements around the country show that there are anti-oppressive forces at work in small groups that together are attempting to challenge the might of the oppressive capitalist order in unexpected but powerful ways. Social justice educators could play an important role in this arena.

## Chapter 7

### Critiquing Identity

The focus of this study has been on social identity development within the context of unravelling the learning that emerged amongst some political activists in the 1970s in South Africa. Whilst previous chapters have largely focussed on the learning, I think it is necessary to analyse the contribution of this study to the debates around social identity. Concerns about the importance of identity are voiced among the divergent political groupings on the right and left (retrieved in November 2006 from: <http://www.alcoff.com/content/chap2polcri.html>).

This study supports the view that identities are socially constructed and are not fixed essences. It also acknowledges what Neville Alexander has termed the 'primordial validity' (Alexander, retrieved from: <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/research/programmes/DG/events/20060511NevilleAlexander.pdf>) linked to political, historical and social context in terms of identity construction. The relevance of this study is largely about the deconstruction of racial identities and the significant impact on the lives of the respondents.

A writer highlights the concerns raised by leftist groups in the US. He says:

...most prominent (white) leftists in the U.S. today are critical in varying degrees of movements that make identity their organizing basis, and are worried about 'overemphasizing' difference. The debate over multi-culturalism that raged throughout the 1990's was instructive in this regard. Most leftists wanted to carefully distinguish good and bad forms of multi-culturalism, and were very critical of forms that they felt reified identity and promoted a politics of visibility without an agenda of class struggle. (retrieved from: <http://www.alcoff.com/content/chap2polcri.html>)

It is significant that in the South African context those who underwent racial identity deconstruction under the guidance of the Black Consciousness Movement sought to educate themselves on political struggles elsewhere so as to empower themselves to fight against the oppressive South African regime. They adopted various strategies of struggle including class struggle. The writer's concern about overemphasising difference needs clarification.

The argument put forward by the critics of social identity development is that ‘the focus on identities and thus differences inhibits the possibility of creating a progressive political majority based on class.’(retrieved from:

<http://www.alcoff.com/content/chap2polcri.html>) Gitlin is purported to have said that identity politics make ‘a fetish of the virtues of the minority.’ Further, in his view, ‘this is not true of just some versions of identity politics, but of all: ‘all forms of identity politics’ are reductive: they are all ‘overly clear about who the insiders are...and overly dismissive of outsiders.’”(Gitlin 1995, 127 in ‘The political critique of identity’ Retrieved from: <http://www.alcoff.com/content/chap2polcri.html>) [It is important to note that in the South African context the racial target groups and women are in the majority.]

Was the Black Consciousness Movement ‘dismissive of outsiders’? I am of the view that the data collected validates the view that ‘whites’ were regarded as outsiders. The insider/outsider view provided the opportunity to build the oppressed community independently of the well-meaning but privileged outsiders who did not experience racial oppression. The word ‘dismissive’ is unnecessarily emotive and undermines the intentions of the insider group. The focus was deliberately removed from the outsider group inwardly to the oppressed group in order to build their capacities.

The findings in this document indicate that in the South African context racial identities superimposed all other identities. Class, gender and other identities became of secondary importance in the context of South African racial oppression. However, through understanding and unpacking those racial identities a new consciousness about identities emerged that not only provided greater clarity about race but opened new vistas for political struggle and understanding of other identities. The process of unravelling the intricacies of racial identity led to involvement in political struggle

Although it has been proven, scientifically, that there are no foundations for arguing the race question through genetic studies, it is true that the social constructions of racial discourse continue to be driven by disproved theories. The public continue to be largely

ignorant of the body of knowledge at the disposal of social scientists. The Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa was successful in emphasising difference to debunk the notion of inferiority. The word 'black' was reconstructed to mean all the oppressed. Identity labels like 'coloured', 'Indian' and 'bantú' became terms, regarded as divisive, derogatory terms not to be used by anyone who wanted to be taken seriously as a liberatory force in the political world of the oppressed.

Evidence presented in this document highlights initiatives that were conducted in the era prior to the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement. There had been attempts in previous decades to build on commonalities across race groups. Conflicts in the student movement that emerged when 'black' students broke away from NUSAS showed how those initiatives had failed to build the necessary capacities within the oppressed communities to effectively overcome the feelings of inferiority in relation to 'whites'. It failed to bring to the fore the burgeoning racial hatred as it tried to cover up agency with platitudes and good intentions. The Black Consciousness Movement used difference to its greatest advantage.

In a case study of identity politics amongst Puerto Ricans, political scientist Jose E. Cruz found 'identity based organizing led not toward separation but was precisely the key to the enhanced political mobilization and involvement of Puerto Ricans in Hartford politics' (Cruz 1998, 12 in 'The political critique of identity' Retrieved from: <http://www.alcoff.com/content/chap2polcri.html>). He concluded that 'identity politics did not 'reify victimization' but 'encouraged individuals to overcome passivity' precisely through a rearticulated 'self-image' and the demand of 'equal access to positions of responsibility within the civil and political society' (ibid.). That view encapsulates the intention of the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s.

The Black Consciousness view gained prominence in political circles and a review of literature of the 1970s and 1980s corroborates my contention that the Black Consciousness Movement successfully united the racially oppressed under the umbrella of the term 'black'. However, it must be acknowledged that though successful within

seasoned / hard-core political groupings it was just superficially accepted in the broader society. I contend this because after the un-banning of the political organisations and the freeing of political prisoners (in 1990), previously disbanded terminology came back into everyday discourse. I am of the opinion that through the re-introduction of racially divisive terminology into the South African political discourse an opportunity was missed to deconstruct race in the South African context.

Moyo supports the view that 'identities are constituted differently in different historical contexts' (Moyo, retrieved from: <http://clogic.eserver.org/3-1&2/moya.html>). The term 'black' in the present era, is fast assuming the identity popularised by the former apartheid government and has (largely) lost the previously associated power for debunking racial stereotypes and language. This shows that 'identity categories are neither stable nor internally homogenous' (Moyo, retrieved from: <http://clogic.eserver.org/3-1&2/moya.html>). Therefore, politicians can, with the power at their disposal, redefine meanings and intentions associated with identity terminology.

Questions that come to mind are: 1. Was the South African struggle for liberation compromised by its link to identity politics? 2. Does that link to identity politics explain some of the ongoing difficulties experienced in the present era? I believe this study provides some insight.

During the period of apartheid racial oppression, the South African regime built its racist policies around multi-culturalism and difference. Separation of groups was based on identities created by the regime for their self-serving purposes. It has repeatedly been pointed out in this document how the Black Consciousness Movement dealt with this reality but I believe that the fallout of such policies in the post apartheid era needs some clarification.

Structures of oppression create cultural and ethnic differences for the specific purposes of exploitation. In the present era, the regime continues to argue for recognition of diverse cultural groups. It is for this reason that so many languages are recognised in South

Africa as official languages<sup>41</sup>. Racial oppression in South Africa devalued those cultural groups and the present regime's intention is to undo that historical error. However, confusion arises as these policies are undermined by elements in the society who continue to have a racist and divisive agenda diametrically opposed to the 'unity in diversity'<sup>42</sup>, as enshrined in the South African constitution.

The Afrikaner group in Orania whose policies are rooted in the apartheid past is a case in point. The Orania group was part of the dominant 'white' group during the years of apartheid and negotiated a position to continue to live separately, as a distinct separate (racial / language) group, in post-apartheid South Africa. It must be noted that the Orania group did not arise from structures of oppression, but rather from their own perceived fears of the new society which was being built free of 'white' or any other domination.

Similarly, tribal authorities, that were built up during the apartheid era for the specific purpose of promoting the regime's divisive policies, re-emerged in the post-apartheid era with a new identity that constructed a tribal identity under the guise of the Black Renaissance discourse and the promotion of African cultures (which were) previously denigrated by the apartheid regime.

How can these conflicting objectives be reconciled? I am of the opinion that the power dynamics need to be uncovered in order to expose the intent of those with an apartheid or oppressive agenda. In the new post-apartheid era that sought to remove any and all anomalous / anachronistic racial / tribal privilege the racist intent of the Orania group appears unambiguous to me. Similarly, the desire of the tribal authorities to retain, entrench and increase their dominance over people they claim to be their subjects (as in the province of KwaZulu-Natal) is problematic and militates against not only the non-racial, anti-tribal/Bantustan/apartheid struggle but also the spirit and text of the South African Constitution. I contend that the present regime, whilst having the power to challenge and crush such oppressive practices, lacks sufficient will. Perhaps, the race

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<sup>41</sup> SA Constitution: Chapter 1: Founding Provisions

<sup>42</sup> Preamble to the constitution states: (We) believe South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity

question provides a suitable smoke screen against the burning issues of gross class inequalities promoted by the devastating neo-liberal policies of the ANC government.

Unity during the period of struggle was crucial for winning the battle against the oppressive regime. Unity was built on the basis of contextualising a homogeneous experience of racial oppression and discrediting attempts by the nationalist regime to construct racial and tribal divisions. Makang refers to the formation of the common experience as a 'community of destiny'. His view in this regard is pertinent:

... the racial differences are being retrieved by the former oppressed and given new meanings, new destinies and new ways of being in the world, which are meant to empower these former oppressed. The slogans of 'race pride' or 'black is beautiful' for instance are meant to boost the morale of black folk who came to form a *community of destiny*. But this community of destiny was born out of their common suffering in the modern age or their consciousness of being marginalized and ostracized (Makang, 1999 retrieved from: <http://faculty.frostburg.edu/phil/forum/Multicult2.htm>).

During the revolutionary period of struggle against racial oppression it was assumed that in the post revolutionary period and in the absence of legalised racial oppression differences would become less important and a new national identity would replace the ethnic labels popularised by the apartheid regime. While there is evidence in the stories in this document, that that is what South Africans want, it remains elusive. The new national identity is tempered by the ongoing divisiveness in the government's equity policies and its implementation of affirmative action that not only uses derogatory racial labelling but also promotes racism under new guises. Evidence in this study highlights the frustrations people with a Black Consciousness background have with those policies. It is my view that new interpretations of apartheid inequality are dangerously close to inadvertently falling into the traps created by apartheid divisions.

Do the authorities have an interest in maintaining an apartheid racist identity in its population that hides the emerging class identities that challenge the status quo? The social movements developing in South Africa display strong class characteristics and challenge the racial labelling that are used to divide them. Benjamin explains that in the emerging social movements, race is not an issue as social movements are organised across race groups on the basis of social problems (Benjamin in McKinley & Naidoo 2004: 153 ). She explains:

In the movement themselves, racial intolerance is not welcome and this is made clear by constant articulation and referral that is dealt with head-on. The very nature of the movements themselves, that sees people from different townships and communities getting into taxis and buses and venturing into other townships to build solidarity and community, is not only a beautiful thing to see but helps to break down the barriers of race that existed during apartheid, and that are still in existence today (Benjamin in McKinley & Naidoo 2004: 155).

In a paper written for the Centre for Civil Society, Benjamin quotes a research report that reveals the deep disparity in the distribution of wealth in South Africa:

About 18 million people live in the poorest 40% of households and are thus classified poor and 10 million people live in the poorest 20% of households and are thus classified as ultra-poor (commissioned study by the World Bank May 1998 in Benjamin: 12).

A strong working class could challenge the neo-liberal policies of the capitalist government and therefore pose a danger to the state. It is important that the traps created by non-delivery and increased anger among divergent groups are addressed before they develop into internecine warfare as witnessed in other countries. The experiences of other African countries provide us with information about the pitfalls of identity politics that heighten conflict and can lead to violence and war.

Ikelegbe analyses the impact of identity politics in Nigeria:

...Ethnic, communal, religious, regional and sectional identity has become the safe haven in the circumstances of an incompetent, weak, failing and insensitive state...

The state and its officials and the competing ruling class and its factions have been fingered as central to the resurgence and heightening of identity, identity politics and conflicts. Being the main base of class formation and accumulation and being consequently huge in its stakes and centrality to personal and group welfare and survival, what is created is an intense and fierce competition and an amoral lawless politics. With the state as an actor, a locus of conflict and an instrument of the struggle, Nigerian politics has been that in which groups have been excluded and marginalised, disadvantaged and rendered powerless (Ikelegbe, retrieved from: <http://www.codesria.org/Links/conferences/cotonou/ikelegbe.pdf> ).

The above report signals dangerous precedents of how identity constructions can be abused by power blocs for their own purposes. I am of the opinion that, as has been argued, the relationship between identity formations and power structures need to be explored (retrieved from: <http://www.alcoff.com/content/chap2polcri.html>) to understand the new relationships of power and the underlying discourses that disguise power.

A writer highlights Fraser's analysis of identity struggles. She divides identity struggles into two groups, viz.: struggles for 'recognition'<sup>43</sup>, and struggles for 'redistribution'<sup>44</sup>, (retrieved from: <http://www.alcoff.com/content/chap2polcri.html>). I believe that the South African regime considers both recognition and redistribution as crucial aspects of their policies for redressing imbalances created by the apartheid regime. What is important for this study is to realise the limitations of only considering identity from those perspectives. The neo-liberal policies of the regime place constraints on its ability to address those considerations in any meaningful way. It is my view that focussing only on recognition and redistribution hides that neo-liberal intent and the new power formations that continue to promote capitalist exploitation.

While the Black Consciousness ideology served a very useful purpose in providing the sense of 'power and solidarity' to the disadvantaged youth and silenced voices, its dynamic and militant challenge to the increasingly brutal apartheid state was all too brief. The anti-communist, 'total onslaught' strategy of the minority regime, resulted in country-wide arrests, torture, state-murders and the hounding into exile of hundreds of Black Consciousness members and leaders. The Black Consciousness movement was simply not allowed space on the political scene to develop its revolutionary ideology, particularly its focus on the struggle for an egalitarian society.

In the post apartheid period, the ANC amply aided and abetted by various sources (which could be the subject of another paper) won the battle for hegemonic control of the political space. Massive funding by agencies to acceptable (pro-West) political organisations has triumphed over the long, anti-colonial, non-racial struggle for an egalitarian South Africa.

It is hoped that problems raised in this chapter contribute to a greater openness in the understanding of underlying dangers of promoting racial reasoning and emphasising difference at the expense of unity. Social justice educators have an enormous task of not

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<sup>43</sup> Recognition: women, oppressed minorities, gays and lesbians

<sup>44</sup> Redistribution: labour, the poor, welfare rights

only raising awareness of oppression but need to be mindful of the power politics in identity constructions. The price paid for a non-racial, just, egalitarian society (in South Africa) is so great that educators can do no other but ensure that the social justice agenda is always kept uppermost in the hearts and minds of the nation state.

# Chapter 8

## Conclusion

### **This study found:**

- The apartheid state was responsible for racial oppression that immersed the society in the illusory belief in superiority and inferiority of different race groups.
- Within the subordinate discourse there were clear expressions that rejected and questioned the messages of inferiority that were spread by the dominant group.
- Black Consciousness drew individuals away from preconceived notions rooted in the oppressive ideology of apartheid and created a new identity that promoted 'black' pride and solidarity.
- The identity development was contextualised in the racist realities of apartheid South Africa. Activists were able to construct a convergence towards a common goal for revolutionary social change. The group context facilitated the paradigm shift that not only changed personal perceptions and assumptions but also crafted a new direction for the anti-apartheid struggle.
- Revolutionary zeal evoked spontaneous learning. Powerful learning occurred when it was linked to the struggle against oppression. Under such conditions groups and individuals took responsibility for their own learning and developed skills and strategies that stayed with them for the rest of their lives.
- The most effective learning occurred outside traditional schooling systems.
- Language was effectively used to redefine an oppressive consciousness and identify its link with the maintenance of power. Black Consciousness explored the power and privileges as well as subordination inherent in language usage. The Black

Consciousness discourse not only challenged the existing norm but also set its own standards and created a new language.

- Involvement in struggle resulted in suppression of middle class aspirations in the interest of overcoming institutionalised racial oppression.

**and concluded that :**

- The development of an anti-oppressive social consciousness was a powerful tool used by the Black Consciousness Movement to fight racism and injustice.
- The gains made by the Black Consciousness Movement in respect of anti-racist education have been lost as a new racial consciousness has been promoted that serves the interests of powerful neo-liberal groups.
- There are dangers inherent in blind obedience to ideology that discourages independent thinking. Identity politics should be interrogated to ensure that disadvantaged/oppressed groups are not used in a destructive manner against one another.
- The youth are ideal candidates for change agents.
- While social justice is important to those who have committed themselves to it, different alliances and strategies have emerged in the post-apartheid era.
- There are important challenges emerging in the social movements that create spaces for innovative social justice educators to pursue the objectives of social justice education.

## Chapter 9

### Reflections

This has been a journey of great joy for me personally. It has given me the opportunity to meet old comrades and relive what was a most exciting period of my life. I had not contemplated much about my formative years in my political consciousness in my later life.

As much as I experienced joy, I also experienced great trepidation as I constantly questioned my role as the narrator/researcher and wondered about my ability to retain an objective stance that would reflect correctly the period I was recording. I feared that my closeness to the subject matter would prevent me from correctly analysing the events of the period. I also wondered if what I was saying was not just a rehash of what others had probably said in much more sophisticated ways in research that has already been done. I felt like a stepdaughter of the mysterious academia who so eloquently analysed the numerous papers, books, journals and newspapers I read and browsed as I tried to find out the best way of tackling the project and presenting my research data.

Because of my rational/irrational fears of misrepresentation, I have been absolutely loyal to the spoken word of the individuals I interviewed. What I have written is not an interpretation of what they said but rather their actual words. As I read the stories, I can hear the voices of those I interviewed and I hope that it will be the same for those who read this research.

I have included all the stories of those who made submissions as I feel that it is of interest from both a historical and educational point of view. In addition, I believe that those who took the time to tell their stories should share the space to be heard individually and collectively. I found working within the restraints of academic discourse somewhat frustrating. However, in hindsight I have to admit that it helped me to focus and gave the project direction and value.

I got married in December 1974 when I was just twenty years old. I mention this because it relates to my positioning in this study. In retrospect, I think I was quite young but at the time, I felt more mature than most because I had been involved with the student movement for some years and lived a very full and demanding life.

Roy and I met when a group of us from Cape Town came to Durban following an invitation from Jaya Josie. We met at Jaya's house. He was under house arrest at the time and ironically, that was the only place where we could safely meet without the intrusion of the security police. His dog signalled when anyone approached and gave Jaya a chance to disappear into his bedroom. Three of us from the Cape Town group consequently married members of the Durban group. This is not as strange as it seems since the Durban group was predominantly male and our Cape Town group was predominantly female.

Being married to Roy allowed me access to all the groups that he belonged to. This dissertation unfortunately tends to over-represent the ASH group although they were just one of the groups that operated in the Merebank area. I made some attempt to interview other activists from Merebank but as I became conscious of the lengthiness of this study, I did not devote sufficient energy to a full representation of the views of other very important individuals in this area. I hope that Roy and Daya who represent those voices have adequately captured their views.

I was never in any doubt that this study needed to be a comparative study between the two geographic areas. Although in the final analysis the views from Cape Town are a bit under-represented, I believe that the essence of what needed to be said has been captured. I must admit that once I was half way through the Durban interviews I realised that for the purposes of this minor dissertation I already had sufficient material and did not need a comparative study to be able to answer the research questions. However, I have always personally been fascinated by the fact that two diverse groups thousands of kilometres away from one another developed in such similar ways. When we met, we hit it off immediately as we had so much in common. It was not only in the way we had developed

our Black Consciousness identities but also in our aims to confront our oppression and find ways to participate actively in the struggle against apartheid. I feel I was well placed as the person to do this research. I hope that I have done justice to the views of my comrades and in some small way contributed to the body of knowledge.

A major disappointment of the 'young , gifted and black' generation is the ease with which so many settled for less than the minimum political demands of generations of freedom fighters; they settled for the 'trickle down' promise of bourgeois democracy. I was gratified to find that many of the people who I had developed with in my youth continue to be people with a conscience.

The struggle continues! Aluta continua!

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**Table 6: A Chronology of Events: 1948 – 1975**

Year	Event
1948	Pamphlet on Christian National Education published. National Party wins election and forms government
1949	Robert Sobukwe delivers 'Completer's social' address
1950	Suppression of Communism Act passed
1951	Bantu Authorities Act passed
1953	Bantu Education Act passed
1955	Boycott of schools in Southern Transvaal and eastern Cape
1957	Nursing Act Amendment Act passed
1959	Extension of University Education Act passed
1960	Shooting at Sharpeville and Langa-Nyanga. ANC and PAC banned
1960-67	African university colleges demand the right to join NUSAS
1965	Christian Institute forms AICA
1967	University Christian Movement launched. ASSECA started. Urban Training Project formed.
1968	UCT students strike over Archie Mafeje issue
1969	Durban dock strike fails. SASO launched.
1970	African Students Movement (later SASM) formed. Gatsha Buthelezi becomes Chief Executive officer of KwaZulu.
1971 September December	First steps to formation of BPC. TEACH launched for black schools. Sales and Allied workers Union started Durban workers threaten strike action Ovambo workers strike
1972 March June July August October	O.R. Tiro addresses Turfloop graduands and is expelled. SASM launched. PUTCO strike, in Johannesburg BPC formed BAWU formed Dockworkers strike, in Durban and Cape Town.

	Widespread university strikes and clashes with the police
1973 January- February March June July-September August 11 September	70 000 workers in Durban-Pinetown-Hammarsdale on strike. Strike at Tugela Mills; B. Dladla involved. NAYO formed. Boycott of classes at UWC Strikes in textile mills, Durban. Carltonville strike and shootings
1974  August  25 September	Strikes spread to rest of country, and continue on mines.  Inkatha Yenkululeko Yesizwe launched. Caetano government falls in Portugal Schlebusch Commission reports on NUSAS. Entrance to African Secondary Schools doubled by lowering examination requirements. Viva Frelimo rallies called.
1975  August October	Trial of SASO 9  Trial of NAYO 7 Trials of ANC, SACP, and Okhela members. Standard Six (exclusively at African schools) abolished. South African army enters Angola. Bus boycott, Newcastle.

(Hirson: 334-336)

**Appendix 1: Black Consciousness is...**

**BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS IS**

1. an attitude of mind, a way of life;
2. its basic tenet is that the Black man must reject all value systems that seek to make him a foreigner in the country of his birth and reduce his basic human dignity;
3. it implies awareness by the Black people of the power they wield as a group, both economically and politically and hence group cohesion and solidarity are important facets of Black Consciousness;
4. The Black man must build up his own value systems, see himself as self defined and not defined by others;
5. Black Consciousness will always be enhanced by the totality of involvement of the oppressed people, hence the message of Black Consciousness has to spread to reach all sections of the Black community;
6. Liberation of the Black man begins first with liberation from psychological oppression of himself through an inferiority complex and secondly from the physical one accruing out of living in a white racist society;
7. Black people are those who are by law or tradition, politically, socially and economically discriminated against as a group in the South African society of their aspirations.

*Solidarity (Volume 1 No. 2 1979)*, a publication of the Black Consciousness Movement of South Africa, Black Consciousness

Appendix 1: Bobby's Creative Writing from 1971

Dad  
and Kennedy Hill

to my sister to my

My Sunday school class consisted of four boys around the age of five years that morning a part of my lesson I gave them twenty four pages to play with left nothing else but with some time could be spent with the things I noted down to mind and my whole one writing to go on

They all set to it except one little boy, he preferred to write down from the text of the song and could not be drawn. As first I said to go on with the lesson and give references to some of the words that morning was so boring I thought it off that for the night to stop the class myself and to see how it that night I was so bored with the process I said however for young people for experience, I allowed the to carry on. I did not stop them to change the means but encouraged them on.

He had gone against my mother and was in the process and separated from wife for the some three days, and did this mean that the boy was selfish and disinterested. In thinking that deeply I reached the conclusion that he was not so very selfish because a day of his life did not make a great thingy matter and he had thought that they were already quarrelling to see the cause. The little soldier was not at all disinterested as he chose to be there to see something and he was left to my mother's side where I was writing



## 2.1.1.1.1.1

to the lead

Case to the lead

some years ago

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the same in the same way and you can find

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Appendix 3: Bobby's Police Documents



TO: BAPTESE MARIE  
(I.N. 800-113422A)  
MODDERBEE PRISON  
RENONI

WITHDRAWAL OF NOTICE ISSUED IN TERMS OF SECTION 10(1)(a)  
READ WITH SECTION 10(1)(a)bis OF THE INTERNAL SECURITY  
ACT, 1950 (ACT 44 OF 1950)

I, JAMES THOMAS KRUGER, Minister of Justice, hereby,  
in terms of section 10(1)(b) of the Internal Security  
Act, 1950, withdraw the notice issued to you in terms  
of section 10(1)(a) read with section 10(1)(a)bis of  
the said Act on 18 August 1976.

Signed at *CAPE YOUTH* this *23rd*  
day of *DECEMBER*, 1976.

*James Thomas Kruger*  
MINISTER OF JUSTICE

SEARCH - WARRANT

SECTION 47 ACT 55/1955 :  
TO ALL POLICE OFFICERS :

WHERE AS IT APPEARS TO ME FROM INFORMATION TAKEN ON OATH THAT THERE ARE REASONABLE GROUNDS FOR BELIEVING THAT THE FOLLOWING GOODS AND OR DOCUMENTS, VIZ :-

DAYBOOKS, CIRCULARS, CIRCULAR INSTRUCTIONS, LETTERS OF INSTRUCTIONS, MINUTE BOOKS, MINUTES, PAMPHLETS, DRAFT SPEECHES, RECORDING DISCS, RECORDING TAPE, RECORDING MACHINES, LETTERS, TELEGRAMS, CABLE GRAMS, MAGNETIC ROLLS, MAILING LISTS, PLANS OF CAMPAIGN FORUMS, CIRCULARS, DRAFTS, RESOLUTIONS, DRAFT RESOLUTIONS, MEMBERSHIP CARDS, VOLUNTARY FORMS, BOOKS, LECTURES NOTE BOOKS, FILMS, SWAMPANORE RECORDS, TYPE WRITERS, DITHIZONE AND ANY MATTER WHICH COULD BE OF USE IN PRINTING, PUBLISHING OR DISSEMINATION OF ANY DOCUMENT OR PUBLICATION, RELATING TO :-

- (A) THE ADVOCATING, SOLICITING OR WAGING VIOLENT REVOLUTION, GENERAL UPRISING OR ARMED STRUGGLE AGAINST THE REPUBLIC OF S.A. OR,
- (B) ANY ACT OR SCHEME WHICH AIMS AT THE BRINGING ABOUT ANY POLITICAL, INDUSTRIAL, SOCIAL OR ECONOMIC CHANGE WITHIN THE REP. OF S.A. BY THE PROMOTION OF DISTURBANCE OR DISORDER, OR
- (C) ANY ACT OR SCHEME WHICH IS CALCULATED TO FURTHER THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF ANY OF THE OBJECTS OF COMMISSION OR
- (D) IS THE PROPERTY OF AND/OR RELATING TO THE AFFAIRS TO THE ORGANIZATIONS OR MATTERS UNDERMENTIONED -

(1) BEACH PEOPLE CONVENTION

(11) SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENTS ORGANISATION WILL AFFORD EVIDENCE AS TO THE COMMISSION OF ONE OR MORE OF THE UNDERMENTIONED OFFENCES OR ARE INTENDED TO BE USED FOR THE PURPOSE OF COMMITTING THE SAID OFFENCES, TO ALL

- (A) C/S. 28, ACT 55/1955
- (B) C/S. 29, ACT 44/1950
- (C) C/S. 21(1) ACT 76/1962
- (D) C/S. 35, ACT 56/1967
- (E) C/S. 2(1) ACT 85/1967.

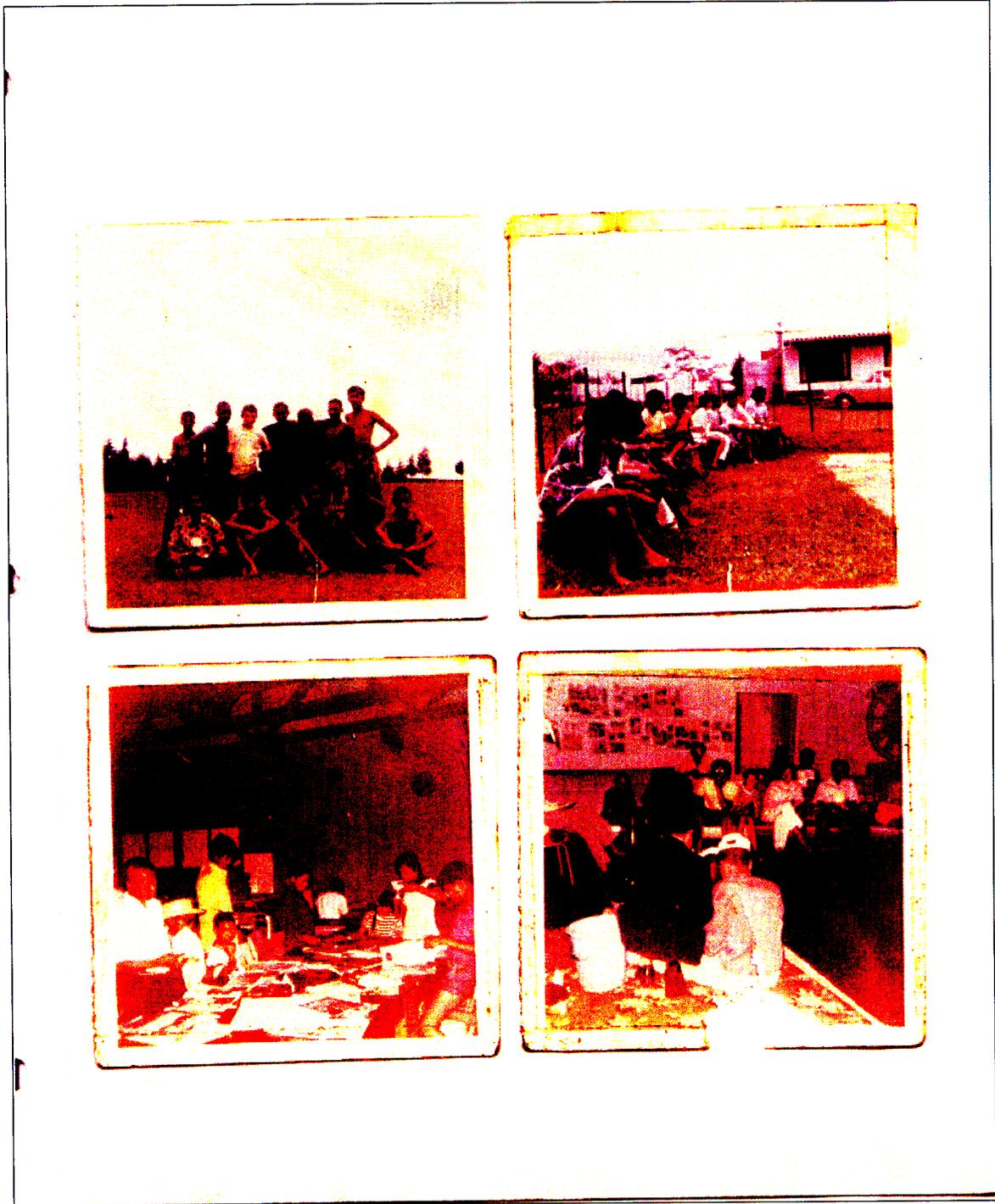
AND ARE IN OR UPON THE PREMISES OR PREMISES AT

Flat 7, Bonaire Centre 275 Spauls M  
IN THE OCCUPATION OF Baptiste Wari

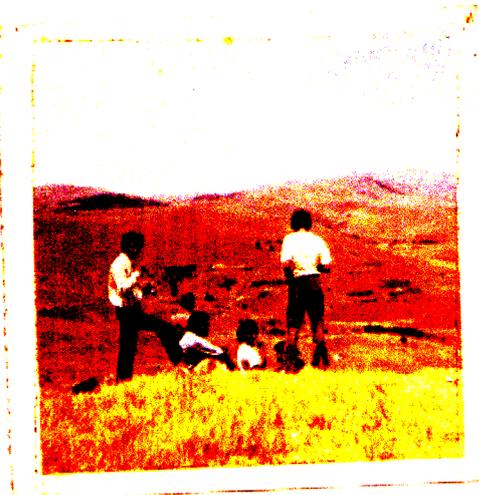
THERE ARE PROVIDED IN THE NAME OF THE STATE TO AUTHORISE AND REQUIRE YOU, WITH NECESSARY AND PROPER ASSISTANCE TO ENTER THE SAID PREMISES OR RECEIPTABLE AND THERE DELIGENTLY TO SEARCH SUCH PREMISES OR RECEIPTABLE AND ANY PERSON FOUND THEREON OR THEREUPON FOR THE SAID GOODS AND/OR DOCUMENTS AND IF THE SAKE OF ANY PART THEREOF SHALL BE FOUND UPON SUCH SEARCH, THAT YOU BRING THE SAID GOODS AND DOCUMENTS SO FOUND BEFORE THE MAGISTRATE AT Leopold TO BE DEPOSED OF AND DEALT WITH ACCORDING TO LAW.

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AT Bathurst THIS 22nd DAY OF March 1977  
THIS WARRANT IS TO BE EXECUTED AT ANY TIME DURING THE DAY OR NIGHT.

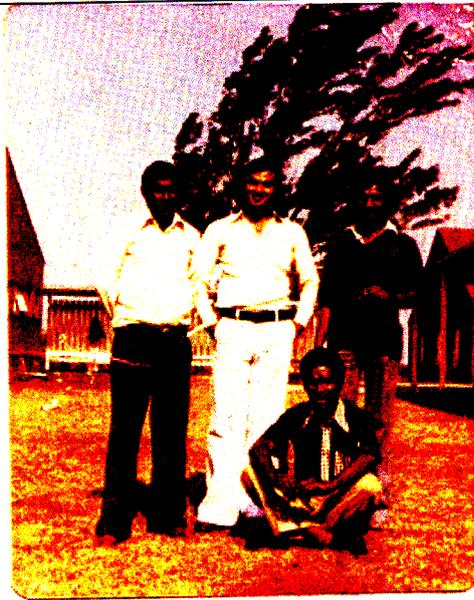
Appendix 4 Photographs of Workshop Participation



Appendix 5: Post Matriculation trip of the Durban group to Cape Town



Appendix 6: Durban: Group Bonding Activities





School of Education and Development  
Faculty of Education  
Private Bag x03  
Ashwood, 3605

Oral Histories of young activists in Cape Town and Durban in the early 1970s

**Participant information sheet and consent form**

Dear

**Description:** As part of the research work for my MEd Degree I am investigating the learning experiences of young activists in the Merebank and Cape Town areas in the early 1970s.

Crispin Hemson, senior lecturer in social justice education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, is the person supervising the work.

To enable the research to be effective, we are requesting that you assist us by agreeing to be interviewed.

**Risks:** There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study.

**Privacy:** To accurately record historical interviews I wish to use the actual names of participants in this study. I need your permission to do so. Should there be anything you do not wish me to publicise, your privacy will be guaranteed.

**Time involvement:** the expected length of the interview is approximately two hours.

**Payments:** You will receive no payment for your participation in this study.

**Participant rights:** You have the right to refuse to take part in this research. If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this study, please understand that your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions and your rights will be upheld at all times. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of the project, you may contact, anonymously, if you wish, Mr Crispin Hemson on 031 260 3432, or 082 926 5333, or by email: [Hemson@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Hemson@ukzn.ac.za).

I agree to participate in this study. I do understand that the only way I may benefit is through the publication of oral histories of the 1970s as yet untold.

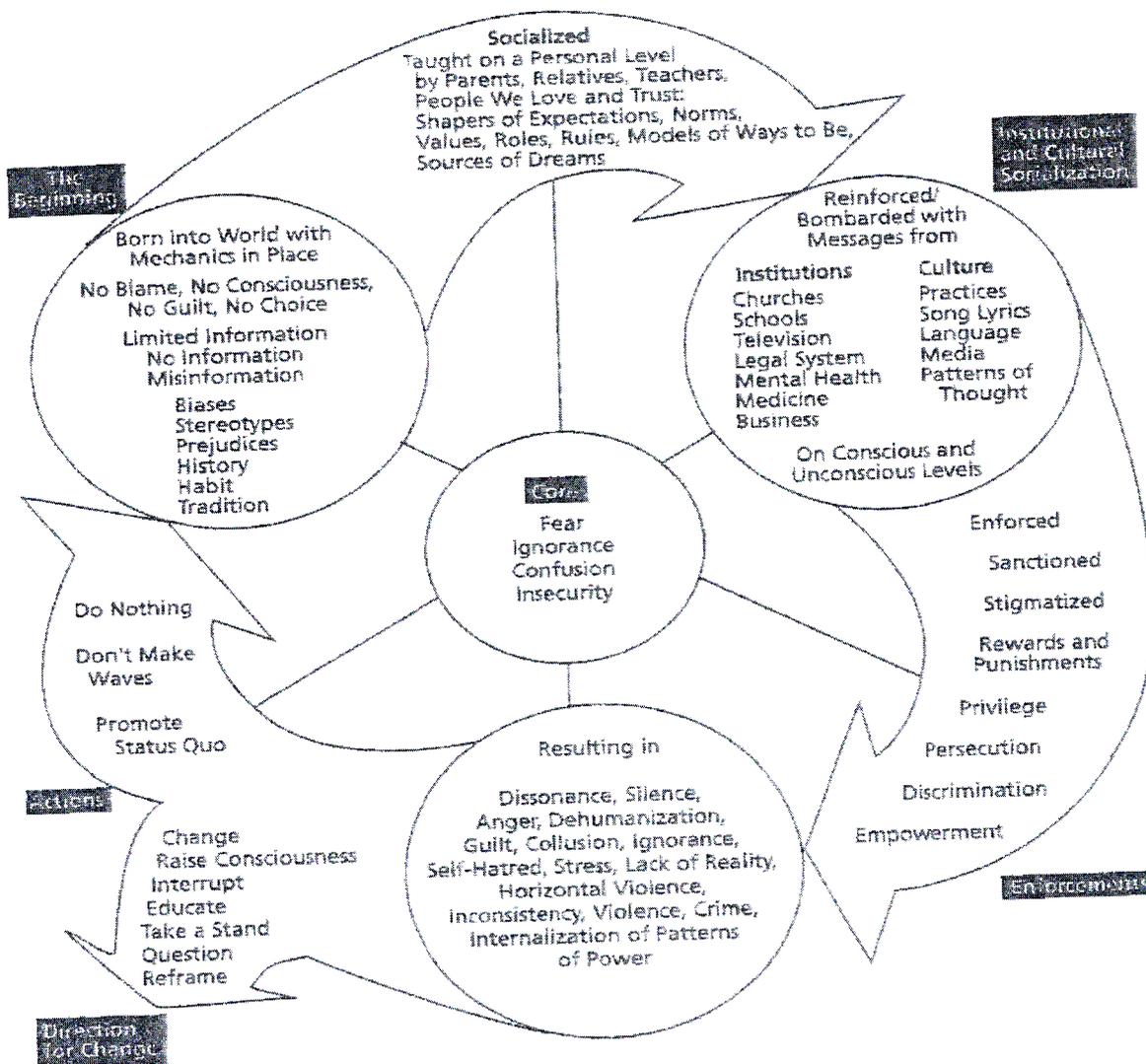
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

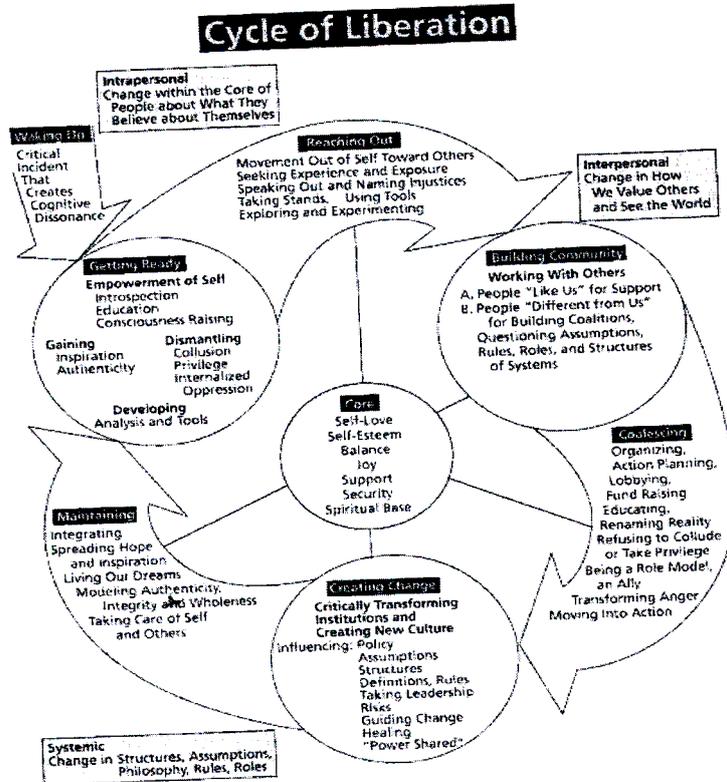
**Appendix 8: Examples of questions asked in the interviews:**

1. Please provide a brief outline of your family history.
2. Describe the home you lived in when you were young.
3. How did you come to live in this area?
4. Describe your experiences at school.
5. Did you experience oppression in your childhood? If so, what did that consist of?
6. What was your understanding of your identity as you were growing up?
7. I would like you to refer to experiences of oppression in your childhood that you are aware of and how you first came to the realisation that you were different.
8. I would like you to talk about how you came to start working with activists in this area and the workshops, seminars that you participated in both as a learner and as a facilitator/trainer.
9. You can refer to the photographs that I'm attaching to help your memory recall. Speak of the activities that you engaged with during this period and how your consciousness developed as a supporter of Black Consciousness.
10. Speak of the people who were most influential in raising your consciousness and the organisations that you belonged to or were instrumental in forming.
11. I would like you to focus on your identity development from then to now. Explain how the consciousness developed in your youth has affected your life and the choices you've made.

## Appendix 9: Cycle of Socialization



Appendix 10: The Cycle of Liberation



The Cycle of Socialization

## Appendix 11: Pigeons at the Oppenheimer Park

### Pigeons at the Oppenheimer Park

I wonder why these pigeons in the Oppenheimer Park  
are never arrested and prosecuted for trespassing  
on private property and charged with public indecency.

Every day I see these insolent birds perched  
on 'Whites Only' benches, defying all authority.  
Don't they know of the Separate Amenities Act?  
A white policeman in full uniform, complete  
with a holstered .38 special, passes by  
without even raising a reprimanding finger  
at offenders who are flouting the law.  
They not only sit on the hallowed benches,  
They also mess them up with birdshit.

Oh! Holy Ideology! Look at those two at the crest  
of the jumping impala, they are making love in full  
view of madams, hobos, giggling office girls.  
What is the world coming to?  
Where's the sacred Immorality Act? Sies!

# THE SENTINEL

A Quarterly Publication

ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED TO P.O. BOX 40, MEREBANK

This Newsletter is designed to bridge the gap that exists between the people and public organisations, and to serve as a platform for public views. All correspondence are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor, P.O. Box 40, Merebank.

## L.A.C. OPTS FOR AUTONOMY

The Southern Durban LAC has decided to go ahead with its plans to accept the City Council's offer of declaring the Indian areas of Durban "autonomous" by the end of July. This is in spite of an assurance given by local LAC representative, Mr. A. K. Pillay, at the annual general meeting of the Merewent Ratepayers' Association, that only the people could decide whether they want autonomy or not.

However, we have been given to understand that the LAC has attached a 5-point condition before accepting the City Council's proposals. At a joint meeting held between Southern Durban LAC and the Northern Durban LAC, Mr. A. Rajbansi, a representative of Bayview, Chatsworth, pointed out that the annual revenue from Indian areas amounted to only R3 million as compared to R42 million from Whites. Thus, he concludes, that "autonomy" will be economically viable only if the City Council cedes to its 5-point condition:

- ★ That the Clairwood industrial area, Springfield Flats, and Mondi Paper Mill be included;
- ★ That compensation for the backlog of work on the areas be paid by the Council;
- ★ That a pro-rata share of all Capital Funds be given to the new Indian Local Authority;
- ★ That all expenses incurred by the new Local Authority be met by the Borough Fund until the Local Authority has gained a firm footing;
- ★ That plans be devised so that the new Local Authority can share the rates contributed by commerce and industry.

It is highly unlikely that the City Council (not unknown for its shabby treatment of the Black population) will accede to the LAC's demands. An immediate blow to the plan has already been delivered by the Town Clerk, Mr. E. R. Irvine, when he said that the City Council only envisaged Indian group areas being included in the new city, and the Mondi Paper Mills, Clairwood industrial areas and Springfield Flats were not Indian Group Areas.

However, it must be realised that the LAC is not truly representative of the people, and indications are that they will be prepared to accept "autonomy" even if the City Council does not cede to its 5-point condition. The real danger is revealed by Mr. Fowle's

statement that if the LAC wants autonomy, and if the City Council agrees, "autonomy" would be granted without a Provincial Council of Inquiry into the economic viability of "autonomy" being established. The City Council fully realises that it is dealing with an organisation that is not fully representative of the people.

★ Meanwhile, the Merewent Ratepayers Association has resolved to request the Town Clerk that the proposal to grant "autonomy" be stayed until such time a Commission of Inquiry, appointed to examine the economic viability of Indian areas, tables its findings.

LATEST: City Council rejects LAC's 5-point condition. Only prepared to grant a share of Capital Funds to new local authority.

### MRA TAKES DURBAN CORPORATION TO COURT

Applications for a court order restraining the Durban City Council from increasing the final selling price of Merebank's sub-economic houses have been lodged in the Durban Supreme Court.

In a 30 page affidavit submitted by attorneys D. K. Singh, Poovalingam and Yahed, the litigant claims that the City Council is not justified in (1) increasing the price of the houses twelve years after purchase, by nearly 40% in some cases; (2) charging backdated interest calculated on the new price.

The litigant in the case is Mr. J. Naidoo, Secretary of the Ratepayers' Association. According to Mr. M. R. Moodley, the Chairman of the Association, this is a test case, and the final judgment on the case will apply to all residents.

Now that you can see that the Association is doing something concrete towards the case, you should not hesitate to contribute towards the legal fund.

This page is sponsored by TONY HARRIS, Merebank  
(Show Promoter and Salesman)

## Appendix 13 What people learnt

### Skills

- Conducting seminars and workshops
- Reading for relevant information
- Developing innovative learning materials. (Making use of everyday things for educational purposes)
- Writing pamphlets, speeches and articles
- designing, writing and running a community newsletter (Sentinel)
- running a coffee shop
- building community networks
- writing poetry, music

### Information

Gleaned from various sources:

- The ideas of revolutionary writers like Fanon, Freire, Illich, Cabral.
- Freire's ideas for literacy training
- Alinsky's ideas for community action
- Speeches of influential adults and civic leaders
- Speeches/tape recordings of radical civil rights leaders.
- Radical Movies
- Books, magazines from radical sources such as the Christian Institute and Institute of Race Relations, SASO and NUSAS.

### Concepts

- Black Consciousness
- leadership rather than individual leaders
- sensitivity training
- the teacher is also a learner
- learning comes from experience
- learning can be self directed
- self efficiency with respect to design and conducting of learning
- the power of the written and spoken word
- Education is not synonymous with schooling
- truth is relative
- need for social change
- changed consciousness formed around the acceptance of inferiority, myths and stereotypes.

### Attitudes and behaviours

- identity development and conscientisation
- clandestine operations under the scrutiny of the police.
- community action for change
- involvement in demonstrations, mass meetings and pickets.
- calling and running mass meetings
- radical street drama
- participation in civic bodies e.g. Merebank Ratepayers Association
- Challenging the regime
- There was strength in numbers
- There were alternative ways of looking at life
- The power of propaganda

## Appendix 14: The Stories

### *The Early years*

#### Respondents from Durban

##### *Bobby Marie*

*Bobby has his roots in a poor working class family. His father was a waiter and his mother stayed at home to look after the children. As a young child his family moved around a lot. They lived in a settlement just outside Merebank which was bulldozed. They then moved to rooms in Jacobs Road, Clairwood. Bobby says, 'We always lived in 2 rooms with all six of us. My parents one and us kids in the other, no kitchen, they built their own kitchen, that kind of stuff...' He started school in 1961 in Clairwood and moved to Merebank in 1962. His new home was a two-bedroomed council home. Talking about his parents, he remembers: 'For the first time completely to their amazement they get a house nicely fenced with their own yard and their own three little rooms...'*

Bobby talks about his childhood experiences:

I believed I was more privileged than the people in my class. It's a very interesting little realization. It is because teachers used to insult kids who came without shoes for one and who had dirty feet. Now I had clean feet. So among the bare feet I was always better off and the teachers always pointed to that. So it always sort of made me feel that I was more privileged than the others. I think for that very early bit, I was always brighter in class and therefore felt I was a cut above the others on an individual basis. I remember feeling some kind of embarrassment because I would apply for free books because my parents couldn't afford to buy books for me. So we had to fill a green form.

There would be say about half of the class applying for free books. My close friend was the principal's son. He never applied so that may have been..... but somehow I think it's a classic kind of situation like house nigger and field nigger. I think in my consciousness I was house nigger. Because some of the other kids came from very depressed homes so there was no care over them.

My parents made up for it because they were very organised. They made up for not having. Like the other thing that they would do, maybe it was their consciousness, like they would say there was one difference between us and the other kids in the barracks where we lived was that we never used clothes that were patched. All the other kids, all of my friends used clothes that were patched. I think more like.... my father's.... kind of.... he worked in the hotel he was a waiter, he served white people.... In his perception we were always a cut above the others.

The other thing that may be a factor in this was the Christian bit..... We were Christian and the others were Hindu. It may have been in my consciousness that I was better than all this because we lived among the poor a lot. I was better in class so I was better than the principal's son who was in my class and he was my close friend. I'm talking about class 1, class 2. It all began to change in Merebank because when we came to Merebank there was an equalizing.

In that time I did have a sense of the people who lived in the bigger houses. I remember having a sense. The ownership houses..... I did have a sense because invariably there would be families who'd be better off. There would be the teachers there. There would be the clerks. We were the waiters and the factory workers. I had a distinction of class to those who were teachers. In my family there were no teachers.

Racial identity also has been very interesting because from the time we moved to Merebank the church<sup>46</sup> was always a mixed race. That was strange, very un-Merebank because other churches were all Indian, even the Methodist church.

When we came there my closest friends were from Austerville<sup>47</sup> and I used to cycle across and hang out there with them from the time I was nine, ten. And I did have a sense of being Indian because they used to call me *curry guts*. So I'd be the only Indian guy in there. We were very close friends in Sunday school and then we go across to Austerville and watch football matches. Then also Jaya's cousin, David was a close friend of mine and all his brothers played football in Austerville. They were coloured. We used to call them *mixed brains*.

By the time I reached high school I stopped seeing them because they all end up being artisans and whatever. They would have left school around std. 6. They were similar age groups and I would have stayed on at high school. We stop interacting. Like Ivan<sup>48</sup> now from the time he was std. 6 he stopped being socially kind of friends with us because he became a factory worker and we were high school students.

We were a kind of rarity and in many respects we were a group by accident. That is exactly how I understand that and that's one of the things in trying to work this out. It's by a strange mix of accidents that we become a mixed group of people involved in the church - not by any design. That accident is very much like the way we lived our lives in Merebank. You get up in the morning, you go

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<sup>46</sup> Bobby's church was the Presbyterian Church.

<sup>47</sup> Austerville was a 'coloured' township adjacent to Merebank

<sup>48</sup> Ivan is Bobby's older brother.

out. Your parents don't ask so what are we doing today or we're doing this for our holiday. Our parents did nothing with us. What would happen in the day, who we met, who we bumped into, whether we were led into situations, where we stole fruit or not, or got beaten up and things like that it was all by accident.

The fact that in the church there is a football ground there where everybody used to come and play and that is where I would have bumped into Jaya.... And the fact that it was opposite my house. So if anyone wants water, gets tired and sits in my house.... My house then becomes central first because of the football ground....

So the reason we came together was because I had access to this place where we could all go and sleep there. There was a whole bunch of us and quite honestly I don't know if we studied very well there because there was just this big hall and then at some point or the other somebody would be sleeping, taking a break and somebody else would be bored and messing around. There was table tennis there and there was all sorts of maybe fights around people and some people would study. But we came together and it wasn't for any political programme or anything. And then we were spending more time together because that was like a den. Everybody had access. There was no... like kids today would get into a car, we never had a car... Then going to Cape Town together...but then going to Cape Town ... we raised money to go to Cape Town through carol singing with Pastor Prakasim.

The only Africans we would see were those who came to sell things and those who worked. So it became an issue by the time we were eleven, twelve when my Aunt Poomoney would say don't ever use the word *native*. The word is *African* and we live in Africa and this is an African country and we must throw the white people out. That was direct politicization from her which I don't think was ordinary to Merebank.

By the time I was thirteen, fourteen, by the time I was in high school, I, very early on got the political line. Examples of that would be: There'd be the white soccer league and there'd be the black soccer league. Durban City, Durban United..... I always wanted to go there but it was forbidden in my house that I should go there.... Once I went ..... I wanted to see because we used to go to the soccer league. I wanted to go there. But anyhow I got talked down by my aunt ....

But in terms of my family, my father invited some Whites to lunch one day. You see at home we never sat around the table. There was no space for a table. Our lounge was a lounge and there was a little table in the kitchen always and forever. When White people came for the first time they set up table in the veranda, tablecloth, forks and knives...so we always had a sense of whites.

The other time we had a sense of whites was in the church where all whites were missionaries, all Whites were those who came to save us. And one day when there was one White and his name was Dr. Kennedy. There was a little incident, an accident down the road, somebody was injured so Dr. Kennedy came and attended to that person. There was this thing about how Dr. Kennedy used his handkerchief. And there was this big discussion between my father and whether we can give him the handkerchief because he's a White man you can't give him a handkerchief. So among our parents there was that kind of feeling that Whites were very particular people.

When the White children used to come with the missionaries about a dozen of us would run around them and want to play with them because they were different and they were very unique. Interesting for that church we heard there would be a doctor, an African doctor and his family would be invited too. So Prekasim had this very interesting non-racial attitude.

We always had White priests in our church from the time I went. My parents converted earlier. So I always knew Whites and I knew them as missionaries, as doctors, people who came to give us something. Like when we were kids, we would stand in a queue every Saturday. The White guy who was helping build the church had a shop and he would give us bread. So we'd be lining up in the queue and at some stage there'd be a fracas and somebody got the best bread .....because that was the relationship with Whites.

### *Reshi Singh*

*Reshi grew up in Clairwood till about 10 years of age when he moved to Merebank. His father felt it would be much better to go into a 3 bedroomed council house than having to live in Clairwood with a family of about 10 of them in a 2 bedroomed outbuilding. He describes his family as 'very much typical Indian orthodox family concerned about eating and living for the day'. His father was an ordinary worker who earned very little money to keep his family going. They experienced hardship which he says was 'synonymous with all my friends living here where fathers worked in ordinary companies in the factories, mothers stayed home and the fathers tried to take care of the family and families were big'. In the community they found poverty, hunger and unemployment.*

.... the stark realities somehow started making us conscious about why was this so prevalent. At the same time we also saw how the white community lived in Montclair, in Woodlands having some playgrounds and libraries and pools. When we moved in the area there was no library, there was no pool. I actually witnessed the roads being tarred. It was a thrill for us to see this truck coming with the tar and offload into this whole grading machine that used to tar. So we initially lived in homes where there were no street lights, roads were not tarred,

we had no library, no pool, no recreation. Everybody came from different areas and settled in Merebank because it was a whole township that was being developed by the Durban Council and this is where my friendship began with youngsters in that community.

We used to walk distances to shops that were owned by Indian families. I used to help my auntie and uncle who were hawking - selling fruit and vegetables in the van. We used to go into the White areas to sell because the White people were the customers. That's when we start to see the difference. You know the tarred road, the beautiful gardens, well kept homes, cars in the driveway, parks and I think it undoubtedly raised questions as to how come we're battling in terms of our area not having these things and yet they are benefiting from having these kind of things. I think these little things start sparking discussions, started raising consciousness - not that we were very bright politicians at that stage.

Initially it was all to do with fun and play going to school, movie houses, playing soccer and I think that kind of relationship led to us being exposed to the politics of discrimination that we started becoming conscious about. A lot of this also happened, because of our involvement in the church youth programmes where we were trying to look beyond just trying to be youngsters in the community, enjoying life. It was part of the whole growth but also becoming consciously aware of us being in an Indian township wondering why there's a coloured township on the other side an African township on the other side. We also started becoming aware of living conditions in these areas.

So in this whole process of growing in Merebank friendships were established with people like Bobby, Jaya, Roy, Myron..... Now for some reason or other we found ourselves becoming conscious ... and people like Bobby, Jaya them went to church regularly. They had some visions of becoming church leaders and priests and we became part of that whole group. We played soccer together, we swam in the canal together, we stole sugar cane from the trucks together, we went to the movies together then at the same time we found ourselves trying to do something towards playwriting, acting and all that. This is all giving us some platform of consciousness.

When I started understanding the differences around me in terms of... ok coloured people were living not too far from me ... and I found that the difference between us as Indians, the coloured and then the African and the white so much in the sense that I thought that we were living a comfortable life. Only to sort of realise that the culture that I was experiencing was, there was a home, there was a mother, there was a father and there was a family. The father was working and at times he wasn't working as well. So what happened was I could go home and find myself at home having a bath, changing, having the comforts of home and I

didn't at that stage realise until later it was much more than having that and the reason why we didn't have it was because of the whole question of discrimination.

My father himself would have earned much more if he had the opportunity of being able to produce a certificate of the skill that he had. He was a furniture maker but he didn't have a qualification to show that he could be regarded as a qualified furniture maker. So what happened in that instance is that he was underpaid, exploited. Yet we knew of some people in my going around with my uncle in his fruit and vegetable van you get talking to people in the white community and I clearly remember, its not one but some of them, say no they're working, they're carpenters and when I compared their living standard to what we were living I thought no there's something drastically wrong. My father's also working as a furniture maker but he doesn't earn as much as you whites are.

So these questions then might have been emerging and then we started wondering, thinking and I think when we grew a little we could ourselves now become knowledgeable about the discrimination having very little knowledge about it initially and then having to experience some of the things that we saw happening and then having to become out of a conscious group of people. We realised that there were definitely major differences in community living.

### *Betty Leslie*

*She was born in the Free State, Ficksburg, a bordering town to Lesotho. Her parents were Dina and Calvin Motgomery. Her mother was a nurse up to her birth. After maternity leave she was transferred to Clairwood Hospital. That's how they ended up in Wentworth. She was the third of five children. They lived and schooled in Wentworth. She started at Austerville Primary School and then Durban East and finally Wentworth High. They lived on Duranta Road when it was still a shanty town and before the street became a dividing line between the so called coloured and Indians. They attended the church in Wentworth. It was the Dutch Reformed Church. In about '69 her parents left the church after there was a special bible introduced for the 'coloured' people. They then joined the Presbyterian Church in Merebank.*

Betty describes her childhood consciousness:

As a dark skinned coloured I found I was even more disadvantaged. In a class we were forgotten by a teacher that type of thing. In the family some members would not pay attention to you or make a fuss about you. My mother was so called coloured and my father was Basotho and we remember very clearly that we used to go and visit my mother's side of the family. At some stage my mother's family actually ostracised her because they felt she was taking the family *backwards* to quote them, instead of lightening the genes. And I particularly was the darkest in the family. So we'd also have our sibling fights and I'd be called *black cat peanut butter*. So that always worked on me and I said

there must be some answer to this. Then we met the youth at Natal University with Steve Biko....

### *Jaya Josie*

*Jaya's family lived in Merebank before the council development started. His parents were originally from Isipingo. They grew up in 'a little pandokkie' next to a 'coloured' family who were involved with building boats. Near them were two 'coloured' families and an 'African' family. Jaya recalls, 'Jeremiah used to be a very interesting guy. He used to go hunting - he was a bit of medicine man, a herbalist. He used to work in the mines. He used to come back. My liking for jazz was got from Jeremiah's music. He used to play African jazz'.*

*Jaya remembers Merebank as being a very mixed community. People in Wentworth and Merebank lived in one community. There were no 2 townships. He has cousins who were classified 'coloured' living in Wentworth, and then others classified 'Indian' living in Merebank.*

*His mum's grandmother came as a passenger, as a herbalist. Her first husband was his mum's grandfather. When he died she married a 'white' guy. She lived on a sugar plantation in that area called Powys related to the Powys's. So the Powys' in Durban were mixed as a result of that linkage.*

*Some family members saw themselves as more 'white' and were more anglicized. His dad's father came from Kerala on the south of India on the SS Mzinto in 1910. They were given clerical jobs because they were educated. He set up the first Tamil School in Merebank. .... As children they were forced to go to the Tamil school. His grandfather was very culturally committed to maintain that kind of Indian background. His mum's side were very anglicized Methodists because of the Powys tradition but then his mum's granny was not Christian. She converted because of her marriage to Powys. The Methodist tradition developed around there.*

*From his mother's side they were given Western names – his name, Mervyn, being of Welsh origin and on his father's side they were given names read from the book in typical 'Indian' tradition.*

*Jaya was about ten years old when his parents got divorced. He remembers fondly his childhood playing with children from all race groups at the canal and in the sugar cane plantations.*

*He remembers attending Congress meetings with his Dad when he was still very young. He also had the influences of strong women in his life from a young age. He mentions his mother, his Aunt Flora and his late eldest sister, Marge as people he looked up to.*

*It was in the early sixties when they moved into a council house in the Merebank township.*

*He went to school in Clairwood with Reshi. He remembers:*

Clairwood was a very cosmopolitan area. It was very well developed and people were very highly political and there were Africans and there were soccer heroes who were African and we used to support Aces United and some of the soccer stars were African and Indian. We went to Curries Fountain to support all these soccer teams.

***He talks about his relationship with Reshi and Bobby:***

It was not difficult for us to link up as friends because we knew each other at school and then Bobby's sister Maxi and others knew Dawn<sup>49</sup> .... the churches were there and so at the church we participated as kids within the church - the Presbyterian Church. We played soccer on the grounds with Reshi and them who used to come over and we used to sell fish.

Bobby and I were always close in an intellectual kind of way - always discussing and talking poetry and reading and exchanging books and discussions with his aunt.... so the church became the centre in discussing readings. I taught there at the Sunday School - Presbyterian Sunday School and it became quite an interesting engagement. So bible reading and bible study was a very important part of the Presbyterians so I used to attend the bible study.

***Jaya talks about his early life:***

We were very poor as a family. My mum really struggled. I think what happened was within the context of the struggle that we had as a family she sort of managed to get us educated. She managed to encourage that education and you notice that each one of us - if you look at our social economic backgrounds - none of us should actually have become anything.

In our family we used to read. My mum used to take us to the library in town almost every Saturday to spend time so that we could be exposed to books and to read and I used to read everything that I could find my hands on. I used to go to the Gandhi library in town to read about India. We used to be exposed to lots of literature and listen to them on the radio. There was no TV in those days and I think libraries were a very important part. My mum used to take us all the time to go shopping and spend some time at the market and you take your goods and spend about 2 hours in the library, Victoria Street Library. And so I think that to open, to broaden your mind, the way you're brought up...'

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<sup>49</sup> Dawn is Jaya's sister. Maxi is Bobby's sister

*Vivienne Taylor*

***Vivienne is Jaya's sister and shares much of his family background. She adds to the story:***

...seven children .....Jaya was the eldest brother and after Jaya was Jean and then I was the last girl and after myself there was Neville. He's my other brother he's the youngest in the family. I think the four of us have more common involvement in social life at that stage but it was particularly Jean, Jaya and myself who were involved in similar type of activities.

My mum was teaching and was divorced and Aunty Flora<sup>50</sup> was the one who cared for us during the day more like a second mother. The older siblings Marge, Dawn and Gloria left home quite a long time ago. From the early seventies, late sixties they set up their own homes, their own families but we were also an extended family.

Although we grew up in a very low income neighbourhood, working class background, the house was always open and it was amazing to me at that stage that us living in a so called Indian group area that our home was open to just about anyone who befriended and it was open to people from different race groups, different religious backgrounds and there was never an issue. My mum or my aunt never said to us you cannot bring so and so home or you shouldn't be sitting and discussing certain things and when I look back at that experience it was really unusual and I think for us it was a privilege to have had such an upbringing.

There was nothing systematic or nothing organised by design it was something that just happened because both my parents and my aunt inculcated this in us that we had the right to socialize and to relate to people and they were just people in the same way that we were. That lack of the other, the lack of the other you know that these are others to what we were was not there and we don't discriminate on the basis of racial distinction or any kind...

The identity that we had that was different emerged more in the context of the school system where your friends or your classmates would all use a certain frame of reference as their frame, their thinking. For instance they would talk about what happened in their homes which was really very different from my experiences of what happened in my home about their relationships with their parents which was very much a child in relation to the parents with the parent laying down the law whereas in our home my mother was there but she would discuss things with us if she would have to discipline us we understood exactly why she was doing this and what was expected. It was discussed. It was not

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<sup>50</sup> Aunty Flora was Vivienne's Mother's sister

either do this or not. That was the context in which we lived. We were able to ask questions of our mother and our aunt in a way that most of my classmates were not able to do. So in that sense our social frame of reference was different from my classmates. It was a lot more open and if we want to do things that were different we could always put in a plea to ask my mother or my aunt and we didn't have to hide and do it surreptitiously as was with many of my friends or classmates at that time. So in that sense we were different but the difference came more out of a social context with a different belief system from respecting each other and believing in earnest rather than trying to hide what one thought.

I was in secondary school in the mid to late sixties. I finished my matric in 1970. In our home there was access to information and reading about South Africa. We were already making a distinction between not having the same rights as whites. We did have a distinct idea that things have changed in 1960 with the Republic of South Africa but nothing had changed in fact -things had got worse so in that sense the need to identify oneself as being distinct from the ruling group, the dominant group but yet not be inferior to that dominant group I think was there. I know talking about it now sounds very analytical I'm sure it didn't happen in that way when one was growing up.

I can remember going to school in 1960 being in primary school still and saying to the other classmates because we all got some flags. We said we're sorry we can't take this we can't take the flag because it wasn't true that we are independent in this country yet.

We saw ourselves I think at that stage having Indian descent. We saw ourselves as being fully South African and South Africa was the only context in which we could define who we were and how to live our lives. That context was shaped very much by the politics of the period in which we grew up. There was quite a lot of ambivalence within ourselves because we had this pseudo non-racialism in our interactions with friends that we had from different settings. Bobby, and the church and then from Wentworth from Myron, Roy and Tys and all of that and then at the same time we went back to those settings in the school system, the university system that were very rigidly contained an identity that was being forced on people because none of us saw ourselves as....

The whole thing was beside there being sort of non racial context to our upbringing there was also a lack of class consciousness in the sense that there was a difference in the way for instance I would talk my language and the words I would use because although we all came from Merebank some of us had been reading for a lot longer and I had grown up reading the classics and in our home we didn't have fairy tales and books that typically children would read. I was reading those books or reading Charles Dickens or the Bronte's or whatever

because those are the books we found and so our English was really very different from the typical young person's English and pedantic at times and that sense set us apart from our contemporaries.

A lot of our contemporaries would tease us and we would always do very well with language. We didn't concern ourselves with the issue of class because all of us lived in the same type of residential area, came from very economically poor backgrounds just part of mothers or fathers or whoever's being educated to some extent but on an economic level we all knew that we were working class ...

In terms of class consciousness you didn't have the sense that you belonged to middle income or upper income level but you saw yourself as being part of the broad class and broad in its broadest sense - so distinctions about how you spoke or where you worshipped or what you.. how you dressed didn't really matter because we all saw ourselves as having a common struggle to overcome this type of economic poverty that was forced onto us - the racism and the evil edifice of apartheid penetrated all our lives.

We (Vivienne, Jean and Jaya) were at school at the same time and all took the English prizes for debate but for English as well, language. All were involved in debates - took prizes on that level as well. It almost seemed as automatic that if there was a Josie in that in school the person would be involved in the debating society and I seem to have a very good ability to argue and take on different points of view and I did very well in speech contests and in the debating society, competitions and so on.

There were quite a few political struggles because already at that time the school system was political struggles - it was more about whether we would have the right to have student representative committee and whether we could invite people to come and talk to students and influence events. For instance, when we were at school you used to observe Republic Day celebrations. We were to have a counter to that and we were to invite people like Mewa Rambogin and Alan Paton. We were not allowed to do that because schools were part of the government and had to be accountable to the Indian education department and so in that sense we had conflicts within the school.

I always recognized that even when I was growing up that being a young girl, being a young woman, defined you in a very specific way and even within the context of growing up in Merebank as a young girl working, associating, being part of the group Community of St. Steven initially and then the Association for Self Help.

*Steven David (written submission via email)*

I was born to what became a large family of 13 members: 9 siblings, mother, father, and grandmother. From my earliest recollection I always had a sense of us being wedged somewhere between a rural and urban community, despite growing up on the fringes of the industrial belt in Durban. My father had a standard four education. He grew up on a farm as part of the remnants of indentured labour and nobody in his lineage owned any property in South Africa. Harsh conditions during the World War II forced him to the city to seek employment to supplement the household income. He operated earth excavators in road construction, drove taxis, trucks and had a special talent for motor mechanics. Throughout his life he held a disdain for factory floors and constraints of production lines. Somewhere along the line he met my mother who was born and grew up in Brooklyn Road, Jacobs on the fringes of a swamp that was used by industries for dumping refuse.

My mother had a class two education and while she could read laboriously she could not write. Years later when I was in about standard two I taught her to sign her name. She was proud to no longer sign a cross. For the most part she did char work in white homes.

My first vivid recollections go back to when I was about four years old. Then we lived in Duranta Road in Merebank. There were no council houses then. The community was both racially and economically integrated. We lived in a shack on land leased from a landlord. Our shack was located among many imposing avocado pear trees. Behind us lived an African family from whom my memory still holds the image of 'Tu-Toot' derived from his riding a motor-bike with a side-car. On the other side lived 'coloured' and other Indian families. Three events press my recollections about this location: a 'six-foot' dance – a play, at somebody's house that attracted and scared the daylights out of me; coming across, while gathering cow-dung, a cow that had been run over by a train hauling oil from the petrol refineries (the cow-dung was used to redo the floors of our one roomed shack and its lean-to kitchen); and, images of the Co-Operative Shop van that delivered our groceries on Saturdays.

When municipal council housing, more popularly called 'housing scheme' began, we moved to Jacobs to live with relatives. My father, who did not have a steady job, did not feel comfortable with the rigid constraints of the housing scheme option. After a year of hardship with relatives, my father built a two-room- and-a-kitchen shack in Boston Road in Jacobs - on land leased from an Indian furniture factory owner – close to the western entrance of Wentworth Hospital. The area was euphemistically called 'Happy Valley'. This is where I really grew up in a squatter shack community that was part of the Durban South squatter sprawl. The community was racially mixed with coloured, Indians, and Africans. Some, very few, Indians and coloured owned their own homes and land with better houses. Then, the World War constructed military barracks in Wentworth, Assegai and Austerville still housed whites. This area connected our new home with that of my relatives in Brooklyn Road where we lived for a year. Whites, in cars, bicycles, and motor bikes often passed our house as they moved between Wentworth and Brighton

Beach and Bluff which extended on the eastern side of Wentworth Hospital.

The contrast between whites, a few rich Indians and coloureds and the rest of us was quite considerable and striking. While they rode in cars and bicycles the rest of us made our way on feet and buses. They presented the images of wealth and higher states of being human. For all that our community was never quiet. Most of the people worked in the factories, shops in the city, or in hotels. On our way to school in Clairwood we walked daily through huge swathes of squatter squalor. We played, fought, and mostly grew up on sandy and stony corrugated streets with faint lighting.

*Steven recalls great poverty when their father was unemployed for three years and their only source of income was from his granny's ability to read palms. They also got credit from the local shopkeeper, worked a small plot of land and scavenged from the dump. He continues:*

A missionary from the church helped my mother gain a three day week permanent char work with a white family of two in Brighton Beach. Her three rands a week plus bus-fare stabilized us. My mother went to the market in the city at the last moments before the gates closed on a Saturday. She picked up perishable bargains that would not keep because of the weekend close. In this way, three rands stretched quite a way. My father did the garden and odd jobs of repair for the white women my mother worked for. When he was unable I was called in. Then my father got a job driving trucks again and maintained such jobs till he died in 1968. Two of my sisters, older than me, left school and joined the workforce.

In the midst of this change, the Group Areas Act found us out again and we were moved to Chatsworth - Happy Valley and Wentworth being declared coloured. Finally, having resisted the housing schemes years ago, we found ourselves eagerly committing ourselves. This time, it was my mother that made the important decisions. We moved to Chatsworth when I was 12 years old. That was the year I slept on my own shared bed for the first time in my life.

*Daya (Joe) Pillay (written submission via email)*

I have four brothers and two sisters. This does not include my eldest brother who died of leukemia in 1957. In 1947, we moved from the rural areas outside Umzinto, Natal, to Merebank. Up to that point, we must have been peasant farmers. Once we moved to Merebank, my father had to change occupations. He became an insurance agent and endeavoured to sell insurance policies to people who were barely eking out a living. We lived in a great deal of poverty up to the sixties until my older brothers began working as furniture sale representatives, and began contributing to the family's upkeep. My elder brother wanted to become a teacher but because of family circumstances and because of poverty, he had to begin working immediately after he graduated from high school. In those days, because of the quota system, very few Indian students graduated with a high school diploma. He did.

We lived in a tiny wood and iron building with no indoor plumbing and no electricity in an acre of land. The toilet was an outdoor toilet a distance from the house. As the need arose and finances allowed the house was enlarged. Smoky paraffin lamps and candles were our lighting system. As a result most of us had to wear glasses in later life. In winter, the cold penetrated the house and it became pretty cold. Just the opposite happened in the summer. The heat penetrated through the tin roofs and walls and the place became unbearably hot.

Merebank in the early fifties was a mixed area. For instance, we had both coloured and African neighbours. I played with African children my age after school and on the weekends. But we did not attend the same schools. Our school was solely for Indians; there were no coloured or African or White children. Indian teachers taught us. I quickly realized that we were a separate, but inferior segment of the South African population. Why inferior? The school facilities were poor. And when White officials arrived at the school, our principal and teachers panicked and looked up to them as demi-gods.

Some people we would consider educated seemed to accept that somehow we were inferior. For instance, when I was in Grade four, a teacher was much peeved at the government for treating us as third class citizens. He felt that the Indians had much more culture than the coloureds and should be regarded as second-class citizens, the coloureds as third-class citizens and the Africans as fourth-class citizens. I am still amused by his reasoning.

For as far back as I could remember all that mattered to me was that I was of the human race. There are probably many reasons for this: For instance the 1949 riots. I was only a few years old when the rioting occurred; so I recall very little about it. But family, friends and relatives always talked about it. My family's experience with the riots was unique, I think, and it goes like this: Ntuli, an African neighbour, got us up one night in 1949. He asked my family what they were still doing at home. Didn't they realize that, as they speak, the area is being attacked by hoards of Africans and that we were placing ourselves in great danger, by remaining at home. He advised us to leave everything and save ourselves. We took his advice. My family took refuge in a bushy, mosquito infested swamp. We heard the roar of the rioters as the area was being attacked. The next morning, as we left our place of refuge and walked through the neighbourhood, we were shocked by the devastation; every home was looted and either burnt or vandalized. We were expecting the worst. When we entered our home, we were amazed. Every item was as we had left it. Ntuli had protected us. To Ntuli race did not matter; and neither did it to me.

Oppression was evident everywhere. When Indian workers spoke about their places of work, one realized that all their managers, bosses and supervisors were White. In the parks and the stations, the benches were reserved for Whites only. The separation of facilities was silly, but sometimes it was just absurd. Even the Merebank Post Office had separate parts of the building with separate entrances, one for Whites and the other for the rest of us mortals, though the White part of the building was hardly ever used because no Whites lived anywhere close to Merebank. Even the footbridge that crosses the railway

tracks between Merebank and South Coast Road was partitioned in the centre: one part for Whites and the other for 'Non-Whites.' Though Whites hardly ever used the bridge.

Because in the eyes of the racist laws, Whites were classified as superior, many of them came to believe that they were indeed superior to others that did not possess their colour. And the more foolish and uneducated they were, the more they displayed their feeling of superiority by being arrogant and unkind to Black people. This was sharply felt because many of these Whites occupied positions in the state's bureaucratic apparatus, where they wielded maximum power and one was at their complete mercy.

Later in the sixties, when the group areas act was being enforced and many people were uprooted from homes that they had lived in since birth, the cruelty of the State was evident. People had to bribe the authorities to get a home in Merebank.

## **Respondents from Cape Town**

*Harold Dixon*

*He was born in Factreton a township in the Western Cape. His family was one of four 'coloured' families amongst Xhosa speaking families. He recalls that when government wanted to force the Xhosa speaking people out of the area they cut off their water supply. His family helped to supply water to these families late at night.*

*When he lived in Factreton they used to go to the movies (bioscope) at the Avalon in District Six. He was responsible for paying the family electricity and water bills in the city centre and he became aware of 'white' and 'black' people being separated. He had to use the apartheid trains to get into the city. This too had an effect on him.*

**He says:** We used to go to the station and I was always curious about What's going on that side of the station....

*His parents divorced and he went to live with his grandfather in Lansdowne. He joined the Catholic Youth Club which brought him into touch with the youth of Silvertown who had a similar youth club.*

### ***He recalls the termination of his high school career:***

When at the high school I attended in standard nine they said I must get out of school. They didn't want me there anymore. I applied to Livingstone. I was there for two days and then the word got around from Oaklands - I was an agitator and they told me right I must also leave the school. That's when I became an apprentice motor mechanic and a mechanic.

## *Jane Lawrence*

*Jane talks about her background:*

Well I was born right in the heart of District Six and that was the only home I ever knew until the age of 26 and then I went to America and when I got back into town it had completely been raised to the ground. So I grew up in District Six and the memories I have of District Six are very, very happy ones, extremely happy in terms of our schooling, the schools I attended and also the neighbours I grew up with and the children that I played with. I certainly have just lovely warm memories, no regrets, no sadness ....

***Jane talks about her schooling:***

I attended St. Marks. It was an English school. It was English in terms of medium of instruction but it was an Anglican school that's why it was referred to as the English school. And then I went to Zonnebloem for my senior secondary training till standard 8 and then I went across to Wesley. One of my maths teachers at Zonnebloem said, 'Hey you should go to Wesley -since you are a Methodist' - so that's how I landed up at Wesley College doing my teacher training. Then I got the Primary Teachers' Certificate course that I did in those days '60 '61 to standard 8 and then after that started teaching at Windermere Methodist. I started doing my matric at night school which was Harold Cressey and I enjoyed that so very much. Then I taught for five years.

At the Windermere Methodist School Peter Storey came along and he said to me 'You know you shouldn't really be teaching - Why you should actually come to Buitekant Street which is our church, the Methodist Church and come and help me start a team ministry'. I was very apprehensive about it but then I said it will be challenging. As much as I love teaching, teaching's in my blood, there would be opportunities to teach and opportunities to work with all different sorts of people, young and old. And that's exactly what I did.

I come out of District Six, out of this repressed country where in our homes I would say we were not as articulate in articulating our political wills because... We had a house where the door was always open, always open, it never, it only closed at night when we went to bed. But, my mother always said, Don't talk such a lot about the government' because she was so afraid because we had had by that time two different States of Emergency. I remember feeling very angry and very hateful towards whites especially. I don't know what it is why we should be treated like this but certainly it wasn't something we spoke about a great deal. The reason I'm saying this is later on when I got back, that inhibition was gone for me. I felt I had to speak up.

It was very different. I mean it was different because here I had come out of this - I would say conservative background and also a very conservative Christian background. Peter Storey, when he came to our church in Buitekant Street actually opened our eyes.

I remember prior to his arrival at our church, as our minister, we had a minister there and he was a big white man - most of my ministers were white. We only had one coloured minister at the time. I remember being there and I remember going to this minister one day. It was a very cold, windy evening and I walked down from my house down to Constitution Street - because that's all we ever did was walk down that street - to go to this minister to ask him to sign a form for me because I was so excited about going to Wesley and to start my teacher training. He never asked me a single question about, 'Why do you want to become a teacher? What is it all about?'. He was an absolute racist this man. He just signed and off I went.

### *Terry Grove (nee Mathews)*

*Terry grew up in Silvertown, Athlone, Cape Town. She and three brothers were raised by their father since she was about five years old. She attended Silverlea Primary School and Oaklands High School.*

*Her grandparents, both maternal and paternal, were from the Bokaap. Her great-grandparents were from District Six. Her father moved to Athlone because he didn't want to raise kids in District Six which she thinks was at that time starting to become a slum.*

*She grew up in a politically conscious family. They were always made aware that they were people for other people. Colour wasn't important. She was taught there are two kinds of people in the world. Her father would say: 'There are good people and bad people.' There weren't references to people's colour. Terry says, 'We were raised to actually look beyond colour and even not a coloured identity I think was something that was emphasized in my house. I think we were black as opposed to white.'*

#### ***Terry talks of her experience of Apartheid:***

I think it's strange that you think about these experiences. The only sort of racial experience or where I felt different was in Durban actually when I needed to pee once and I went in. I can't remember where it is in Durban, but I went to the toilet and that's the only time I remember being rude to an adult when this white woman said to me, 'Only white people are allowed to pee here, to use the toilet'. She didn't use words like pee but....

I think that the circles that my father actually moved in were different circles.

The things that I think like exhibition opening night... so there would be people you know - all shades.

I remember at school we were not allowed to sing. My father forbid us to sing *Die Stem*. We never went to school - we never attended the 31<sup>st</sup> May celebrations. Those were the only times when I consciously as a child felt that there was... not consciously felt but things that I was not supposed to do....

At school there were obviously things you couldn't talk about. What I realized growing up with artists, musicians and writers early on is there were the things I couldn't talk about at school. Carol Noah for instance, told me about 'butch' and I used to talk about *butch* and those sort of things. She was gay and so for me the word meant different things. I was always corrected at school or the things that I would talk about would be frowned upon. As a child you don't actually realize that gay people are not accepted equally so there was the gay thing and also some of my father's colleagues like Imam Haroon who died in detention. We couldn't talk about some of the things discussed in my house. For instance I think that I learnt that you don't talk to anybody. You select people you can talk about and I found school difficult because I was getting a different education at home to what I was being taught at school. My father would debunk the rubbish that they taught us at school especially the history...

Apart from actually having grown up in a house where the parent is politically conscious because my father was a journalist, was the death of Imam Haroon. I think it was in '67 or '69. The same day he was buried on the day of the earthquake in Tulbach. That night we actually thought that a bomb had exploded because that was I think the first big funeral that I had seen. I think for me my political awakening was the death of Imam Haroon because this was someone I knew personally, someone that comes to our house, someone that I had actually met, connected with...

Something else that happened at school - Oswald Mtshali also brought out the book 'Songs of the cowhide Drum' and there's *The Pigeons at the Oppenheimer Park* and I recited this poem at school. I was accused by my English teacher. She said, 'This isn't a poem' and that I wrote it myself just to be to be difficult because there's never been poetry like that, poetry is you know the normal Robert Frost and other English poets that we were taught at school. So for me I think Oswald Mtshali's book was also for me affirmative in terms of my thinking and I didn't dare actually take my father's<sup>51</sup> stuff to school ... that she could think that I wrote this you know.... That I'm that smart that... sorry Oswald Mtshali....

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<sup>51</sup> Terry is the daughter of poet and writer James Mathews known for very provocative writing during the apartheid era.

*Maria Engel*

***Maria remembers childhood experiences that made her realise she was oppressed:***

I remember St. Theresa's and how divided the school was on the 31<sup>st</sup> May. One of the teachers was very into this whole coloured identity thing and he would arrange this whole raising of the flag .....

Well for me it was different especially on the buses... and you had to move to the back and on some occasions you just sit there and that's because you didn't actually know on which side of the fence you were on.....

...I remember with Rita and Rita will say, 'No Maria you mustn't sit there,' and I'll say, 'No I'll just sit here' and I refused to move and she moved. That was the Wynberg bus. As a child that's what I remember and I think I suppose it comes from Mummy and Daddy who said that you were allowed to sit anywhere. I remember when mummy got onto the bus she always tried to make a scene. She'd always make a scene about this whole thing and then you all get ready to climb off the bus. The only thing for me the most was the bus other than that when you went to the beach and going to Sea Point and Daddy would say 'That's white by night' you can only drive through here. I only remember that... go up on the mountain and look at Sea Point from Signal Hill....

*Alan Liebenberg (written submission via email)*

I experienced the trauma of racism at an early stage due to divisions of race in the families of both my parents.

My father came from the rural area of Piketberg and was one of nine children born to a mixed couple. His mother was white and his father was coloured. His family was English-speaking. Those of my father's siblings who were dark skinned or married a spouse who was dark skinned became classified as coloured. All the male children were classified coloured and were decidedly working class. My father was a labourer on the South African Railways and my mother was a factory worker. I was born in Retreat and we moved to a wood and iron house in Albert Road in Lansdowne when I was five years old. Three of my father's sisters took out white classification and materially did well for themselves. My grandmother, who was very old and infirm when I became aware of her, lived on a rented plot surrounded by Port Jackson bush close to Southfield Station. One of her white daughters, a spinster who was an educator, lived with her. It was at this house that I experienced racism as a child. I had two brothers George and Lionel and one sister Julie. George was the eldest and was light skinned. Julie was born a few years after George and was dark skinned. She died at a young age as a result of a car accident. Lionel was third in line and light skinned. I was the baby in the family and have a dark skin. Two years separate Lionel and I and we had roughly the same circle of friends and did many things together.

One of our favourite past times was to visit my grandmother in Southfield. My father's job on the railways allowed us virtual free travel on the trains (paid only 10% of the ticket price). We were therefore rail-wise and would travel unaccompanied to granny's house. We enjoyed hunting for chicken or goose eggs or picking the abundant fruit from granny's many fruit trees. There was such a large variety of fruit trees that this past time could be enjoyed at every season. played her role perfectly. When my grandfather had visitors at night, my grandmother would leave the marital bed and stay in a spare bedroom, sometimes for the rest of the night. Years later I learnt that this arrangement had suited my grandfather very well. Since his friend understood that he was a bachelor, they gravitated towards his house for a boy's night of card games and sometimes were accompanied by women - one for him too.

This arrangement affected me in a major way. Whenever my mother went by train to shop in town, she would usually spend time with her parents. On these occasions she would take with her my light skinned brothers, never me. I cannot remember what reasons were given when I was younger, but when I became conscious of this exclusion I understood that unfortunately my grandparents lived in a house for white people and if I should go there during sunlight, the police will see me and I would be arrested. This would also cause much trouble for my grandparents. Although I often cried when my mother and brothers left without me, I began to accept the logic after being taken there at night a few times by car at night. It felt as if I was brought into the conspiracy - the conspiracy being my clandestine visit. My father never accompanied my mother to her parent's house.

When I became a teenager I stopped going to my grandfather's house. After a lifetime of contesting the racist views of my maternal grandparents I adopted a position against them in my adult life. I did not attend either of their funerals. My position was that at a funeral you pay your last respects. For both of them I had none.

I attended a Moravian primary school. It is rather like a Catholic school but emphasizing the Protestant ethic. My learning experience was devoid of any political content (the principal was extremely conservative) except for my teacher for the last three years in primary school. He encouraged us to read newspapers and created various incentives as motivation.

My father, who worked shifts, was usually at home with the Times when I arrived from school. I would go and buy him the afternoon newspaper, the Argus and I would settle down to read the Times. I would read the Argus after my father. With a diet of two newspapers a day I started to develop a view of my country. Based on my own experiences, I also developed a strong sense of justice and a respect for the greater good.

## ***Raising Political Consciousness*** **Respondents from Durban**

*Bobby Marie*

By the time we get into high school we start getting very different interaction with Whites. The Presbyterian Church wanted to send a delegation to the US of young people. They were invited. But they had to take somebody dark. Because they were White there was no interaction because it would have been embarrassing. We were their dark, their closest dark. There were African churches why didn't they take anyone from the African churches... We were in the middle so we were acceptable. Anyway Tony went on this.

There was one guy who was a NUSAS student, and he came, kind of alerting us to demand certain things. From the time of youth club we'd been having this sense that Whites were treating us differently and we wanted to be equal.... but now I'm not sure whether that politicization came from there or whether it came direct from my aunt.

I had a close relationship with my aunt. Jaya used to come and Jaya had been politicised by his father. But he would come and talk to my aunt. My aunt used to rattle him for his kind of Gandhian ideas and all that and I would be in those discussions listening in.

So around fifteen, sixteen there was politicization. My aunt was detained and I remember going with my mother to the place where she was detained to take her clothes and then we'd come back and they'd search the clothes because there'd be notes in there and all that. That was known to us when we were about eight or nine. My aunty was detained by the government and a family friend had left the country ..... And my mother and father would say, 'You try politics and you going to jail.' You see, they'd be too scared to say anything to my aunt, because she was the leader.

The obvious influence was my aunt, and that would be, from childhood. I was eight years old. There was a sense of observing her go to prison. I have a recollection there in her flat. There would be a big party and somebody telling you, there were people at the party who were banned people or communist party people.... using the party in the flat for all sorts of other engagements. It was probably around early 60s, so that lead to my politicization meaning that it lead me to understand that there's a political resistance world ....

So the other thing that made me ready to begin to question was the church. My mother had the keys to the church, and we would go there and clean the church and we'd play the piano there and we'd have access to all the things that would come in the church. That's how we could use the church to study.

I think it was pre coffee-bar that we would go and study and sleep and study there. You see the youth group, the Presbyterian youth group, was a little bit before that. Tony going to the US...The Sunday school, ... if I'm not surprised Roy came to one of those. He was very troublesome ... and be against all these Christian things, right to the end. Because you know we would take for granted - for the church thing we would find a way of rationalizing our politics with the church thing. Now Roy would be there and he would hear all these Christian things and I don't ever believe came anywhere near those Christian side of things. And China was there and China would just laugh at it, and he never took any of it, either the politics or the Christian thing. For us, at this stage, at one stage in Christianity,..... that is Methodist Christianity and politics became integrated and that was the link with black theology.

When Tony came back, he came back with liberal Christian ideas as opposed to conservative Christian ideas which were presented in our church.

I was reading a bishop from India, who had to say that the role of the church is not to convert the Hindus and it resonated with me because one of the things that I found very difficult to accept, is that... And again this comes from my family because part of my family is Hindu and my aunt in particular was anti-Christian, rather than atheist. She was Hindu and a communist. She used her atheism to attack Christianity. I took in Christianity, with a strong anti-bias. The anti-bias being - Why should we convert Hindus? And that's one of the reasons why they were not able to accept me into the church much later - because I actually had been passed to be accepted into the priesthood - and so they spoke to me, so I said, 'I refuse to convert people.' 'Then what should the church be then?' I said, 'The church should be the liberator of the country.' - Now that was by Matric. I actually went to this interview when I was in Matric. By then we had connected with Ruben Phillips in Wentworth. Ruben Phillips was starting at Federal Theological Seminary. The Federal Theological Seminary was the hotbed for SASO and one of the things that was pushing me to go to church was that I'd go to Federal Theological Seminary.

When I talked to the pastor, Prekasim, he wanted me to go to Durban Westville, because he believed he could change me around. When I got involved with the cops and then he took a decision to turn me down. So he used the White church to turn me down, the White moderator.

Then starts emerging from the church... the interaction with the church and the youth group. From the youth group in the Presbyterian Church we then start creating another youth group. The word was Ecumenical. Now that was coming from Jaya, it was coming from his link with, the YCW<sup>52</sup> and the Anglicans and people like Ruben Phillips, Pepsi, I don't know what's his other name and Father Cuthbertson and all the Christian left. The word was ecumenical, that we don't discriminate on the basis of religion.

There was that ecumenical thing within the church. I begin to read stuff on my own at the global ecumenical movement. This was much later when I was reading theology. So that was my understanding of it then. So we begin to define this Community of Saint Steven... it was linked in with other church people who were setting up similar groups and it was the pattern.

There was a lot emerging from there. That was the first phase, the early phase, that was an influence that moved very fast. Then quickly there was a link with Saths Cooper and Strini Moodley and the theatre link.

We always had a Christian identity by the fact that we used the church. When we set up ASH even later we got in Ruben Phillips, Father Kuper, who were all the people we didn't view as 'churchie' as such who didn't present the inference and the orbit of the church... We got money for ASH through the church ...

Its from a period of a surge developing globally with the 60s, to me being a lot of 60s anti-establishment - hippie, ... peace stuff and committed ... It was Woodstock time and we were growing our hair, and things like this, and the anti establishment ideas, personally were very interesting and I wasn't getting that from the church. My attitude in school was just to rebel and it was a connected rebellion. You'd be angry if you were forced to cut your hair. And that was a form of politicization.

Then Spider and Vis and the other guys who were operating almost simultaneously. So we were immediately aware. I was immediately aware that those people were saying the same things that my aunt was saying because the church thing was a different kind of politicization.

By ASH we had moved away from the church... So here was the Community of St. Steven which was a mix of church linked ideas which never talked about god in the religious sense but in a secular or an ecumenical sense but their models were Christian models. I actually can't remember how that Community of St.

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<sup>52</sup> YCM Young Christian Workers

Steven rose. There was a group that was based that ran a commune. Even we tried to live in a commune. It was a middle class thing but us depressed working class guys go there and pretend... that was the other realization and also the sense that we were beyond our class even though we came from working class kind of situations we all took on issues like middle class in the way we argued things.

By contrast Krish, Vis and Spider and the others were in Congress - NIC orientated. Vis for a brief moment links up with Roy and I'm not sure who was recruiting who there but Vis then began to work with Roy and do things that Roy was doing. Vis, Vis' brother was very linked with Congress tradition. Now I don't know.... I can't be too sure about that. Also Vis, Satish, Spider and Coastal.

Coastal was a crusader against Christians. He used to go on these campaigns. Where these people put their tent up he used to go and he was angry that they were converting. He would go there and hold his hand and say, 'Pray for me' and then they would pray for him and he would say, 'Nothing is happening'. They would seriously pray and he would say, 'No, nothing is happening'.... So he was a crusader very much like my aunt, because Christians could not understand how I was recruited so early into Christians because my aunt was so anti Christian - because it was what White people do to us...

I remember once Roy and I decided to go hitchhiking to Jo'burg and on the way I told him that there's a White youth camp going on. They had work camps and on the way we deviated and went off. Then he and I went and we spent two days there. We were not invited we just pitched up because I knew the place at Eston because I had been there before.

We were running a youth camp for young people like George<sup>53</sup> and ...The White churches invited us to a camp for young people. At first they don't invite us. We learn that this is happening. No. We're not invited and I think this is where our informant was this guy from NUSAS in the white church, and then we said, 'Why's it that you'll organise for whites only?' Then they said, 'No it didn't come to that...'

And we organised that and ran it ourselves and that would have been amazing politicisation for us and also organising skills to run this camp with about 20-30 kids, Indian, coloured kids who were absolutely riotous. They were running away into the cane-fields in the middle of the night and we had to control them and counsel them....

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<sup>53</sup> George is Bobby's younger brother.

The way we would run that would be - like it would be a social thing. Like one week it would be study and the other week would be social. I think that must have attracted my friends because it was social and we would have dances and all that. Now that preceded coffee bar. I know for sure the coffee bar arose out of that and only once that could go - the idea of coffee bar emerged.

You see the security police visited. They used to tab Prekasim. We used to see them coming and talking to him for a while now and then when we start messing things up in school and then they traced it back to the coffee bar. Somebody told them the pamphlets would have been made in the coffee bar. The coffee bar was targeted and the church closed us. It was not simply the police. It was that we did all these hero things... and guys would disappear round the corner with their girlfriends - all these evil things was happening there and the more conservative guys came in and they started a fight there and ... anyway they closed us down very fast and that was the end of the church.....

Then we went off to university and that time was now a very different kind of politics. And then in the first year I was thrown out and the others just walked off. Shamim was there. Roy was there. Myron was there. Everybody walked off at one point or another. And that's when we started talking about ASH<sup>54</sup>. '73 we started ASH.

There was the link with Saths Cooper and Strini Moodley - the theatre link. Again the theatre thing gets played out in the church. We're sitting in the church and people like Jaya and myself, Tony and others were becoming very into the church.

I think Steve came to Segie's - the room at the back. I can't remember the details but I know that we met Steve in Merebank and the other time I remember meeting Steve was when we all met in the beach in the bushes.... Because we were all conscious of the police we all took a walk from medical school to over the hill, down the hill and then we found a clearing in the bushes and everyone was sitting with branches on their heads and Steve was like the guru. I remember you pick up daily this kind of issues. A lot of this would have happened but I don't know when that was. Obviously it would have been in the early 70's ..... but in that earlier period there was that link and then we were working with the younger kids, George and Adiel and Neville and doing poetry with them.

***After looking at photographs Bobby comments:***

This was Alex Boraine, ... these people were deported from the church and we were closely linked with the church. So we would go to this, but the people, I

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<sup>54</sup> ASH – Association for Self Help

think were Christian but they weren't political, you know and we would link that too. So for us the church has definitely been very central. So that, the way we became politicised was probably interesting.....

Because, the moment we starting becoming political, we start having concrete action, organising things to do. Some of the things we did are way ahead of the times of the activist and that's why we moved into ASH so fast, because that was the strategy of the BC movement. Not many people moved as fast as we did. We virtually moved almost before Steve set up the clinic in the Eastern Cape because that was the first BCP<sup>55</sup> project. We were already 3 years at cultural activity, at education activities like training, we not only trained ourselves, but we trained other young people, so we were developing enormous kinds of organising skills.

It would seem then by the time we were in matric, we were already clear that we needed to work hard politically. Because I remember when I went to university, there was no doubt in my mind that my job was to close the university down. Because already in matric, we were politicised. There was no thought in mind that my form of activity was to find a career. We were describing ourselves as professional revolutionaries or whatever even before we reached University. So it began to move very fast. I remember we used to have some heavy discussions in our group on Guerrilla warfare - no links at this time outside with any groups. We talk about UGM<sup>56</sup>, you know, ...

It was coming from all these books you see... Roy was reading a book called the *War of the Flea*. I remember borrowing it from him. *The War of the Flea* was a study by the US army on guerrilla warfare in Vietnam and it was doing the rounds. So the idea of guerrilla warfare was read and it was a time of different and growing movements emerging from the 60s. So we were probably picking it up.

The direct ANC links was coming via Vis and his brother - except for my aunt passing me communist party literature which she had kept secretly somewhere. I went and fetched it, and passed that around.

Paula Freire - now that was another strand. We probably went through the best. We went through the church which gave us Philosophy and Theology. There was philosophy, asking deeper questions about who we were. The church left was more a question of humanity and relationships. But there were other issues that were clear intellectually at a very early stage. The question of gay people, I've heard about and come across the question of women - was all in that early themes and issues. Okay so there was that church stuff. There was the Black

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<sup>55</sup> BCP - Black Community Programmes

<sup>56</sup> UGM – could mean underground movement (writer's interpretation)

Consciousness stuff. There was the congress stuff and the BC stuff... was Paula Freire as organising... now that's when we started to mature and really begin to shape our skills.

Martin Luther King's speeches - I remember the speeches were coming through. I recall even the Malcolm Xs record. You see that was another source. The books, the pamphleting was hitting the country. We had latched onto it. The informal discussions with Steve Biko and people from medical school was a source. But you see that did politicise us .... or were we politicised?....

We would be completely out of sync with the average Matric student in Merebank. Completely out of sync... And there was a lot of fear in our schools. I remember in '71 I had done something at school. I had stolen a flag off a wall and three teachers approached me. All of them had seen me do it. The one just smiled at me and moved on. The other just said, 'Do you know the story of the three monkeys?' I didn't know it then and he just said, 'Find out about it' but he didn't see anything... All the teachers knew that I did it. The principal would have got reports that I did it and the police came and interviewed people but nobody in the school told them I did it. They generally didn't assist. They were scared but even the conservative principal - it was his duty to report it to the police and the security police came in. He could easily have pinpointed me and I wouldn't be surprised that the principal knew about it. So in the school, teachers were not political in the overt sense but they supported us. One teacher was a connection in an indirect political sense. He had a Gandhi library museum in the school. He was the history teacher and all our history teachers would be scared to talk politics but then a person like me who comes from a home where my auntie is telling me the communist revolution is the only solution... that destroys all kind of fears and so I get encouraged by these teachers.

I remember Spider for introducing me to the word anti-apartheid. Spider and Peter Hain those names are synonymous. Because Spider always took on liberal struggles. The sports thing was very important for him and his two brothers were teachers. So you grow up as a child and then there's a political thing and you connect in school.

Jaya brings in a lot of influences because he is about four years older than us. He knew Strini and the other people so he would come into his own politicization. So he was a source for many things.

By the time I was in Matric I actually remember having this feeling that well I may be expelled from high school. The first time I was interviewed by police was in my Matric year '71. They came. I was in Chatsworth studying at the church

there - myself and Steven<sup>57</sup>, in the Catholic Church. And they traced me down there.

I was part of BPC. The thing is I didn't have a long time at university - then I was out, so SASO itself was out. I had some links with SASO. I remember attending one meeting in '72 which was supposed to be an underground meeting to re-strategise after Tiro had left and Tiro had sent messages that we must start recruiting people for training and Tiro was wanting to set up his own SASO. He was wanting to set up links and this was not BPC this was SASO and Tiro was bombed soon after.

Now prior to that I met Tiro at this meeting before he left. And he said he was leaving and that we must now start thinking of arms as a way of doing it. And then thereafter there was no connection. I think that was just a good idea once Tiro went and was not long after that so this must have been pretty early then, early '72. That was the only link.

Then I got involved in ASH and myself and Tys first, and then Myron and Pat and then Reshi followed and Segie followed much later. That became my full time job and then towards '75... just didn't get involved in anything else... We were supposed to keep clean and keep it away from any kind of political things because we were working with people. We would probably have discussed that. You remember that was at a time when everyone was free.

You know our work became very focused then especially with ASH because what we set up was actually way beyond us. It was way beyond us. We had no clue what we were doing and we were taking on things that we had very little skills. I was very preoccupied with that until '75. Then I began to move because I just felt it's been three years and I need to move on to do something else and then I got involved with setting up a newspaper.

### *Reshi Singh*

I think the turning point of us becoming conscious would have been in my schooling at about standard eight in the late sixties. I think in the late sixties is when the level of consciousness became much higher. And I think what contributed to that was the fact that we could see the deprivation in our community - we experienced it. Families were literally breaking up either through alcoholism, prostitution, unemployment. When we went in the communities, the families that we related to were families that really tried to make ends meet. They were really battling. They had very little. Lights would

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<sup>57</sup> Steve here refers to Steven David

have been cut off. They would have very little to eat. This was during the time when we started working within the community.

There was a family that I can still remember we used to call them Willies. The husband's name was William. We used to call the wife Mrs. Willie. They had a kid that was disabled. From the time I was visiting that family I think even 2 years after that I don't think they ever had their lights ever connected... They had no mat on the floor. What do you call that? Linoleum. They lived in utter poverty. Husband didn't work. I think the wife only worked. So you know witnessing this kind of deprivation and poverty obviously brought about questions that we were asking. I think that's when the consciousness really became quite blatant with us. We were looking at the things that were happening in the community.

Actually, although we belonged to the Hindu, Christian and Moslem faith, it somehow didn't affect the grouping and friendship that was starting to establish and form itself. Like myself being from the kind of Hindi, Hindu culture and background - like Roy we found that somehow the things we were doing more relevant than having to link or focus on religion. We found ourselves doing things that excited us like St. Stevens....

For example we found ourselves getting excited about doing things together. For example writing and developing - writing plays that we did and then also linking up with other drama groups. We were then able to slowly grow towards establishing a relationship with TECON which was a theatre group that's where Saths Cooper and his wife, Strini Moodley and Sam and all were involved with these so there was a working relationship. There was a sharing and discussion going around and somehow we found ourselves focussing on issues that affected our lives. For example we did plays that spoke about oppression, that spoke about unity, spoke about consciousness and that's how having to move towards that we also started to read, started to get literature, some of it was banned literature - discussion groups, discussing what we read and that type of thing.

The church did play some role in our consciousness in that we found ourselves formulating like a group around the church guild, the church social club or youth club and although Myron, Tony and Jaya were people who became youth leaders in the churches, they found that there was a need for us to do things with the youth in the church, not so much the community at that stage. That's how we managed to go out on what we used to call retreats. I think the Eston photograph will show you one of them. We went to a few. We went to Mooi River once. We went to Eston. I can't remember where else we used to put things. And the Cape Town trip was one of them.

When we decided we would establish ASH, we were quite clear that it would be a project involving a number of areas of what we'd be doing. For example the nursery school, literacy classes, the whole bulk buying scheme... I think that started cementing that relationship even more because we found ourselves sharing a common ideal and at the same time with that ideal we managed to link up with people who more or less also shared the same kind of principles.

We believed that we had to at least try and assist and conscientise the community about political issues. That basically was the whole idea. It might not have come out as strongly at that stage but as we moved along we found that's what we were actually planning on doing.

When we started discussing the concept of self help - the process of going to the community, working with the community - I think people like Steven Biko and them obviously at that stage, if I have to reflect now, was much more advanced in terms of their whole consciousness. We were actually gaining from what they had already read and thought and wrote about. He would come and discuss with us and we would discuss issues of politics, the whole social evil of apartheid and discrimination and I think that started now to get us involved much closer within the community. But what happened was that some of the people started interacting with organisations like SASO and BPC.

As far as my age is concerned I don't think that in a way influenced the group too much. I think it actually helped in a sense that it gave me some advantages of being the driver in the group because I could actually drive, I was driving the group. It was quite relevant. It was quite important because I think that really gave the group as a whole the opportunity to have access to outside kind of influence - outside Merebank - because we knew there were similar kind of youth groups in Chatsworth, in Town, in Wentworth. I think when it came to the question of strength and power physically, ja maybe people will put me in the frontline to say you know you're the big guy you'll deal with these guys and things like that. But I think in terms of thinking, rationalising, I think we learned from each other.

There wasn't a major age gap because the younger guys had the opportunity of being exposed to university learning...and I think that gave them some sense of platform to be able to also use their consciousness and intelligence to assist to where we wanted to be with our ideology.

I think that what also was very relevant is that when we approached organisations and groupings we found that irrespective of the fact that they belonged in other areas, we were able to work together and I think when that started happening we found that within ourselves we somehow forgot all this

race thing which was still blatant in the community. My father would say, 'What you doing with the coloured people?' and 'I think people will do this to you' and things like that. That was quite blatant. That's what apartheid did. It really divided us so much so that we were filled with each others races but when we started interacting we found that it was not an issue at all. We somehow forgot about race and concentrated more on the fact of having to work towards building a kind of philosophy that somehow espoused this whole thing about being together, working together so that we could in our own little way - we thought that we could destroy apartheid.

Now the whole concept of the BC movement itself was introduced to us through SASO because although some of us didn't have an opportunity of pursuing further education and some had to drop out in the first three, four months of university we still nevertheless were able to link up with groups with education institutes. Like there was this whole Natal University Medical Centre. The medical students had their living quarters in Wentworth. I think this whole question of us having the opportunity of BC was through the fact that we managed to link up with the students at the medical school who lived just a stone's throw away from where we were operating and this came about through the whole drama group that we had established.

We went there to do a play. We were invited to do a play and that's where the relationship started developing. And we linked up with the ecumenical centre as well. We knew that people like Barney Pityana and Ben Khoapa were people who were involved in the church work as well... Archbishop Dennis Hurley, Bishop Dennis Hurley at that stage. So partly the work in the church gave us exposure to these people and part of what we were doing in terms of our own playwriting and acting expose us to people like TECON and other groups. We were espousing the whole theory of BC at that stage as well and the BC theory was rife in America at that stage - Stokeley Carmichael and all these guys. We managed to get books that we read about it as well and I think that started cementing our whole belief in BC. I think what was the highlight was to have personal friendship and contact with Steven Biko, obviously regarded as an icon and the father of the BC movement in South Africa and he really got us thinking. He was a person who inspired us and with that kind of philosophy we found relevance in that we found a home in that and started building and working around that.

I remember clearly when we performed a play at the medical college there were a few other groups including Saths - TECON and when it became time for discussion he arrogantly stood up and asked, 'Who are you all? Where are you from? What are you doing?' as if to say to us you know I'm an authority therefore I have the authority to ask you such questions and we found him to be

very arrogant in that... and obviously there was always that whole belief that Town people were better than the township people - That they were leaders and they carry the flag because they lived in town. That had to do with the whole question of economics.

I think Steven Biko was quite intelligent to ensure that the work came first not the personalities and the backbiting. And so he would regularly visit us in the community, spend time, have chats and he would address some of our meetings we would have had amongst ourselves. Then he actually became quite comfortable amongst ourselves in what we were doing and therefore asked Jaya to go to America on behalf of SASO because he could see now here was a group of young people who were more or less speaking the same language, having the same kind of philosophy, striving to have the same level of consciousness. Well Jaya was fairly articulate. Tony, Jaya and myself were the senior guys and they approached him to go to America on behalf of SASO and I think when he went and got back I think that's where we as a group benefited a lot because he was able to be fortunate to meet people and share that philosophy of BC with them. We were very excited. I mean for the fact that one of our members went to America, met people on behalf of organisations like SASO, that was now becoming very relevant in terms of black philosophy. I think it also cemented our consciousness in terms of the theory and our belief. We began believing quite strongly in this philosophy.

The Christian philosophy did help to bring us closer as a group because what happened initially was very much linked to church work. The youth group that started there was very much something that came off the whole church thing. It wasn't like we were outside trying to establish ourselves. It actually drew us because Bobby was a church goer, Myron was, Jaya was, Tony was. So that became a rallying point - a centre that we found ourselves in and that's how the coffee bar started. But the ideas that were borne were our ideas - it had nothing to do with church ideas. It became in some stage in that whole process, a conflict between the church and us as a group where eventually we were literally thrown out of the premises of the church because they found us to be radicals. That didn't deter us - we continued.

The whole hippie outfit of beads round my neck with long hair and torn jeans. That influenced us. I don't regret having experienced.... I think what was stronger within ourselves as a group, we believed we could contribute to some change. ....rejection of establishment and the freedom of just wanting to believe that whatever you do was right.

The programmes that we ran in the church were first of all, obviously with the youth of the communities of Merebank and Wentworth. The programmes there

were sort of leadership programmes, training programmes where we tried to get the youth to become a bit more responsible to think about their surroundings and their areas but tinged with a bit of Christianity, the Christian philosophy of love, martyrdom and Christ. But that fell away eventually because we realised that we needed not just to let people believe that the Christian way of life will be the way that will get us our salvation because that's what Christianity preached - BC philosophy challenged these ideas ....

I am a Hindu. I wasn't a strong practising Hindu and I wasn't in any way influenced by Christianity to the extent where I would have changed my religion and become Christian or Moslem. I think this was one of the beauty of us.

So as much as I worked very closely with the churches, with the people like Bobby, Jaya and Tony, I don't think in any way I was pressurised into believing that would be the way.

I think I was fortunate - China, myself, Roy - fortunate in that although we interacted within churches, I don't think anyone could come and stand up to us any argument to say to us you must convert, become a Christian, it is a better way of life because we knew it wasn't a better way of life anyway because we could see what was happening within the church for the fact that this minister was entertaining special branch police. He no way convinced me that being Christian was a better way of life because he was actually not a good example of it. So there wasn't too much of pressure.

Some of the guys strongly felt that they would become ministers in the church. They'd follow the profession of being a priest - Jaya, Bobby. When they started becoming conscious and found contradictions, then it became quite clear that it would no more hold water to believe that they as Christians would save the world because it wasn't the case in the case of our personal experience. We had a common understanding of what we were doing as a group and religion didn't play any role at all.

The issue of gender I must admit wasn't very strong within our whole philosophy. Yes we did interact, we had women in the group but I don't think for me personally, I don't think I was ultra-sensitive and highly conscious at that stage. Now I am because I've slowly developed, I slowly learnt about the whole gender differences, the issue of gender inequality. We did have women. We worked with them. I think somehow we still felt that we were a bit more stronger and a bit more leaders than women - that we had to protect them although people like Vivienne and Jean did oppose that. They did challenge, there were conflicts like anything you can't deny that.

Within ourselves as a group we had small internal conflicts because we started realising that this whole romanticism about being a group forever it was a folly. It wasn't really ever going to happen. So this started falling apart. This was a bit later after the banning where we still tried to keep ourselves as a group but started realising that as people developed as each of us started developing we became more critical of things in the group.

The group identity started falling apart for different reasons. One was the pressure from the state, the banning of the people, the house arrest. So the group started disintegrating then. People lived in exile, and then of course other factors started playing a part. We started getting married. We started becoming parents. We started now becoming people who started looking at personal responsibility. As a group we were very free in our thoughts towards community responsibility where we find nothing belonged to us we need to give everything away but we needed to put our efforts and our work in terms of others towards the community rather than self but as we started becoming older, becoming husbands and wives, we now began living in our own homes, outbuildings the group formation no more became a strong point in our lives.

### *Betty Leslie*

We had the church youth group and it was just a natural progression - you went to Sunday School first, then you went to the youth. At that time when we joined the youth, Tony Govender and Mervyn had gone to the States and came back and then they got this idea of having a coffee bar. So there was music and coffee and drinks for sale and we socialised there. That's where people met and shared ideas but we also used it to invite other church groups like there was this youth group in St. Michael's where Jean belonged - the Anglican Church. They came along. People like Pepsi Narain, Rev. Philips - that's how we made contact with Ruben Philips. I don't know where but somewhere along the line- I was always on the periphery of all the activities - but somewhere along the line when Ruben Philips showed his face then we started visiting the students at the University of Natal - the UND section at Alan Taylor.

I went to a few camps but I didn't go to all of them. The one that sticks in my mind is we went somewhere in the northern part of Natal. It was somewhere towards Ulundi. I can't remember. There was a priest, a white priest, we used to call him Pete and he let us use his facilities there. I was quite moved by him because he was this selfless person. There was some guy who needed to go to Johannesburg and Pete took his only jacket he had. He wasn't a very materialistic person and he gave him his jacket and some money and some smokes to go to Johannesburg and find a job.

Yvonne was a young lady who came from Johannesburg to study in Durban. Her parents actually wanted to send her to boarding school but they couldn't get her in the boarding school in Eshowe so for two years she came to school in Wentworth and then later went to school in Eshowe. She also joined the group and we used to study with Bobby and Roy and them. I think I was in standard eight when Roy and them were doing their matric. I think the main aim was to get to the Merebank youth, even the communities to work together with the Wentworth community because there was a bit of friction or racial tension between the Indians and the coloureds then. And so we used to organise camps for kids. We used to go to Camp Jonathan on the South Coast of Durban and Port Shepstone and generally have workshops. Kids breaking down the racial barriers....

I didn't go to Cape Town. I had a fight with Mervyn Josie. So I didn't end up going. He was rude to me at a meeting. We were busy whispering something you know nudging someone to say something. He was chairing that meeting. Came down hard on us and I was angry about that.

We used to do lots of like skits, the poetry and sports activities.

For me somehow developing consciousness happened almost simultaneously but I would say I was the last of almost all of them because at some stage I felt they were very secretive. They used to pass around literature and it NEVER used to get to myself and Yvonne and there was another young lady who's in Australia right now. We never got the literature. We had discussions with Tys and that's where I used to pick up that they had a document in circulation and they were discussing.

It could be many reasons why they excluded us because they were very close to each other. They saw each other, lived together and I think trusted each other and did many things together. Even got into trouble if you remember that flag burning. So there was some kind of brotherhood that kept them together. They trusted that. A banned document you know it's safer if only we know of it. I think they were possibly not sure of me.

The youth group got into trouble with the church. I think it started with Jean having this white boyfriend. I can't remember clearly but the special branch then came and they started questioning. And they went to the priest of the Presbyterian Church, Prakasim. And then Bobby and them got into trouble with the burning of the flag. That's when they said the youth group is banned.

Coming from the so called coloured community and as a dark skinned coloured, I found I was even more disadvantaged. In class we were forgotten by a teacher

that type of thing... Then we met the youth at Natal University with Steve Biko and them were all there. And the slogans sort of stuck first on my mind 'Be black and be proud'.

You know sometimes when I think of it, it must've been an accident that I met Willy<sup>58</sup>. We seemed to have a similar outlook and experiences coming from a so called coloured community and as much as coloureds felt they were somehow privileged, Wentworth was the worst of the coloured areas in Durban. You saw suffering everyday and then being with Bobby and the group I somehow felt there were answers - look at our own strengths, be self sufficient and then hence the self-help group came into being. It had originally started in Merebank then it later spread to Wentworth and you could actually see some relief, economic relief in the families that got into the programme. For me that was the realisation that being black we could do something by ourselves and I think that's when my consciousness started.

Possibly because I was female this is why I was more on the periphery. Males were more the dominant characters.

I related to Vivienne more for a while. Jean was much older and I think when I met Jean she was very in love, very involved with her partner then when Jean left Vivienne and I became close.

There were other members in the group ...and Devi Moodley. I bonded more with Devi. They were more my age group. With the group at least we were in the group that was more on the periphery. Jean was a much stronger character she would take the guys on so she could relate to them.

Willy joined ASH at a later stage when it spread to Wentworth then Willy joined the group and I don't think he was there for too long then he moved onto SASO and BPC. He was more involved with...Terence and Boy Njongwe.

The first contact that we had with the group in the university was when we went with Bobby, Mervyn and it was practically the whole group. But you see there was Devi and ....Moodley who were amongst us as well and it was a first time experience for them. They actually mentioned that they didn't expect in fact to socialise with black people and feel so comfortable. What I remember with SASO is when the students were on strike, it was a food strike and for many weeks we had to go round cooking and collecting and cooking for the students because there was no food supplied at the university. They actually were successful in

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<sup>58</sup> Willy is Betty's husband.

that boycott in that they managed to get the cafeteria closed down in the Black section of UN, Alan Taylor.

Another thing that comes to mind is 1975 when we had the Frelimo independence - the FRELIMO rally was held at Curries Fountain and I had broken my leg. I was in p.o.p. and was on crutches with one shoe on. I went to the rally with Willy. We were then forced to disperse. When we were forced to disperse, we went up across the school in Mansfield High School and into the Scala Cinema. I dropped my crutch and I kicked off the one shoe and then we sat there and watched the movie until the movie had ended. We walked out with all the other people up to the bus-stop in Albert Street, got onto the bus going to Wentworth - no crutch just the pantyhose and no shoes. I went to work the next day and I think it was three days later, it was a Saturday - I didn't speak to Willy about my crutch or my shoe. I didn't even know that he had noticed that I didn't have the crutch or the shoe - He went on the Saturday back to Curries Fountain to look for the crutch and the shoe and it was there and just as he was picking it up he got arrested.

The first time I met Strini Moodley was at a party at Bobby's mother's house and if I remember he was banned or under house arrest or something like that and then the SP's came in and then they quickly switched off things and they pretended it was a prayer meeting or something. And then they were praying. I got tired and I walked out. I don't know how that thing ended. Hearing from Devi Moodley she said even the SP's got tired on that day.

### *Jaya Josie*

I was part of the UCM and UCM used to organise these sessions. And the Christian Institute organised them in such a way that we would drive these workshops. Alex Borraine used to organise places like Eston and I think we adopted the methods from there. There was this woman called Anne Hope who organised literacy classes using the Paulo Freire method.

They were talking about the University Christian Movement being subversive in that period. I became involved in the University Christian Movement through James Moulder who was part of it. He was our Methodist parish priest. This was like 1967, 1966 in the Methodist Church. He was our priest and so we became also involved in the protest movement. He used to encourage us ...you know the youth, the Wesley Guild to do all this kind of thing and then he left.

The ideas melted and then another priest we had in Merebank an Olden. He became involved and also encouraged us to get into the Christian Institute.

One day he was going to Johannesburg and we were thinking about raising funds. And so he took us with him. He introduced us to people in the Christian Institute. That's when we started attending group sessions. We (basically it was Reshi, Bobby and I) got exposed to things at that particular stage.

Seminars were organised by Archbishop Hurley. Bobby and I were wanting to become priests at this stage. Archbishop Hurley came up with this big theses linking up palaeontology with the evolution of consciousness and all those kind of things. And then also the new discussion and discourse was about the notion of god is dead and human beings must take responsibility for themselves. Hurley was very keen on that kind of thing. There were very interesting debates between Hurley and Beyers Naude because Beyers used to come and organise these things.

Then Reshi and I got involved in a more radical expression called the Free Church Movement started by Steven - a kind of free group from Anglicans and Catholics....

***Jaya talks of his experiences in the Methodist Church:***

There are very specific incidents. When I had this issue with the church about my candidature for becoming a priest, (I was really keen on becoming a priest. Thank goodness that I didn't.) I was in the youth, the Methodist youth, the Wesley Guild. The head of the Wesley Guild at that time was Alex Borraine. He used to organise all these radical youth programmes that we used to attend because he spent time in the States and he came back with all these radical ideas. I said I'm sure that if I speak to Alex he'd give me some advice. So I went there to the office. It was in town. I talked to his secretary about it and he was too busy. When he did have some time he said, 'If you ask me I'm very sorry but I don't think there is much one can do. There are certain things we've just got to accept and at the moment I'm pretty busy.' He gave me about 5 or 10 minutes and I walked out so disillusioned because here is this person that you think is so radical. So Alex Borraine was the first disillusionment.

I was actually planning on doing this candidature and then going to the seminary, FEDSEM, because Ruben was telling me how exciting it is. It was this non-racial thing with all these guys and they were publishing this magazine called *Outlook* there. We used to always read *Outlook* for the most radical discussions and debates and here this guy says there's nothing and actually discouraging me from even trying to attempt to organise anything around it.

One of the reasons I think I had incurred the wrath of some of the church was because the priest at that time was a guy called Roy Olden, a white priest and he

was very keen with the guild introducing radical ideas. Now he had a young wife and his wife left him and he was going through this major crisis. The Methodist Church then suspended him. Because they were worried about his links with the Christian Institute, I was painted with the same brush.

Roy used to come and visit home and he used to actually come and visit Merebank there in Khader Road<sup>59</sup>. I used to speak to him and he used to eat there and spend some time there. We used to love it. We were friends and he was supportive and he used to even take Reshi and I to his house and listen to his music. When his wife wasn't there he needed company. He was feeling lonely. One day he proposed (he had a beetle) he proposed that we should drive with him to Johannesburg. He had all these radical ideas. I'm sure his heart was in the right place. So we drove to Johannesburg.

We didn't know where we were going to stay. He didn't know where he was going to stay. So we end up in Turffontein. I don't know where - in the middle of the night we're trying to get early but he was ill on the road but we finally got to Jo'burg and he goes into this house of his former girlfriend, a really boere area, must be Turffontein, that white working class area and he goes in there. He leaves us in the car, doesn't come out. So we're sitting in the car there and I think it's June, feeling quite cold. Then finally he does come out and says, 'I don't know what we're going to do because I can't take you guys anywhere because these people are not going to be very helpful so I hope you guys don't mind sleeping in the car'. I said, 'Oh my, OK.' So we sleep in the car, very uncomfortable, very cold but anyway we didn't sleep very long.

In the morning to add insult to injury, the domestic worker brings us breakfast in the car. And you know what kind of breakfast - A jam tin with coffee for the two of us, brown bread and there's jam on it, thick slices - I looked at this. At this stage we'd been influenced by Black Consciousness and you know I actually puked. I said he's supposed to be our friend. He was apologetic about it later on and he did later on try to make up but it made an indelible imprint on our minds. Reshi didn't want to hurt his feelings he ate it all. I was hungry but I didn't.

### ***On his suspension from the Methodist Church:***

When I was going to preach my first local preacher sermon, Mr. Singh was driving me. He says they said to him that he mustn't allow me to preach because they've suspended my candidature. So I said 'Why?' and as we were driving he said but you can sit and listen to me and then I said, 'Why? What's the issue?' So he said I didn't get elected.

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<sup>59</sup> Khader Road was Jaya's home.

Well you see the Methodist Church was a mission from the white church in Musgrave Road so those guys were conservative White and Indian priests.

But by this time we were already set up in the ecumenical movement in Merebank with the Presbyterians, Father Cuthbertson, Willy and them, the Anglicans, Father Kuper in Chatsworth ... and even the Catholics. We started this ecumenical group. Then the youth group and Prekasim was generous enough to say we must come there and organise it with them.

***Jaya talks of his experiences with Bobby:***

Bobby and I in '69 we hitchhiked to Swaziland. It was like a pilgrimage. We just stayed in the churches and outside on the streets and we met this bunch of hippies and Black Panther disciples...

We were more impressed with the literature like on Elridge Cleaver, some of the Black Panther guys, Soul on Ice.... We brought all those things here. So we were reading those things as well. But I think in the church itself, the Methodist church where I was trying to express all these things, we were talking about love and peace and the whole issue about this and we were reading from the scriptures and there were some issues around sexuality -you know the psalms of Solomon - and we were encouraging discussions on sex.

***On starting youth groups in Merebank:***

We wanted to move more in the direction of creating the youth, the ecumenical youth community centre that people could actually get actively involved in. Guys needed a place to study for their matric. They needed special tuition in English. English was a problem then and Maths. So we said let's bring in some of the teachers we know. HP Singh was an English teacher and a few other teachers and they were having similar programmes in the cathedral in town. So we said we can create a centre. So we used to bring movies of the plays of the matrics were doing and people would come in.

Now Roy, Myron and Segie were part of the clique at high school. While the activity at the church was going on the other side in the community we linked with Vis's brother Daya with a few of us who were from Merebank High. The idea was to set up a youth movement, Merebank Youth Movement. Daya was very instrumental. Guys were quite radical. In fact the church guys were very conservative compared to the non-Christian. The Christian guys tended to be more conservative more appealing the White hierarchy. The guys who were non-Christian were a lot more radical and involved. Daya and them were from

Clairwood High, we were from Merebank High and some others from Merebank so we couldn't call it a Merebank High ex-students so we said Merebank ex-students, so all ex-students joined. The Merebank ex-student's Association then became quite a powerful instrument as a catalyst for mobilizing all the units across sectarian lines. Although there were no mature sectarian groupings as such in the ideological sense.

### ***Greater political involvement:***

It was 1970. I think it was the clemency appeal. It was the whole issue around the clemency appeal for freeing political prisoners - 10 years I think it was. We had linkages with George Swerpersad and some of the guys in the NIC although they kind of looked down on us. In fact the guy who was very good, from a political perspective, was Norman Middleton from the Labour Party. Because he worked in the Wentworth area, he had linkages from the Congress Movement and the people from the NIC. So we said fine. We tried to get the ratepayers involved in it but they weren't very keen. So we said let's form a clemency appeal committee. We contacted these guys, some of the Merebank ex-students, Kuppen and a few other people got together.

Coastal and I were given the task of going to bring in speakers and we had to bring in this woman called Paula Ensor from NUSAS. We weren't Black Consciousness involved. We, as the guys from Community of St. Stevens had one view. We all combined with the Congress view. Our view of Black Consciousness was not yet matured.

### ***Influences from Daya:***

Another interesting thing was Daya. Daya was quite a radical guy for that area. He was very radical because he had ideas which we'd wonder where they'd come from because it wasn't something that a traditional Indian family, you can say that of us as well but he was a bit older. I think he was a year older than me and he and another friend of his hitchhiked to Cape Town before Reshi and I hitchhiked and they gave us the idea.

They hitchhiked in '66 so Reshi and I hitchhiked to Cape Town in '67. We just got onto the road and went after matric during the December holidays with Ivan my brother-in-law, Reshi and I went to Cape Town. Completely negative experience in Cape Town, and eventually hitchhiked back.

I think Daya - that group of Daya's generation played a very key role. They themselves I think had a history because their parents were all Congress. NIC

and not just Congress in the peripheral sense, their link was Congress in London with the workers' sense because Merebank fed the labour markets in Mobeni and the oil refinery, Jacobs and all those light and heavy textiles and manufacturing industries. My dad worked at the blanket factory. Reshi's father worked at the furniture factory there in Jacobs. So they were in Congress but more in the radical labour side of congress.

People like Daya and them were very heavily into the ratepayers in Merebank. They have always had a tradition of being radical. They may have gone conservative a couple of times because the older guys were wiser and more mature than we guys but still that kind of impacted very positively.

### ***The breakaway of SASO from University Christian Movement :***

In 1969 there was a University Christian Movement conference in the Eastern Cape and there was one regional one in Natal. These gatherings used to take place and I used to attend these gatherings. Collin Collins, Basil Moore, and some of these priests were propagating these new ideas. Hope was doing literacy training thing during that period with Paulo Freire. And Black Consciousness literature was being circulated. People like Stanley Twasa and Justice Moloto were very keen. Some of the NUSAS guys, Barney Pityana and others were part of the whole Anglican Students' Federation coming to attend the NUSAS. They were also part of that.

When we heard the one in Stutterheim was taking place simultaneously, then people like Barney had to go and Stanley had to go. They were taking place simultaneously and people like Steve were at that one. The NUSAS conference was being held at Rhodes University and I remember there was this big discussion with the Black caucus - the University Christian Movement had this black caucus. We all attended this black caucus and Barney said, 'How can you guys go to this NUSAS thing... how can you guys still be part of that?' Stanley and them would think radical but into black theology and all this kind of things and so Steven them were in Stutterheim and Barney them were saying 'No we'll go' and Stanley said, 'We'll see what happens'. So they went to NUSAS, a delegation went there. The delegation from Stutterheim joined the NUSAS guys at Rhodes. Suddenly they couldn't find accommodation and they couldn't or wouldn't offer them accommodation. So the guys organised accommodation for them in the township. So they had to go to the township.

I think the foment of the whole black issue emerged during this time. Steve was already very keen in moving this thing forward so they all just decided to walk out. They walked out, went back to Stutterheim. They took a decision to form SASO, not SASO but a student grouping.

From that time it wasn't long linked up with the Durban Student's Movement which were all Marxists, Trotskyites and then some of the congress guys from Natal University and so on. Steve was also part of Natal University. He had just started medical school at that time. So they organised the first meeting in Marianhill and that's when SASO was formed. We still stayed on the periphery but I wasn't a student I was working.

***Involvement in drama:***

One of the things that we did was - any kind of issues around political activity we tried to find a justification, a biblical theological justification. We tried to do a play once called 'The son of man' about Jesus Christ. We converted this play so that Christ was a worker, a mine worker and things like that. - it had everything - church, politics, labour, oppression, workers mobilizing, communities struggling etc. We did it and we wanted to take it to the churches. They initially said yes but when we pulled up at St. Michael's, one of the churches, they turned it down flat and Prakashim was very upset. Oh we were so pissed off - that really confirmed what Whites are and there's really no hope for dealing with White people. Everybody was damned pissed off and this guy was part of this pristine youth group that was trying to help us and he betrayed us. He promised that if we go there and then he betrayed us. We were so pissed off and then we said we'll show them.

Then I think Reshi had the car so we went down to the SASO office and said we've got this play we've been doing and we'd like to put it up and then we met Keith Mokoapa. He was SRC president and he said, 'Oh it'll be wonderful. We're going to be having the SASO conference.' (I think it was '71 at this time.) 'and its ok after that and you guys will be welcome to come to the SASO conference.'

***Further involvement in SASO***

So we went to the SASO conference. It was held in Wentworth. I think Reshi and I must have gone to the SASO conference. That was my first experience of a student being part of a student group as such. That's when Temba Sono was elected as president of SASO. Solitaire! Solidarity! Blah blah blah he had a whole thing like that and we thought what a great philosopher, an ideal guy.

That's when we started encountering people on a more intimate level. We had known Steve before. We met him at the office. I met him occasionally at Phoenix Settlement and at University Christian Movement.

Now Phoenix Settlement was also one key area for us. Mewa Ramgobin was one of the guys who used to come to Merebank as part of that clemency appeal. Then he got banned again. Now he handled Phoenix Settlement. Very interesting

retreats, vegetarian retreats that Mewa used to organise for the students. That's where the linkages with the Durban Students group, most of the Indian and coloured guys, some of the African guys from Natal and from Kwa Mashu. He used to organise these wonderful retreats and that's when I first met Steve. It was the end of 1969. He was coming in to set up the Marianhill conference for the founding of SASO. Mewa was organising this thing. Mewa couldn't be part of it because he was under house arrest.

We had some wonderful discussions and that's where Saths and them, Saths Cooper and Strini Moodley were also becoming radicalized. They were part of the Students and they were challenging because you had on the one hand Rick Turner and his group of Natal University workers into this kind of ..... French Marxism, you had the Black Consciousness thing with Steve and the others, you had the Congress Movement which was Saths Cooper and a few others and there were these big debates that we had and then we could see the kind of leadership qualities.

Steve was only about 6-8 months older than me but you could see all the conflicts. He'd calm Strini and Saths down and engage on the other hand and Mewa would sit right in the background so that he wasn't part of the group and I think when we went to the SASO conference we had this discussion with Steve and he said no you can come and present the play and we went and presented the play there and it was a great success.

Strini and them organised TECON. They were organising this TECON festival so they said we must bring the play there as part of the festival. We went and did it and it was a great success. So that's how we became part of that.

But I think it must have been the start of '71 beginning of '72 when we started becoming more involved with the SASO projects and Steve used to come with his group because he was very deeply Christian, from a Catholic perspective, but he was also very disillusioned. So when he used to see us at these workshops, meditations, discussions and retreats he used to come there and participate with us. We used to have it in Segie's backyard.

### ***Greater political involvement:***

I was on the committee. I was a student. I was studying through UNISA so I was on the committee with the SASO group at Wentworth because SASO wasn't entrenched at UDW. The only people who were entrenched were the Congress guys with Pravin and all that group. So SASO was trying to make inroads at UDW, through people like Strini and Saths. We had the Merebank group involved in that. Then SASO wanted to set up their own SASO group there. They

didn't really succeed very much so when Vivienne and Bobby and them were supposed to be the catalyst to set that up so that's why we formed this community. But I don't think SASO succeeded in getting the UDW people. Some of them may have. The Alan Josephs and Mervyn Joseph and those other guys were part of it. Some of the other people from Chatsworth became part of the SASO group. They were very small compared to the dominance of the Congress guys....

Benji Francis was a contemporary of Saths and Strini. Pravin and them were always part of this clandestine Congress, Communist..... They had the word you know. They knew. They were the Marxists. SASO wanted to set up projects in the rural areas. We tried to get the fellows involved... Highly active, highly active, you know you've got to deal with the roots of the class struggle and mobilize the workers.

### ***Greater Community Involvement:***

We all became involved in the bus boycotts and bread boycotts and that was another unifying element. We had stronger links with the labour party guys in Wentworth because of the Presbyterian Church, and my links with Ruben Phillips. Ruben Phillips and I were very close from the University Christian Movement days so when he went to seminary and he became the vice president of SASO he used to come to Merebank and he used to come to St. Michael's Church and he used to visit us and so we became close and also very keen in helping us to set up ASH and bringing us the whole issue of Black Consciousness. And so we became the link with Wentworth and some of the churches. We also had some coloured people from Wentworth attending the Methodist Church, St' Michael's Church, the Anglican Church.

David Curry and all these guys used to come there. We had discussions there. We used to meet with Mewa Ramgobin at Phoenix and some of the Congress guys in Merebank. Coastal was one of the few people who was brave enough. Daya was very much on the periphery at this time. He wasn't very active with us as such. His brother Loga on the other hand was a lot more involved with us in teaching and things like that. Loga and I were very close. He used to play soccer with us. He used to be part of our soccer team. We were very close friends. I always wondered what happened to him. But I think you call up anything - Coastal would be game. He joined us and we went out at night.

Bobby and them were still at school but they wanted to be part of it.... bread slogans and writing on the wall and all that and they also took it further with their protest at school. Reshi and I were there mostly to provide the transport

and help them with the things like that. '71 was a very crucial period when we were doing things together politically and so with the church issues as well.

The ratepayers association was able to mobilize and we moved fast. We wanted to be practical. We wanted to go out there and set up the community projects and do things in townships. We started the Tintown thing long before SASO and then came into the picture. The project we set up there, the ASH project it was really key for us to get it going and start. We joined the ratepayers. So we tried to mobilize to get the big guys excluded from there.

ASH was one of the first community, real community based programmes and that's why the Institute of Race Relations published it because it was very organised. Merebank had a tradition with the cooperative stores - an old tradition. But here it was starting again with communities that were in transition.

It was also giving acknowledgement that amongst the Indian Communities and the coloured Communities there was poverty. We actually did a survey in Tintown and Minitown to establish the level of poverty and income levels. That was quite advanced. We wrote our own questionnaires. All the guys went out house to house getting people to answer the questionnaires and we took the results and we prepared a project proposal.

We went to raise funds. We didn't get much joy. Bobby and I went with Charles right to The Christian Institute and that's when Beyers Naude got the South African Council of Churches and Christian Institute to fund some of the projects. Archbishop Hurley supported some of the projects and that effort of support gave birth to the notion of DIAKONIA and then Bobby became a part of that with Paddy Kerney and others to set up the whole DIAKONIA movement. Ruben Phillips from the Anglican Church, he became a priest now and he became part of the ASH board and chairman of ASH.

### ***Jaya's trip abroad for SASO***

In '72 I had become very disillusioned with the bank where I was working and that's when Steven and Barney approached me to go on a trip for fundraising because I had a passport because I had hitchhiked to Swaziland. It was a very difficult time for me because I was the breadwinner at home. Then they needed to send someone overseas to raise funds. I'd left Indian Affairs and I was working at the bank.

The universities were on fire. This was about '72. Durban Westville was on fire, people were being expelled. Bobby, Jean,, Vivienne and I think Roy and them

were all actively involved on the campus. Reshi and I were the only working ones.

No one else was working at that time. Jean and Vivienne were all dependent. So it was how to make that kind of decision. I was so involved with this whole thing. It was so important, so I said fine. I took it on and resigned.

I resigned, I didn't even give notice. I resigned and decided to go. I didn't even ask these guys what they're going to do. They called me so Reshi and I drove to Wentworth to meet Barney and Steve. It was a kind of secret meeting because they didn't want people to know. I went away for six months. I left on September, end of August and it was quite a big thing for me leaving. Then I came back in February of '73.

It was quite long. I went all over. I met with all these radical guys. Some of the big radical theologians. Elridge Cleaver, Angela Davis - huge and I got tapes and I brought home. Those are the things the special Branch took but some of the books we still kept.

I went and attended a big meeting with Angela Davis at Fisk University. I was a guest of the Fisk guys at Fisks University, the Black Consciousness guys there. Angela Davis had just been released from prison. This was in '72 when she was campaigning to be president against George McGovern. Her famous statement was : 'Between Nixon and McGovern is the same as between Tweedly Dee and Tweedly Dum.' It was a very interesting time for me.

I met with Basil Moore. He was an old University Christian Movement guy who carried on with Collin Collins who was also an old University Christian Movement guy. They were setting up the links for fundraising for us - basically fundraising with the IUEF and the World University Service. I met the guys in San Francisco who had set up this Alinsky Group for radicals where you set up this community programme issues.

Elridge Cleaver and Oaklands had a group going there - the Alinsky ideas about organising communities. I attended a couple of sessions with them and I got the book, the Alinsky book *Reveille for Radicals*.

### ***On Detention and Banning:***

I was detained several times or picked up by the cops several times so when the coffee bar thing broke that was the first time when they picked me up. I was working at Indian Affairs then and they came and picked me up from there and you know and they were grilling me.... and so I was picked up quite a few times

between that period. I remember when I came back they detained me at the airport in Johannesburg.

### ***On literature and reading:***

I don't know if you know that Christian Institute had what was called the Sprocas Study. Now Rick Turner was involved in that and used to organise these workshops. Issues like *Marxism and the Class Struggle* were being raised from that perspective. You could also buy a lot of that kind of literature. In Victoria Street there was this guy. I remember buying *The Story of Mao and Marx* and things like this and we had it at home. You could actually read the Penguin stories. Black Consciousness was still the basis for us. We used to have this debate. In fact Beyers Naude raised the whole thing about the Christian/Marxist dialogue.

### ***Change of name from Mervyn to Jaya***

During the Black Consciousness time Gonda<sup>60</sup> came and in SASO as well we all wanted to abandon our slave names and strangely enough in my family nobody had a problem. Almost overnight people started calling me Jaya but in terms of the whole racial connotation the thing that used to really bother me - and that play that we did was about black solidarity. I think we were all very concerned about the divisions in the black community and that's why Black Consciousness appealed to us because it tended to bridge...

### ***His relationship with whites:***

With ordinary whites I really had no problem. I could deal with them but the whites that really pissed me off were the liberals, the white liberals who thought that they were helping us.....

### ***At Indian Affairs:***

....obnoxious period. You had these Afrikaners, illiterate Afrikaners who are in the senior positions in Indian Affairs. The guy would come to work with a bag looking like he got some food bag and he would start eating and you had all the other Indian guys there, you know obsequious guys, chasing after him. When the special branch came there they shunted me to various... they were quite happy to see the back of me and at the bank it reached a particular stage because I didn't... I mean their secretaries would come there and say go and buy me sandwiches and I just refused and so they didn't like my attitude. That was clear at that level they were absolutely and completely racist. The ones that really pissed me off were the white liberals. I had this - particularly within the church structure - People like Beyers were really committed. You could see their real

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<sup>60</sup> Refers to Algonda Perez Jaya's ex-wife.

humanity and you could see they were not into this kind of being judgemental.....

***On the gender question:***

To be honest our gender conscious was very low as a group. Despite the fact that we were working guys, in my personal family I had five women, strong women, so I didn't see women in the traditional way where they work. I didn't see them as servants. In fact in my own home I had to do dishes. I had to wash my own clothes. In Reshi's house the women were oppressed.

But even for me personally the issue for me as a man was, they're there for your pleasure and your gratification. But of course that would be tempered with but you can't treat them the same way. We always had these discussions of how we would treat women. We wanted this equality. For me it was easier because of my experience. But now in terms of our personal relations with women that was different. For me that role model was my father. For him women were objects of desire - to put it crudely.

There was an ambiguity there. Many of us were terrified of entering into relationships. You will see we had this coffee bar and the women would come and dance. Then you would start flirting and so there was that kind of ambiguity and we didn't have the kind of gender consciousness. If you had a relationship it would be a relationship between someone who is dominant and someone who is not. You would assume it automatically and even in SASO that was the case.

Many of us had this view of being entitled. There was that entitlement issue. It was the negative side of that period but on the other hand much of it was consensual. But then again that's a thin line there and maybe the women felt that was expected of them to do that.

*Vivienne Taylor*

The whole conceptualization of the Community of St. Steven came out of discussions in number three Khader Road<sup>61</sup> because all of us were involved. I was involved in the church with Jaya and Jean. Then we got involved in theatre. I think Jaya tried to bring all of us young people together to say ok let's do an alternative version of the play about the crucifixion.

Jaya did a totally different version of the passion play and we were all involved in it - Bobby, Myron and Jaya. Jaya was directing this and we all had a role to

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<sup>61</sup> 3 Khader Rd. was the Josie family residence

play. Out of that play we came together and Jaya said. 'Ok what shall we call ourselves?' And the discussion was: 'What are we going to be doing? Is it just theatre? Is it more than theatre? Is it theatre with a social conscience? What about getting involved in community activities and so on.' I think it is out of that type of discussion that all of us then got involved in conceptualising Community of St. Steven. It wasn't separate from what we were doing. It wasn't a moment when we said ok Community of St. Steven is out there and we are joining it. It was an organic development and we were part of it from the beginning. I think all of us were part of it.

People who drove the whole process and who led it intellectually and politically were, Jaya and Reshi - I think Bobby and Jaya to a large extent were very actively engaged in trying to articulate a process that Bobby more from the Presbyterian, his disillusionment with the Presbyterian Church and the way the Presbyterian Church was engaging with young people in those days and becoming very insular by not identifying or looking at how politics shape religion and social life. Jaya from the point of view of looking at the Methodist Church and how narrow the Methodist Church was. Churches were totally aligned with the politics of apartheid and not questioning broader social injustices. All the fasting that was taking place, the protests about people being held in detention and so on. There was that type of disjuncture that motivated Jaya to go off on an alternative.

I was always challenged because a lot of what we were saying amongst ourselves was resonating with what was being said by people within the BCM at that time. We had been saying it based very much our very localised experience within Merebank, within the church, in the youth group and within our school system and the issues around how do we get people - from our friends who were in Wentworth and the people who we were associating with, from Umlazi, the people from Merebank - how do we begin to live and to help ourselves and to develop ourselves as a unit across these geographical, racial barriers and at the same time be part of a process that brings change to those who were living in extreme poverty in Minitown and Duranta Road and so on. So that was part of what we were asking ourselves already before BC had come up as a major movement.

At that time in 1970 - there was the trade union movement and the whole resurgence of student protests in the early seventies. I was at university in 1971 and we used to go to meetings - the trade union meetings that were happening on Beatrice Street.

That consciousness gained prominence at the time when we asking similar types of questions and there was a natural convergence for us with what was happening at that stage and we felt as a strategy and as a way of combining our

strengths it was the ideal route to go. Not just in terms of force of numbers in bringing all oppressed people together, but also in asserting an identity that was different from the narrow ethnic identities that were being imposed on one. There was this solidarity of all oppressed groupings but also the need to assert a South Africa identity that transcends the ethnic identity that was being imposed by apartheid onto you. I think for us it was really a moment in our political development that we used.

From Community of St. Steven to ASH from ASH to association with SASO and then ASH was part of initial decisions, discussions within SASO to launch BPC. ASH was in the discussions with the SASO leadership on whether SASO should become a political movement, a political organisation or not. In that sense I think ASH played quite a strong role in trying to link local community empowerment processes with broader political processes and we were in a sense privileged by Jaya's involvement in SASO, to the executive of SASO and the associations being developed with people like Steve and Barney and the SASO leadership. To actually engage in discussions on how realistic would it be for SASO to convert itself into a political organisation. I think at that stage within ASH itself we were not really convinced whether BPC would be able internally to be a political credibility it needed in the same way for instance the ANC could. We don't know in what way it would play itself out - a lot of discussion around that. But as ASH and as initially Community of St. Steven we had discussions.

Ben Khoapa, Jaya and Bobby would go and set up meetings and then we would all go and be introduced to them, talk about what our vision was and so on. A lot of the time I think, what surprised people, was here was a young group of people, a mixed bag, usually Jean and I would be the only two young women but later on in the mid seventies we had people like Betty ,Devi and other young women coming in. At that stage it was in the early days. It was just a few of us who would go in and have these discussions, mutual discussions and find out how we could establish ourselves and establish in a way that would allow us to bring together different groups of people and work on social and economic aspects - like having a communal buying scheme to help low income households buy basic essentials and running that communal buying scheme from Reshi's house and I think at times Bobby's place as well, Segie's and wherever we could get accommodation to store the stuff and pack the stuff and then transport. So those types of ideas were really amazing ideas.

A lot of the ideas came out of Jaya. As Jaya made the trip to the US in 1971 and met with Black Power people and organisations some of them were involved in Alinsky type community activity and community empowerment processes and he came back with a lot of the literature and experiences of what was happening - politics of liberation - and shared that with us.

People talked about socialism, about materialism and there was quite hard core - it wasn't exclusive - it was a hard core materialist dimension and the soft things about feelings and sensitivity training and so on did not seem as important in terms of intellectual discussion and debates, but it did permeate how we interacted.

We had retreats for instance at Botha's Hill in Durban where we could go away as a group. We had weekends where we say now this is the context that we're living in now in South Africa, these are the main... now that I look back on it in retrospect it would be a sort of SWOT a political SWOT analysis, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities.... Look at that and the social and political context look at that and what's happening in our lives and look at how we can move ahead and we would bring to these processes a whole process of reflection analysis and evaluation and that whole cycle would be part of that. We would either have an external facilitator or invite one or two people who were skilled in this type of sensitivity training like Dale White famous t-group person who launched this ....

***Vivienne comments after perusing the photographs :***

It used to be freezing cold there in Eston in winter compared to Durban. It was such an amazing experience for us to have our own vehicle that we could use to take people out and do training. You've got pictures here of us involved with training young kids and giving them an alternative educational experience, trying to expose them to recreation and learning ... different from what they had experienced also from poverty and deprivation not having opportunities to get together talk as young people. But we also had workshops called in our communities. We used the Presbyterian Church. We had a coffee bar on the basement of the Presbyterian Church. We had access to that through Bobby and through representations made to Father Prekasim at that time. We would bring the people who.... I had gone house to house in Minitown and told people on Duranta Road and Wentworth... some of the young men and others some of the other ASH people. They all agreed that they would be part of the communal buying scheme.

They would want to learn to read and write and literacy classes and so on. So they would come together. We had meetings and they elected representatives from amongst themselves to do certain things to lead them in these activities. We would have workshops for these adults on how to conduct these activities - very similar to the way that we had workshops with young people. Because this was the early seventies that was unheard of for poverty stricken, low income people from Indian communities to get together with African and coloured communities to look at how they could have joint action to address common problems.

In 1971 I had just finished my first year at university and Bobby, Roy and Myron were still setting out. We relied on Reshi to drive because he was the only person who knew how to drive, who had a car. We got this vehicle to assist us when the Christian Institute gave us the funds - it was a break through.

In those days we stuck out because we were travelling around as a mixed group and we had all these slogans attached to whatever we were doing. Tys would be singing his songs about *Oh why is it so terrible to be black* and all of that.

Bobby's aunt was very involved in politics and association. She was like Auntie Francis. They just gave us the space to listen, to talk and listen to what we had to say and share their parts of you - but didn't try to change but rather guide in a very non directive way. That was really amazing for that time. She had a long involvement in the Indian Congress and some of the leaders in politics in those days and so we respected that and once again we didn't have a sense that there was an imposition of ideas or values.

In retrospect I think though there were lots of different activities that we got involved in but if you look at in isolation from who we were, it could be termed community or social development type project because it brought together people who were disempowered economically, socially and we were trying to say ok how we could together get out of this and improve your situation and not doing it for people but together working with them.

Because we had a strong political background, I think many of us linked who we were and our own search for an identity and place in South Africa, the need to change our material conditions, our social economic conditions, our individual empowerment, our individual sense of who we were and need to empower ourselves very closely to what was happening in our community. As we moved out of that community into the university arena, into working arenas we can link to other aspects.

In 1975 there was a woman's conference in Durban - the launch of South Africa Black Women's Federation. This was the UN decade of women. Fatima Meer and Winnie Mandela and all black women leaders were there constructing a constitution to launch the Black Women's Federation. Constance Khoza who was then the head of the Christian Institute was doing the keynote address and she was saying why it is so important for women in South Africa to get together and to help launch this Black Women's Federation because there are so many poor women and we have to do something for them - that was the crux of what she was saying. We had to do something for the women in South Africa and so on.

Like the young upstart I was - a real unsophisticated young thing - in the middle of the keynote address (I didn't realize that you couldn't interrupt a keynote address) I stood up and said, (and I had two pigtails) and I said, 'I'm sorry I must just disagree. I don't think you need to establish or launch a Black Women's Federation to empower other black women and to do something for women, you need to work with women on the ground who are in local communities and they are able to empower themselves. We don't need to establish an organisation so that this organisation is going to work on behalf of people.' I said that. 'Women from the grassroots must be represented here on an equal footing. You cannot talk for women as if you are their representative when they haven't elected you from amongst themselves.'

....I had the gall to interrupt a keynote address and I didn't know it was not the done thing and then to make that statement. I had the whole room turning around and they said, 'Yes women from the grassroots need to be represented.' I said, 'We are tired. We live in the township and people are always talking on our behalf. We need the space to say this is our organisation and we will be represented on equal terms and voice our issues.' And so what did those women do? They elected me onto the committee that was drafting the constitution. I got elected onto the Black Women's Federation as a member representing Natal at that stage. It had a very short lifespan because it was one of those that was banned soon after but I was there with all these women: Fatima Meer. Winnie Mandela, Kabashi and all of them...

### ***Speaking about gender issues as a young woman:***

At times it would be a very lonely state to be in because the things that one wanted to do had to be conditioned because perceptions around what it is possible for a woman to do and what is not possible for a woman who is so young to do. For instance, I couldn't just walk. Although I was the one tasked with the responsibility later of going into Minitown in Merebank to the temporary settlements where there were very, very poor people. I went and did a community assessment and had to walk from house to house in those areas and these were in Duranta Road and so on. I couldn't go there as a young woman of 18, 19 years because I had to walk. There was no transport and I had to always make sure that one of the other members of ASH, the young men - I had to literally beg them to come with me - there was this thing that for me to do something I had to be accompanied by a male. It was taken for granted within ASH that that would be the status quo. If I had to go somewhere, it wouldn't be accepted that I could go on my own or take a role other than as part of the group.

I think that was the latent gender hierarchy within the group. Although it played itself out in a very subtle way because all of us prided ourselves on being

I think that was the latent gender hierarchy within the group. Although it played itself out in a very subtle way because all of us prided ourselves on being liberated but there were these subtle nuances that brought home to you the reality of that you were a woman and you didn't have the freedom. You had the freedom to argue and you had the freedom to really argue intellectually, politically your points of view at that level, at that part no distinction and in that sense the group was a very good training ground. Our home in Merebank was a very good training ground for us to be able to put forward our points of view. If they were different or part of the majority point of view, you could put forward a point of view and argue and you had that freedom. The freedom to act as an individual, independent, autonomous individual as a young girl was not as restricted.

There were instances that I experienced as a young girl involved in politics at that stage in the seventies and I'm sure that a lot of other young women would have experienced similar things. I was walking for instance in a street in either Merebank or in Wentworth or in town in Durban, the city of Durban, and people saw me walking with Tys for instance or another African friend that I had, male friend. They would make abusive comments, subject us to abuse. There was a lot of that because if anyone else was walking with somebody of another race there wouldn't be that level of abuse if they were men. There are those type of distinctions that brought home the reality of what it meant to be a young woman or women who were trying to break through these barriers.

I think that the men were feeding into the image *up the little woman* and in fact I found it very paternalistic. I think terrorism can always be seen as a protector. That's the justification for being paternalistic, that we're protecting you either from yourself, or we're protecting you from forces we don't know about.

*Steven David (written submission via email)*

I was in matric, and for the first time deeply affected by a literary text under study. I was always partial to the humanistic inclinations of literature but the Pastoral, Romantic and Victorian texts always remained outside my own life. Robert Bolt's 'A Man For All Seasons' made a surprising immediate impression on me. Upon reflection it may be the crisis produced by the critical intersection of Church, God, Law, and Man somehow spoke to me in that critical stage of my life. But even this text may not stand out amongst others if it had not intersected with others.

In the Church I was beginning to function in roles that began to mean something more than being on my own. A member of the choir, service guild, bible study, and prayer group produced possibilities for agency and membership in a social context greater than

merely the family. But just then, another accidental turn tempered this agency. On the way home from Church on a Sunday I bumped into a classmate who pressed me to accompany him to a 'Prayer for Clemency' event at the Natraj Cinema in Merebank. Then I had no idea what 'clemency' meant, 'prayer' was enough to attract me. The meeting was stringently political. It was held a few weeks prior to the 10 year celebration of Republic. I knew nothing about any of the Robben Island personages or why they were revered.

The speeches by Mewa Ramgobin, Fatima Meer, and others were totally out of my world experience. They spoke with far greater authority than the priests and bishops I was accustomed to. I did not understand most of what they said, but what filtered through I knew to resonate with things deeply felt in my consciousness. It seemed they were articulating forms of feelings and truths that lay percolating in my innermost recesses. Almost suddenly I became aware of the forms of a whole new world.

I was accustomed to large church gatherings and the one-way traffic of sermons. But here in this cinema hall of hundreds, people – some old and many my own age or at least a bit older – stood up, made comments, asked questions, - irrespective of how incoherent or confused they sounded. They were all taken seriously. I felt catapulted from home, church and school to a vast new horizon. Their truth enkindled immediate and strong responses of applause and yeas in me. This was the epiphany in my political awakening. The sketchy outlines of this new world of meaning may have been more threatening but it also produced a greater sense of confidence in me. I felt more in control of whom and what I was to become.

Yet another force in this intersection eased the threat and led to my finding a real home in the world. I met Jean Josie while she was doing classroom observation during her teacher training. In a brief moment we had an opportunity for a personal chat. Jean was attractive, effervescent, and the most eloquent woman I had ever met. So the attraction, on my part, was mostly romantic – I was 18!. She told me of youth in Merebank with a strong ecumenical disposition and exciting energy for social commitment. At the end of the 'Prayer for Clemency' event I bumped into Jean and got introduced to what was then the 'Community of St. Stephen'. This introduction grew deep and has yet to run its course.

In 1970, when I first made acquaintance with the group who were to become ASH, I was 17 years old and in matric at Southlands High School in Havenside, Chatsworth. My meeting and becoming a part of the young people I met Bobby Marie, Jaya Josie, Rishie Singh, Vivienne Josie, Jean Josie, Myron Peters, Tys (Welcome Smith), Roy Chetty, Roy (Bush) Kisten, Sagie Naidoo, and Tony Govender when they were in the final plans of organising a leadership camp at Eston. Sitting in on their meeting I was amazed at two significant things: the magnitude of their project and the sheer youthfulness of the participants – teenagers and most still in high school! I had never before encountered such serious youthful responsibility in my life! More fundamentally, the projects had a

sense of worth, a goodness that seemed infinitely reciprocal: it would give to me as much if not more than I gave to it.

A week after the Natraj meeting for Clemency a cousin and classmate of mine, Sathia, invited a group of us to a meeting in a house in Unit 3, Chatsworth. The Republican Festivals were coming up and the meeting was called to help organise a boycott of the celebrations. In the aftermath of the Prayer For Clemency Meeting I needed no persuasion to participate. Everything was already organised and we simply had to assist with putting up posters at schools. The teachers at school had already been training students to perform at a major celebration at the Odeon Cinema in Chatsworth. In line with the boycott we got more than half of the students to refuse complimentary tickets to the event. Then two days before the event I had a change of heart and decided simply boycotting wasn't enough. At a lunch-time meeting with friend from other matric classes we decided to disrupt the celebrations at Odeon. We collected monies from students. I went to the Royal Cycle Works in Victoria Street and bought a large quantity of 'stink-bombs'. Then we laid out a plan to seat students strategically in the 1,000-seat cinema and begin a process of setting off the bombs from the stage to the exit. We managed to scrounge tickets and carried off the disruption to enormous success on the Friday event. That same evening I set off to camp with the Merebank folk.

In addition to the wonderful atmosphere of camaraderie in the group, the camp at Eston was an extraordinary steep learning curve in my life. For the first time I put my mind to a close examination to such notions as 'community', 'society', 'social environment', 'values', 'self-awareness', 'objectively considering your individual life', and the implications of 'the environment-individual relation'. More than anything else, was the allure of personal agency to construct both your own life and that of your environment. Fate and mystification faded and exposed the fundamentals of historical agency in the form and content of social life.

The camp was the most wonderful thing I had ever experienced. Living together, eating together, participating in workshops, listening to presentations in an informal setting of unheard of freedom, and taking responsibility for specific chores in teams, all this was dizzying. I was also introduced to the plan of opening a coffee bar in the basement of the Presbyterian Church in Alwar Road. The dream of this camp was to continue. On our return we spent months working on transforming a disused and abused basement into a place that would attract and serve young people. The idea was largely to connect with youth in the area and serve as stimulation for serious self awareness in a community of interests. The Presbyterian Church, alas had other plans and since we did not serve its evangelistic interests found excuses to close us down.

When I returned to Chatsworth on Sunday worried classmates informed me that the security police (SBs) had already taken in a key activist in Unit 3 and we would likely be called upon. They were investigating the poster campaign. We organised our stories and

slept uneasily that night. Monday morning saw us being called into the Principal's office (C.G. Pillay). My cousin Sathia was doubled on the floor. He had been beaten by the SB's in the presence of the principal. The short of it was we were bundled into a car and driven to Fisher Street, interrogated the whole day, threatened, bullied, and released into the custody of our parents. For me the actions of the police, their mannerisms, threats, and insults and the sheer lawlessness of the edifice has remained an indelible character of the nature of state power. This contrasted strikingly with the high ideals and values of the camp in Eston and subsequent work in Merebank.

Later that year we planned a long trip to Cape Town with an organised camp with youth in Strandfontein on the agenda. We worked hard to gather funds to make the trip possible. The highly successful trip was both fun and a test of our organising abilities. Travel, food, and sleeping arrangements for fourteen of us in addition to a driver and his companion for almost four days on the road was no mean feat. I who had never left Durban before in my life awakened to the natural beauty of the Garden Route and our country. The enthusiasm of the group never sagged. In Cape Town we visited Christian Institute, got to know Manenberg, Silverton, and Athlone. A weeklong camp in Strandfontein Beach with youth from Cape Town reinforced the perspectives from Eston. Lots of fun was also on the agenda. Most significantly, the values forming in me and forming me extended both aesthetically and politically from a speck on the map, Merebank, to a yet to be known country.

The next significant moment was an evaluation camp we held in Mtubatuba in Kwazulu. Pete, a priest, and Isabel his wife, church friends, opened their hearts and house to our group. This became an annual affair and we made at least two other pilgrimages to Mtubatuba. The camp continued some of the themes from the Eston camp by extending them. Some of the products of the last camp was organised towards formulating a plan of immediate action. We concluded with plans for a survey into the needs of an identified section of the community in Merebank and Wentworth. Responsibilities drawn up and people assigned tasks. So what began at camp continued when we returned to Merebank.

In my church years I had learned to value service to a community. Merebank, unlike Chatsworth had a plan to exercise that desire to serve in the most meaningful mode I had ever known. Every step of the way, helped consolidate this path. The sheer encouragement and respect shown by grownups in the community during our questionnaire drive was the highest award of achievement I had ever received. It underscored the correctness of what we were about.

What followed was a very organised structure with well-thought out programs. The bulk-buying grocery scheme, the pre-school education program, youth education programs, adult literacy classes and our continuing presence in the community gained much influence. I was co-ordinator of the youth education sub-committee. Soon we organised as a non-profit corporation, received funds from Anglo-American and the SACC and had an office. Along the line Pat O' Brien, Carmel and Algonza Perez, and Ingrid Henry

joined us from Cape Town.

Numerous associations with Church structures and individuals followed. The self help program we embarked on caught the attention of church leaders. We drew close to the Ecumenical Centre in St Andrews Street. We engaged in many talks and workshops with Paddy Kani and Isaac Pitso.

Then about the same time I met up, through ASH, with the Black section of Natal University at Alan Taylor Residence. It was here, on Sunday afternoons, that we sat in on discussions with Steve Biko, Aubrey Mokwape, Ben Langa, Strini Moodley, and a long list of Black Consciousness people. Unfortunately, my weekday distance in Chatsworth with no personal transport left me out of the loop a lot. In the times I visited Alan Taylor residence the debates and conversations around what Black Consciousness was and its necessary pursuance carried an enormous authority. The emerging philosophy of Black Consciousness began the grounding of my first philosophical and political positions. More than anything else Black Consciousness provided the analytical frames and language that gave expression and resistance to the particularities of the life of the downtrodden in Durban. The analytical perspectives and accompanying language of Black Consciousness was the first powerful technology to emerge from the black oppressed itself and to me constituted the ground for the kind of independence from white manipulations articulated by the philosophy of Black Consciousness itself.

Together with the growing political consciousness in Black Consciousness, we were also introduced to the importance of the creation and enjoyment of Black Culture. The 'Black is Beautiful' cultural charge raised much hell in our personal relations in the black community as did the term 'Black' being applied to Indian and coloured. But it also began the beginnings of a pride and cultural ownership that seemed more genuine than the contrived applaudings of a white European culture that despite ones efforts remained exclusively for 'whites only'. From 'Gumbas', 'Afros', 'Black paintings', and dramas our moorings in an oppressive white culture began to be loosened and replaced by connections more positive to our cultural and social well being. This was when we participated in the Tekon Drama Festival.

In ASH Jaya was the leading light in our political and organisational maturation. Articulate, perceptive, and gifted with a wide historical, social, and ethical interest he could bring panoramic and atomic views to bear with startling clarity. But much more than the political interest, Jaya formed with us a deeply caring and comradely group whose group commitments rose above those of family. From him we gained our wide socialist leanings and our strong Black Consciousness commitment. Jaya once toured the US as a representative of SASO. Seamlessly complementing this strong leadership from Jaya was the earnest, honest, expansively wide and deep humanist caring, deep intellect and untiring efforts of Bobby Marie. From him I learned that what we were about was not a distraction or a project limited by a beginning or an end. It was a way of life. Also in this line of leadership that sustained ASH must be mentioned Vivienne and to a lesser

extent Jean. To these two we owe the revolution in our gender relations and the prototype of what I later encountered as feminist and gender movements.

It would seem from this narrative that the group and its working were quite harmonious but this would misconstrue the dynamic relations in this group. Our meetings and conversations seldom refrained from absorbing and heightened debate and strong challenges. Our comradely group was also a cauldron and arena that relentlessly pursued ideas, analysis, and critical encounters.

The early Black Consciousness travelled via SASO. Later the Black Peoples Convention, was to play a supplemental role in being able to include all black people. While my peers in Chatsworth filled their time with sport, house parties and later discos, my interest in ASH and its projects, and the companionship of the group was both fulfilling and self sustaining. A broad humanism begun in religious teaching was recast in social terms to produce a Black identity that celebrated a black humanness. This humanness gave accent to a black position in a racially hierarchical society but refrained from racial exclusivity as a primary concern.

*Daya (Joe) Pillay (written submission via email)*

Much of my youth and young adult life was spent at a time when there was a vacuum in the resistance to apartheid. This was a period when the ANC was banned and many of the NIC leaders were banned. Many activists were silenced, imprisoned or had left the country. The security branch, using a network of informers, was very active in enforcing very oppressive laws. Torture, death, long periods of detention without being brought to trial were the order of the day. The opposition to the State was thrown for a loop and was in disarray. There was no organisation or leadership to steer one's opposition to the state. And though I was always aware that the system of apartheid and separate development was wrong, I found no vehicle to channel my opposition to the state, so that it would make a meaningful difference. That was my dilemma. At the time there wasn't much support from the community to do anything about our oppression. People knew that the system was wrong, but seemed to turn the other cheek. This, however, allowed the nay Sayers and collaborators to have a field day. They never failed to point out that democracy meant African rule and that meant that the Indians would be driven into the sea: Remember 1949, they'd say. You are much better under white rule; better the devil you know than the devil you don't, they'd reason.

I was frustrated with the lack of initiative to fight the government. The first break to do something about our oppression came in the early 70 ties when I read and heard about Black Consciousness Movements.

We are talking about a period that is over thirty years ago and therefore it is difficult for

me to remember exactly how I got involved. I was ready to get involved politically, that I know. But I think my brother, Ivan Pillay<sup>62</sup>, must have told me about a BPC meeting at the Wentworth Medical College. I, together with my brother, attended several of BPC meetings. Both Roy Chetty and I were appointed delegates to the BPC's Hamanskraal Convention which was a visioning exercise in mapping out the future and the needs of BPC.

I was the founding member and the first president of the Merebank Youth Council. I was a secretary of FOSA. I was on the executive of the Merebank Ratepayers' Association. I was a member of BPC. Then in 1973, when in London I joined the military wing of the ANC. I helped to write, publish and distribute a newspaper called the Sentinel.

Also, I organised and chaired meetings against bus fare increases and poor bus services and the dilapidated condition of buses. Whilst with the Merebank Ratepayers Organisation, I together with the others, fought for better amenities for the Merebank area.

## **Respondents from Cape Town**

### *Harold Dixon*

One of my greatest influences, my biggest influence in the early days was Johnny Issel and Danile Landingwe but especially Johnny himself. It was his character, his honesty of the struggle. Whatever happened around us - for the struggle for the cause of the people; how we should duck and dive from the police - the life that he lived. To come down here from Jo'burg to live like that far from the family but not really concerned about that but his main concern was the liberation of people.

What Johnny was telling us is what life is all about - Liberation of our people. I could see something. There is a way forward. Things don't have to be like this all the time. I don't have to be called a coloured because he gave me books about Frantz Fanon and those guys... and I realised I don't have to be like that, it's up to me. I have to work on it. I don't have to call myself a coloured because it is only a label from the white man. I know I'm not a coloured. Who I am or who we as a people are. Johnny was very black. He was very much as far as things are concerned I'm black first and in that of course it only came up later that I am African and nothing else. If I'm not European then I am not a coloured, I'm African. Still today I fight with a lot of people about my Africanism. I don't want to deny my Africanism at all cost. I also got my wife now involved also to start realising that they are also first Africans and nothing else.

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<sup>62</sup> Ivan Pillay is also known as Vis

I won't say this identity caused me trauma, just it was you do a lot of explaining to other people. I had to justify a hell of a lot who I am why I see myself as black and not as a coloured. In those days people didn't really understand about the racial thing. Perhaps they were in denial. They didn't want to mention they were happy to be coloured. A lot of my friends were happy to be a coloured person and even today they're happy to be coloured and they still want to be coloured. You see there's quite a lot now *I'm a coloured person...* they don't realise what they are. You are not coloured, you're an African person. Now that I've done a lot more reading and seen things that are happening around me these people are still with coloured and there's even now talk about forming a coloured party. They still talk about fragmenting what has happened.

I was approached by certain soccer people to start a coloured group. They said I must start this coloured group. I can't understand that because no matter who does what wrong in the ANC, I still believe in the ANC, the manifesto of the ANC. I still believe. Some say to me black blind, ANC blind.

My first major, major thing was conscientising the people of Bonteheuvel. They were busy building some kind of maisonettes. Some people didn't realise why the maisonettes were happening so we went out there campaigning against the maisonettes in the area. It was an over populated area already and then they would bring people in from District Six where the Group Areas Act declared white District Six. Then they wanted to bring this people in from District Six and Plumstead. They decided this is a built up area let us just put in new houses. We decided to campaign in conscientising the people against the maisonettes.

Clive McBride got us off to the struggle - where should we justify our struggle - where should the church be in the struggle for liberation and the upliftment of the black people in South Africa. That's when he got us focussed and we could get a lot closer to the work and to the struggle via his black theology in the lines of Martin Luther King and Manas Buthelezi. Because of McBride being in Factreton because McBride was present in that area, he could tell us about hardships of the people in 11<sup>th</sup> Ave. Factreton, Windermere. He could get us focussing and get us emotionally charged up about us seeing what was happening around us.

At that stage we were all very much in need of knowledge of what was going on around us because we were all just living in this corner of the Western Cape - we weren't into Steenberg and all of those areas. We weren't aware of what was going on far around. McBride was also the connection where he was the priest because they used interchange with one another with the priest from Langa. Of course McBride was also a township priest from Johannesburg township. He wasn't a person that was outside. He worked from inside. He could tell us the

very first day in one of my discussions with McBride was around how do we take the struggle from the Christian level. He was justifying Christians to be morally and physically involved in the struggle. Should Christians turn their back and say 'dis hulle ding', 'it's a Xhosa or an African thing that'. He used to get us to that situation where we, as young adults, were looking for besides looking for a form of identity. He got us to identify that we are part of that struggle as Christians which led us to the Christian Leadership Centre

***Harold talks about his religious experience at the Christian Leadership Centre.***

Every Sunday we had to go to a different church to be able to see how different religions, not different religions, different sects - how different sects practice the worshipping of god. Up till now I always say, 'Yes we believe in God, but I can not say that the Presbyterians do not believe in the same God that I believe in. Perhaps their way of worshipping could be different. It is a bit different not a lot different it's just a little bit... but they still worship their God....'

I was very comfortable. The only thing was how the Baptist Church there in Kensington conducted their services on a Sunday night. I was quite shocked - How can these people dance in the church? - that one praying and that one shouting from the other side - the way they were shouting they weren't talking. I can still picture that.

That's why I still feel very, very comfortable about going to a Roman Catholic Church. I saw a major difference because there's a certain thing with the Roman Catholics and the Anglicans - there's a distinct difference in how they behave in church. There is almost a more holiness in the Catholic and the Anglican Church and the other churches because the relationship seems to be very loose in the church - we are very sombre.

***Harold talks about racial prejudice and his personal experiences with comments made about his grandchild:***

My friends also realise that when you talk about things racially I justttt... although I won't argue with them, I just shut down for that. It must come out of them.

The other day this person told me this. 'Zachariah's one with two eyes, fair of complexion... What happens eventually if someone comes along and kill him?' I mustn't hate that person. I mustn't hate that person because it's just that person who did wrong. But they say, 'Ja but it's a racial thing because you got this whole thing about the coloureds are pushed to one side in South Africa'. So I said, 'That's rubbish man. I'm not prepared to talk about that.' I still see Zachariah as a white child but he is not white. He's an African. The colour of his skin has got

nothing to do with him as a person and to do with me as his grandfather. I see him as a child and we should all start now. They say that will never change in our life time. I say no Mr. Mandela said, 'In my life time' and I said that's a helluva life. He spent 27 years in this life time but it did change.

I did not just participate as an individual but I got a lot of individuals to and organisations to understand their blackness in South Africa then and now. My help was in conscientising people mostly towards the upliftment and to get people to realise that there is a better future we can look towards and for people to realise that they are never second class citizens in South Africa. They've been slotted as second class but they are not second class.

And the acts that I did in the townships I've got no regrets of what I done there. I've got no regrets so much so I only I think I could've done more. I could've got more of my family involved.

### ***Political Action with his grandfather:***

My biggest bonus that I can say is that through my actions alone we (my grandfather and me) had to move out and he was prepared to buy a house in Sherwood Park in Mannenberg and then we had a nice talk one day and then he turned round. He was not going to move out of Lansdowne anywhere. He would wait for the bulldozer to take that house down. It was a victory for me because here my grandfather who was very much what I called a non-white.... and then he started... because I ended up in prison they started a movement in Lansdowne - sort of an anti-eviction movement and all those people who rallied around, all those houses got kept. Their children are still living in that houses. A lot of whites moved in around them.

That whole area was declared white and all those people, because of my grandfather's actions, a lot of people formed up a ratepayers association in that area and then a helluva lot of people stayed behind. Up till now their children are still living in that houses. For me that is one of the plusses that happened.

### ***About his arrest***

I was arrested at my grandfather's house. It 's so strange. I got home quite late at about twelve o'clock, got into bed and got up again to see.... At about half past two I heard a vehicle stop. I looked out. In front there was a road and I suddenly realised that's it - they're here for me now. Ah I said I'm not going to get up and open the front door because they're going to take me. If I'm going to go to the front door then they're going to take me out of the house without my parents..,

my father knowing and my sister... they must stand with me. Somebody else in the house must come with me here. The other part of my mind said go through the back door jump off there because there's a dog. Then I heard the dog start barking out of the front of the house. So if I had gone to the back door they would have...

Prior to that, one night coming from a meeting at your house<sup>63</sup>, I used to see them there in the road that's why I moved.

Spyker and Van Heerden came. I think my father opened the door. And they said. 'Is he at home?' and my father said, 'Ja hy is hier in die huis...'<sup>64</sup> They saw me coming home. When I came home I saw a car standing in Harmony Road. From my bedroom I could see the next road. There was this car parked there. I know it was a white Cressida, a new car and I just thought why ... So when my father woke me up they said, 'Our captain said it was just for the day he'll come back tonight.' So I told my father, 'Don't believe them. Why must I take things with me? I will go with my woollen jersey because if they beat me up they can't get the blood out of the wool....' I made up my mind I'm not taking that woollen jersey off and woollen socks ... can't get the blood and that will save me. As if they will go through pathology and allow pathologists... One of the reasons why I hoped my father would contact your father or mummy<sup>65</sup> to find out is that prior to that Johnny always used to tell us, 'Kyk uit<sup>66</sup>, if they're coming to fetch us - I don't know when, but they are coming to fetch us.' That was immediately after Danile's arrest and then they released Danile.

So Johnny said they are going to come fetch us and we sort of half prepared ourselves. I told my sister the first thing first when they come fetch me and if they come fetch me phone Mr. Perez or Mrs. Perez explain them and phone Trevor, Trevor de Bryun for the legal things what you should do. Also two people must phone and then my father must phone your house.....

They were quite nice in Cape Town. I know Andries in Cape Town (he drove us up - he and van Heerden) he said, 'Listen here. Jy moet nie anders nie gaan jy nooit huistoe nie...'<sup>67</sup>

### ***After his arrest, his trip with other detainees and his detention in Pretoria***

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<sup>63</sup> The reference is to the Perez residence.

<sup>64</sup> He is here in the house

<sup>65</sup> Reference is to Mr. & Mrs. Perez.

<sup>66</sup> Means 'Look out'

<sup>67</sup> Means if you don't co-operate you will never go home.

On top of Du Toits Kloof Andries told Van Heerden 'Kyk daar agter jou.'<sup>68</sup> On top of du Toits Kloof you can see Robben Island in the distance. He said, 'Kyk weer. Julle sal nooit hierdie plek sien. Julle gat terug kom maar as daai plane land land hy nie hier nie hy land daar op die eiland. Sê maar bye vir die Kaap. Julle gat hom nie weer sien nie.'<sup>69</sup>

I got beaten up in Kimberley.

We got to Beaufort West and they were going into a shop. They wanted to eat and they had to give us food. They were sitting in the kombi because it's a problem. So we went into the restaurant. So Johnny said, 'Kom....'<sup>70</sup> Because we were handcuffed to one another and to ourself and so they started panicking. The whites were in there so we started shouting 'Hier kom die terroriste, hier kom die terroriste'<sup>71</sup> You know how quickly they went out of the restaurant! But of course its blacks coming to the white side of the restaurant.

And then we were planning. Johnny will go to the front and one of us go for the gun because Andries took his gun off. He put it in the glove compartment. We thought we'd get the gun, get hold of the kombi and we leave but of course it never materialised...

While we were driving to Potch - they didn't want us in the same cell so they decided to drive right through to Pretoria. When we got there, we were frisked and then they took us upstairs to the cells and said, 'You must prepare yourself.' First I said, 'I want to see a magistrate.' We could converse. Johnny told us a lot of things and so the first morning I saw a policeman. We were not allowed to wash nothing... the food... and then you could hear them putting the food down outside and then we had to wait two or three hours later they'll open the door for you and your bucket you've got to put outside and you got your food and you put your bucket outside and things like that and your cup and all that.... Who came for me? Welman he was in the prison.... Police commissioner in Pretoria - Now the first time I see outside.... it was about 12 days...

The first time I came there I want to see a magistrate. When I said I want to see a magistrate they said, 'No.' 'I want to see one now - finish talking. I want to see a magistrate and what do you people want from me? No statement - I want to see a magistrate. I've got rights.' They put me back. It was on a Friday then again the Sunday night they came. A white policeman and a black policeman came.

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<sup>68</sup> Look behind you.

<sup>69</sup> Look again you are not going to see this place again. You are going to come back but when that plane lands it doesn't land here it lands on the island. Say goodbye to the Cape you are not going to see it again.

<sup>70</sup> Come

<sup>71</sup> Here come the terrorists

Security branch took me down to commissioner of police and said, 'We just want to talk to you and you going to give us a statement.' And I said, 'A statement about what?' 'About you activities' and I said, 'What activities?' 'Must I tell you sir SASO, BPC ...' 'I want to see a magistrate.' So they back off then they smack me around. 'Jy moet praat'<sup>72</sup> All the time.

For my whole interrogation period there was .... The whites never lifted their hands up, only the blacks lifted their hands up. The security branch guys or askaris they brought in.. point a finger.... but then.... A dark night and then the Monday a big guy - looked like a wrestler, beautiful body .... 'Ooo sit down have a cigarette.' I got cigarettes but no matches. So I can't smoke so I say. 'Okay.' One of my stupid mistakes. I should not have taken the cigarette. They took the cigarette they lit it up and they tell me right they want the name and address. And I tell them, 'But you got it. You people came to fetch me at home why do you want my name and address?' 'Because we want to write it down.' Then he smacked me. He was the only one that smacked me. He said, 'Jy praat nie so saam met my nie.'<sup>73</sup> Then I said, 'I can't speak to you like that then I'm not going to speak' and I said, 'I'm gonna be quiet. Now I want a bible. I want a bible and I want to see a magistrate.'

On the Friday the magistrate came and I told him, 'Listen here I must have a bible and these are my complaints. I don't get a bath. I don't get a shower or bath. My food is cold and I'm sleeping on one coir mattress and one blanket. And the light they don't want to switch off how am I going to sleep at night?' You know its 24 hours in a cell - you can't sleep... the days off for half an hour long..... The magistrate saw me the Friday. Saturday morning they came back for me and this time they were serious...

I got a Afrikaans.... because the magistrate still asked me what type of bible I want. I said I want an English, new and old testament and they brought me an old testament on the Friday night just after supper. Then anyway now I got something to occupy me - I read the bible.

Then the Saturday they came back - this was Du Toit alone.... Then I knew there's something. He handcuffed me. There was a car inside the building. There was a street then there was a car-park where the police cars parked. They got me out of the car and walked me into the building and the museum was on top. As they took me, as I got out of the car Ruben came across the road also handcuffed and they smacked him back into the car... and I still said, 'Hello Ruben' - another mistake. Then when we got inside, inside the building was an office and you got a passage and you turn there... I had to duck down and as I duck down

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<sup>72</sup> You must talk

<sup>73</sup> Don't talk like that to me

someone kicked me from the back .... and as I looked they pushed me from the back inside and then they went to town - two guys went to town on me... I was bleeding all over the show because when I prepared.... they took my jersey off. All the time when I went for interrogation they took my jersey off me. When they came to fetch me they said in the cell I must just have my shirt on... they went to town on me.

They took me back to Pretoria and now a different cell on the ground floor. We used to talk to one another at night but all the time common law prisoner, detainee, common law prisoner. The reason being you can't talk because between the two cells there was common law prisoners. You can shout your backside off and they can just about hear you. Then the reason I came back they first said me otherwise you listen to us now you see what happened - this was now Stadler ...he said, 'I'm sorry what happened... the guys got angry. I wasn't here. You must just make a statement. Tell us all your activities. Why did you do this Bonteheuvel thing?' And now they're telling me a lot of things that they know about. 'Why are they asking these things?' I thought of what Johnny said. He said, 'Guys we are all going to be forced to make a statement. Find out what they know. Tell them what they know. Tell them to put it down in writing at least you can push the thing out longer. If you make a statement they have to question you. Don't ask, don't answer questions without stuff that is written down. Just write down and stick to what you write down make sure what they ask you. They will tell you it's nine o'clock and you affirm yes nine o'clock.....'

That went on. Then they came to tell me, 'This is cooked. The rest of you now are being charged but you must make a statement. Johnny's gone home. He made a statement. He's gone home. Steve is also at home already. Come make a statement and then we fly you home tomorrow.' Then I said, 'No I'm scared of flying.' 'Then make a statement. We'll see you home tomorrow.' And I said, 'No man. I can't understand Johnny going home. Johnny's not going to make a statement. Then I'm going to make a statement... then I said fine alright then make a statement.' 'We're not going to force you.' Then they took me up again sitting there they switch the light off . They switch the lights off because.... They took me to town .....<sup>74</sup> It was cops they didn't use prisoners... Then they said, 'Right you don't to talk then make a statement. Then what we're going to do is lock you up with prisoners. We don't know what's going to happen to you guys one by one.' And then they told me Maphetla also I think he's from Durban...

They said, 'Maphetla was coming out.... They raped him....he's in the hospital now they had to stitch him up...' I also wrote down things there for them and they weren't satisfied. 'Make another statement.' And I said, 'This is it - there's

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<sup>74</sup> They beat him up

my statement.' And then they sent me to a magistrate then I said, 'I'm not sure but the days I got beaten up I don't see a magistrate.' They took me to John Vorster Square. After my first statement they took me through to ..... what's this place? A sort of police station on the farm. What is this place haai jenna but this is 62 km from the border. They told me, 'Listen, you make a nice statement, implicate Johnny and Steven.... There's no problems with that. Implicate Johnny and Steve then we'll take you out of the country. We take you to the Mozambique border. We let you go. Make a statement then we let you go.' So I was about to do it then I thought if I do this they will kill me. Between the border I run and they get a bullet to shoot me. Now also you must understand I'm becoming desperate because it's now February/March already.... Working on my nerves.... Then back to Pretoria. 'Your statement, you're not mentioning names.' Here now we get into specifics. Steve Biko, Johnny, Saths because... looking after Saths.... I met him there. I was in conference with him too - the BPC convention in Hammanskraal. I took us all round to Saths, took us to Steve in ..... That's where I got to know Saths, Steve Biko, Maphetla and Aubrey and that priest.... Russel and then they got me down to very specifics. I had to give them details, times of meetings and because now they going to.... 'Who was at that meeting?' and you had to think of names and... at that time I heard that you people<sup>75</sup> had gone.....

Spyker also came. 'Nou waar is die mense?'<sup>76</sup> Why did you people leave the country especially Mervyn. How did Mervyn leave the country? I said, 'I don't know Mervyn.' Taylor said, 'You know. We saw you at Mervyn's house.' There were so many things that you couldn't deny. You tell them this then they tell you no that's what happened.

They took me to Pretoria...no to John Vorster Square and you know what happened there then they say, 'Ohhhh this is it! You going to die now.' I won't go back .... So I packed my things nicely. First I thought they going to take me home but I ended up in John Vorster Square. You know what happened there. Ohhhh this is it then. They came to tell me, 'Ok here you give statements because here....' There's always that threat with Spyker Van Wyk with the rusted nail...

They say, 'You know Imam Haron? Jy ken Imam Haron hoe hy't dood gegaan het?'<sup>77</sup> They say, 'This killed him - a rusted nail.' Now all these things ply on you also ... I asked him, 'What's the time?' I got a hiding for that.

When I made a statement it was 2 days before they started the trial when Saths Cooper and all the others were charged. And then they told me you make that

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<sup>75</sup> Refers to Roy and Carmel Chetty, Algonda Perez and Jaya Josie

<sup>76</sup> Now where are the people?

<sup>77</sup> You know Imam Haron how he died?

statement that implicate Saths and people and I can go home. So if I make a statement then they're going to keep me here as a witness. Then I got to then I still made a statement.... Because so many people is being charged so I thought my statement must have been very incriminating... time was of no essence. I lost track of time I didn't know also - I didn't understand that they must submit it to the attorney general. I always thought that they're a law unto themselves they decide who to charge and that....

Who did I incriminate in this thing? I can't remember who the guys are charged. This guy Saths Cooper - I didn't know him much, I couldn't say much about Saths. I just informed them that I met Saths at a graveyard in Merebank, Wentworth. There's a graveyard somewhere there.

Then they took me back to Pretoria with my baggage. This they do all the time to me - 'Jy gaan vandag vry laat'<sup>78</sup>.... They released me. They said, 'Jy kan maar huistoe gaan'<sup>79</sup>I didn't still ask them. You know they didn't release me there. They brought me back to Cape Town.

### ***Comments about drama:***

We did street drama. One of our tutors was Christine Dout. We did a lot of street drama. I remember at one stage when you<sup>80</sup> were personally involved and I think you and Milly and we took over OK Bazaars. Drama is that we would park in the bus, sit in the bus there into town - some would sit in the front - and we would have this conversation of conscientisation, talking about non-whites and coloureds and blacks, talk about the struggle, revolution and talking about colour consciousness....

We'd be talking loud and arguing with one another. In Kensington in front of Christian Leadership Centre we also had drama in front of the church. We also had drama at St. Timothy's Church, Clive's, Father McBride's church.

### ***Harold's views of the armed struggle***

It was a major necessity. At that time I thought the armed struggle was too soft seriously talking .... I was intending pressing that if I leave the country I will seriously... because my idea was that every white in South Africa was part of the National Party because they as voters had a choice. Every white over the age of 18 joined the army, trained and either went to prison because they don't want to take part and if he's doing training he isn't part of us he's against the struggle -

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<sup>78</sup> You are going to be freed today

<sup>79</sup> You can go home

<sup>80</sup> refers to Carmel Chetty

against the liberation of black people in South Africa. It was very much Umkonto we Sizwe's policy of soft targets. That's why I was very much in favour of McBride, the ANC McBride, because of them choosing so called soft targets. He ...the bombing of Fox Street, the McGoo's restaurant - because whites at that stage were really used as fronts that's what I can say.

I asked Father McBride, 'How can you justify violence?' I said to him. 'What happened in the bible? Jesus came into Jerusalem and people were selling and going tekere<sup>81</sup> in the temple and then he came and took a sjambok and beat them out. That is violent, so my mission is justified. Apartheid government used violent means to keep the blacks under suppression, oppression they were using it why can't we.' I have no conflict as a Christian towards violent armed struggle because it was justified.

The things that I've seen was around the country. Alexander Township. There I saw... I thought I saw poverty not until I went into an area that I saw... GaRankua there I saw what we see on TV now people sitting on practically ash heap scratching for a living. There I now saw bad poverty. Yes I did see the cache of arms there I also once or twice moved people for training from in town. I was very much aware at that stage of the armed struggle. In Cape Town I always used to see myself that if it wasn't for the formation of the UDF I would've gone over to join Umkonto we Sizwe.

### *Jane Lawrence*

Along came Peter Storey, a young minister, a young Methodist minister and he had just come back from Australia. His stint in Australia had opened up his eyes again to the conditions, the dreadful apartheid conditions in our country. He made us think. For me going to the States really opened my eyes and helped me to think critically about what was happening. I think also did a number of things just speaking to young people, listening to black people and noticing the complete difference. I could then make the comparison.

I was given an opportunity, through the church, to go to America sponsored by the United Methodist Church. I was the so called coloured from Cape Town and they had a white from Pretoria. The two of us never ever met but got to know each other on the plane. We went over to New Jersey and there we spent a year up together working in a ghetto. We were funded by a very rich church in New Jersey called the Haddenfield Methodist Church and just across the river was this big very, very poor generally dilapidated black ghetto made up of a number of Puerto Ricans and poor whites but mainly black.

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<sup>81</sup> chaos

Because of our teaching background, we had to help run a nursery school. But in the afternoons we were also involved in employment agency to help people get jobs. The two of us were the only two international students. It was really an American programme that they had. Alex Borraine, who was president of the *Conscience of the Methodist Church* at the time, asked if the two of us could come along and get involved in that. The Methodist Church here in South Africa was trying to introduce a similar programme called *Giving a year of your life* as a young person at the time.

In South Africa the black people that I saw always walked in such a stooped way. When they drove their cars they hugged the steering wheel and wherever they walked it was always such a position of subservience. In the States was a different thing. Even though they had just gone through - and then of course the whole civil rights movement was very strong - but to see them being so proud and being so confident and so assertive, that was the most revealing thing for me.

I went to Chicago Theological Seminary and spent three months there. During that time I would go every single morning to *Operation Basket* which was Jesse Jackson's programme which he had. He was encouraging this whole black consciousness movement and the Black Panthers were there. You realise you are a person, don't let anybody, don't let any law allow you to be dehumanised. I think for me that was the most incredible experience because that's what Peter Storey was saying.

Regardless of the laws here if you want to be a Christian and you live according to the bible - and especially according to what Jesus Christ is saying, that I've come so that you might have light and life - so don't let anybody ever diminish you in any way. I think that's what gave me so much confidence. From now on it doesn't matter what happens. This is the power that I have and I have to live by this power now. I think that was the most exciting period of my life. Don't let anybody push you down. There's another world out there - these Nats here they've tried to stifle us and they've tried to demonise us but it hasn't really worked.

My stint in America opened my eyes to so many things. It was the most exhilarating experience and yet it was also a very destabilising experience. It was a shock to my system really. First of all at the time, that particular period, the nineteen seventies - it was exactly 1970 - it was the heart of summer - there were just so many demonstrations back then. There was the Jesus revolution

everybody walking around. There was the hippie revolution and there was the anti-Vietnam demonstrations.

Over there I did a course in Afro Americanism. It was the most wonderful thing. I was always interested in history. I did it at university while I was there for a year. I think the whole thing of slavery I was just making the comparisons all the time.

The whole woman liberation movement - particularly the woman's liberation within the church, the life of the church - that was another stance but it was also very confusing for me at the time trying to decide should I now be feminist or should I rather be conscientising black people? What is it now? Where is it? At the same time all the different arguments that were going on around that - first be a woman then be a person - first be a person then be a feminist - first get the whole racial thing sorted out here...

I read a great deal over there and I read all those books - Malcolm X's book Alison's book *The invisible man, Call me by name*. I went to a lot of black theatre but I've never ever done it in South Africa. I've never had access to books because we never had these books. Paulo Freire's book also *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. There were so many books and I just kept reading all these things and that Muslim thing also was there. I remember going one weekend while I was in Chicago attending a course also on the rise of the whole black Muslims - the Muslim thing for me - the whole Elijah Mohammed - that also was a whole new thing that I was exposing myself to constantly.

I thought for goodness sakes now what will it be like when I get home and will people actually understand because here the church sent me to do church things as such which I was doing but at the same time I thought but what's happening in South Africa is so wrong.

It opened my eyes and I know what I think and even now in terms of what I do with students and the teaching that I do is always rooted in assertiveness. It's always an empowering thing. It doesn't matter who the student is. It's a constant acknowledgement and affirmation.

It wasn't difficult being a woman over there. I think when I came back definitely. I think it was difficult and I'm sure for Gilbert<sup>82</sup> also. It was an adjustment. While he supported me I know it must've been for a lot of people 'Oh why it's just an American thing. She's gone over there and now she's back. They have to be different.' But it was more than just going to be different. It would become an

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<sup>82</sup> Jane's husband

integral part of my life in terms of bucking the system. I think for me also in terms of when I reflect on my life and I think of the anger and the hatred that I felt for the Afrikaner and the whole thing of Afrikaans how I would subvert not in an overt radical way but in lots of covert ways like refusing to speak Afrikaans, being polite even though I understood exactly what was being said, I would deliberately continue to speak in English. For me that was the language of the oppressor and I was not going to. The whole Afrikaans thing - I've changed now completely because I see in forms of any language and every language in our country being of equal importance and that we need to make use of the rich diversity that our country's many languages - but certainly at that time never singing the anthem but always getting so emotional just listening to this wonderful tune and listening to the words and wish I could sing it; never honouring the flag we... just lots of little things like that that I did. When I think of the price lots of people paid with their lives I just feel goodness where do you come to.....

When I got employed by the Methodist Church and then I started the Christian - well Alex - just when I left they started the Christian Leadership Centre as an opportunity. Once again one of Peter Storey's ideas to make use of this church because the department, the Nats, were closing down church schools at that time. So here we had a church building and so the idea was let's have a residential programme and make it inter-denominational so that we could invite leaders, youth leaders from different churches work at different jobs during the day but come and study at night - the whole objective of raising leaders - and so that's where I got involved. And it was again an opportunity for me to teach and also to make use of the whole sensitivity training courses that we had at the time - although it created a lot of controversy.

People felt it was an opportunity to indoctrinate people, which of course it was. Of course it was, it's absolutely right to focus on the *I*, and what am *I* feeling, get in touch with your feelings and to look into yourself and see the power you have. So I enjoyed that very much coordinating that and giving people the opportunity to be part of a group and to be able to listen to each other - basic social skills and to hear the pain and anguish and the richness of each others lives also. So that was wonderful also for people to see how creative they could be. We weren't meant just to be followers but that in each person there was such a wealth of information, such a wealth of experiences and background also that we all draw from each other and in that way we live together.

Peter Storey and Jim Liat and a whole team of people, people who came and did different courses over the three months. I think the emphasis very much at that particular stage was on Christian leaders as such. I didn't realise that there was this cauldron bubbling - the whole black consciousness thing. You now realise

who you are as a person and ... ja and I think just with Steve Biko and Henry Isaacs and other the SASO guys it was just wonderful. And also a lot of the Christian, the Christian Institute took the time also and the *Outlook*, the *South Africa Outlook* and the SPROCAS and the VERITAS publications that we were reading, making us, certainly me, aware that you've got to resist this apartheid system - that you resist, resist.

The church as an institution - I'm talking about the Methodist Church now - when I think of our synods, our church bodies, they weren't really happy with what we were doing. No, no. We took proposal of motions so we got to resist this. We're unhappy with this. Why they doing this? The people... why they uprooting the people of District Six? At that stage people were moving out. Now those times the church - the majority of the church - I'm talking about in particular in the Western Cape - which was mainly white Methodist ministries - we got no black priests. They were happy with the status quo certainly, definitely it was all very one and undivided.

I loved every single minute of that period. It was just so exciting because beside the three monthly courses I was having lots of other courses getting women in... I remember the course on single women - and the whole thing about empowerment also through that - the Easter camps that we had, youth camps beside that. So it was an exciting time because you could feel that things were changing in the country. It was just prior Mozambique, the FRELIMO independence that was having a ripple effect also on what was happening and giving us more and more confidence because if they're getting things right... So no, no it was absolutely exciting I'm just... it was also very repressive at the same time with what was happening politically again.

The most awful thing during that time was living with this suspicion that even though we were all... there must be an informer here because informers are everywhere. And then you tell yourself don't worry about it but I think we were never free of that. Somebody's reporting back that's what's happening.

I think what the church and all the young people did for me is it helped me to become real and to own my feelings. I've come out of the schooling system where there was only one truth and that one truth was the authoritative truth of the teacher. This is white so it has to be white even though it could be shades of beige or cream or whatever but that was the one truth whereas my experience with the whole black consciousness empowerment you know I have a right to my opinion and I have a right to my thoughts and my ideas and I have to share I'm not going to believe that I'm inferior to anybody. I mean that just lifts me completely. Never ever will I ever be afraid of anybody. If I feel intimidated by somebody then I'll have to stop and question myself why am I suddenly now

feeling powerless and why am I afraid. Why even am I having these fears. I think for me that's what I wanted to share - you have to own your feelings, own your own feelings.

Also the church had preached this is one truth and regardless of the context of suffering and pain. Peter Storey came and preached a gospel within a particular context and said how is it possible that this government can enforce the group areas act. 40 000 people up in District Six having to leave homes now because the area is white. That! And the courses that I was exposed to, that I helped facilitate with him that *My brother and me* courses, all the things that he'd done in Australia where you had to confront each other. I take on the role of a white person and you as a white person take my role as a coloured person. And so you'll feel what it feels like when we blame the way we're doing it - making both of us intervene. I think all of those things contributed.

I always get so excited when I think goodness sakes the positions that people are in now I think my word this one's a minister now, this one's a dean that one's - it's amazing that how our lives touch each other in a positive way in a little way just by doing ... you know don't listen to the negativity around you - believe in the richness that you bring to life and that others are able to bring out within you.

### *Terry Grove*

*Terry got involved in student politics while still at high school at the age of about 14/15 She joined The South African Black Scholars Association (SABSA). They organised in the sphere of 30 high schools in the Peninsula.*

#### ***Terry talks of her introduction into organised student politics:***

I remember, apart from the fact that my father and other people were consciously part of the Black Consciousness Movement in terms of their writing....but I remember the trip to Durban and when we met Steve Biko.

I think in '73 was not a turning point but I think an important year. It was the year of the UWC walk off, Jimmy<sup>83</sup> was a first year student. It was also the year the base was at your house (the Perez house), the UWC student base. I think there were lots of things, lots of contact with SASO as well. What all stands out for me is meeting Steve Biko on the trip but also when we got to PE for the first time I think it's not as a foreign thing in Cape Town as it is in PE you know you get these beaches, Indian beach, coloured beach, Chinese beach.....

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<sup>83</sup> Terry's brother, Jimmy Mathews

Then meeting the ASH people I think it was in '73 we met Myron, Vivienne, Roy and them.....

***She talks of Father Wrangmore who fasted on Signal Hill:***

He went to fast at Signal Hill there. There's a burial ground, kramat and I think Bernard Wrangmore's fasting was in protest of Imam Haroon....

I think there's a poem to him. I think in Cry Rage there's a poem to him.....

***She talks of her introduction into adult literacy training:***

It is actually strange that years later when I studied adult education we had to do an assignment on what was the genesis of the interest, or what started the interest. And I remember going with Myron to Tintown to literacy classes and being so interested in how prepared he was and his manner of teaching and always coming early and impressing and saying you can't waste people's time. For me that is such a clear memory that I have of why I'm actually today still involved in adult education.....

***Terry has a great affection for Mrs. Perez, the writer's mother:***

I know this has got nothing to do with your mother but what I actually think when I think in terms of my education - because I always link my faith with my involvement - is that at your house the two were so closely connected. Other people whose faith were also connected, but I think your mother actually played a big part in my political education. The fact that I could connect political theory is one thing but if you just.. you need something more than political theory to actually get you involved and I think a lot of people actually discount people who were true believers and the part that they actually have played in the struggle in this country and I think your mother's one of the people who should actually be mentioned....

Not that your mum pushed religion I think she was just a fervent Catholic -to practice what she actually preached and for me that is the perfect connection of being - that your faith is actually what guides your political practice.

***Remembering The Christian Leadership Centre:***

The only thing that I can remember of the Christian Leadership Centre course

was the black history. I think the black history course is the only course that sticks out in my head.

We did transactional analysis, meditation....

I can remember and then also these bible studies that we do. We used to go to all these different churches. I mean we had to go and how reactionary we were....

We were just anti-establishment. We weren't very discerning at that time...

I think the fact that we were people from divergent backgrounds. I remember I was the only scholar on the course, Gonda was at university. I was at high school. Everybody else was working. I think they made an exception in my case because it is supposed to be for young working adults. We can't remember much of the course anymore but I think the discussions that we had in the evenings, the courses because things were systematized I think it helped to shape....

***Terry talks of her detention by the security police:***

I remember SABSA, the executive of SABSA were taken in for interrogation and that for me was actually quite traumatic. I was picked up by two special branch policemen. I still remember their names, Cornelius was the white guy and Small or Smal was the coloured guy. They took me to Caledon Square and I remember them saying something about Imam Haroon had died and sort of trying to intimidate me. It was very scary because a cop smacked me and before I was interrogated by Spyker Van Wyk and a couple of other security branch people and I remember while being interrogated... and them coming in. I remember during the interrogation which was like for a few hours keep bringing people in to have a look at me... that was a strange experience.

And then I remember coming to the Christian Leadership Centre because I felt like really violated because they had sworn at me and said things like, 'SASO guys just want to screw you that's why they're misleading us.' Ja I just felt very violated, humiliated. I remember coming to the Christian Leadership Centre and just wanting to be with people and I think Jane was scared to have me there....

But I remember I wanted to be with you and Milly<sup>84</sup> I think particularly of Milly because at some stage... and Milly's big and you know Milly was the one person who would always protect us. So I think I needed that. I think I wanted to be with people that I thought would protect me.

I just remember that somebody took me to my granny's house. She lived in

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<sup>84</sup> Milly Abrahams nee English was a fellow activist on the Christian Leadership Centre course

Factreton - no my granny was dead already.... I can't remember how I was taken home.

They wanted to know what SABSA was up to. They wanted to know the executive of SABSA. Actually the questions, now that I think about it, are quite innocuous questions because I remember at some stage they wanted to know who the other executive members of SABSA were. Alan Liebenberg, Kleinschmidt...

I remember at one stage I'm not wanting to answer because if I think about the questions now they're actually stupid questions you know and I remember at one stage saying seeing that the answers - why do you ask me these questions and Spyker Van Wyk picks up a ruler, a metal ruler but almost like he's going to hit me and I almost fainted. But thinking back I don't know why they... now let me think... we were making contacts with SASM. I think that at that point SABSA was thinking of merging with South African Students Movement. Michael Diseko, was the youngest person to be banned in South Africa. He was still at high school I think he was 19 years old and I think we were having talks with SASM in terms of merging. I don't actually remember much of the interrogation ...

***People who influenced Terry:***

I think the people who made an impression on me is Ruben Hare, Ben Palmer Loux , Ivor Cornwall, Danile Landingwe and Albert Beukes, Nikki Titus, Virginia Engel, Christine, Ilfa Mckay

***Involvement of the Christian Institute:***

At the Christian Institute we actually had our meeting place. SASO met there and we met there. I went to the Christian Institute everyday after school. People like Florrie De Villiers always fed us. She joined the domestic workers union afterwards. I think the people at Christian Institute also played an important role.

I think there's that Young Christian Workers? There's a connection with Young Christian Workers as well....

***Commenting on the suggestion of stolen youth:***

I don't think our youth was stolen. I also think it is some of the choices that we made. There was Rilda who was part of the group and was always frivolous. I mean she was always on the periphery of things so I just think it is important that the choices that we make and with hindsight I think... ok I think part of the

youth being stolen is that the innocence you know we were confronted with things I think sometimes when we were too young to actually handle those things and understand some of the things. If I think back you know you couldn't possibly have internalized some of the things that I read you know that I'm rereading now. I only now really understand or it's taken me a while you know. So we had all this knowledge. We were sort of like sponges. I think sometimes we were parroting things that we didn't understand but I think we were fortunate in a lot of instances in that we had good guidance. I think a lot of the choices that we had made I mean I contacted people who were communists but I never.... I can understand what the ideology or the theory but I'm always very grateful for the other guides and mentors that we had along the way. Because for me my political ideas have to be guided by my faith. I think and this is just because of the other people who were in our lives at the time as well...

I remember we had a speech - an inter-SRC meeting - we had a speaker's contest and I spoke on the ideal society and my father gave me a copy of the Freedom Charter. My speech was based on the Freedom Charter but I couldn't because I remember it was at some hall here in Belgravia and there we had the speaker's contest. I don't think the Freedom Charter is a difficult document but I think the other documents and other stuff that we read...

***Commenting on protest theatre:***

Protest theatre. I also remember Alan Liebenberg because we would do it on the buses....

The protest theatre was to get the people on the buses and at the bus stops about the increase in the price of bread or...

I remember there was a protest, a Sharpeville protest or something when we walked in the streets with coffins and stuff.... now I think kids.. I think we had more guts than sense....

We changed the words we sang 'we shall overrun' and when they sang 'We walk hand in hand' we sang 'And we'll walk gun in hand.'

## *Maria Engel*

I must have been about 13 and you<sup>85</sup> would have been at some course or other and came back with this whole Black Consciousness thing and preached all these things to me. I went on the Monday to school and I remember preaching this to all these pure white people standing in front of me there at Immaculata, telling them that they're not white but black..... and all the things were based on what Carmel had told me not that I had really been there. I always remember and I will never forget this one girl Julia standing in front of me and saying, 'This has got nothing to do with us.' I tried because now we had this whole thing that you've got to conscientise the people around you and so now of course I had to conscientise these posh people... They thought they were posher than me - from Heathfield and Fairways and those places - and I remember that's my first memories... and then of course everybody joining SABSAs....

We were in this group mode and I always felt I was just a part of this group that was just moving along.

We were always just conscious and the fact that UWC were having this big riots going on or I can't remember what it was... and the fact that daddy always used to take us to the meetings, NUSAS meetings and The Progressive Party and I tell you for me the first thing that I remember was when the UCT students had that thing at St. George's Cathedral and we were there - you and I ..... and the teargas. I don't think anything specific happened. I think it was just an accumulation of things, small things that happened over a period of time that led you.

Wrankmore was also a big thing in our lives at the time because he had gone up onto this mountain to fast until something could be done..... after the 40 days he carried on. It was almost 60 days he fasted and I think there again it was most probably his bishop who persuaded him down.... they changed his name to *Crankmore*. I think the thing is you start reading and you start believing this man is crazy to carry on and carry on knowing that he is going to die....

I always thought it was Harold that got us involved with Father McBride. Father McBride kind of reared Harold to a certain degree and then Harold, when he told Father about us, then we started going to his house on a Saturday afternoon. I remember him always saying, ... 'Religion is that Jesus walked on the earth in the same way that we are today and also having the same type of fight .....' He never also pushed much religion, not much, very little religion if I remember correctly....

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<sup>85</sup> refers to Carmel Chetty

I remember when we used to go and build the church in Gugulethu..... the bricks, chopping the bricks - they were second-hand bricks.

I can remember very little about the Christian Leadership Centre. I remember my first day at the Christian Leadership Centre with Jane sitting in the middle and asking us what brought you here and what motivates you and we had to draw pictures and I wasn't a very good drawer so I copied off. I can't draw. So of course I had to make a story up.....

What I remember is that we had a black guy with us that time which was unusual. But I can't remember for the life of me what happened. But you know the one thing that struck me... Somebody had played a joke on him - you know how stupid we were and we put ENO<sup>86</sup> into the sugar. And Charles was very angry and he took the cup and he threw it against the wall at Neville because Neville had offered it to him. He used to come. I remember that now. He used to come in every day. He was there all the time in the day but he'd leave at night.

Trevor DeBryun was that tall minister. He was a Methodist minister. We had a lot of Methodist ministers. The course I discovered was run by the Methodist Church. And then we had this other priest that was the Methodist minister here for a long time. That meditation that was run by Trevor DeBryun I'll never forget because people made me go and have a session with him on my own when we were at Christian Leadership Centre because they found I was different because I didn't used to cry and then I was the one that wasn't crying. I didn't see the need to cry. They all forced me to go and then I had to go every evening afterwards to go sit with Trevor. That's why I remember him so well. He was VERY tall and he used to fold himself up and we used to stand and laugh. We stand and laugh at him from the window as he folded his body up into this little thing. ... but I can't remember much about what we did at Christian Leadership Centre.....

In all the churches we were always causing problems. In one church we refused to sit where the women had to sit. The Dutch Reformed Church - we refused to sit where the women had to sit.... Jane preached to us before we left: 'You're representing Christian Leadership Centre when you go there.' But you know I remember now the one thing... I remember about the Christian Leadership Centre, I remember we all got into the twin's cars and we drove one weekend into the bundus. We thought at the time it was the bundus. It was probably Peniel or somewhere nearby and we misrepresented ourselves saying we are a church group but in actual fact we weren't really a church group. We demanded for them to give us accommodation and they had to give us accommodation.

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<sup>86</sup> ENO is a white powder used to aid digestion.

<sup>87</sup> Maria is directing herself to the interviewer, Carmel

Jane also had a very difficult time with us... a very difficult time because we didn't toe the line as she wanted us to. Although I think Carmel and them were also a difficult group.....

That's when I realized that I could live on my own without my parents around me. That's what I remember. I said to myself I don't need to go back home because you know that there we couldn't do as we please we had to be in at ten o'clock but you had a certain amount of freedom that you didn't have before and I remember also going up weekends. We had things on Saturday morning.... there were seminars over the weekend and I remember distinctly we had Denise come and do one for us one day.... and I remember her hopping up and down trying to tell us - I can't remember what it was about - but I remember the fat... and she was hopping up and down to tell us something that I don't remember....

That was the other thing we always used to go to all these plays and things - radical plays.

Christian Institute I think played a big role I think because we always went there. My mother also used to go there. She used to go to the Agape on a Thursday afternoon. I mean for her that was a big thing out of her Catholic Church to do something that was non-catholic. And for her that was a very important thing. And I think that is also when she became more politically aware - although I think she was always politically aware but she got a different perspective of things....

We were involved in the Young Christian Workers. They also took us to Gugulethu.

I think that your<sup>87</sup> sensitivity training had a lot to do with the starting of our consciousness and I think that was where it started. Although you were always aware but there must have been a time and I remember you coming home and putting up all these posters and mummy just left them... Mummy didn't interfere with all of this that was going around and I remember you had this big thing up 'I am who I am...' something like that you're not going to change me....

We had a lot of pluck. We were just a handful we weren't very many... Mass meetings were the in thing. We went to mass meetings. Every mass meeting and we were there whether it was the white people or the black people - mass meeting - we're there.

At the mass meeting at the Athlone Stadium Jackie was at the mike singing. We didn't want her to sing *We shall overcome*. It became a terrible song at the time. She was going to sing *Freedom isn't free*. She was going to go and sing it and they wouldn't allow her to sing it.

We had the dreams. They didn't materialize. We were deprived of proper liberation.

There was lots happening..... OK bazaars..... also the Bonteheuwel maisonettes. I remember the year - the whole year I was so stressed out. 15 years old and I developed an ulcer.... At the time everyone said I had taken too many dispirins. But subsequently, years later, because they don't believe this story, they believe that I was so stressed out at the time that caused it.

### *Alan Liebenberg*

... George started visiting the family home again but only on Christmas Day and only very briefly. His conversations were mainly with my parents. In 1972 he came for Christmas lunch. This was the year before I matriculated. In our house lunch on Christmas day was the most important meal of the year. Many of the items on the table were items of food we generally could not afford. These foodstuffs were paid for weekly throughout the year in the form of hampers.

George had been working the last year or so in a white job in the then South West Africa. Having accepted the ideology of Black Consciousness earlier in the year, I resented his white accent (he now spoke mainly Afrikaner Afrikaans) and hated his views which he confidently expressed shortly after we started our meal. I know my parents were trying to hide their discomfort at his frequent use of the term 'kaffers'. (Over the years I had reacted when anybody used the term so that my parents generally avoided using the term. When the word slipped out they would cover themselves by pre-empting my response and saying that they did not mean it in a bad way.)

He was telling us about the difficulties they had with the 'Kaffers'. The Ovambos were on strike and his last words at the table were ..... 'die Here weet, ons gee vir hulle klinieke, hospitale, ons gee vir hulle skole en dan doen hulle dit aan ons.'<sup>88</sup> For the first time since he started speaking about his life in Namibia I spoke. I pointed my fork at him and told him very deliberately and very slowly, 'there will come a time, soon, when the battle lines will be clearly drawn and I will be on one side and you on the other, ...and I will kill you'. My father was the first to react by leaving the table crying. Next was my mother who demanded that I apologised. I expressed no regret for my statement and repeated that I would not hesitate to kill him. George stormed from the table without saying a word and left our house. My mother started sobbing and left the table. Lionel and I were left at the table staring at each other and eventually started to peck on the food. I had ruined the Christmas meal but I was too angry to regret what I had said to George. Later the following year George returned briefly to our house. No one spoke about the Christmas incident.

<sup>88</sup> The Lord knows we give clinics, hospitals, we give them their schools then they do that to us.

After that last visit in 1973 we never saw George again. Occasionally news about George would filter in usually from the white aunts. The last news we heard of him was that he was part of a technical advance party in the invasion of Angola by the SADF and that after their retreat that he had been absorbed into the National Intelligence Service. This information was never verified. To this moment we have no knowledge of his whereabouts or his state.

I was brought up in the Anglican Church and participated exhaustively in the activities of the church (two services on a Sunday plus Sunday school). I became active in the church youth. At the age of sixteen I became part of a group of young men who was groomed by the priest for the ministry. Unfortunately the priest was a coloured who turned white by marriage. After evensong we would spend an hour in the rectory discussing his sermons of the day. I had many arguments with the priest about his views and his interpretation of the text. By this time I had met the Rev. Clive McBride and had been introduced to black theology. Ultimately my priest asked me if I was sure that I had heard the Calling. That was the end of my Sunday evening sessions

Politically my first three years at Livingstone High was uneventful. I developed an interest in drama. In 1971 and 1972 I attended very single student production at the Little Theatre. I teamed up with Thomas Davids and Venette Ebrahim and we formed *The Trio*. We produced our own plays which we performed during extended intervals. Increasingly our plays began to focus on political issues. We auditioned one of our plays, 'My God, My Skin, My Country', for the first Black Theatre Union Festival (SABTU) and although the organisers were critical of some of the content, the play was selected to be performed at the festival. The festival was a theatrical expression of Black Consciousness. Coming from Livingstone we instinctively rejected the BC ideology. At the end of our performance we were going to raise our clenched fists, pull the fists down with the left hand and raise the peace sign. The organisers, Strini, Issel, Virginia Engel and others were horrified and on the morning of the performance set us scholars down in the centre surrounded by 'super blacks' and bullied us with the BC ideology. Although we resisted their ideas, we relented and did nothing in our performance which would embarrass them in any way.

Shortly after this a seminar was held at the Christian Leadership Centre and I gravitated towards the Black Consciousness thinking. In a very fundamental way, that seminar held at the Christian Leadership Centre was the genesis of SABSA. A number of scholars from a range of peninsula schools attended the seminar.

There was an immediate and vicious reaction at school to our spreading these alternative political ideas. We had formed a political group called South African Black Scholars Association which involved a number of high schools. One of the schools which was the energy source of the organisation was Livingstone. Livingstone was also known to be a Unity school. We ended up being a major embarrassment of the Unity Movement Leadership who were educators at Livingstone....

.... we eventually made contact with literature from some liberation authors. These gems were usually made available by some or other SASO member. In any event we were always confident that we could beat the Unity youth in a debate on processes of struggle in South Africa. After being part of hundreds of 'conscientisation' sessions in people's homes, on buses and trains, we had processed and internalized many ideas on struggle in a general sense. When we relaxed we listened to music which spoke to us and which related to our context. My particular favourite was a Native American called Buffet St Marie who sang of their struggles against white America.

I was detained for the first time when I was in standard nine in 1972..... I was arrested at school. It was also during this arrest that I felt most threatened. I had met Spyker Van Wyk for the first time. Others who had spoken of him had prepared me for this moment. I was very afraid and when it was over I felt that I was lucky that I had survived the meeting with merely a smack (klap) and insults coming my way.

In 1974 after the state refused me a permit (a promise made to my parents a year earlier by a Special Branch operative, Van Der Heever when they brought me home after questioning) to do drama at UCT, I enrolled at UWC. At this stage there was a new layer of leadership in SABSA. Unfortunately a number of trials were taking place in the Western Cape and the leadership of SABSA was implicated in some of the charges. They were seen as soft targets and were being primed as state witnesses. At some stage three of the main leaders skipped the country and SABSA collapsed.

## ***Later Life***

### **Respondents from Durban**

#### ***Bobby Marie***

After my detention ... after ASH and everything else, we started working with the NIC lot. My break with them was more on issues of social culture repression.... My break with that was their position against all kinds of Marxist, Leninisms, not Marxist Leninism, ... not Marxism but Stalinism and Trotskyism and all European based revolutionary ideas on the basis of what I learnt in the Black Consciousness Movement which resonated with what I was beginning to pick up in Black Theology Movement. That was very different from the politics of being black, but more the cultural liberation ideas.

So I actually had two strong links. It was the oppression in the country on the political level but a deeper one on issues of cultural liberation. So I maintained a slightly different perspective, which only became and synchronised much later

which then kept me out of this, major movement after I sort of got pissed off with these guys. And then I joined the Trade Union Movement and this became the base for a new movement, and there was a strong strand of COSATU that was coming from an independent base and not from an ANC base or a Black Consciousness base and I didn't see myself, I think Black Consciousness was far gone.

I've seen that ones politicisation is related to a whole range of events, societal events, community events.. but there is a connection to yourself. For me I had to work this out now I'm making life choices but what was it ... it was simply the situation in the country. You can rationalise that now people could write, people have opportunities, so now you just have to work for people to get better access. I think there was a deep anger personally which almost set me up to become radicalised. I would not be happy if I pursued an individual career choice.

So that's how my political optimism lives out the democratic revolution at the various stages people categorise it into. I always felt that I am only happy if I am engaging in breaking down and rebuilding structures and attitudes that place people at a disadvantage.

If you take my own immediate family situation it could very well come that my mother didn't read and write and I was angry about that. What I conceptualise is a lot of anger.

When we get to std. 6 Ivan<sup>89</sup> has to work and I go on to school so I must have thought something about that. And when the teachers would say you're better, you're cleaner, that one's dirty made me angry in a way I didn't understand. So when I think about the situation today, you know the best thing about South Africa today, if you've got good education, skills, this is the best place to be, much better than even Europe. You know to make money fast. Europe you struggle because you're competing against hundreds and thousands who have got the same skills. In this country with its serious skills shortage, even if you're white you struggle a little bit, you need to have a little thick skin if you're white. ... Today you could do that and so when you think about it you have to make a choice....

So why am I so bitter and angry against friends of mine who have accumulated - who are part of the system as it were? Then I begin to say now hold on now you're dealing with your own anger and that is not politically correct or incorrect. The basis for that you've got to judge differently. What is the base of your anger? So whether my politicisation was a drive for politicisation because of

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<sup>89</sup> Ivan - Bobby's older brother

that deeper anger ...anger connected with social economic, connected with a discrimination against people, you know it's got to do with institutions like in my school - I was so angry against the system because I connected all the hippie stuff with the establishment of teachers because none of those teachers would have been anywhere close to a relative of mine.

So there was a kind of class anger that for me is the individual reflection of it because in the Indian community, somehow you have a better chance -there is always an opportunity. It wasn't as depressed for our generation. Our parents' generation it was a hard time. They end up like my father ended up - being bossed around. My mother would never be in any good situation but our generation somehow.....

It is also the push of industrialization. There was a boom just after the Second World War. By the sixties the opportunities for this country was enormous because they were able to benefit from what they had gained in the war. But they could not expand fast enough because they did not have a big market nor did they have the skills and they could not get faster whites from outside so they opened up around this time opportunities for Indians. So the sixties and seventies I would say was a slightly better situation. So we get free schooling. The first two years I didn't have free schooling. We line up and fill the green form and get it stamped and feel bad about doing that. By the time I get to std. 1 you don't have to answer questions everything was given to you. They'd changed their policies you see. So the things that made me be angry was because we're not living in depressed poverty.

Reshi had the only car you know. But what made us political to the point where we became radicalised? So there were 2 factors - one was deep inside each one of us probably we were ready for a kind of commitment to changing society. That's where everybody is. And then we meet different people in different situations and then we grow within that.

Later I had to make a choice whether I support my mother or not and I said well what I'm involved in is not for myself. I'm involved and the fact that I do not have a job for... In ASH we took one salary and split it in three and so there's still no money. So why am I not looking for a job to attend to my parents? Later for five years I was banned. It is only in '82 when I started working for the unions that I had a job with an income. And throughout this and even that time I reasoned that it is justified to organise my life on that basis. I don't attend to my family because I'm involved...

I'm coming to terms with that now because I'm involved in union work. If the government comes to me now with a great big contract I won't do it. I work with

the unions. I work on a consultancy basis. I work for particular groups and I'm doing pretty well I suppose. I would do twice this if I went into government consultancy. That's not an issue because I think the work is too boring in government so I wouldn't go anywhere near them. I work from home. We take holidays when I want to. I work when I want to. It becomes a second nature thing because I keep contemplating that maybe I don't want to work you know and make my earnings so that I can have a lot of time maybe to write or.... Why should I wait until I'm too old and can't do anything? The thought strikes me but sometimes it's not that easy.

The political views on race are still very strong. But it is my view that race shapes. I'm looking more in terms of black/white because I've been looking at it more internationally. I visited India recently and you meet a lot of people who have been talking.... You begin to look at the whole problem of European. I don't look at the black position anymore the way I used to. I think even the way we think about change has always been shaped by the intellectual debates of Europe - Not only our oppression but our struggle for liberation has been guided..... Someone in the BC movement has raised in a very crude and straight forward way 'The communist party they're all whities anyway'. But if you look at Marx, the whole Marxist ideas emerge in first world Europe in the industrial revolution completely ignorant of what was happening elsewhere in the world. Its science itself is structured both as knowledge but as a culture of European life and modernisation is on the basis of European culture and the exclusion of bodies of knowledge, the exclusion of cultures of life styles of values continues up to today ... globalisation by global corporations but global corporations that operate from the first world but Japan becomes so American in the way it does its business. So I don't think the question of not colour but culture.

I've been pissed off with national identity after the ANC government .... I don't think nationally. I do think African because I've been working a lot in the past four years in Nigeria and more recently in Southern Africa. I stopped working intensely in South Africa for a while and recently in India. I want to go and work there a little bit....

I've been intrigued by the Indian connection and I write a lot. I've been writing a lot about that and I've been reading a lot. It was important for me to go there that is intellectually, not just physically you know to understand why I'm different from Indian.

The best I describe myself now is as a child that gets taken into a family, that does not belong to that family biologically, who lives with other brothers and sisters and for a long period gets treated badly by, not the parents but by others living in that, which is the whites. Who won't allow you to get to know your own

brothers and sisters and reminds you of your biological differences and in the end parents are distraught and yes they want to throw you out and besides even if they throw you out you don't go anywhere because you don't know anywhere because you've lived all your life in this family. But it is a fact that you are not biologically the same and so no matter how much of a bond you have with the others. I think that best describes the position that Indians in South Africa and whether they like it or not they won't want to go back to India. They rather go to Europe if they've got money and if they don't have money they're actually nowhere because India would be the last place they would want to go because it's so alien in terms of its climate, in terms of its culture there isn't a connection.

Now when I visited I felt that a bit that is working out intellectually. So it's very fascinating for me. I'm more excited now in India because intellectually I find some of the people there very exciting. They have no illusions about government. They've seen government being a mess for the past fifty years. They have no illusions that you will solve the problems of the economy unless there's some major rupture in the world and so they're thinking creatively about other ways of struggle. There's some very powerful and very fascinating stuff like that.

My upbringing in the BC movement, the church movement in my own development is coming from the kind of narrow nationalist ideas. My BC has led me to question traditional European movements you know Marxist/ Leninist/ Trotskyite and other movements. In a sense in the sciences Marxism as an interpretive tool is very powerful and very important for that period and very limited to understand the changes that are taking place in capital right now. I can predict certain outcomes but cannot interpret a lot of things. In any event if Marx said I present the absolute end that would be anti Marxian. So it is not refuting Marxism. It's in line with Marxism. I think my class analysis would be very much that, very Marxist the way I see things. So I've never been part of these movements. I've never been nationalist and I've disliked the ANC for a very long time and the communist party and in many ways then it left me without a movement ..... And now whether you're nationalist or internationalist I don't see myself going back to the old way of formulating who you are. The globe is very much small and you move around you walk around with people on a very cause basis - on a project basis. Right now I'm working with people from the US, people from Nigeria, people in Holland and people in Germany and I'm starting work with people in Brazil in close working relationships. My consciousness then starts opening out. I become more and more rooted though in a smaller community.

I should assume age as well because that's the other factor. Shamim<sup>90</sup> and I are 52 this year. So the questions we ask are different and the others I don't hang onto them because that's what I was. I do hang onto to some basic things that I think people must be judged on. If you join the system in accumulating and propagating we all are involved in this system. You know I just bought a flat. Shamim owns this house. I have no income once my job ends and so I thought I'll buy a flat and rent it. I have income but that places me in the property market. That's not the way that I look at it.

I've seen people defend the policies of the government. All my union buddies are all servicing those policies. That I have a problem with and my politics more recently is hardly instigated with people to do crazy things and not violent things and that's the way I actually see the way forward. I don't believe we have the veritable beginnings anymore of big mass movements. The terrain won't allow you to do that. We've got to be more and more creative.

The project I'm working on now: 'Tell the story of a crazy thing that you've done that out-manoeuvred either municipal authority or the police or your employer or your union leader' and so people start telling stories. So that's the kind of things I've been doing. For me that's the connection with everything that I've done. It's exploring my consciousness further. And feminist ideology becomes an important issue for me because of Shamim's involvement in their politics.

### *Reshi Singh*

I can tell you even though we eventually went our own ways I think to the day I die I will never not believe in what I believe in because even today in my own personal work I still practice this whole belief of having to work with people in a sense that you can help them develop because we haven't as yet won this whole economic struggle that we're battling with at the moment. We might have got the vote and whatever but I think we're still battling and grappling with inequalities around the whole economic imbalances.

I think for me personally it played a very important role in that it got me thinking about the whole human aspects and oppression and injustices. When I started becoming conscious about my surroundings and the situation and the injustices then as a youngster at that age, and that time relating to the different organisations and friends and communities, I think it built a strength in me that even up to this day I cherish and hold very dear. That strength is to always be conscious of the fact in whichever way I contributed to or can contribute to achieving some sense of development and also to kind of relate all of this to

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<sup>90</sup> Bobby's wife

people that I'm dealing with in this very stage of my work area with youths from disadvantaged communities who themselves have very little even at this stage, in terms of skills and work and employment. My consciousness allows me to cope and deal with these issues to kind of interact and share with them the information I know that will assist them in their growth. Just to give you an example: I work and manage an institute that is a service provider organisation where our task is to try and skill and educate youth in furniture making and most of them who are on the programme are youth from disadvantaged communities. Although they are matriculants most of them have not been in employment for 3, 4 years and have no skills whatsoever to sell in the market place. I make an effort to seek funding to assist the youth to come onto programmes of education and training and I think what I'm doing is somehow related to what I became conscious in the early years. I think I have a high level of commitment to what I'm doing today because I feel absolutely proud - a youth gains these skills and I'm able to assist them in getting employment in the country and I've done that I'm doing that constantly actually. I do believe that what I'm doing today has been a spin off from what I've come through in terms of my consciousness and my work in the communities with youth.

I hold those values fairly dear because I actually try within my interaction with the youth today to get them to understand the philosophy, not necessarily of BC, but rather the philosophy of the values in terms of my experience and my exposure of having come via the BC. They feel so desperate in not having much, that some of them say they could easily turn to crime just so that they could survive. They feel extremely grateful to have the opportunity of being on the programme. We organised to try and build their confidence in imparting some kind of knowledge and skills and finding employment. For me this whole level of consciousness that I still have with me has come from my own personal experience of having to be given the opportunity of relating to people like Steven Biko, Barney and the group itself.

I think I still see myself as being 'black' and I think a contributing factor to that is the fact that in terms of deprivation, poverty, imbalances I still find the majority of the black people suffering this kind of consequences in South Africa. The privileged class, the privileged group of people that we know have been white. They still have the privileges. They're still very much in control of the economy. We would say that we now need to recognise that we are equal but in real terms we're not. I would still very much believe that we need, as black people, to be conscious of this and I think the youth are conscious of this. It's not in any way propagating any racial hatred to any extent because I don't think we'd like to go backward rather than forward but in the process of moving forward I think I make an effort to make the youth realise that there's still much more to be done for us to be able to believe that we are equal.

We knew for a fact that there was discrimination, there was injustice, there was poverty and there was a divide between the races. We looked at the way the white community lived in terms of their privileges in all aspects, political, social and economics but I'm not sure whether I sort of believed that an alternative for me would have been to live like the white people. I don't think I saw that as an alternative.

I'm still very much involved in areas of work that I was in my youth. When you talk about development, I'm very much involved with development. If you talk about social consciousness, I'm still very much involved. Might have taken a different platform in the way I'm operating... When I say I'm operating, I think I'm operating within that kind of structured business environment where there is this whole concept of being rewarded in terms of a salary and working. But I'm still doing the kind of work that I think that I fight for so many because the smile and a brightness on the person's face when they say to you that if it hadn't been for your intervention or your help, or if it hadn't been for your persistence I don't know what my life would have been. Seriously this is what they say because often you get the opportunity of coming onto the programme, funded, the skills that they get taught and life skills as well. That's where I have a lot of enjoyment because I do life skills with them. On the issue of consciousness about community, responsibility, about family, about health, about AIDS, something that I think somehow fits in with this whole consciousness that I'm talking about.

I think in any society you're gonna find a gradual change of power. We know that the power concept in my youth was more very much the white power, white domination. Now that there's democracy there is definitely a shift in terms of the elitist towards black as well but I don't think we're going to get rid of this whole kind of upliftment that needs to always happen - this whole development that always needs to happen irrespective of there is bit of power change and there is a bit of people having the vote. I think we'll always be involved in some sort of development work making people conscious about themselves, their environment and their rights.

You and I know that exploitation happens everyday. The people we train that we try to skill, find work, they have to find work in industries and companies and the culture on the shop floor, the mentality of the employers hasn't moved very far down the line to where we see proper change happening. It's still very much the same authoritarian, bossy kind of attitude so we try to inculcate some level of that in these youngsters. But when they go into these areas and they consciously try to make an effort to either involve themselves in some kind of constructive discussion in the factory floor with employers and workers. Because they're youngsters, they obviously most likely would become the leaders in the factory.

There's the possibility that they can grow into supervision and management and they need to understand where they come from. They need to understand the people they're working with. They need to understand the culture that happens. So, all these things are areas that we constantly bring to their attention. Hopefully it will help towards the change.

### *Betty Leslie*

The consciousness that I developed in my youth made me more open to accepting people as people easily. I also want to confess that at a certain stage in my consciousness it made me very racist - anti-white - to the point of really being racist and at some stage now in my life I find myself guilty of falling back to the old habits.

They complain a lot at work about my being hard on the whites but during my time outside in exile I met someone like Father Osmos. Father John Osmos also found it very difficult to get through to me and he also said that he thinks that I still have that bitterness towards white people. But I think I'm still getting there with regards to this.

Recently I also made a career limiting statement. I said, 'I think whites are inherently racist.' We went on a work session for a week and every evening my boss would deliberately end the work session for people to socialise in groups and he would invite the whites out to join us and they say ok they're coming, they're coming but they didn't come for a drink. We went to a Jacuzzi one evening, drank there, they didn't come. On the third evening he asked - he's a new boss in our section - he asked, 'What's wrong with your white counterparts?' I said, 'No they're inherently racist. You shouldn't be surprised.' He said, 'What are you saying?' I said, 'I'm saying that.' .... And they didn't take it too kindly.

I still see myself as a black woman. I find it difficult to work with the coloured identity. I'm forced to work with it. My job - every September I get targets - racial targets - for representivity within the defence force, 64% have to be African, 10% have to be coloured..... and then I'm forced to ask how many coloureds have applied? So you've got to do it.

I'm not sure if I'll ever resolve it because it was demanded that we for the next twenty years look at people in these racial categories until we've levelled the playing fields. So it's going to be a battle for quite some time.

*Jaya Josie*

I think that I still feel a lot in terms of consciousness now. I know how consciousness works. I've read a lot about it and we do know how the brain operates and how we internalise existential contexts and things like that. That's why I have an academic understanding of what happens but I think for me some of the basic truths are I still see Black Consciousness as a very important part of Black people in South Africa because I encounter it in my work and I encounter it in communities. I have lots of relationships with the African communities and people make calls to me. I can see how much that, if they read in themselves as human beings they will overcome the inferiority complex because for me that was the main issue.

Black Consciousness really made us become people who believe in ourselves. Now for me that is Black Consciousness and the other part of it is solidarity - black solidarity. I've never seen Black Consciousness as an anti-white thing at all. I saw it more as something as how we could mobilize communities. I feel quite aggrieved that some people have taken it up and are trying to bring it closer to Africanism.

I know there are many people who don't accept that but I also see that because of that consciousness I'm able to engage whites or engage anybody and I see it with people like Barney and Lekota and others - they can engage anybody. They can even have relationships with white people without batting an eyelid. It helped me to recognise my own humanity and I still read Steve's *Quest for true humanity* and you can see a lot of the truths. This guy was very young when he wrote that and you see a lot of the truths about it. It's not so much a political ideology as it is an ideology for people oppressed whose understanding of themselves was so subjugated that they needed this kind of development to consciousness to overcome that. So I see that as a very important part of my life.

I think where Steve differed from a lot of ... he placed more emphasis on the psychology in human beings. He used all Frantz Fanon's work. He had a consciousness - the psychology was more important and people actually believed they were inferior because that's the encounter that they had but he said, yes culture is important but not as important as finding your humanity and the fact that his seminal paper was called *The quest for true humanity* was in the tradition of existential philosophy,.... he also said we need to use the existential context to overcome the limitations so that we can develop a consciousness so that we recognise ourselves at the end of the day as human beings. I think that was Steve's great contribution philosophically. But apart from the philosophical and the psychological he made us realise that we don't have to sit and do nothing and that was the whole Paulo Freire - it was action orientated. We've got to do

something about it, using the literacy programme, using the community action to raise people's awareness above their situation. Despite what people say, if you didn't have that kind of action orientated awareness, conscientisation, if you didn't have them in those periods, you wouldn't have the mass '76 uprising.

People like Harry Nengwenkhulu and others who went around, Tiro all these guys, SASM that started in Cape Town and NYAWO - all these started with teachers who were part of SASO and raising their consciousness. I think that's the other part of the consciousness and we started in a small way too with ASH.

But the third part of the consciousness I think was our own suffering as young people. But we felt we didn't have to sit and accept it. And the impact of our parents especially mothers you know kept pushing for education raising our questioning minds.

I think that what influenced me was not so much what people said but as to how they related to us. Like your dad, despite what people say about him, the fact that he came, you know ...he was a simple guy. He picks me up from Adam Small's place, takes me to his house it's full of students you know people that were completely ... and your mum you know when I told people this they were absolutely shocked, ordinary folk who were able to put themselves out. The fact that he showed the kind of commitment that sort of portrayed the spirit of the community on the part of the students. I mean you guys weren't very rich but here he was and people would come in....

When we were young we wanted this whole great socialist revolution and now I think, for us its not so much of an issue now, or for me, it wasn't about socialism or anything like that, it was about, in your mind it wasn't identity or anything, it was oppression you know,... so we never articulated that as achieving democracy. We did say a situation where we could each achieve. It was a kind of ... socialism, not Marxism ... but we should call it Black Communalism. There was also writing on it, but I think it wasn't a great motivating ideal of it... scientific socialism and the soviet, or Trotsky, or .....

You see there's the black bar issues. Steve would talk about the issue around class and he'd talk about Marxism. He'd say communists are not our oppressors. But I think if you look back in retrospect you could say that there was in SASO and our black consciousness movement a move for a just overthrow, a liberation, a government, socialist as it were.

I met Sam Njumo and I met some of the Freelimo guys when I went overseas. I brought some of the literature about the Liberation movements being Marxist and the ANC was. I met the ANC guys and they were all a bit of the ... socialism.

LATER on that became, especially when we went to Botswana, that became like the key area. But I think initially it was just important to get over apartheid, to have freedom to express, then became all those big scientific socialism issues and things like that,...

Of course when we came back I actually think it was a lot of effort. We may not have played a key role in any of the issues, but I think each one of us has played a role in trying to make the contributions in bringing consciousness and influencing the people. I think we're part of the fabric, we're one of the threads, or part the threads that make up this democracy that we have. So I think that we helped achieve a democracy.

I know that the black consciousness movement and SASO gave a kick-start to '76 and that whole uprising. '75 and the Freelimo rallies, the way the students moved forward, the way the workers came to their own, independently in '73, I think that the tide had moved and I think the ANC became dragged in, in spite of itself and because they were the most organised, they had the most material support, so people invariably moved there. I think people moved to the radical part, the communist party. When you look at them now these people are very grateful that we received this democracy. In fact if I look back now I'm quite grateful that we didn't go the route of many African countries or even third world countries. I think at the end of the day if people have been oppressed for such a long time, if you put further restrictions on them on how they express themselves no matter how radical it appears I think you will still have that kind of resistance. Because look what's happening in Zimbabwe. I think the kind of democracy we have is a serious experiment because we have a constitution that is very liberalised, it's humanitarian, many civil liberties are some of the issues. Economic rights are enshrined unlike anywhere else. It gives a form, it gives the space for people to operate and get in.. I'm happy I was part of that.

I have a lot of question marks but I see my role. I was with *Ernest and Young* I could've been a partner there today. I could have become part of the black empowerment deal - become a director - but I deliberately left that to go to the FFC<sup>91</sup> because I see the FFC as a way in which I can use my knowledge in public finance to make some impact and we are making some impact because at least we are addressing the issues of constitutional rights, economic rights of people. They even quote our recommendations in court cases when people don't get housing and things like that. There is that and I think that is an important part. I think that if we had achieved the kind of socialist revolution that the Mugabes and the others had tried we wouldn't have had that space to make the service and do it independently.

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<sup>91</sup> FFC – Fiscal Finance Commission

## *Vivienne Taylor*

My upbringing and my experiences in my youth had a very decisive influence because I wasn't afraid to change my frame of reference. I was more open to engaging with people at different levels in different places. For instance when Alan and I met and we married, we left for Swaziland, I was able to relate to people in a different environment and to a large extent what I relied on was my ability to analyse what was happening around me and then to decide on how I would engage and on what basis. That was an internal strength that I had. I didn't need to get a sense of who I was from outside of myself so it helped me to be very grounded, be very proud of my background.

I didn't have to apologise for being underprivileged in the sense that I didn't have material wealth. I didn't have the sophistication that some of us had coming from very affluent backgrounds. I didn't need to apologise for who I was or what I was. In that sense I felt better able to engage with people. Maybe it was a false sense of bravado but I didn't hesitate to take on when I felt there was something I disagreed with. I would make my point of view felt and could articulate it in a way that would be heard and so in that sense I think that my experiences from my family background, social environment with Community of St. Steven, with ASH with a strong group of like-minded individuals, helped shape my own ability to think, see myself, being very critical of myself, sometimes too critical as well because we always had within ASH and within Community of St. Steven this ability to be self reflective as individuals. We would reflect on each other and on ourselves - strengths and weaknesses - and talk about it, why we didn't do, what worked, what didn't work, why didn't it work and how it could. So I took that with me - Swaziland and Botswana and I came back.

Working in the ANC you begin to lead very different lives. On the one hand we did do work to achieve an agenda within the normal job and then within this work that one engages in that requires more rigorous analysis.

We were not afraid to voice our views or opinions ever. And that I think must have been fairly unique. That, I think as young people... I mean what did we know of the world? All we knew is what we read and what we saw round us but we tried to make sense of what we saw around us and we didn't believe that people who were poor were inherently bad and because we didn't believe that we felt that people could overcome their circumstances and in our naivety we were prepared to take on whoever had a counter view to ours.

I think we used to interact as young people in church meetings. There was a meeting somewhere in Botha's Hill. The Methodist Church was sitting and

discussing the state of South Africa and we were going to have a sit-in at their meeting. We went in. It was winter. It was freezing cold. We sat outside all of us. I don't think Jean was there but all the guys and myself sat in the cold and protested that they were sitting there and making decisions as leaders of the church and not asking the people who were affected and talk to them. We had that type of bravado to go in and do things that were not being done. We had no fear whatsoever. We just had the view we wanted to be heard and we looked at the best way to make our point of view. I think this experience, growing up in this way, trying to forge an identity that was distinctive, an identity that more linked to how we saw ourselves rather than an imposed identity was what helped because once you have that type of grounding it can't be taken away from you.

What one does in ones youth, when I look back on it, I think I'm really amazed. I think in terms of sheer energy and commitment to alternatives. Now I look at myself as being much more strategic in my engagements with the world. I look at what battles I am prepared to take on and why. I think my principles haven't changed but my approach, where I would try and find a space to make my point of view. I see myself as trying to make strong policy advocacy interventions still on issues of poverty and social justice in South Africa but by intervening in poverty and social security, social development issues and on the gender side. The gender side I've had room to make interventions in national and global networks. Fortunately, I've had the opportunity to write some of these experiences working with global women's movements.

I've published a book. It's called *Marketisation of Governments*. It's about privatisation of services and the abrogation of responsibilities of government, the market and the issues around women's experiences of that type of poverty and isolation and that has had quite a lot of impact on the woman's movement. I believe in India 5000 women translated a chapter of the book on the state and globalisation. It's been translated into French and Spanish and I think one or two other languages.

One is always negotiating power because even as the stage of being a young girl living and working with your siblings, your male classmates and friends and so on you negotiate unconsciously how you're relating and on what basis you relate and what you take in that relationship. So I always have to keep an emotional distance. For instance, in the group, the male members of the group would not automatically assume that because Vivienne is the girl, it is easier for them to see me as a sexual being .... It was there... because once I allowed that to happen then my independence as an equal intellect and activist would have been negated. Throughout my relationships with members of the group I had to negotiate that and ignore other dynamics that were there and latent. If I wanted I

could have engaged in a relationship, in more than the relationships we had, with some of the members of the group. One had to always keep that distance and that is what I was negotiating.

I think for all of us the group had to respect women because of the role models they had. Mrs. Francis, my mother, Aunty Flora were women who worked everyday - Ordinary women who worked and fought survival battles. They were role models of what women were doing and once you understood issues of justice and liberation in that broadest sense, that just in that simplistic issue of having the right to vote, not just in the political sense but in the broadest sense, then it was an automatic thing that women are not just objects out there, that they are part of our struggle. We were all shaped by that but as a young woman, and then a woman working with the guys in ASH, even with Jean as well when Jean was there in the initial stages. It was a lot easier for us because there were two of us. For many years it was just myself and then towards the latter end there were more women. But there was always this tension around retaining their autonomy and not allowing your involvement intellectual and political project being seen as a sexual issue because once I allowed that then my status would have been gone.

Also I think a lot of young people around us were fascinated and really felt that there was a space being created that was bigger than who we were. Because we created this environment in the coffee bar and then our activities were not divorced from the youth or the community of youth so there was constant interaction and movement with young people coming in and out of the youth groups of the camps, of the theatre, the plays and so on. There was always a broader circle of people and sometimes we had parties and that would degenerate into very, very rigorous debate and sometimes the debates would be very philosophical, some political and at other times it would be just stupid. There would be just these debates and there would be a few people having these debates and the others would be sitting around and listening and involved in dancing or whatever. So there would always be a whole range of different encounters. But I think what people valued was that they could come into the space even if it was for a short time and not be judged and not be treated as if they were less because they had little education or they didn't have the right clothes or because of race or anything like that.

*Steven David (written submission via email)*

Identities in the Black Conscious Movement, like my own, shifted from abject objectivity to one of insistent subjectivity. This identity came along with its own struggles: I was fired from my first job at Republican Publications for calling a white man, who addressed me by my first name, by his first name and refusing to apologise. I held my own with a Bank sub-accountant who objected to me addressing a white woman in the same terms

and forfeited any advancements. Trained as a teacher at my own expense because I refused to be trained as an 'Indian teacher'. And taught in coloured schools as 'temporary' staff with no prospects for advancement.

The philosophy of Black Consciousness allowed me to see the connectedness of all social actions, personal and social. To this our experiences in ASH provided a deep social and socialistic perspective. This truly humanistic frame still informs my personal identity and continues to place me at loggerheads with the capitalistic subversion of human ideals. The tools of identity formation that insisted on social analysis and an imaginative disposition connecting to an evolving humanistic ideal continues to inform who I am and the social actions I commit to. The modes of debate, assessment of multiple perspectives and commitment to temporary conclusions has brought me far from rigidly nationalistic and inflexible mantras of narrow import. I have learned the necessity to re-access and reconstruct the forms of my identity as the shifts in the modes of social production usher in changing modes of social sensibilities. Yet in this the changing same, my eyes remained fastened to that humanistic ideal born in the days of ASH and tutored in the formative relations of Black Consciousness.

*Daya (Joe) Pillay (Written submission made via email)*

Because we did not have the vote and because of the stringent laws and the reprisals for being politically active, our political activities had limited success. It, however, was very helpful in bringing political awareness to all those of us who were involved. Many of the activists later became more and more involved in the struggle against the racist government, ultimately helping to bring its collapse.

As the Black Consciousness Movement became stronger; the racist government took steps to contain it. Its leaders were house-arrested, detained and harassed. In a police state, any above-the-ground protest movement is liable for harsh reprisals by the government. I made up my mind to leave the country and check out the situation overseas. I left the country in October of 1973 and carried letters and reports from SASO and BPC to the IUEF in Geneva. In Geneva, I met Lars Gunnar Erickson (check spelling), who was the CEO of IUEF. I informed him about the situation within the country. I also wrote a report of my political involvement. Only years later, while reading the newspaper, I came to realize that a South African informer, Craig Williamson had infiltrated the IUEF and had passed on all my information to the South Africans. So, when I left Geneva for London, my baggage went missing and only caught up with me days later.

I had discussions with many organisations in London. I was put in touch with the ANC. I had several meetings with them, and they kept persuading me to go back to South Africa, where they felt that I would be able to make a greater contribution to the struggle. In the meantime, I was getting reports that the security branch was harassing my family and enquiring about me. So, going back to South Africa was very risky. In any case, I had a visa to enter the USA and I wanted to visit some anti-apartheid movements there. So, I made my way to the USA. Although I had a visa, I was denied entrance into that democratic country. The US authorities gave me 24 hours to leave their country. I then

flew to Toronto, where I spent a few months and had discussions with various organisations including the ANC.

Things were changing pretty fast in Southern Africa. The struggle in Angola and Mozambique and the resulting coup in Portugal meant that those countries would now be free. A struggle against the racist regime could now be waged from sympathetic states bordering South Africa. Things seem to be going in the right direction, and so I decided I would go back into South Africa and play my part in the struggle. I went back to London and got some training about underground work, and left for South Africa. I did not let anybody know that I was returning to South Africa. But when I disembarked at the Durban Airport my bag again was missing. The next day the special branch interviewed me. They took my passport away and they hinted that my baggage was with them. All this convinced me that I had to tread a very narrow line. The security branch was waiting for me to make a false step, so they could get me with all my contacts, and I had to make sure that that was not going to happen.

I worked as a salesman in Durban and later owned and operated a second-hand furniture store in Beatrice Street. Many activists that weren't known to the special branch met at this store. Krish Rabilall, who worked with me at this store, was one such person. He later joined me in exile and was killed in the Matola Raid. Patrick Msomi was another. He was an organiser for BAWU. Pat, my brother Ivan, and I formed the first Natal Military Command for the Armed Wing of the ANC. We had leased a farm and set up the conditions to begin the struggle, when Shadrack Mapumulo, a contact between us and the ANC was arrested. We had no choice, but to flee the country and wage the struggle from outside. In 1981, I was abducted from Swaziland and detained, tortured, interrogated and returned to Swaziland. Fortunately, my arrest didn't lead to any other arrests.

In 1985, when the Swazi government began expelling all activists from its territory, I left for Canada. When South Africa was liberated, my children were young in school and it was not an opportune time for me to return to South Africa, though I am always there in spirit.

## **Respondents from Cape Town**

### *Harold Dixon*

Even at this moment I realise who I am. This is something that I'm living with. I'm racialistic, I'm racist. I do not readily accept whites still. I still question a lot of whites from behaviour. I see them as I always seem to see as very paternalistic. I question a fifty year old man being rehabilitated. I question that.

When Mandela was released and we were on the parade that that was really the end of apartheid I question because a lot of these whites haven't changed. They are still very much the same. But as for personal growth I still got this feeling inside that our people that's been outside the township are not really committed to the real upliftment of the poor people in our area. I could tell you a lot more but I'm not physically involved in politics any longer because politics is going now in another field but I don't. I'm aware of what's going on around me not to say not in a political sense but in the sense that we got so many poor people around us at this moment in time. So many people that is living in shacks so many people that is anti the ANC, anti government that I can't see....

If we look around us people are the question that people are now toyi toying for houses and all that. We are seeing and I know it I have seen and I have heard of what is going on in the paper and I know the issue quite clearly about housing. Now the other day people went to occupy those houses but you must see how they are dressed.....

Now take Khayelitsha. I work in Khayelitsha. My full time job is in Khayelitsha, for the last seven years. People move into shacks but you must see the car that is there outside. Now I question, 'Who are they?'

The mayor of this area - her brother-in-law has got a house in Tuscany Glen. Now Tuscany Glen in this area is **the** area - if you have a house in Tuscany Glen you have arrived in Blue Downs<sup>92</sup>. We got the corner house in this area and then they built the house next door and the house next door.

The ANC has sort of gone soft. I don't know why but these people are not supposed to be in the ANC. They were always against the ANC that time. Now the ANC's taken power in the Western Cape and the crossing the floor because of interest in themselves. There's a lot more people in the area that are for the DA. They can't see what the DA's done for the people of Blue Downs because coloured people like to be DA.

Now even in our soccer - I'm very much involved - in soccer I'm always questioning, still questioning. It has now come to the fore we are supporting one area and there's people in our club people said straight, 'We must move from Nêrens' -that's an Elsies River based district, and form our own union here. There was a union before it fell by the way. They still want coloured soccer one side. For me now who has been conscious of my identity since I learnt from young by all these groups it's unacceptable to me that people can still keep to a certain colour. Some of them would want to say yes our present government is fostering the promotion of blacks. When they talk about blacks as people who are

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<sup>92</sup> Harold's home is in Blue Downs in the Western Cape

outside people of skin colour, the promotion of Xhosas here in the Western Cape. I question this.

Where is the so called coloured person at the moment in time? He is never on the economic label. He is never in that he is sitting and looking after himself. Just to make sure I'm in my corner. coloured is 1966, is the coloured man today. He has not moved an inch. Rather want to talk about toyi toyi. Last week when COSATU came out for a rally the economical blacks - those that earn a proper penny - they were nowhere near Cape Town. Tuscany people they were nowhere. The people around here they were nowhere.

I've been involved with SAABU and ... when I was in Tramways I was also involved. There that time SAABU union they went more to the... they were not worried about the individual ... which is fine but... whites are still getting promotion. That's why I had to question that. That's why they don't want to send me back to my workshop. I discovered that this one whitey - he's the assistant superintendent - he's now moving out. Then I heard that another whitey is going to take his place. When I questioned that they said this one whitey has got sub-training and I said let's look at that. If I'm not trained for the job and you have trained someone else for the job then I must be given that same opportunity. I must also be trained and then you can configure who can get the job. My question is - another friend of mine he's got more qualifications than any of the superintendents. He's got two courses short of a degree in mechanical engineering. My question is, 'Why is it?' - again because of the colour of the skin - because all of a sudden that job they don't want to give it to him. He's a black guy and he's also got the necessary qualifications.

It's not worth it. What was the struggle for? What? A lot of people died to still come here. We got the vote and that's it.

In the ANC's economic policy they appeased the capitalists and they appeased the whites. They just want to keep the whites still ok. I don't know how much movement now because of this change of structure in Cape Town is now going to take place. Our local government is also going to be caught in that thing.

Moving around town you see a lot of companies all of a sudden they've got names like ..., Langela. White man and then there's a black man who was the sweeper ..... so they've given him - you are now a director - give the broom to sweep - he's another director and give him x amount of money. It's happening - all of these formal companies now have a black man... I think not ANC. ANC has got a manifesto. It's people who came over from the DA with this floor crossing they are still pushing their line.

I'm quite happy with who I am. Personally haven't changed much but I've got a lot of experience. I am not a passive person. I'm still very much critical. I'm a critic. There's a helluva lot of things. I don't argue with people. I've told you once and that's it you don't want to listen. I don't know if that's a passive. I don't see it as passive. I'm not laid back. I'm just a person... I like something done and done quickly. I see myself very much as an individual and I pride myself. A lot of people told me already, 'Must you be so an individualist?' Because I can't get it out of me. If I ask you for a cup of tea and five minutes you still sitting there then I get up and make it myself. I'm not going to be cross or angry with you because you didn't do it. I just feel disappointed that I asked. I don't wait for people to do things for me. Even in my work situation...

I still see myself as a Black African. I do not at this stage want to be accepted by whites. Amongst our people I treat every black person as an individual but as an equal to me... sitting next to me is not a white man. I will call him mister... because of his status that's as far as everything else is concerned. He is my equal and the same with every other person - they're my equal. There's no such thing as I will first look at the person's colour and say hey you are this. The only bad thing about me and I know it's bad, sometimes I think I shouldn't do it. When I speak to a white person, when he speaks Afrikaans I will not speak Afrikaans. I will speak English no matter how uncomfortable that person is with speaking, I speak in English.

The only other thing that I feel the ANC has let me down here but it should be initiated by the ANC for teaching of an indigenous language, Xhosa. Not just at school. Yes my children and my grandchildren are going to learn Xhosa. I'm talking about us.... Not just for conversation - custom. Most of the people do not know people across the road, just down the road, their neighbour. The custom for the Xhosa, that's one of the things that you need to learn. Here they speak Afrikaans. Our people do not mix on a church level. I took my sister to Khayelitsha. Now I do speak a little bit of Xhosa but she was so overwhelmed by it. It was almost similar to what we experienced in the Baptist Church, clapping hands and so on but it was much more spiritual and they are not a silent church....

### *Jane Lawrence*

I landed up in Pollsmoor in 1985 because I was teaching at the high school at the time. I was so mad. When they first started they wanted to impose the Tricameral System on us. I thought that was the worst thing that could have happened. I mean the government decided they were going to have this Tricameral System of

government and then with the education boycotts and then of course in the 1980's there was student unrest - but 1985 - particularly at the high school.

It was at a high school, Belhar No. 2. It's now called Excelsior. A brand new school opened at the time. One day they shot one of our students. You know how the police coming along and provoking students - it was a two way thing. The students were tossing stones. They shot the one student and then we hid the student. I was one of the senior teachers at the time. So now then we had to hide him. So you know somebody's an informer, somebody knows. I know for a fact that that was the reason I was detained - names were given in.

We got the student out of the school the night with another teacher and then he brought him to Hazendal, where my sister's living. We also had a group of doctors who would look after the students who got shot. So we took him to Libertas then we smuggled him out. We had to find a way to get to his parents. Again there was a whole arrangement and planning. So that was just one of the things. We were always busy with something.

Then the department had this whole thing - because there's so much unrest at the schools the matriculants can't write they weren't allowed to write at the schools, they must write - all go to Goodwood under the protection of the police. So there's such a lot of division amongst the teachers because some teachers were saying they're not going to go to Goodwood. And in the meantime the worst thing was every day we had trouble with the army and the police - every single day. After the principal that we happened to have at the time, decided to go on leave because he couldn't cope which left us behind with our acting heads, senior people.

Anyhow, this Friday morning they came. We had already worked out a whole strategy. 'It would help if you teachers would go and sit in your classrooms at least we'll get the children off the playground and into the rooms and it won't be so chaotic.' So while I was rounding the children up one of my colleagues came to talk to the officer quickly. But we were so used to having the police and so I went in there and there they had my list, the list with my name on it and others. What they did is they took all the senior people out - they did that with all the schools....

By the time I got to Pollsmoor a lot of the students of the PTA's or PTSA's<sup>93</sup> or whatever it was called then at the time they were at Pollsmoor...

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<sup>93</sup> PTA – Parent Teacher Association. PTSA - Parent Teacher Student Association

What happened was I suppressed my feeling. That's exactly what happened to me. When I got there this woman never stopped crying.... and so I was never given an opportunity to be sad and cry because I was actually looking after her. All the time trying to reassure her that things would be alright. She had little children. My girls were slightly older than hers. They were in primary school. I said, 'No don't worry.' She never stopped crying. The most terrible thing for me on that experience was I blocked my children out of mind because I didn't want to be so angry and didn't want to be made weak. I thought, 'No, if I think about them and then I'm just going to get weak and I must be strong.' We lived under such terrible fear in that cell.

We were 22 women. We never knew who's going to be called in for interrogation and you never knew what was going to happen. But we were never. It was just one or two. But you'd hear they call you but you didn't know interrogation or somebody's going to visit you now. We built up a wonderful sense of community in that place - it was absolutely amazing.

The other thing about how did I deal with it. I just said, 'Lord look here. I've had so many experiences in my life. There must be a reason for this now and here I am now so I am actually going to get on with my life right now. But let me suppress these other feelings that I have' - which I really did. When I got out of that - for having had two weeks of my life stolen - Two weeks where I had very little control over my life - It was, it really was terrible.

Being part of the church still and being invited to go and give talks and things to women's groups and having workshops and things like that also are things I still do because I believe in the whole peace and justice role of the church and right up today we have a peace and justice in our church. I know we have had ministers who have wanted to get rid of it and I've always... no you have to if you have conflicts you can preach Jesus Christ and preach and encourage people to be strong in their faith but it has to be in the context it can never be in a vacuum. We had to respond to what is happening political and economical in the country. You have got to link it up otherwise it doesn't make sense. A lot of people don't like it. If they ask me to do a workshop I will do it and I will look at the plan and what's in the newspaper how we're responding to this issue when you do it.

I've been involved with female street children for years and years now also. I do exactly the same with the female street children. Regardless of what is happening to you, you're traumatised, you're brutalised, really there's another side to life. You know you are good. You are good because when God made you he said you are very good when he made the sun he said it is good, but when he made

people very good and there you've got to believe you're good and you can have a second chance. I do meet with them and I do reading. I do a lot of reading aloud. Because of their background, a lot of them have learning disabilities and struggle to read. I believe that reading aloud is the most wonderful gift you can give to children. They can just sit and listen to you. You read a story, you discuss it, sometimes it's not a story it's a non fiction - whatever interests them. It's through reading aloud, and through being enthusiastic about reading, I'm hoping, I know it works, that they develop a passion for reading so that they in turn become independent readers and independent writers and thinkers.

I think we've been liberated because we've been given the opportunity - because we've got an incredible Bill of Rights. We've got the most wonderful constitution. So we have been liberated. In that way it is up to ourselves what we do with our liberation. Some of us don't want to do anything. We want people still to do things for us and so in that way we continue to be in bondage and we continue to imprison ourselves. No one else is doing it for us. We're doing it ourselves.

People say, 'It's so terrible what's happened to the world and so terrible and... bombs in London oh it's such a terrible world' and I just say, 'No the world's not so terrible you see because Al Quaeda may have done it. I don't necessarily agree with violence, but I know that globalisation is imprisoning the world in a different kind of way again. I'm happy for the demonstrators that they're demonstrating. That's right they must. Somebody has got to do it.'

### *Terry Grove*

#### ***Terry comments on living through the period of transition:***

...and it was even worse us being up in Namaqualand because in October '94 the NUM had a strike and it was the first time the Namaqualanders initiated a countrywide strike and other people in the country joined in. So in October '94 we had barricades .... It was a joke when I told all people in Cape Town that we were at the barricade and then the caspirs and fires burning and everything - so freedom came a bit too soon.... because a lot of rural people in the struggle felt that they were just starting to flex their political muscle.

#### ***The impact of politics on her life:***

I think I've been a political animal all my life and in terms of the choices that I've made.

If I just think I would've loved to have just gone to some institution to learn fine arts because I'm interested in textile and creating things. But for me it's never

been possible. You have to be involved in some sort of social justice or issue.

I'm a programme manager at the National Development Agency. I work with different communities initiating programmes to alleviate poverty. I'm involved in adult education. When I think of the serious side of my life it's all the social justice issues. I'm involved environmentally, involved in Namaqualand. We still are involved in trying to prevent the government from erecting another nuclear power station, pebble bed modular reactor.

You know it's environmental justice, women's issues, it dominates my life still and yet I have a part of me that wants to do art and I can't because you know you feel like it's got to be relegated to being a hobby and at some point I keep saying when I retire I want to go and do this diploma in fine art....

I trained as a weaver. I worked for almost two years and I can weave. I enjoy working with textiles, working with wool and other fabric. At this stage of my life, because to me the struggle is not yet over you know and especially the way the government the decisions this government is making.... It's not what we struggled for. So for me the struggle is still incomplete. I'm not sure whether I'll ever have a chance to actually do the art thing. It will always in my case be relegated to being a hobby.

### *Maria Engel*

I was affected after people left then we, as a family went into some kind of a mode where mummy didn't want us to move the waters because she just wanted a passport to go and see her children. And that is the important thing for her although she was still very vocal. She kept reminding me that we have to suffer as black people.

These white people who were her friends - and she really liked - she pushed them out of South Africa. 'Go back to your country so that we can get on with...being South Africans, proper real South Africans.'

I think maybe it shaped my life in the sense that's why I became a nurse. Maybe I wasn't so politically involved any longer but socially still kind of involved in a lesser extent.

*Alan Liebenberg (written submission via email)*

By 1975 I had become chairperson of SASO in the Western Cape and in 1976 the image of SASO had changed from that of a villainous organisation to one which brought hope. In that same year half of the members elected onto the SRC were SASO members. The struggles at UWC is a very long story. To attempt to be very brief, with the major national rebellions in 1976 and 1980 I was one of the first to be detained and saw little of the action outside. Over the years I have been involved in school sport administration, unionism and activism in the realm of education. Currently I serve as National Executive member of the National Association of School Governing Bodies and for me the struggle continues.

I have my integrity and my adult life in many ways is a vindication of the perceptions I had as a youth.

One such example was my experience of examinations as a child. I have as a scholar entered a classroom to write an examination without fear and a feeling of trepidation. As an adult I chose assessment as the focus of my post graduate studies and I encountered what I see as the theoretical vindication of feelings and shaky perceptions I had as a youth. Within a year of returning from Bristol University in the UK, I had addressed 37 schools, most of the teacher training colleges and the master's students of both UWC and UCT on the issue of assessment. Before the end of the year, I was serving on Continuous Assessment Task Team which completely changed the way in which we assess our children. I was also a founder member of the Exam Board in the Western Cape and am currently still a member.

My relationship with the present regime is one of critical solidarity and I am often invited to make submissions on educational matters and laws in both the national government and provincial parliament. While I am passionate about struggle, I have a natural aversion to parliamentary politics, to the extent that I will never join a parliamentary party. I have lost too many struggle friends who have entered parliament.