

**Broadening the Black Sash's Reach:
A Biographical Study of Women Activists in the KwaZulu-Natal
Midlands**

by

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COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
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ABSTRACT

Broadening the Black Sash's reach:

A biographical study of women activists in the Natal Midlands

This dissertation examines the contribution made by Black Sash women to the anti-apartheid struggle in the Natal Midlands region. It gives special attention to the biographical narratives of three women who were members of the Black Sash organisation in the Natal Midlands region. These women are Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley. This study explores how, for thirty years, these activists who belonged to two different generations of the Black Sash employed different modes of resistance. Furthermore, this study will examine their participation in the anti-apartheid movement, which is unique as they were willing to take risks and go to jail. These Black Sash activists rose to the call of duty and took a stand against injustice, taking a stance that other white people refused to accept. They were passionate in their beliefs, serving jail sentences, and suffered hardship as they lost friends and were often socially ostracised.

These activists discarded the white privileges afforded to them by the apartheid government. They dedicated their lives to combating injustice while fighting for their vision for the future, a free and democratic South Africa. It was due to their involvement in the anti-apartheid movement that the fight against the apartheid regime was not merely a black versus white issue but rather against an oppressive system. Their participation in the anti-apartheid movement transformed the liberation movement into becoming multi-racial, albeit their numbers were small. Thus, this study on the three Black Sash women will integrate the role of white women and contribute to the liberation narratives of South Africa. It will demonstrate that the anti-apartheid struggle was a collective effort and included a small group of whites, who were to become in some ways the white consciousness of South Africa. This dissertation via the narratives of Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley, highlights the contestations between gender oppression and political oppression that so characterised the anti-apartheid struggle. It also provides a more in-depth insight into women's political collective organisation in the Natal Midlands. Also, it helps us to understand the complex relationship that existed between the Black Sash and other women's organisations.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late mother, Nobuhle Thabile Lindiwe Kheswa, who tragically passed away on the 23rd of July 2020 during the course of this study. Her love, prayers, support, and motivation kept me inspired, even in difficult moments. She taught me to persevere and prepared me to face challenges with faith. She was a constant source of inspiration in my life. Although she is not here to give me strength and support, I always feel her presence which used to urge me to strive to achieve my goals in life. All credit for my achievements goes to her. Furthermore, I also dedicate this thesis to my late grandparents, Mr. Bantu Phillip and Mrs Thandiwe Phyllis Kheswa (*u-Ma Gumede*), and my late maternal aunt Miss Zandile Kheswa. May their souls rest in peace.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFRA - Association for Rural Advancement (AFRA)

ANC - African National Congress

ANCWL- ANC Women's League

ANCYL- ANC Youth League

FEDSAW- Federation of South African Women

IFP- Inkatha Freedom Party

NIC- Natal Indian Congress

NICYL- Natal Indian Congress Youth League

NMCC- Natal Midlands Crisis Committee

NOW- Natal Organisation of Women

PAC- Pan Africanist Congress

PACSA- Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness

PFP- Progressive Federal Party

REAP- Rape Education Action Project

SACTU- South African Congress of Trade Unions

SAIC- South African Indian Congress

TRAC- Transvaal Rural Action Committee

UDF- United Democratic Front

UWO- United Women's Organisation in the Western Cape

WDCL- Women's Defense of the Constitution League

WNC- Women's National Coalition

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This thesis seeks to document the pivotal role played by the Black Sash women in the anti-apartheid struggle in the Natal Midlands region. This study gives special attention to the biographical narratives of Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley who were staunch members of the Black Sash in Pietermaritzburg. The general elections that took place in May 1948, saw the National Party winning by a landslide victory and shortly thereafter introduced the segregation legislation called apartheid. This system sought to promote racial discrimination and white political domination.¹ But some liberal-minded whites opposed the introduction of the apartheid system. In 1955, Elizabeth Maclaren, Ruth Foley, Jean Bosazza, Tercia Pybus and Helen Thompson held a protest in Cape Town. These white middle class women were protesting the enactment of the Voters Bill which aimed to exclude the Coloured people from the voters' roll. These women subsequently established the Black Sash organisation. In 1955 Else Schreiner travelled to Natal to look at the possibility of setting up branches of the Black Sash. In Pietermaritzburg she was welcomed by a small group of women, and this resulted in the formation the Black Sash Natal Midlands region.²

The Black Sash grew significantly in Natal as it established branches in towns and villages like Matatiele, Kokstad, Underberg, Ladysmith, Greytown, New Hanover, and Mooi River. By 1956, Pietermaritzburg became the Headquarters of the Black Sash in Natal.³ By the late 1950s, many people began to lose heart as they viewed their campaign as unsuccessful and questioned the usefulness of protesting. This led to a decline in membership in the Black Sash movement.⁴ But those who remained committed to the anti-apartheid movement embarked on protest campaigns against the apartheid system. For thirty years, the organisation held weekly demonstrations to protest capital punishment and the torture of political activists. The organisation continued to examine the legality and morality of the administrative and judicial

¹ Roger Beck. *The History of South Africa*. (London: Greenwood Press, 2000) 70-77.

² Alan Paton Centre (hereafter cited as APC), Else Schreiner interview conducted by Pat Merrett, Pietermaritzburg, 25 August 1995: 6-10, APC 95 AP B9.

³ Mary Kleinenberg & Christopher Merrett. *Standing on Street Corners: A history of the Natal Midlands region of the Black Sash*. (Pietermaritzburg: Natal Society Foundation, 2015) 28.

⁴ Kleinenberg & Merrett, *Standing on Street Corners: A history of the Natal Midlands region of the Black Sash*, 34.

system.⁵ The Black Sash white anti-apartheid activists took a stand against injustice that other White people refused to take. They served jail sentences and suffered hardship as they lost friends and were often socially ostracised. These white individuals discarded the benefits granted to them by the apartheid government. They devoted their lives to fighting the injustice faced by black people. They were willing to put their bodies on the line and go to jail. Their dedication to the fight against the apartheid system makes their involvement in the liberation struggle unique. Their involvement in the liberation movement transcended the movement from being a black-versus-white issue but rather against an oppressive system. Their participation in the liberation movement transformed the anti-apartheid movement into multi-racial, albeit their numbers were small.

Therefore, this thesis will highlight the role played by women activists in the Black Sash organisation and highlight their commitment to the liberation movement in Pietermaritzburg. This study will also explore the contributions of the Black Sash organisation in the Natal Midlands via the life histories of three women, Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley. It will highlight their trials and tribulations as wives, mothers, and political activists and how they negotiated their activism in the context of race, gender, and class. By incorporating a biographical narrative of these three women, this research project will be able to provide a more in-depth insight into the contributions of women's organisations other than Black organisations in the apartheid struggle in the Natal Midlands. Hence this study will contribute to the regional histories of KwaZulu-Natal in the context of race, gender, and resistance. This study also examines the socio-economic and political factors that shaped and defined the political activism of Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley in the Natal Midlands. The need to include gender perspectives and voices in the nationalist narratives was one of the primary reasons for choosing this topic. The role played by women in the anti-apartheid movement and during the transition to the formation of a democratic government in 1994 is very crucial. These regional narratives are wanting in current South African liberation histories.

The general absence of Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley in literature could be accredited to South African historians' tendency to overlook the significant role played by women in the struggle against the apartheid regime. The historiography of Natal concentrates

⁵ Michelman, *The Black Sash of South Africa: A Case Study in Liberalism*, 24-39.

mainly on the social history of Durban. This distorted focus has left the social history of Pietermaritzburg relatively neglected. This is due to the gender-blind approach used by most academics interested in the anti-apartheid movement in the Natal Midlands. There are, however, few exceptions; Debbie Bonnin has explored the political protests organised by women in Mpumalanga Township.⁶ Furthermore, the anti-apartheid historiography in South Africa overlooks the contributions of “non-black” communities to the anti-apartheid struggle and focuses on black South Africans. Thus, this study on the three Black Sash women will integrate white women into South African history and pave the way for an invaluable academic inquiry. It will demonstrate that the anti-apartheid struggle was collective, non-racial, and included a small group of whites. The life history approach in this study and its findings will reveal how the contribution of Pietermaritzburg activists shaped and defined both regional and nationalist history in South Africa’s Road to democracy.

Aims and Objectives of this Thesis

The aim of this study is three folds. Firstly, it seeks to identify and discuss the multiple factors that shaped and defined the political consciousness of Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley. Through their biographical profiles, we will gain an insight into their early lives and the factors that shaped their political identity during childhood. This thesis will also examine the impact that the exposure to the racial paradigm and apartheid during their childhood years had on them and their families. It will also explore their family’s political activism and the role that their families played in shaping their political identities during their childhood.

Second, by adopting a biographical approach, this research will highlight their trials and tribulations as wives, mothers, and political activists. It will also problematise these multiple roles, and the ways in which these women managed to balance their dual roles of motherhood and political activism. It will also highlight the familial impact their political activism had on their child-rearing and parenthood and how their political activism affected their marital status. This research project will also examine the challenges and constraints of being an activist wife.

⁶ Debby Bonin. “Spatiality in the Construction of Identity: African Women and Political Violence in KwaZulu-Natal”. *Society in Transition*. (1997, 28:1-4) 31-33.

In addition, it also examines how they negotiated their activism at the crossroad of gender, class, and race. It will investigate how sexism that they endured due to their gender deepened their commitment to the anti-apartheid movement. Furthermore, this thesis will explore how these women activists negotiated and accommodated their 'White' identity amidst a community that did not always share their political beliefs. Whilst they shared a common race and gender status, and differed in class, they all strived towards a non-racial South Africa.

Key questions:

- What factors gave rise to the Black Sash Movement in the Natal Midlands?
- What personal, educational, religious, socio-economic, and political factors shaped and defined the political activism of Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley in the Natal Midlands?
- What was the role and contributions of Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley in the Black Sash movement in the Natal Midlands?
- What were the challenges and constraints of being a black Sash member in the context of a wife, mother, and activist?
- What role do gender, race and politics play in the construction of regional narratives on the liberation struggle in South Africa?

Literature Review

Over the past few decades, there have been many critical studies, both nationally and internationally, on women's role and contribution to nationalist and political struggles. Laura Beard points out that the autobiographies of women who have resisted colonialism in the Americas managed to give a voice to women who have been marginalised.⁷ Helen Ting uses the life stories of individual women to examine their experiences in nationalist struggles in Southeast Asia. Ting argues that the activism of these women nationalists was shaped by social, political, and economic forces, such as growing up in a war zone and personal experiences. Ting uses the life story of Bosoi an activist from East Timor to prove this point. The eruption of

⁷ Laura Beard. *Acts of Narratives Resistance: Women's Autobiographical Writings in the Americas*. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009) 199.

armed conflict in East Timor ended her schooling and forced her to flee into the jungle. She followed in the footsteps of her uncle and joined the liberation movement in East Timor.⁸ Dorothy Holland and Jean Lave argue that the socio-economic realities shape and define the activists' activism and political consciousness. This implies that activists are a product of their families and the educational system. According to Holland and Lave, the individual's political consciousness was shaped by the historical events that they witnessed in their lives. This assertion insinuates that their outlook on life and how they perceived the world was through the lenses of their teachers, parents, and significant others and also through practices that they were exposed to.⁹

Elisabeth Burgos-Debray argues in a biographical study of Rigoberta Menchú that the deaths of her father, mother, and brother in military attacks shaped her political consciousness. The military attacks on her family forced her to flee Guatemala in 1981. She travelled throughout the world to alert the international community about the gross injustices and human rights violations that were taking place in Guatemala. These human rights were committed by Guatemala's government and military and resulted in the death of 100,000 indigenous people.¹⁰ Inshah Malik examines the Muslim women's agency in the political struggles of nationhood in Kashmir's resistance movement against Indian control in the 1980s. Malik looks closely at the crucial role that Muslim women played in the armed struggle. She argues that these Muslim women inherited the idea of struggle from their families that was engaged with them throughout their childhood. Their struggle against patriarchy and gender equality played an important role in their participation in the nationalist struggle and resistance movement.¹¹ Michelle Moran has done a biographical study of Rani Lakshmibai, who was one of the leading figures and a symbol of resistance against the British in the Indian Rebellion of 1857. She examines how Rani Lakshmibai defied the mighty British invasion and highlighted how she navigated her way in a

⁸ Helen Ting. "Conclusion: Becoming Women Nationalists." *Women in Southeast Asian Nationalist Movements*. Helen Ting and Susan Blackburn eds. (Singapore: NUS Press, 2013) 277-278.

⁹ Dorothy Holland and Jean Lave. "History in Person: An Introduction". *History in Person: Enduring Struggles, Contentious Practice, Intimate Identities*. Dorothy Holland and Jean Lave eds. (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press: Oxford, 2001) 3-33.

¹⁰ Elisabeth Burgos-Debray. *I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*. (London: Verso, 1984) 95-101.

¹¹ Inshah Malik. "Imaginations of Self and Struggle: Women in the Kashmiri Armed Resistance." *Economic and Political Weekly*. (2015, 50:49) 60-66.

male-dominated society.¹² The above scholarly work reveals the significance of biographies, the ways in which they provide insights into the personal experiences of women activists. More significantly, it alludes to how multiple factors shaped their political identity. These nuanced narratives reveal that women's politicisation and activism cannot be homogenised and must be seen within diverse spaces.

In Africa, biographical studies have unearthed lost narratives of women activists. Jane Turriffin in her biography of Aoua Kéita reveals how the emergence of the feminist movement in Mali shaped and defined the political consciousness of Keita. She argues that gender subordination both within the private and public spheres motivated Keita. She further argues that: "Female feminists, such as Aoua Keita, were motivated to fight to promote women's rights by dissatisfaction with their own lives and the way they had been socialised".¹³ In addition, the women's movement, conscientised women not only to challenge traditional roles but also French colonialism and patriarchy. Susan Geiger uses the biography of Bibi Titi Mohammad to highlight gender aspects and cultural conditions that informed the agency of women activists in the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) in the process of constructing Tanzanian nationalism in the 1950s. Mohammad migrated to the urban areas and experienced triple oppression based on race, class and gender. She argues that the colonial oppression and patriarchy that existed in Tanzania contextualised the construction of Mohammad's political identity. By adopting the biographical approach, Geiger highlighted the biases, silences, distortion as well as gender marginalisation in Tanzania's nationalist movement. She disrupts the narrative that depicts nationalism in Tanzania's nationalist movement as fundamentally the work of a couple of great men.¹⁴ Similarly, Jean Allman argues that gender played an integral part in Ghana's national movement. Focusing on the life of Hannah Kudjoe, Allman highlights the decisive and leading role she played in nationalist struggles for independence in Ghana. She argues that the political subordination of women by the colonial administration led to Kudjoe joining the nationalist struggles for independence against British rule in Ghana.¹⁵ Nina Emma

¹² Michelle Moran. *Rebel Queen*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015) 154-157.

¹³ Jane Turriffin. "Aoua Kéita and the Nascent Women's Movement in the French Soudan." *African Studies Review*. (1993, 36:1) 59-89.

¹⁴ Susan Geiger. *TANU Women. Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955-1965*. (Heinemann: Portsmouth, 1997) 13-82.

¹⁵ Jean Allman. "The Disappearing of Hannah Kudjoe Nationalism, Feminism, and the Tyrannies of History". *Journal of Women's History*. (2009, 21:3) 13-35.

Mba and Cheryl Johnson-Odim in their biography of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti have analysed the crucial role played by women in their quest for equal rights during the liberation struggle in Nigeria. Kuti often faced the dilemma of trying to maintain a balance between her roles as a housewife, teacher, and her activism. They also argue that her activism had a familial influence on her children as they also got involved in the protests against human rights violations in Nigeria.¹⁶

For a long time, historians in South Africa overlooked women's history and their contribution to political change. In the 1980s, many historians began to embrace a feminist framework and shifted women's history from the margins to the centre of South African history. The late 1970s saw the transformation of South African history due to the contribution of neo-Marxist historians. They challenged the hegemonic narratives of the earlier liberal interpretation of South African history.¹⁷ Cheryl Walker argued that women's history could not be separated from mainstream history, and gender should not be the primary determinant of women's position.¹⁸ Bozzoli adds that women's history has been marginalised and that there was a need to recover it and she coined such work as "rectificatory" history. She describes the "rectificatory approach" as the "as yet incomplete task of rectifying the imbalance in history-writing by recovering the hidden history of women and gender relations".¹⁹

South Africa post-apartheid has witnessed many multiple publications, on the liberation struggle's history, but few have focused on women. This is demonstrated in the popular readership category of publications, particularly biographies, autobiographies, and general histories. These categories of publications reflect the male-dominated narratives of the liberation movement, mainly focused on prominent activists such as Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela and Albert Luthuli.²⁰ Similarly, when women have been the focus of historical study, it has largely concentrated on well-known popular women such as Dora Taylor, Bessie Head, Lilian Ngoyi and Winnie Mandela just to name a few. Standard general works focus on

¹⁶ Cheryl Johnson Odim and Nina Emma Mba. *For Women and The Nation: Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) 8-178.

¹⁷ Christopher Saunders. *The Making of the South African Past: Major Historians of Race and Class*. (Cape Town, 1988) 40-60.

¹⁸ Cheryl Walker. *Women and Resistance in South Africa*. (London: Onyx Press, 1982) 16-18.

¹⁹ Bozzoli, *Maxism, Feminism and South African Studies*, 141.

²⁰ Scott Couper. *Albert Luthuli: Bound by faith*, (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2010); Rebecca Steffoff. *Nelson Mandela: Hero For Democracy*. (New York Ballantine Books, 1994); Luli Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Engeli Mountains*, (Claremont: David Philip, 2004).

significant events like the 1956 march to the Union Building, the 1913 anti-pass campaign in Bloemfontein, and the Cator Manor riots of 1958-1959; they were devoid of broader gender analysis. It did not incorporate everyday struggles women encountered within the family as wives and mothers and how they negotiated their activism in the context of gender, class, and race. Walker re-iterates this fact by stating that “where women’s presence is acknowledged, it is often to subsume them within the family or hide them behind abstractions such as reproduction and oppression, so that the full complexity of their lives, as well as their historical agency, becomes obscured”.²¹ Recent gendered voices in the liberation struggle have been gaining currency.²²

Recent efforts, to document the contribution made by unidentified women in the anti-apartheid movement in the context of the urban-rural divide, incarceration, and militancy have highlighted the importance of unearthing the histories of the marginalised.²³ For example, Raymond Suttner investigated the role of women in the ANC-led underground. Using archival material and oral interviews, Suttner showed that women played a pivotal role in *Umkhonto we Sizwe* and in the underground struggle.²⁴ Kim Miller has analysed the life experiences of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* female members and the crucial role they played in smuggling weapons into South Africa. She further explores various issues that many women confronted, such as sexual harassment and sexism from their fellow comrades in the male-dominated atmosphere of MK camps.²⁵

Although the above studies are significant, the comparative studies between Coloured, African, white, and Indian women in the anti-apartheid struggle are very few.²⁶ Inter and Intra struggles of women within the liberation struggle have yet to be explored. To understand the significant

²¹ Cheryl Walker. *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*. (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990) 3.

²² Emma Gilbey. *The Lady: Life and times of Winnie Mandela*. (London: Vintage Books, 1994); Elinor Sisulu. *Walter and Albertina Sisulu: In Our Lifetime*. (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 2002); Shireen Hassim. *Voices of liberation: Fatima Meer*. (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 2019);

²³ Kalpana Hiralal. “Narratives and testimonies of women detainees in the anti-apartheid struggle”. *Agenda*. (2015, 29:4) 34-44; Gregory Houston, Shepi Mati, Hangwelani Magidimisha, Elmé Vivier, Mojalefa Dipholo. *The other side of freedom: stories of hope and loss in the South African liberation struggle 1950-1994*. (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 2017).

²⁴ Raymond Suttner. “Women in the ANC-led Underground”. *Women in South African History*. Nomboniso Gasa ed. (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 2007) 243.

²⁵ Kim Miller. “Moms with Guns: Women's Political Agency in Anti-Apartheid Visual Culture” *African Arts*. (2009, 42: 2) 68-75.

²⁶ Cheryl Walker. *Women and resistance in South Africa*. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1991); Nomboniso Gasa. “Let them Build More Goals”. *Women in South African History*. Nomboniso Gasa ed. (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 2007); Shireen Hassim. *Women’s Organisations and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority*. (Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2006).

role of women in South African history and politics, Nomboniso Gasa advocated for the re-conceptualisation of South African history.²⁷ Recent biographical, autobiographical and life histories of women in the anti-apartheid movement have provided nuanced gendered experiences in the context of race, gender, and class of the autobiographies and biographies of Winnie Mandela, Charlotte Maxeke, Patricia de Lille, Zarina Maharaj, Amina Cachalia, Pregs Govender, Fatima Meer, Albertina Sisulu, and others aimed to challenge the exclusion of women from standard narratives of the anti-apartheid struggle.²⁸ Zubeida Jaffer uses a personal narrative to display her experiences working as a journalist. She also illustrated how she navigated around in a sphere that has been traditionally masculinist.²⁹ Ellen Kuzwayo uses her biography to narrate her trials and tribulations as a social worker, teacher, and also general secretary of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Transvaal.³⁰ In her biography, Emma Mashinini states that she had to balance her personal life and her unionism. She narrates how her unionism also led to her imprisonment for six months.³¹ Caesarina Kona Makhoere explains her efforts to gain an education while facing difficulties joining the armed resistance.³² Pregs Govender uses her autobiography to highlight her experience as a feminist activist during apartheid and showcases the pivotal role of gender activists in the anti-apartheid movement.³³ Laretta Ngcobo uses reports, narratives, essays, and poems about women who were forced into exile to provide an insight into the lives of women from different classes and races who were committed to the dismantling of the apartheid system.³⁴ Rasool states that masculine auto/biographies overlook the significant role played by women activists in South

²⁷ Nomboniso Gasa. "Let them Build More Goals". Women in South African History. Nomoniso Gasa ed. (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 2007) 145.

²⁸ Emma Gilbey. *The Lady: Life and times of Winnie Mandela*. (London: Vintage Books, 1994); Shireen Hassim. *Voices of liberation: Fatima Meer*. (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 2019) Elinor Sisulu. *Walter and Albertina Sisulu: In Our Lifetime*. (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 2002); Zubeida Jaffer. *Beauty of the Heart: The life and times of Charlotte Mannya Maxeke*. (Sun Press, 2016); Zarina Maharaj. *Dancing to a Different Rhythm*. (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2006); Pregs Govender. *Love and Courage: A Story of Insurbodination*. (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2007); Amina Cachalia. *When Hope and History Rhyme: An Autobiography*. (Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2013); Charlene Smith. *Patricia de Lille*. (Cape Town: New Africa Books, 2003).

²⁹ Zubeida Jaffer. *Our Generation*. (Cape Town: Kwela, 2003) 134.

³⁰ Ellen Kuzwayo. *Call Me Woman*. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1985) 1-288.

³¹ Emma Mashinini. *Striker Have Followed Me All My Life*. (London: The Women's Press, 1989) 1-141.

³² Caesarina Kona Makhoere. *No Child's Play: In Prison under Apartheid*. (London: Women's Press, 1988) 3-124.

³³ Govender, *Love and Courage: A Story of Insurbodination*, 55-57.

³⁴ Laretta Ngcobo. *Prodigal Daughters Stories of South African Women in Exile*. (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2012) 70-76.

Africa's liberation movement and the trials and tribulations faced by the partners of political activists.³⁵

Zarina Maharaj argues that: "wives in the struggle, even those known to be actively involved, were generally not credited with an identity of their own by the majority of their fellow comrades".³⁶ Zubeida Jaffer also explores the contributions made by Charlotte Manny Maxeke in the struggle for women's emancipation in South Africa. She further looks at the trials and tribulations of Maxeke as a wife, mother, educator, community activist, devout Christian, and probation officer and how she negotiated her activism in the context of gender and class.³⁷ The above biographical studies offer insight into nuanced perspectives of women from different racial groups who belonged to the anti-apartheid movement. It reveals how political, economic, and social factors influenced and characterised women's resistance.³⁸ In addition, it also reveals how trade unionism and familial influence, personal experiences of social injustices shaped women's political consciousness.³⁹ There has, however, been little documentation of the significant role played by women activists in the nationalist struggles and resistance movements in Pietermaritzburg. This is due to the gender-blind approach used by most academics interested in political violence in Pietermaritzburg, which overshadows the significant role of women in political conflict. However, as alluded to earlier, there have been some attempts to redress this gap. Debby Bonnin's study into political violence in Mpumalanga Township explores the role played by black women in Mpumalanga Township during the 1980s political violence. From 1987 to 1991, this township was subject to killings mainly committed by Inkatha and United Democratic Front (UDF). Bonnin interviewed black women who narrated their stories and experiences of joining the UDF during this period.⁴⁰ Bonnin's study is significant as it captures African women's marginalised voices and experiences who belonged to the UDF in Pietermaritzburg during a very volatile political era in this region. It also captures rural political violence and how it affected women in Pietermaritzburg.

³⁵ Ciraj Rasool. "Rethinking Documentary History and South African Political Biography", *South African Review of Sociology*. (2010, 4:1) 28.

³⁶ Zarina Maharaj. *Dancing to a Different Rhythm*. (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2006) 13.

³⁷ Zubeida Jaffer. *Beauty of the Heart: The life and times of Charlotte Manny Maxeke*. (Sun Press, 2016) 1-180.

³⁸ Jaffer, *Our Generation*, 134-135.

³⁹ Govender, *Love and Courage: A Story of Insubordination*, 63-68.

⁴⁰ Debby Bonnin. "Spatiality in the Construction of Identity: African Women and Political Violence in KwaZulu-Natal". *Society in Transition*. (1997, 28:1-4) 31-33.

Philippe Denis and Philani Dlamini examine the supportive role played by women as peace agents in Mpophomeni. Denis and Dlamini assert that gender issues were often ignored during this period as the struggle for national liberation superseded women's emancipation.⁴¹ Jean Fairbairn uses the life story of Jabu Ndlovu to examine the experience of women who struggled and suffered due to political violence in Pietermaritzburg that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. She uses this biographical study to show the devastation that political violence brought to families, organisations, and communities in Pietermaritzburg.⁴² Mxolisi Mchunu examined the political violence and vigilante activities that characterised Kwa-Shange village in Pietermaritzburg between 1985 and 1996. He further examined the pivotal role that was played by Kwa-Shange women in trying to stop the conflict.⁴³ The invisibility of women in studies in the Pietermaritzburg political violence reflects the complex nature of South African society, which is characterised by deep levels of sexism. This study seeks to add to this limited regional analysis. Women's political organisations have also been the focus of the study. However, they are few and focus primarily on well-known organisations.

The 1950s saw the emergence of multi-racial organisations such as the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) and the Federation of South African women (FEDSAW). In the SACTU women played a significant role as they advocated for workers' unity across racial and class lines. These organisations included members of all of South Africa's racial groups.⁴⁴ Scholars have made some efforts to document the political activism of these political bodies. Julia Wells explains that the trade unions engineered the formation of FEDSAW on the idea of transcending race and class differences to bring womanhood together.⁴⁵ However, scholars such as Wells and Walker were critical of the FEDSAW as they argued that women were mobilised within the nationalism doctrine instead of the feminist ideological framework.⁴⁶ Walker asserts

⁴¹ Philippe Denis and Philani Dlamini. "Multiple Layers of Memory: The History of Mpophomeni Told and Retold". *Alternation*. (2015, 22:2) 73-99.

⁴² Jean Fairbairn. *Flashes in her soul: The life of Jabu Ndlovu*. (Cape Town: Buchu Books, 1991) 56-59.

⁴³ Mchunu, "A History of Political Violence in KwaShange, Vulindlela district and of its effects on the memories of survivors (1987-2008)", 26

⁴⁴ Iris Berger. *Threads of Solidarity: Women in South African Industry, 1900-1980*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992) 153-169.

⁴⁵ Julia Wells. *We now demand! the history of women's resistance to pass laws in South Africa*. (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993) 106.

⁴⁶ Shireen Hassim. *Women's Organisations and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority*. (Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2006) 28.

that women began reorganising in the 1970s following the state crackdown in the 1960s.⁴⁷ Shireen Hassim offers new insights as she examined the relations that existed between political parties, the state and civil society. She also explores the contestations between women and national struggles and how this was shaped by democratic and nationalist ideologies. She alludes to the emergence of the Black Women's Forum which sought to promote collective non-racial mobilisation in the 1970s.⁴⁸

Hassim further asserts that in the early 1980s, women were drawn into the grassroots anti-apartheid organisations led by the United Democratic Front (UDF) that emerged during this period. In addition, the formation of several regional organisations which emphasised democracy and non-racialism such as the Lamontville Women's Group, the United Women's Organisation in the Western Cape (UWO), the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW) and the Federation of Transvaal Women (FEDTRAW) reveals that women were at the forefront of grassroots activism. More significantly, these collective organisations allowed for the promotion of non-racial politics. Although these studies are important, they do not fully capture the inter and intra-women's struggles within women's organisations and how they shaped and defined resistance.⁴⁹ Studies on the Black Sash organisation have provided an overview of the organisation in terms of its success and failures as a vehicle for opposing apartheid. For example, Cherry Michelman argued that the Black Sash women were driven by their morals and beliefs in their fight against the apartheid system which they deemed immoral and evil.⁵⁰ Kathryn Spink is sympathetic to the Black Sash movement, arguing that the organisation was a thorn on the supporters of the apartheid system in South Africa. Spink further argued that the Black Sash supported non-violent methods to oppose apartheid, such as holding peaceful demonstrations, marches, convoys, demonstrations, and all-night vigils to oppose apartheid.⁵¹ On the contrary, Jill Wentzel is antagonistic, towards the organisation, in that it fell short of its liberal principles.⁵² Sheila Meintjes alludes to the Black Sash's role in helping the African community, particularly women, by establishing advice offices in urban centres to assist them in

⁴⁷ Cherry Walker. *Women and resistance in South Africa*. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1991) 275.

⁴⁸ Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority*, 61.

⁴⁹ Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge. "What Price for Freedom? Testimony and the Natal Organisation of Women". *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*. (1997:34) 66-70.

⁵⁰ Michelman, *The Black Sash of South Africa: A Case Study in Liberalism*, 130-139.

⁵¹ Kathryn Spink. *Beginning of a Bridge in South Africa*. (London: Methuen, 1991) 241-243.

⁵² Jill Wentzel. *The Liberal Slideaway*. (Johannesburg: SA Institute of Race Relations, 1995) 60-62.

pass laws issues. Moreover, the organisation was also involved in rural activities, establishing the Transvaal Rural Action Committee (TRAC) which aimed at assisting communities under forced removals. Meintjes study is valuable in that it provides insights to how the Black Sash aided the marginalised women in rural areas.⁵³

Christopher Merrett and Mary Kleinenberg who is one of the protagonists in this study have written extensively on the history of the Black Sash in Pietermaritzburg. The work produced is a general study of the establishment and development of the Black Sash in the Natal Midlands. This book provides a historical analysis of the organisation's work in the Natal Midlands. This includes the public protests and educational campaigns that were organised by the Black Sash which aimed at exposing the apartheid legislation. It also documents the general activities of the advice office of the Black Sash in Pietermaritzburg from its establishment in 1975. The Black Sash Natal Midlands advice office was very active as it assisted people on different issues ranging from disability grant issues and the old age pension. This study further highlights the cases that the advice office volunteers dealt with and the difficulties that they experienced. This book is important as it provides insights into how this organisation of mainly white, middle-class, privileged women created and sustain a viable body that eventually contributed to the collapse of apartheid.⁵⁴

While the above-cited study by Kleinenberg and Merrett is relevant, there are still gaps in the book as it does not critically examine these individuals' political activism in the anti-apartheid movement in Pietermaritzburg. This general study highlights broader contributions made by the Black Sash movement in the Natal Midlands and overlooks the nuanced experiences of women's activism. Merrett and Kleinenberg missed crucial elements in their study as they do not examine the factors that motivated these Black Sash activists, their effect on the anti-apartheid struggle, and how they coped with political and social ostracism and their imprisonment. Also, these scholars do not highlight their trials and tribulations as wives, mothers, and political activists and how they negotiated their activism in the context of race, class, and gender. There are also gaps in our understanding of the inter- and intra-racial

⁵³ Sheila Meintjes. "The Women's Struggle for Equality during South Africa's Transition to Democracy", *Transformation*. (1996:30) 55.

⁵⁴ Mary Kleinenberg and Christopher Merrett. *Standing on Street Corners: A History of the Natal Midlands Region of the Black Sash*. (Pietermaritzburg: Natal Society Foundation, 2015).

cooperation of other black women's organisations and the Black Sash in the Natal Midlands. As a result, they do not highlight the contestations between gender oppression and political oppression that so characterised the anti-apartheid struggle.

Although the above studies are significant, there are still gaps in the histories of the Black sash movement in Pietermaritzburg. This thesis, through the biographical narratives, will critically show how the socio-economic challenges that these Black Sash women faced characterised their political consciousness and activism. By examining these women's biographies, this thesis will produce new knowledge on the history of the Black Sash organisation in the Natal Midlands. It will close the existing gap in Kleinenberg and Merrett's book by providing new perspectives and new information. By exploring these women's biographies, this thesis will highlight the multiple challenges these three women endured, as wives, mothers, and political activists. This biographical study is important as it will provide a more in-depth insight into women's organisations' role in the apartheid struggle in the Natal Midlands, nuanced experiences of women's activism, and hence contribute to the regional histories of KwaZulu-Natal in the context of gender and resistance. The focus period for this study is between 1970 and 1994 a period that was characterised by political unrest in South Africa, bringing about a radical personal and political transformation in the Black Sash activists' lives. This period witnessed active political resistance against the apartheid system. It was due to the state crackdown during this period that these activists were provided with a better insight into the socio-political inequality that existed in South Africa during this period. This shaped their political consciousness and motivated them to advocate for social change and justice. This study further outlined how their political identity evolved upon joining the Black Sash as they became sensitised to gender issues. Their political perspective had been centred on race; however, upon joining the Black Sash, they became exposed to gender-related issues. This also shaped their political awareness and provided them with a better insight into gender perspectives and oppression that existed in South Africa.⁵⁵ Hence, this comparative study starts in 1970 as this period marks a turning point in the Natal Midlands region as there was an intensification of political violence and the heightening of Black Spots removals in the region. This period also saw many new members joining the Black Sash, which resulted in the revival of the Natal Midlands Black Sash as women's issues took centre stage and were added to the organisation's

⁵⁵ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

political agenda. By focusing on the 1975-1994 contemporary periods, this study seeks to highlight the essential role that women played in the anti-apartheid movement and get the voices of those women who have been marginalised and silenced in the academic literature.

Theoretical Framework

Social History Theory

This thesis will utilise the social history theory framework. Social history focuses on exploring the voices of the marginalised groups and moves away from focusing on the elite. The 1960s saw the emergence of social history which was advocated by Marxist scholars such as Edward Palmer Thomson. Karl Marx's theory on social, economic, and class inequality in societies influenced the rise of social history in the 1960s.⁵⁶ Thompson who was influential in the development of the social history theory argued that class was a major factor that shaped society.⁵⁷ Thompson's work shifted from studying the elite and focused on the marginalised people whose stories have been overlooked.⁵⁸ Geoff Eley asserts that social historians took a position to write the history of ordinary people through their lenses and this enabled them to highlight ordinary people's struggles.⁵⁹ Lawrence Stone claims that social history is pivotal as it assists us in understanding the ordinary existence, of how ordinary people have lived.⁶⁰ Social history theory will also assist in unearthing the narratives and voices of women of the Black Sash movement who fought against apartheid, not just the elite as this study will be based on a biographical narrative.

Although the social history theory has highlighted the plight of the marginalised and ordinary people in history which includes peasants and the working class the poststructuralists have been critical of social history. The poststructuralists argue that historical writing is based on multiple

⁵⁶ Edward Palmer Thomson. *The Making of the English Working Class*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Publishers, 1968) 72-78.

⁵⁷ Karl Marx. *The German Ideology*. (New York, International Publishers, 1998) 1.

⁵⁸ Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 56.

⁵⁹ Geoff Eley. *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005) 90-91.

⁶⁰ Lawrence Stone. "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History". *Past and Present*. (1979, 85) 3-24.

interpretations and lacks objectivity.⁶¹ Cultural historians argued that historians can never be objective in recovering past historical events.⁶² Thus, for instance, believed that there is no true account of the past that exists as historians write different versions of history. Post-structuralist historians such as Hayden White believed that social historians are fictitious in their historical writing as there is no single “histories” or “truth”.⁶³ They argued that the truth about the past cannot be known as the interpretation of the past is influenced by the historian’s perspectives and use of evidence.⁶⁴ The poststructuralists were critical of Thompson’s work as they argued that it prioritised the history of others whilst marginalising groups such as women.⁶⁵ I will use social history to highlight the crucial role played by these women activists whose life stories have often been ignored in mainstream history. Since their life experiences have been excluded from the state archives, I will utilize a social history framework to document their narratives. Social history is pivotal in this thesis as it will also assist me in bringing the life experiences of women activists to the forefront of the historical accounts.

Biography and Microhistory

This study also incorporates a biographical approach. Early biographies written in the 19th century and early 20th century tended to focus on powerful figures and the elite. The 19th-century biographers mainly focused on these famous and important figures and wrote about them in a celebratory, uncritical manner. Thomas Carlyle a 19th-century biographer asserts that history is the “biography of Great Men”. Carlyle believed that heroic individuals shaped history through their divine inspiration and leadership characteristics that they provide during times of crisis.⁶⁶ Robert Skidelsky also argues that: “Biography had its roots in the Romantic view of the artist as Hero and in the Great Man theory of history.”⁶⁷ This is what academic historians did not like which is why biographical approaches were not promoted by them until much later in the 20th century. In the 1970s micro-history emerged. Microhistory sought to analyse ordinary

⁶¹ Kevin Passmore. “Poststructuralism and History”. *Writing History Theory and Practice*. Stefan Berger, Heiko Feldner, Kevin Passmore (eds. (New York, Oxford University Press, 2003), 123-124.

⁶² Elizabeth A. Clark. *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 15-16.

⁶³ Hayden White. “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact”. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays In Cultural Criticism*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985) 98.

⁶⁴ Passmore, “Poststructuralism and History”, 122-123.

⁶⁵ Passmore, “Poststructuralism and History”, 124-125.

⁶⁶ Thomas Carlyle. *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*. (Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1913) 25-36.

⁶⁷ Robert Skidelsky. “Only Connect: Biography and Truth”. *The Troubled Face of Biography*. Eric Homburger and John Charmley eds. (New York: St. Martins, 1988) 2.

individuals, or those individuals excluded or hidden or marginalised from history, and to do so with a critical lens, which contributed an important new perspective to studies on individuals.

The development of social history in the 1960s influenced the emergence of micro-history. Micro historians argued that the history of the elite was abundant and shifted their focus on unearthing the history of socially marginalised people who had been excluded from history. They moved away from exploring society on a broader level and narrowed their scale of research and decided to focus on individuals. A cultural anthropologist, Hans Medick, argued: “small is beautiful, by no means signifies an anecdotal history cut loose from large context”. He emphasised that small-scale studies are significant as they unearth pivotal details that might have been overlooked.⁶⁸ Historical studies moved away from privileging the political elite as the centre of attention. Instead, they looked closely at the people who have been left out of history.⁶⁹ Giovanni Levi asserts that microhistory is important as it analyses the life experience of individual human beings. Micro-analysis is a useful tool for understanding society. He argued that society could not be understood without gaining an insight into the individuals that constitute that society.⁷⁰

Yet the biographical approach has had its critics. Hyslop contends that political biographies in South Africa tend to be hero-worshipping.⁷¹ Since these biographies memorialised prominent activists such as Nelson Mandela whilst underplaying the pivotal role that was played by women in the anti-apartheid movement. These biographies perpetuated the “heroic masculinity” whilst in turn ignored the tribulations faced by the partners of the political activists.⁷² Lepore argues that biographies tend to perpetuate the history of great men and display gender bias.⁷³ Sithole and Mkhize contend that the biographical approach prioritizes certain narratives. Biographical writing is filled with multiple interpretations as the recreation of the biography is

⁶⁸ Hans Medick. *Weaving and survival in Laichingen 1650-1900: local history as general history*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996) 25.

⁶⁹ George G. Iggers. *From Macro-to Micro history: The History of everyday life. Historiography in the Twentieth Century, from scientific objectivity to the past modern challenge*. (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2005) 101-107.

⁷⁰ Giovanni Levi. “On Microhistory”. *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. Peter Burke ed. (Blackwell Publishers Ltd: Polity Press, 2001) 97-119.

⁷¹ Jonathan Hyslop. “Biography: A Response to Ciraj Rasool”. *South African Review of Sociology*. (2010, 41:2) 109.

⁷² Elaine Uternhalter. “The Work of the Nation: Heroic Masculinity in South African Autobiographical Writing of the Anti-Apartheid Struggle.” *The European Journal of Development Research*. (2000, 12:2) 159.

⁷³ Lepore, “Historian Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography,” 151.

grounded on the writer's selective perception. The writer chooses what is remembered about the subject.⁷⁴

Jill Lepore argues that there is much more of an overlap between biographical and microhistory approaches as scholars within each grouping have learned from each other.⁷⁵ This study uses the more recent scholars' critical biographical approach. Nick Salvatore argued that the recent biographical approach is pivotal as shifts away from documenting the history of the elite but also seeks to focus on the biographies and life histories of the marginalised people. He further argued that biographies are critical to the writing of historical life as it allows one to explore personal narratives, and it also examines the critical factors that shaped the lives of the marginalised.⁷⁶ Ciraj Rassool asserts that biographical studies played a significant role in the production of history in the democratic dispensation.⁷⁷ Barbara Caine examines the relationship between biography, autobiography, and history and the changing approaches biographers have employed to reconstruct their subjects' lives.⁷⁸ Jim Sharpe argued that biographies and life histories are important as they form part of the model of history from below as they unearth lost and marginalised gender voices.⁷⁹ Charles van Onselen uses a biographical study on the biography of Kas Maine to explore the personal narratives and examine the important factors that shaped his life. Van Onselen uses the biographical approach to unearth the lost voice of Maine who had previously been marginalised.⁸⁰ Thus this thesis adopts a biographical approach to highlight the role of lesser-known women. It also provides insight into how the social, economic, and political factors shaped and defined the experiences of the activists under study during apartheid in the Natal Midlands region. The biographical approach will assist this study in unearthing the narratives and marginalised voices of Black Sash women who fought against apartheid, not just the elite. It will also position the Natal Midlands region, a primarily marginalised area, in the liberation narrative to be the centre of focus.

⁷⁴ Jabulani Sithole and Sibongiseni Mkhize. "Truth or Lies? Selective Memories, Imagings, Representations of Chief Albert Luthuli in Recent Political Discourse." *History and Theory*. (2000, 39:4) 69-85.

⁷⁵ Jill Lepore. "Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography." *The Journal of American History*. (2001, 88:1) 132-133.

⁷⁶ Nick, Salvatore. "Biography and Social History: An Intimate Relationship". *Labour History* (2004, 87) 187-191

⁷⁷ Rasool, "Rethinking Documentary History", 29.

⁷⁸ Barbara Caine. *Biography and History*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) 180-195.

⁷⁹ Jim Sharpe. "History from below". *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. Peter Burke ed. (University Park: Penn, 1991) 24-41.

⁸⁰ Charles Van Onselen. "Peasants Speak: The Reconstruction of a Rural Life from Oral Testimony". *Journal of Peasant Studies*. (1993) 494-514.

Gender

This research project will also integrate gender as a category of analysis.⁸¹ In the 1970s, women scholars challenged the production of academic knowledge in Academia which overlooked women and rendered them invisible.⁸² Joan Wallach Scott asserts that excluding women from the official historical records was systematic.⁸³ She asserts that one cannot marginalise the study of women or dismiss their history as it is interwoven with men's history. Scott talks about the importance of the need to highlight gender relations, and how men and women interact with each other, this provides a more holistic understanding of women's experience. She asserts that the historians' attempt to theorize gender should be outside traditional methods of analysis as this is conducive to truly understanding gender.⁸⁴ Helen Bradford has demonstrated how women have been overlooked in the writing of history and have called for a re-evaluation of the documentation of women's history in South Africa.⁸⁵ Bell Hooks argued that it was up until the late 1960s to 1970s that women were starting to be included in the academic literature.⁸⁶ Stephanie Gilmore argues that the rise of second-wave feminism in the 1960s led to the incorporation of women in academic literature.⁸⁷ Imelda Whelehan also concurs that after second-wave feminism in the 1970s, there was great recognition that the system institutionalized gender inequality.⁸⁸

This theoretical work also focused on the intersectionality of class, race, and gender relations in how they shaped women's activism. Intersectionality originated from the racialised experiences of African American women in the United States. Gender scholars Kimberle Crenshaw, Bell

⁸¹ Paula England. *Theory on Gender: Feminism on Theory*. (New York: Aldine, 1993) 35.

⁸² Patricia Stamp. *Technology, gender and power in Africa*. (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 1989) 185.

⁸³ Joan Wallach Scott. "The problem of invisibility". *Retrieving Women's History: Changing Perceptions of the Role of Women in Politics and Society*. S. Jay Kleinberg ed. (New York: Berg publishers Ltd, 1988) 47-48.

⁸⁴ Joan Wallach Scott. "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis". *American Historical Review*. (1986, 91:5) 1053-1067.

⁸⁵ Helen Bradford. "Women, gender and colonialism: Rethinking the history of the British Cape Colony and its frontier zones, c.1806-70". *Journal of African History*. (1996, 37) 351-370.

⁸⁶ Bell Hooks. "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory". *Feminism and Race*. K. Bhavani ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 33-35

⁸⁷ Stephanie Gilmore. *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives On Second-Wave Feminism in the United States*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 36-40.

⁸⁸ Imelda Whelehan. *Modern Feminist Thought: From the Second Wave to Post-Feminism*. (New York: New York University Press, 1995) 4.

Hooks, and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham advocated for black women's interests that they deemed neglected in both the women's movement and black movements in the United States.⁸⁹ Hooks asserts that the women's movements that were led by white women were not addressing the black women's experiences instead they were pre-occupied with white women's pursuits for equality with white men. The black movements which were often led by sexist black men were mainly focused on racial segregation and the attainment of equal legal rights for black people.⁹⁰ Black women were alienated from both the black movements and white women's movements and this resulted in them conceptualising their social conditions as they experienced interlocking forms of oppression.⁹¹ Hilda Bernstein concurs with Hooks as she argued that black women suffered triple oppression because of their race, gender, and class. She further argued that "from the beginning of industrialisation, therefore, African women were relegated to a position with an ever-spreading disadvantage. They were to fulfil their traditional role as bearers of children; they were to work on the land to supplement male migrants' low wages".⁹² Marie Keane argued that women had been historically dispossessed in society and that special attention needs to be given to them as they have suffered injustices perpetrated against them in social, political, and economic life.⁹³ In recent years the concept of Intersectionality has been extended to focus on other racial groups and not just black women. Recent studies on feminism have demonstrated that young white feminists have advocated for Intersectionality as this theory is celebrated as a key component of feminism in many parts of Europe.⁹⁴ In the late 1990s, Intersectionality was introduced to Dutch scholarship and was embraced by the feminist and gender studies movements.⁹⁵ Charlene Calderaro and Eleonore Lepinard argue that young white feminists are inspired by Intersectionality, and they deem it an essential tool. Intersectionality is

⁸⁹ Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, Charles Inglis. *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*. (New York: New Press, 1995) 106.

⁹⁰ Bell Hooks. *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. (Boston: South End Press, 1981) 15.

⁹¹ Patricia Collins. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. (New York: Routledge, 1990) 22.

⁹² Hilda Bernstein. *For their triumphs & for their tears: Women in apartheid South Africa*. (London: International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1985) 8-9.

⁹³ Marie-Henry Keane. "Feminist and Womanist Theology". *Women Hold up Half the Sky*. Denis Ackermann, Jonathan Draper and Emma Mashinini eds. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1998) 121-135.

⁹⁴ Elizabeth Evans. "Intersectionality as feminist praxis in the UK". *Women's Studies International Forum*. (2016, 59) 67-75.

⁹⁵ Gloria Wekker. *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016)

seen by the young white feminists as a generational divide with the older white feminists.⁹⁶ Thus, the inclusion of intersectionality as a category of analysis will provide nuanced female perspectives to the Black Sash movement in their defiance of apartheid laws as these activists experienced a variety of oppressions.

Research Methods and Methodology

This thesis used a qualitative research methodology to examine the biographical narratives of the three women under study. Qualitative research involves collecting and interpreting data about the phenomenon under study.⁹⁷ It is pivotal in this study as it allows a more in-depth engagement and complexity of the three women's lived experiences. This study utilised both oral and archival sources. According to Ronald Grele the interaction that occurs between an interviewer and a subject about historical events is known as oral history. This complex interaction necessitates both listening and questioning by the interviewer.⁹⁸ He further asserts that the oral history interview is: "a conversational narrative: conversational because of the relationship of interviewer and interviewee, and narrative because of the form of exposition - the telling of a tale".⁹⁹ Eva McMahan asserts that developing a relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee is pivotal as this creates a structure for the oral history interview. She also argues that understanding this structure is necessary to understand the interview. She further outlines how the dynamic relationship that exists between the interviewer and the interviewee shapes the oral history interview.¹⁰⁰ Phillippe Denis argues that an interviewee is not simply a person who transmits information about the past. How such a person relates to the interview situation also deserves attention. The effect of the act of remembering on the person who remembers is at the centre of this process.¹⁰¹ Rebotile Machaisa argues that oral history creates new knowledge by helping the interviewee to resuscitate or revisit old memories and old emotions. Interviewees are allowed to narrate their own stories, creating a strong interaction

⁹⁶ Charlene Calderaro and Eleonore Lepinard. "Intersectionality as a new feeling rule for young feminists: Race and feminist relations in France and Switzerland". *European Journal of Women's Studies*. (2021, 28:3) 393-395.

⁹⁷ Mary Lee Smith. "Publishing Qualitative Research." *American Educational Research Journal*. (1987, 24:2) 174-175.

⁹⁸ Ronald J Grele & Studs Terkel. *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History*. (New York: Praeger, 1991) 15.

⁹⁹ Grele, "Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History", 135.

¹⁰⁰ Eva M. McMahan. "A Conversation Analytic Approach to Oral History Interviewing." *Handbook of Oral History*. Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers, and Rebecca Sharpless eds. (Lanham.: Altamira Press, 2006) 353.

¹⁰¹ Philippe Denis. "Introduction". *Oral History in a Wounded Country: interactive interviewing in South Africa*. Philippe Dennis, and Radikobo Ntsimane eds. (Scottsville: UKZN Press, 2008) 10.

between the interviewer and the interviewee.¹⁰² Jean Sweeney Shawver and Kathryn Walbert assert that oral history is unique as it allows people to gain an insight about the life experiences of those who have been left out of the historical records. Useful information can be learnt by monitoring the personal experience of the people interviewed through oral history.¹⁰³ Oral history is important as it produces a different type of knowledge through an interactive conversation. Alessandro Portelli claims that oral history “tells us not just what people did but what they intended to do, what they believed they were doing and what they now think they did.”¹⁰⁴ In terms of positionality, oral history allows us to explore the political and social context that constructed identities across different races, cultures, and genders. Both the interviewee and the interviewees co-create this knowledge. The fact that a black man was interviewing and writing the history of white women is very significant in this respect. The dynamic of a black man interviewing white women about their private lives might have influenced the protagonists about what they were prepared to indulge. The protagonists were prepared to answer certain questions in detail. However, they gave brief answers to some of the questions posed. There were certain issues that the interviewees were not prepared to talk about. One of the protagonists made it clear that she did not want to discuss the contemporary issue of sexuality. Another protagonist was less keen to discuss her first marriage. This affected the writing of this thesis as it could not flesh out some of the issues.

The credibility of oral history has been challenged. Portelli asserts there are false oral history accounts as this technique of generating historical information is influenced and shaped by economic, social, and political factors. However, silences and false accounts are interesting in their own right because they point to important dimensions of the past. The significant problem of oral history is memory. Some oral histories are passed down frequently to communities by small groups such as families. Newspapers, diaries, photo albums, and letters are significant sources of information that micro historians rely on.¹⁰⁵ Sans Souci’s story demonstrates that

¹⁰² Rebotile Machaisa “Practicing and Teaching Oral history in School”. Oral History Association of South Africa. A paper presented at 6th National Oral History Conference, The River Club Cape Town, 13-16 October 2009, 158.

¹⁰³ Kathryn Walbert and Jean Sweeney Shawver. “Oral history in the classroom”, 2002, 1, Available at: <https://docplayer.net/62847065-Oral-history-in-the-classroom-by-kathryn-walbert-and-jean-sweeney-shawver.html>, (accessed on 30 July 2021).

¹⁰⁴ Alessandro Portelli. “What Makes Oral History Different”. *the Oral History Reader*. Robert Perks and Alistair Thompson eds. (London and New York: Routledge, 2006) 70.

¹⁰⁵ Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different”, 32-40.

there is a silencing process taking place within oral history.¹⁰⁶ Michel Trouillot argues that the role played by Sans Souci and African-born revolutionaries in the Haitian revolution has been silenced.¹⁰⁷ Trouillot asserts: “Jean-Baptiste Sans Souci was silenced not only because some narrators may consciously choose not to mention him but primarily because most writers followed the acknowledged rules of their time”.¹⁰⁸ Trouillot further argued that we could not rely heavily on oral history as the people interviewed tend to romanticise history.¹⁰⁹ Ronald Grele contended that an interrogation process should take place when oral history is presented as spoken words dispensed as evidence are often untrustworthy and requires careful examination.¹¹⁰ Although Thompson argued that we need to be cautious of interviews and oral history as there might be biases in extracting and interpreting the evidence.¹¹¹ Oral history is essential in this research project, as the documentation of women’s history in a male-dominated society, addresses the marginalisation of women, in the patriarchal society. Guy Beiner contends that oral history is pivotal as it unearths the voices of the marginalised and allows for their incorporation into history.¹¹² Joan Sangster highlighted the pivotal played by oral history in including the marginalised women in history. She commends oral history for: “putting women’s voices at the centre of history and highlighting gender as a category of analysis; and the prospect that women interviewed will shape the research agenda by articulating what is important to them”.¹¹³ Sugandha Agarwal argued that history is male-dominated and undervalues the life experiences of women. She contends that in the 1970s feminist oral historians began to gather women’s life experiences to fill this historical void.¹¹⁴ Oral also

¹⁰⁶ Colonel Jean-Baptist Sans Souci, born in Africa was a guerrilla fighter in the Haitian revolution. He influenced the tactics used by the Haitian revolutionaries. In 1802, the Haitian army led by Toussaint L’Ouverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Henri Christophe and others surrendered to the French; However, Sans Souci did not. His refusal to submit to the French led to a Civil war in which Christophe got an upper hand and killed him at the very spot where he built the palace of Sans Souci. Michel-Rolph Trouillot. *Silencing the Past*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995). 1-102;

¹⁰⁷ Michel-Rolph Trouillot. *Silencing the Past*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995) 1-102; Asante, Molefi Kete. “Haiti: Three Analytical Narratives of Crisis and Recovery.” *Journal of Black Studies*. (2011, 42:2) 284-286.

¹⁰⁸ Trouillot. *Silencing the Past*. 102.

¹⁰⁹ Trouillot. *Silencing the Past*. 104.

¹¹⁰ Ronald Grele. *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History*. (Chicago: Precedent Publishing, 1975) 197.

¹¹¹ Paul Thompson. *Voice of the past: Oral history*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 15-21.

¹¹² Guy Beiner. “Listening to the Past and Talking to each other: Problems and Possibilities Facing Oral History in Ireland”. *Irish Economic and Social History*. (2003, 30) 77.

¹¹³ Joan Sangster. “Telling Our Stories: Feminists debates and the use oral history”. *Women’s history review*. (2006: 3:1) 5-28.

¹¹⁴ Sugandha Agarwal. “Re-writing history: Oral history as a feminist methodology”. *Stream: Interdisciplinary Journal of Communication*. (2020, 12) 6-30.

moves the voices of the marginalised from the margins to the centre mainstream of popular historical narrative. This is the approach I have used in this dissertation.

In doing this research project, I interviewed three interviewees, the first one is Mrs. Joan Kerchhoff, who was a Chairperson of the Black Sash Natal Midlands region. I also interviewed Dr Anne Harley, a University of KwaZulu-Natal lecturer, who was a researcher and a staunch member of the Black Sash. Lastly, I interviewed Ms. Mary Kleinenberg, a former Chairperson, and a member of the Black Sash in the Natal Midlands region. These interviews are significant to my study as they revealed information unavailable in other historical sources. The information gathered in the interviews was based on interview questions. However, these interviews were also semi-structured as contemporary issues that arose during the segment of the interviews were also discussed. Mrs Shanaaz Palekar-Rayner, the personal assistant of the national director of the Black Sash, assisted me to access the interviewees. She sent an email to all the women who were members of the Black Sash prior to 1995 after I clarified the nature of my study to her. Another selection criterion was that the protagonists had to reside in Pietermaritzburg as the issue of distance restricted me in not being able to interview a Black Sash member who resides in Gauteng. A few Black Sash members showed interest in participating in my study. This resulted in not being able to interview more Black Sash members; hence, the focus of my study was narrowed to these three women who wanted to participate. This restricted the scope and insight of this dissertation as I could not get the biographical narratives of more Black Sash women.

It is noteworthy that the three protagonists have all been interviewed before and that I had access to the transcripts housed in the Alan Paton Centre and Struggle Archives. These interview transcripts assisted me in remaining mindful of the contemporary issues that have already been covered in the previous interviews. However, there are key themes and certain questions that were ignored in the previous interviews. These interviews do not provide us with an insight into their early life, factors that gave rise to their early politicization; family, and education. These interviews not only give us an insight into what socio-economic and political factors shaped and defined the political consciousness and activism of the three protagonists. They also do not reveal the challenges that the three women faced as a wife, mother, and activist, and how they negotiated their activism in the context of race, class, and gender. Hence,

in these interviews, I pursued certain questions that were ignored in previous interviews, such as their thoughts about race, class, and gender issues. An attempt was also made to fill the gaps in the contestations around feminism and nationalist struggles between other women's organisations and the Black Sash in the Natal Midlands. The interview segment of the study provided me with an opportunity to confront my own racial identity and gender status. Talking about race, class, and gender enhanced my understanding and knowledge of racism, classism, and sexism. It sensitised me to gender issues and exposed me to the gender privilege that has been a common theme in society. In conducting these interviews, I used a consent form. I also structured my interview questions on the aims of this dissertation. The information was collected through interviews in person. The data collection will be disposed of in a secure and safe manner at the conclusion of this study. The data relating to publications will be available for analysis and discussion with other researchers, subject to confidentiality provisions.

Archival sources also enriched this study. I used the archives because they provide primary information on the topic under discussion. Caroline Brown asserts that the way in which the archive is funded and maintained has an impact on the functioning of the archives and this leads to some stories being privileged and others marginalised.¹¹⁵ Graeme Reid assert that the archives are pivotal as they are repository where valuable artefacts are stored.¹¹⁶ However, there has been critique about the bias that takes place in the archives. Due to limitations on space and other factors, the archives cannot store infinite number of documents. The archivists choose which material is preserved in the archives whilst other sources are discarded. According to Achilles Mbembe some documents are not intended for archiving, only certain documents fulfil the achievability criteria.¹¹⁷ As a result, the archives affect the information that the researcher can access about a particular subject.¹¹⁸ Ann Laura Stoler argued that the archives are socially constructed objects rather than objectively neutral ones. She contends that the researchers

¹¹⁵ Caroline Brown. "Memory, identity and the archival paradigm: introduction to the special issue". *Archival Science*. (2013, 13) 85-93.

¹¹⁶ Graeme Reid. "The History of the Past is the Trust of the Present: Preservation and Excarvation in the Gay and Lesbian Archives of South Africa". *Refiguring the Archive*. Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Graeme Reid eds. (Cape Town: David Phillip, 2002) 206.

¹¹⁷ Achilles Mbembe. "The Power of the Archives and Its Limits". *Refiguring the Archive*. Carolyn Hamilton ed. (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002) 19.

¹¹⁸ Trouillot. *Silencing the Past*. 52.

should be critical of the way they make use of archival sources.¹¹⁹ The “silences” found in the archives, according to Trouillot can reveal a lot about the subject. He further contends that the elite use biases that exists in the archives for their own personal gain.¹²⁰ In order for me to complete this thesis, I used the Alan Paton Centre and Struggle Archives in Pietermaritzburg. The Centre house the Black Sash movement documents donated by Mary Kleinenberg. It had interview transcripts of Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg and Anne Harley. The Black Sash documents housed in the Alan Paton Centre fall under the PC 2, PC 4, PC 12, and PC 96 collections. I also used the Digital Innovation South Africa (DISA), which consists of the Black Sash collection such as newspaper clippings, pamphlets, and journals. These collections were useful as they entail primary sources which have not been published before.

Limitations of this Study

This study only examined the biographical narratives of only three women activists that were members of the Black Sash in the Natal Midlands. However, it is explained in the methodology why this is the case. Another limitation of this study is that the protagonists chose not to discuss the contemporary issue of sexuality. This restricted our insight into understanding whether the Black Sash became an organisation that was openly supportive of gay relationships in the 1980s and/or 1990s.

The structure of the dissertation

Chapter One: Introduction/literature Survey/Research Methodology

Chapter 1 outlines the structure of the dissertation, the research problem, the significance of the study, the preliminary literature, the aims and objectives of this study, the theories used in this study, the methods and methodology, limitations of this study.

Chapter Two: The Socio-economic and Political Conditions in the Natal Midlands region.

This chapter provides background information on the social and political history of Natal and Natal Midlands in particular, in the 20th century. This chapter also highlights the socio-

¹¹⁹ Ann Laura Stoler. “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance: On the Content in the Form”. *Archival Science*. (2002, 2:1-2) 87-109.

¹²⁰ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 52-55.

economic conditions in South Africa and in the Natal Midlands region from the inception of the apartheid system in 1948. This chapter explores the anti-apartheid campaigns of the 1950s in Pietermaritzburg and highlights how the political events that were happening in the Natal Midlands during this period shaped the patterns of the national anti-apartheid movement. It also explores regional mobilisation in the context of class, race, and gender against apartheid, in the Natal Midlands up to the 1950s period. Lastly, this chapter explores how local incidents were shaped by national events. The Natal Midland region was not isolated but was influenced by the political events that were happening in South Africa.

Chapter Three: The Life Stories of Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley

Through the biographical profiles, in this chapter, I will explore and gain insight into their early life, factors that gave rise to their early politicization; family, education, and what factors shaped their political consciousness and activism. This chapter will examine socio-economic and political factors that shaped and defined the three women as political activists. The first part of this chapter examines her childhood years. The chapter will examine the biography and childhood years of the protagonists in the Natal Midlands. It will further look at the impact that apartheid had on their families. It will also explore their family's political activism and the factors that shaped their political identity during childhood.

Chapter Four: Intra-Racial and Inter-Racial Cooperation between Black Sash and other women's organisations

This chapter will highlight areas of collective resistance with other multiracial organisations, through the narratives of the three women. It further illustrates how the contribution of Pietermaritzburg activists such as Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley shaped and defined both regional and nationalist history. This chapter contextualizes the narratives of the three women, as it will also explore the Black Sash's role in monitoring removals and violence; the Black Sash's advice office role in issues of labour compensation and pass laws; and the Sash's role in the regional Inkatha-ANC conflict. Lastly, it dispels the historical inaccuracy that Pietermaritzburg was the centre of political violence. This historical inaccuracy often causes the pivotal role played by Pietermaritzburg activists to be overlooked.

Chapter Five: Growing Apartheid Oppression, the Black Sash, and the Feminist Agenda

The main aim of this chapter is to reveal the ideological underpinnings of the Black Sash with regards to feminism and the eradication of gender oppression in the private and public spheres. The formation of the Black Sash saw the organisation becoming a vehicle for liberal women to fight the apartheid system. For thirty years, the three generations of Black Sash activists carried on sustained campaigns aimed at protesting against the immoral apartheid system. The early 1980s following the resurgent wave of grassroots organisations saw younger members involved in other forms of protest joining the Black Sash. This resulted in women's issues taking centre stage and were added to the organisation's political agenda. This led to the alienation of the Black Sash older members, who were used to a less militant organisation. However, the third-generation activists of the Black Sash advocated for the organisation to change as they demanded a more gender-sensitive approach. These members argued that the organisation needed to focus its attention on women's rights. Therefore, this chapter will examine how gender issues became an integral part of the Black Sash movement in Natal Midlands as new generation of young scholars informed by feminism joined the organisation. It will also explore how gender issues /feminism were framed, contested, and negotiated within the Black Sash through the perceptions and experiences of Mary Kleinenberg and Anne Harley.

Chapter Six: The Impact of Politics on Family Life

In this chapter, I will discuss what the interviews revealed about the challenges the three women faced as a wife, mothers, and activists. It will also examine how these women managed to balance and negotiate all these roles within a hostile political environment.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This chapter concludes with a summary of my findings.

CHAPTER TWO

The Socio-economic and Political Conditions in KwaZulu-Natal Midlands region

Introduction

The history of women in the struggle against racial and gender oppression in South Africa is generally presented as one that took place in the shadow of a male-dominated history. This chapter will, therefore, contextualise the history of gender oppression and resistance in Natal Midlands. It starts by summarising the early history of Pietermaritzburg in the 1800s and the development of early racial segregation living conditions and exploitation of black South Africans between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. It will give a broad introduction to the social and political history of the Natal Midlands as background information for a study of the Black Sash in the Natal Midlands. It also contextualises the history of oppression and resistance in Natal Midlands by exploring the anti-apartheid campaigns of the 1950s in Pietermaritzburg, and how the political events that were happening in the Natal Midlands during this period shaped the patterns of the national anti-apartheid movement. It also explores regional mobilisation in the course of race, gender and class against apartheid in Pietermaritzburg up to the 1950s. Lastly, this chapter also alludes to how local incidents were shaped by national events as the Natal Midland region was not isolated but was influenced by what was happening at the broader national political level.

The formation of Pietermaritzburg

Pietermaritzburg was developed in 1838 by the Voortrekkers.¹²¹ The town became known as Pieter Mauritsburg, in memory of Pieter Maurits Retief, the leader of the Voortrekkers. In 1839, the name was switched to Pietermaritzburg to honour the memory of Maritz and Retief.¹²² After conflicts between the British and the Voortrekker settlers, the Voortrekkers submitted to British control in 1842. In May 1844, Natal was captured by the British and became the Natal colony's administrative capital.¹²³ In 1843, the British took over Pietermaritzburg, and it became the base

¹²¹ John Benyon. "Colonial Capital". *Pietermaritzburg 1838-1988: A New Portrait of an African City*. John Laband and Robert Haswell eds. (Pietermaritzburg, Shuter and Shooter, 1988) 86.

¹²² Johan Voigt. *50 Years of the History of the Republic in South Africa, 1795-1845: Volume 2*. (Cape Town: Struik, 1969) 129.

¹²³ Harry Edgar Brookes and Colin de Webb. *A History of Natal*. (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1965) 51.

for their colonial army and an agricultural hub. The rapid growth of the African population in the settlement meant conflict over land was imminent. The colonial government demarcated native reserves for Africans to maintain a provision of cheap African labour to white settlers. Furthermore, the colonial government taxed the male reserve dwellers, forcing them to seek employment.¹²⁴

The reserves helped to stimulate the growth of the white-owned commercial agricultural sector. The male reserve dwellers also rendered their services to the white settlers. In case they sustained injuries or diseases in their labour, they would retire to the reserves whereby their wives, children, and the chief took care of them. A group of African “immigrants” *amakholwa* (Christian converts) established their autonomous agricultural village called Edendale in 1851. The *amakholwa* saw themselves as an African elite who could compete in the settler economy. Pietermaritzburg was no longer just for whites by the 1850s, as it attracted labourers and traders of all races. The colonial government allowed Africans to acquire property in town. Africans owned many buildings in the city and often rented some of them to diverse tenants, which created mixed-race neighbourhoods.¹²⁵

The growing population of Africans in the reserves led to sanitation, hygiene, and disease concerns. The colonial government approved the establishment of a village for Africans to provide the sanitary care needed by the Africans. However, the economic depression from 1865 to 1870 made it impossible for the colonial government to build a village for Africans. By 1873, the motion to create an African village resurfaced; the main aim behind this idea was to encourage a stable working class. This village was approved and was quickly discarded in favour of building barracks for single African males. The initial proposal was abandoned due to concerns that the African village would attract unwanted residents and squatters who would not provide labour or white settlers. By 1874, the colonial government, with Theophilus Shepstone’s influence, introduced policies in the city that aimed to police the movement and the settlement of Africans and Asians.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Marc Epprecht. *Welcome to Greater Edendale: Histories of Environment, Health, and Gender in an African City*. (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2016) 93-97.

¹²⁵ Epprecht, *Welcome to Greater Edendale: Histories of Environment, Health, and Gender in an African City*, 93-97.

¹²⁶ Epprecht, *Welcome to Greater Edendale: Histories of Environment, Health, and Gender in an African City*, 98-101.

The *togt* system-imposed curfews banned the sale of homemade alcohol in urban areas and required the African labourers to register daily for labour. The liquor laws aimed at restricting the size and activities of women in the city; women were thriving economically in the city as they had established shebeens.¹²⁷ By the late 1800s period, there was little interest in industrialising Pietermaritzburg as their primary focus was turning Pietermaritzburg into the political, agricultural, educational, and administrative capital of Natal.¹²⁸ Edendale also witnessed economic development during this period, and this was due to the arrival of the railroad in 1880.¹²⁹ These railways connected major economic cities such as Durban and Johannesburg.¹³⁰

Since the 1870s, Muslim traders purchased farms of the outskirts of town and built rental properties for indentured workers, mostly Africans and Hindus. These farms were cheap due to unreliable or polluted water supply. The establishment of these rental properties saw many African women moving into these burgeoning urban areas in Pietermaritzburg.¹³¹ The emergence of this urbanised Black population posed a challenge, to local urban administrators. This is due to the fact that prior to 1900 African workers migrated between urban and rural areas. However, the establishment of these rental properties saw a growing degree of permanence for Africans in the city of Pietermaritzburg. These areas became the scene of the informal economy, largely supported by beer brewing by African women. To curb these informal pubs the government passed the Beer Act of 1908. This gave the police the power to arrest anyone bring home-brewed beer into the city, as well as the brewers mostly African women.¹³² This enactment of the Native Beer Act led to the displacement of most shebeens. To clear out these settlements, in the 1920s the city administrator established a separate formal community to accommodate Africans employed in town. Sobantu Village built in 1927, was

¹²⁷ Epprecht, *Welcome to Greater Edendale: Histories of Environment, Health, and Gender in an African City*, 98-101.

¹²⁸ Carlo Torino. "Industrialisation, 1838-1987". *Pietermaritzburg 1838-1988: A New Portrait of an African City*. John Laband and Robert Haswell eds. (Pietermaritzburg, Shuter and Shooter, 1988) 145.

¹²⁹ Marc Epprecht. Health, environment and the racialisation of space in Pietermaritzburg/Edendale, 1880- 1950: Revisiting the 'sanitation syndrome'. *Archive of the History and African Studies Seminar*, April 2010, 16.

¹³⁰ Bill Guest. "Economic Development of the Capital City, 1838-1910". *Pietermaritzburg 1838-1988: A New Portrait of an African City*. John Laband and Robert Haswell eds. (Pietermaritzburg, Shuter and Shooter, 1988) 120-128.

¹³¹ Christian Myles Rogerson and Jonathan Crust. "New wave African historiography and African historical geography". *Progress in Human Geography*. (1983,7) 203-231.

¹³² Maynard Swanson. "The Durban System: roots of urban apartheid in colonial Natal". *African Studies*. (1976,35) 159-176.

one of those townships established to house Africans working in the city and was located on the southeastern side of Pietermaritzburg.¹³³

The Impact of Influx Control on African Women

This legislative process aimed at confining women in the reserves and rural communities. These oppressive measures were also attributed to the lower number of females in leadership roles during this period.¹³⁴ This was partly the effect of the patriarchal and oppressive ethnic system, which viewed women negatively and led to them playing a minimal role in the discussions of national development.¹³⁵ African women's life was firmly rooted in traditional beliefs and values. The passing of the Native Administration Act in 1927, further entrenched patriarchy and control over women. This Act reduced women to the status of minors and recognised the customary law. Customary law, which governed the standard of living of African people, discriminated against women.¹³⁶ In Natal, all women were subjected to the Natal Code which deemed them as perpetual minors.¹³⁷ The legal consequences of being perpetual minors meant that women could not enter into contracts; travel without permission from their guardians; or own property and their earnings belonged to their guardians.¹³⁸ Because of this distinction between men and women, African women were deprived of equal status with African men.¹³⁹ Women of all races slowly began to move into the cities and entered the labour market. African women now had more economic opportunities in the cities. This resulted in African women moving to cities rather than staying in the reserves. During this period the government imposed no restrictions on the movement of African women. Women's exposure to city life resulted in them becoming more politicised as they were willing to fight for equal rights and socio-political

¹³³ Cecil Seethal, "Civic Organisations and the Local State in South Africa, 1979-1993". (PhD Thesis, University of Iowa, 1993) 203.

¹³⁴ Deborah Gaitskell. "Housewives, Maids or Mothers: Some Contradictions of Domesticity for Christian Women in Johannesburg, 1903-39". *The Journal of African History*. (1983, 24:2) 421.

¹³⁵ Barbara Huttmacher Maclean. *Strike a Woman, Strike a Rock: Fighting for Freedom in South Africa*. (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003) 94.

¹³⁶ Belinda Bozzoli. "Marxism, Feminism and South African Studies." *Journal of Southern African Studies*. (1983, 9:2) 139-171.

¹³⁷ Simons, *African Women: their legal status in South Africa*, 202-209.

¹³⁸ Muriel Horrell. *The Rights of African Women: Some Suggested Reforms*. (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1975) 3.

¹³⁹ S. M. Seymour. *Bantu Law in South Africa*. (Cape Town, Juta, 1970)

rights of women.¹⁴⁰ The government encouraged oppression and discrimination against African women using legislation and social and political systems.¹⁴¹

This heightened in 1928 when the government enacted the Liquor Act to criminalise the sale, possession, and consumption of liquor by Africans. This legislation limited Coloureds to the purchase of two bottles of liquor each at any one time and place. The consequence of this Act was that once again the bulk of all liquor produced had to be distributed through illegal channels.¹⁴² African women continued to sell homemade beer in the shebeens. To obtain financial freedom, African women made homebrewed beer and opened shebeens and handcrafted goods which they sold illicitly. It also gave African women economic independence as they began to earn a small income. During this period, women began to challenge patriarchal oppression formally and informally. Informally, many African women obtained financial independence.¹⁴³ The government recognised that the informal liquor sector could restrain African women's economic and political aspirations. To control Africans in the reserves and townships the government established its own beer halls. The police raided the shebeens, houses were wrecked and home-brewed was seized. The regulations imposed by the government curb women's financial independence and restricted the consumption and production of alcohol to municipal beer halls. African women lost their economic independence since restrictions were put in place.¹⁴⁴ In contrast, this urbanisation resulted in racial and social integration.¹⁴⁵ To curb this racial integration, the government increasingly enforced the 1923 Urban Areas Act. This act had been introduced with the aim of racial separation. It also restricted Africans from buying land in white areas.¹⁴⁶ The government also enacted the 1934 Slums Act, which eroded mixed inner-city residential areas and moved black residents to new outlying townships.¹⁴⁷ These

¹⁴⁰ Cheryl Walker. *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*. (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990) 14-15

¹⁴¹ William Beinart and Saul Dubow, *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth Century South Africa*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2013) 18.

¹⁴² Paul Nugent. "The temperance movement and wine farmers at the Cape: collective action, radical discourse and legislative reform, 1890-1965." *The Journal of African History*. (2011, 52:3) 341-363.

¹⁴³ Mark Mathabane. *African Women: Three Generations*. (New York: Harper Collins, 1994) 132-136.

¹⁴⁴ Helen Bradford. "We Are Now the Men': Women's Beer Hall Protests in the Natal Countryside, 1929". *Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives*. Belinda Bozzoli ed. (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987), 292-323.

¹⁴⁵ Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe. *Johannesburg: The elusive metropolis*. (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2008) 12.

¹⁴⁶ Paul Maylam. "The rise and decline of urban apartheid." *African Affairs*. (1990, 89:354) 57-84.

¹⁴⁷ Philip Harrison and Tanya Zack. "The Power of Mining: The Fall of Gold and Rise of Johannesburg". *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*. (2012, 30:4) 550-570.

segregationist era legislations deprived Africans of the right of ownership of land in urban and rural areas. They frequently led to the mass expulsion of Africans in certain areas designated for white people. This also resulted in the emergence of squatter camps that the local authorities often bulldozed and demolished.¹⁴⁸ The first legislative measures to control the influx of African women in urban areas were made in 1930. The municipalities were empowered to prohibit African women from entering the urban areas without their prior permission. In 1937, women wishing to travel to town in Pietermaritzburg were required to obtain the permission of the local urban authority in addition to that of the magistrate in their home districts. However, African women were exempted from carrying passes. The enforcement of these measures was ineffective.¹⁴⁹

African Women and Migration

By the 1930s, most farmworkers in the Natal Midlands were labour tenants. The African farmworkers were accommodated on their employers' property. Seventy-five percent of Natal's farm labour outside the coastal sugar and timber areas consisted of labour tenants.¹⁵⁰ Some tenants received cash payments; however, plenty of farmers paid no wages to their labour tenants.¹⁵¹ Poverty and non-provision of education to the labour tenants by the farmers was also a way to increase the dependence of the labour tenants on the farmers. By the 1930s, twenty-three per cent of the labour tenants had no formal education.¹⁵² The conditions of the labour tenant were stipulated in a contract that was drafted by the farmer and his labourer tenant. However, farmers heavily relied on verbal agreements in practice as they regarded the written contracts as bureaucratic irritations.¹⁵³ The contract represented the relationship of the farmer and the tenant; however, the contract favoured the farmer whilst disadvantaging the labourer tenant.¹⁵⁴ The 1930s saw the transformation in the city centre as old buildings were demolished

¹⁴⁸ Crais Clifton. *The Politics of Evil: Magic, State Power and the Political Imagination in South Africa*. (Ohio: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 98.

¹⁴⁹ Rodney Davenport. "African Townsmen? South African Natives (Urban Areas) Legislation through the Years." *African Affairs*. (1969, 68:127) 99-100.

¹⁵⁰ Nathan Hurwitz. *Agriculture in Natal 1860-1950: Natal Regional Survey. Volume 12*. (Cape Town, 1957) 29.

¹⁵¹ Oliver Walker. *Kaffirs are Lively*. (Victor Gollancz Ltd: London, 1948) 73.

¹⁵² Deborah Bonnin. "Class, Consciousness and Conflict in the Natal Midlands, 1940-1987: The Case of B.T.R Sarmcol Workers", (MA thesis, University of Natal, 1987), 74.

¹⁵³ Joseph Loudon. *White Farmers and Black Labour-Tenants: A Study of a Farming Community in the South African Province of Natal*. (African Studies Centre: Cambridge, 1970) 75.

¹⁵⁴ Jeff Guy. "Analysing Pre-Capitalist Societies in Southern Africa". *Journal of Southern African Studies*. (1987, 14:1) 18-37.

and replaced by tall buildings and towers. Economic growth during this period necessitated more workers and Africans required jobs and income following the Great Depression. This resulted in the mass immigration of Africans to urban areas. Industrial development was due to the rapid rate of urbanisation after the Second World War.¹⁵⁵ As a result, migrants became permanent residents in cities, and this weakened their ties with the rural areas. Large numbers of African men and women made their way to the cities in response to accelerated industrialisation. The urban migration of farm labourers led to critical shortage of farm labour. The white farmers who paid their workers inadequate wages could not compete with the lucrative wage offered by lucrative jobs in the urban city of Pietermaritzburg. This led to a dire shortage of labour on the farms.¹⁵⁶ Despite this economic boom African men and women that were workers, derived no benefit. This is due to the high standard of living in the cities which was caused by the Second World War.¹⁵⁷

This period saw many women entering the manufacturing industry. The injustices they experienced in the workforce allowed them to unionise and became active in the trade unions activities and also in the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA).¹⁵⁸ The trade union movement transcended race and class differences and brought women together.¹⁵⁹ However, the CPSA on the other hand had a firm belief that women should not fight their own struggle, but should form part of the liberation movement.¹⁶⁰ Racialised and segregated politics that existed during this period to some extent hindered inter-collective racial resistance. The African National Congress (ANC) only admitted Africans, the Natal Indian Congress and Transvaal Indian Congress only Indians, and the Coloured People's Party only Coloureds. In the 1940s, many ANC Youth League (ANCYL) prominent members who were inspired by African nationalism opposed the concept of non-racialism.¹⁶¹ Members of the ANCYL argued that it

¹⁵⁵ Franklin Norton Norris. *Economics in South Africa*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1949) 241.

¹⁵⁶ Mike Morris. "Apartheid, Agriculture and the State - The Farm Labour Question". *The Oxford History of South Africa, Volume Two*. M. Wilson and L. Thompson eds. (Oxford, 1971) 104-171.

¹⁵⁷ Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa*, 69-71.

¹⁵⁸ Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa*, 63.

¹⁵⁹ Julia Wells. *We now demand! the history of women's resistance to pass laws in South Africa*. (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993) 106.

¹⁶⁰ Shireem Hassim. "Gender, social location and feminist politics in South Africa". *Transformation*. (1991, 15) 69.

¹⁶¹ Non-racialism is principle of rejecting race as a way to categorise people. It refers to the rejection of racial ideology and the belief that humans belong to different races. Non-racialism stresses the idea of one human race and implies the recruitment of individual members without regards to colour, ethnic or race. In other words, races are products of social construction. Gerhard Maré. "Non-Racialism in the Struggle against Apartheid", *Society in Transition*, (2003, 34:1).

was Africans themselves that would achieve liberation against the apartheid regime.¹⁶² Jon Soske asserts that developments within Indian politics during this period in Natal influenced the development of African nationalist politics in the 1940s.¹⁶³ The formation of the Natal Indian Congress Youth League (NICYL) by about 40 religious youth bodies inspired the establishment of the ANCYL in Natal.¹⁶⁴ In 1945, the government increased restrictions on the movement and rights of residence of the African population in the cities by enacting the Urban Areas Act, which required black people to carry passes.¹⁶⁵

The Genesis of Women’s Inter-collective Racial Resistance

Bridglal Pachai asserts that the Natal ANCYL was initially not in favour of forging ties with other “non-European” communities, but after the Indian Passive Resistance of 1946, the Natal ANCYL was reconciled with the NIC and advocated for cooperation.¹⁶⁶ South African liberation politics in the late 1940s was marked by vigorous and conflicting debates about inter-collective racial resistance. The Passive Resistance Campaign of 1946 and 1948, and the 1946 Mineworkers’ strike on the Rand, led to closer relations between the ANC and the SAIC. The signing of the “Doctor’s Pact” by Dr Yusuf Dadoo, president of the TIC, Dr A.B. Xuma, president of the ANC and Dr Monty Naicker president of the NIC in 1947 marked the beginning of the inter-collective racial resistance.¹⁶⁷ Dunbar Moodie characterised the 1940s as a turbulent decade that marked a turning point in the development of African politics in South Africa, witnessing a transformation in resistance politics.¹⁶⁸

Women’s political activism must also be viewed against the segregated politics of the period. As alluded to earlier, the NIC, TIC, and ANC were separate political bodies and hindered collective resistance. In June 1946, the government enacted the “Ghetto Act” which restricted

¹⁶² David Everatt. “Non-Racialism in South Africa: Status and Prospects.” *Politikon*. (2012, 39:1) 15.

¹⁶³ Jon Soske. “Wash Me Black Again’: African Nationalism, the Indian Diaspora, and Kwa-Zulu Natal, 1944-1960”. (PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 2009) 62.

¹⁶⁴ Goolam Vahed. “The Making of Indian Identity in Durban, 1914-1949”. (PhD Dissertation, Indiana University, 1995) 233.

¹⁶⁵ Rubin Neville. “Law, Race and Color in South Africa”. *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*. (1974, 3:4) 7.

¹⁶⁶ Bridglal Pachai. *The International Aspects of the South Africa Indian Question, 1860-1971*. (Cape Town: Struik, 1971) 190.

¹⁶⁷ David James Smith. *Young Mandela*. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2010) 72.

¹⁶⁸ Dunbar Moodie. “The South African State and Industrial Conflict in the 1940s”. *International Journal of African Historical Studies*. (1988, 21:1) 21-61.

Indian ownership and occupation of land in the newly demarcated “White-only” areas. The Indian community embarked on a passive resistance campaign from June 1946 to 1948 to protest against this discriminatory act. The NIC protested the Ghetto Act by launching a mass non-violent protest, based on Gandhi’s ideals of Satyagraha.¹⁶⁹ The protesters camped out on prohibited land which resulted in their massive arrests.¹⁷⁰ This campaign attracted very few Africans, Coloureds and Whites. Prior to the 1940s, Indians waged political struggles separately from the Africans and, in fact, avoided attempts to unite the oppressed African, Coloured, and Indian people.¹⁷¹ However, the few Africans, Coloureds, and whites that participated were incarcerated alongside the Indians. The campaign laid the groundwork for future collaboration between African and Indian organizations, most notably the NIC and the ANC.

This resulted in the powerful Indian support to the August 1946 African miners’ strike.¹⁷² In addition, the patriarchal attitudes prevailing within the NIC, TIC, and SAIC hindered women’s political development. Women were denied full membership in the ANC until 1943.¹⁷³ The ANC Women’s League (ANCWL) was founded in 1948. Its objective was to advocate for the issues faced by African women in their quest for freedom and equality and assist in their mobilisation.¹⁷⁴ Traditionally the women’s role in the ANC was to assist the movement rather than being equal partners to their male comrades.¹⁷⁵ The ANC was characterised by sexism in its discourse and operation. Anne McClintock asserts that women were excluded from participating in the ANC, forcing them into grassroots activism. Therefore, women’s political

¹⁶⁹ Satyagraha was nonviolent resistance developed by Mahandas Gandhi in his protest campaigns in South Africa and India. Gandhi’s first passive resistance campaign targeted the Asiatic Registration Bill of 1906 which required Indian males to register and have their fingerprints recorded, limited trade and segregated living areas for Indians. This resistance included burning of registration documents; trading without licenses; crossing provincial borders without permits. see Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed. *The South African Gandhi: Stretcher-Bearer of Empire*. (Stanford University Press, California, 2016)

¹⁷⁰ Jon Soske. *Internal Frontiers: African Nationalism and the Indian Diaspora*. (Ohio University Press, Athens, 2017) 38-50.

¹⁷¹ Goolam Vahed. “The Making of Indianness: Indian Politics in South Africa During the 1930s and 1940s.” *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*. (1997, 17) 1-37.

¹⁷² Enuga Sreenivasulu Reddy. “Indian Passive Resistance Campaign in South Africa, 1946-48”. *Mainstream*. (1997) 2-5.

¹⁷³ Cheryl Walker. *Women and Resistance in South Africa*. (Cape Town: David Philip, 1982) 16.

¹⁷⁴ Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa*, 88-89.

¹⁷⁵ Bev Orton. *Women, Activism and Apartheid in South Africa: Using play texts to document the herstory of South Africa*. (University of Hull: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2018) 6.

character in the ANC was merely seen as supportive. This reflect the patriarchal nature of the ANC during this period, which expected women to be quiet and politically docile.¹⁷⁶

In 1952, the Defiance Campaign was launched. The Defiance Campaign was a non-violent civil disobedience against the apartheid system which was jointly pursued by all racial groups. The Defiance Campaign established a mass-based, multi-racial political context. The significant role played by women in the Defiance Campaign resulted in their massive arrest. However, due to the absence of a multi-racial women's organisation, their participation in the anti-apartheid movement was sporadic. This was largely due to the racialised and segregated politics that existed during the early 1940s period. The move towards non-racialism in Natal was threatened in January 1949, when Durban experienced riots between Indians and Africans which left 142 people dead and more than 1 087 injured.¹⁷⁷ The apartheid government used the Durban riots as ideological ammunition and enacted the Group Areas Act in 1950. This Act divided the urban areas into racially segregated residential zones.¹⁷⁸ The government justified the imposition of the Group Areas Act as a necessity to prevent future conflict between 'races'. Those advocating for the multi-racial political alliance between the ANC and SAIC realised the great harm that the riots caused for their cause. This conflict broke out just as collective action against the apartheid government was planned. The SAIC argued that the riots were incited by the poor socio-economic conditions under which blacks lived and the racist policies imposed by the apartheid government.¹⁷⁹ As a result, G.M. Naicker and A.W.G. Champion called for calm, and both the ANC and the NIC worked together to provide aid to those displaced by the violence.¹⁸⁰ Many women at the grassroots level participated in the Defiance Campaign on a massive scale. Women were not subjected to the pass legislation until 1952.¹⁸¹

The influx control measures enforced by the local authorities to regulate entry to urban areas did not prevent women from coming to towns. The government increased formal control over

¹⁷⁶ Shireen Hassim. *The ANC Women's League: Sex, Gender and Politics*. (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2015) 29.

¹⁷⁷ Kogila Moodley. "The Ambivalence of Survival Politics in Indian-African Relations". *South Africa's Indians: The Evolution of a Minority*. Bridglal Pachai ed. (Washington, DC: UP of America, 1979) 440.

¹⁷⁸ James Wilmot. "Group areas and the nature of apartheid." *South African Sociological Review*. (1992, 5:1) 41-57.

¹⁷⁹ Karis, and Carter, *From protest to challenge: Volume 2: Hope and challenge, 1935-1952*, 285-288.

¹⁸⁰ Ashwin Desai. "A Context for Violence: Social and Historical Underpinnings of Indo-African Violence in a South African Community." (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Michigan State University, 1993) 152.

¹⁸¹ Wells, *We now demand! the history of women's resistance to pass laws in South Africa*, 105.

African women's mobility after 1948 by imposing pass laws and strict influx control restrictions in urban areas. To regulate the mobility of women in the urban areas the government enacted two legislations in 1952 that aimed at incorporation women into the pass system. These laws made it a crime for an African and women to stay in the city for more than 72 hours and also required African men and women to carry pass books.¹⁸² The intention of these laws was to subject women to strict influx control measures in urban areas. These laws extended the issuing of pass books to women in order to ensure that is sufficient supply of farm labourers and domestic workers in the urban areas. African men and women were mandated to carry pass books and official authorisation to be in the urban area.¹⁸³ However, by the time these laws took effect women had migrated to the urban areas to seek work.¹⁸⁴ It also discriminated against African women as they lost their right to accommodation in the urban area if their husbands died. They could not inherit their husbands' leases. Women who obtained the rights to reside in the urban area on the grounds of marriage lost that right when the marriage failed and resulted in a divorce.¹⁸⁵

In June 1952, the Defiance Campaign which was a political resistance against the six unjust and discriminatory laws initiated by the ANC and the SAIC was launched. Many women at the grassroots level joined in on a massive scale.¹⁸⁶ The Defiance Campaign succeeded in arousing the political consciousness of the Coloured, Indian and African women in Pietermaritzburg. African, Indian and Coloured women, frustrated by the unbearable conditions joined the call of action.¹⁸⁷ It brought together African and Indian women from diverse backgrounds with experience in protest politics.¹⁸⁸ The Defiance Campaign was a success as it demonstrated African leadership's potential power and its ability to co-operate with other "non-whites".¹⁸⁹ When the Defiance Campaign was suspended in December 1952, just 8,326 national arrests and 192 in Natal.¹⁹⁰ Then in April 1954, the National Conference of Women took place and

¹⁸² Elaine Unterhalter. "Women in Struggle: South Africa." *Third World Quarterly*. (1983, 5:4) 887.

¹⁸³ Philip Frankel. "The Politics of Passes: Control and Change in South Africa." *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. (1979, 17:2) 199-217.

¹⁸⁴ Harold Wolpe. "Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid." *Economy and Society*. (1972, 4:1)

¹⁸⁵ Harold Jack Simons. *African Women: their legal status in South Africa*. (London: Hurst, 1968) 282.

¹⁸⁶ Wells, *We now demand! the history of women's resistance to pass laws in South Africa*, 105.

¹⁸⁷ Albert Luthuli. *Let My People Go: An Autobiography*. (London: Collins, 1962) 128-129.

¹⁸⁸ Cheryl Walker. *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*. (Cape Town: David Philip, 1991) 155-283.

¹⁸⁹ Luthuli, *Let My People Go: An Autobiography*, 130.

¹⁹⁰ Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*, 46.

resolved on establishing a multi-racial women's movement the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW).¹⁹¹

In September 1954, the Congress of the People campaign took off in Natal. This late start was due to the disorganisation of Congress forces in the province. However, once the formal launch took place on 5 September 1954 at the Kajej Memorial Hall, Durban, the campaign gained momentum rapidly and saw mass mobilisation in Natal.¹⁹² The campaign was extensive and vigorous in the Natal Midlands region as the Freedom volunteers and Congress activists which included women were campaigning on an area-to-area basis in rural areas.¹⁹³ SACTU was also instrumental in Pietermaritzburg in the mobilisation of workers for the Congress of the People.¹⁹⁴ Women played a key role in the SACTU as it provided a special forum for women workers to unite across racial lines.¹⁹⁵ On 25-26 June 1955, the Congress of the People was held in Kliptown and was attended by nearly 3,000 delegates of all races. It adopted a manifesto called the Freedom Charter. The success of the Congress of the People in Pietermaritzburg can be measured by the number of delegates from the Natal Midlands region to the Congress of the People itself which included women. A total of 325 delegates represented the province in the Congress of the People. The ANC in Natal shortly after the Congress of the People committed itself to promote the Freedom Charter. The Freedom Charter became the cornerstone document of the anti-apartheid movement.¹⁹⁶

White participation in the liberation movement should be perceived against the background of multiple political thoughts and a strong belief in non-racialism. The Cape had a strong tradition of White liberalism. For example, activists such as Helen Suzman who identified themselves as Liberals believed in political doctrines which supported qualified franchises based on property and education for non-whites as opposed to Communists such as Joe Slovo and Bram Fischer

¹⁹¹ Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa*, 136.

¹⁹² Ismail Vadi. *The Congress of the People and Freedom Charter Campaign*. (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1995) 87.

¹⁹³ Suttner, and Cronin, *30 Years of the Freedom Charter*, 46-50.

¹⁹⁴ Rob Lambert. "Political unionism in South Africa: The South African Congress of Trade Unions, 1955-1965". (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1988) 131-137.

¹⁹⁵ Iris Berger. *Threads of Solidarity: Women in South African Industry, 1900-1980*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992) 153-169.

¹⁹⁶ Vadi, *The Congress of the People and Freedom Charter Campaign*, 95.

who supported full equality. White activists also sought to ‘transcend racial division’.¹⁹⁷ This was noticeable during the formation of the Congress of Democrats in 1953 as this organisation consisted of leftists, both socialists, and liberals. The COD aligned itself with the ANC and together with the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) formed the Congress Alliance.¹⁹⁸

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has examined the early history of Pietermaritzburg in the 1800s and the development of early racial segregation living conditions, and exploitation of black South Africans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This historical background has shown how the status of women was shaped and define in the Natal Midlands. Women played a significant role in the struggle for liberation in South Africa. Their activism saw them also taking a leading role in the formation, unionisation, administration, and mobilisation of trade union movements in South Africa. Their unionism occurred against the backdrop of trade unionism being heavily influenced by the patriarchal discourse. Women’s issues were being viewed as the national liberation that superseded gendered oppression and women’s emancipation.

Black women have played a significant role in raising women’s political awareness through their active involvement in the unions. Although the absence of a multi-racial women’s organisation made their participation in the anti-apartheid movement was sporadic, they took the initiative in opposing some of the repression and oppressive laws, especially the pass laws. Black women generally suffered triple oppression because of their race, gender, and class.¹⁹⁹ They struggled against oppression as women, workers, and as black people.²⁰⁰ Without a doubt, these three centres of oppression influenced the formation of the Black Sash whose goal was to free women from these forms of oppression. As shall be discussed in the following chapters,

¹⁹⁷ Blair Dickmand Saunders, “Conflict of Color: White Activists in the South African Anti-Apartheid Movement”, (Unpublished Honours thesis, The College of William and Mary, 2011) 12.

¹⁹⁸ Thomas Karis, Gail Herhart, Gwendolen Carter. *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964. Vol 3: Challenge and Violence 1953-1964.* (Hoover Institute: Stanford, 1977) 13.

¹⁹⁹ Sheila Meintjes. “The Women's Struggle for Equality during South Africa's Transition to Democracy.” *Transformation.* (1996, 30) 57.

²⁰⁰ Bernstein, *For their triumphs & for their tears: Women in apartheid South Africa*, 8-9.

women's issues became a key concern in the Black Sash movement. This movement also got involved in activities which aimed at giving a voice to the marginalised rural women.²⁰¹

²⁰¹ Meintjes, "The Women's Struggle for Equality during South Africa's Transition to Democracy", 55.

CHAPTER THREE

The Life Stories of Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg and Anne Harley

Introduction

Through the biographical profiles, in this chapter, I will explore and gain insight into the early lives of Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley. This chapter will contextualize their early life, factors that gave rise to their early politicisation, family, and education. It also will also examine the factors that shaped their political consciousness and activism. The first part of this chapter will examine the biography and childhood years of the protagonists in the Natal Midlands. It will further look at the impact that apartheid had on their families. It will also explore their family's political activism and the factors that shaped their political identity during childhood. Lastly, it will analyse the socio-economic and political factors that shaped and defined the three women as political activists. These gendered life histories will highlight various forms of oppression in which these women faced and the multiple roles they played in the anti-apartheid movement.

The three women come from different classes, educational and geographical backgrounds. Joan Lynette Kerchhoff (nee Attridge) was born in KwaZulu-Natal in Dundee on 7 May 1938. In 1943, she started school at the Holy Rosary Convent. The Holy Rosary Convent was a Catholic white-only girls' boarding school founded in 1918 and only provided primary education.²⁰² She received schooling at the Convent for two years. Her father was a teacher and had a liberal outlook, but her parents were not politically involved. She recalled: "My father was a teacher and had a liberal outlook on life, but my parents were not political. I suppose you could say that I was exposed to liberal values while I was growing up".²⁰³ Her father did not belong to a political party as he was an employee of the education department. Although Kerchhoff's father deemed apartheid as morally wrong, he could not actively oppose it as the education department employed him.

Mary Kleinenberg was born on 27 February 1940 in Gwelo, Zimbabwe (Rhodesia at the time). Her parents were Edgar and Bridget Arnott. She was the second child out of three children. Her

²⁰² Joy Brain. *Catholics in Natal. Vol. II: 1886–1925*. (Durban, Archdiocese of Durban, 1982) 68.

²⁰³ Alan Paton Centre (hereafter cited as APC), Joan Kerchhoff interview by Pat Merrett, Pietermaritzburg, 25 August 1995: 6-10

father worked for the railways while her mother worked as a receptionist in a hotel.²⁰⁴ In 1944, when Kleinenberg was four years old, her parents divorced. Bridget Arnott sent her three children to live in a children's home run by the Anglican Church in Gwelo until she remarried nine years later. The Anglican Church provided accommodation for Kleinenberg, and her two sisters while her mother worked as a housemother in a home for unmarried mothers during this period. In 1946 she started school at the Cochlan Primary School in Bulawayo. The Cochlan Primary School was a white-only girls' school founded in 1911. Kleinenberg recalled: "I was a very happy child, loved school, and the nuns in the home; my mother took us out when she could, and we had an aunt who took us out for weekends. I was totally unaware of the fact that all the children in the home and in my school were white".²⁰⁵ Growing up in an Anglican Church children's home and being raised by nuns had a religious impact that shaped and defined her political activism from childhood. She asserts that:

There was certainly a religious aspect that taught me that all people mattered, all were equal before the Lord. I imagine that this helped to define my political activism though by the time I became involved, I had become agnostic: not following a religious path but believing that we simply cannot know.²⁰⁶

Anne Harley was born on 31 March 1964 in Pretoria. She was a second-born child with an older sister and a younger brother and sister. Her father was an information technology specialist for the South African Technical Industries. She grew up in an English-speaking suburb in Pretoria. In 1969, when Harley was five years old, she was enrolled at Brooklyn Primary School. Brooklyn Primary School was a white girls' only primary school. After completing primary school in 1974, she got enrolled at Pretoria High School for Girls which was designated for white girls only. The school which was under the Transvaal Education Department was politically liberal and socially conservative. Racial segregation, sanctioned by law, was practiced on the buses to schools, shops, and the post office in Pretoria. The government strengthened pass laws to enforce racial segregation and prevent black people from invading white areas, requiring Africans, Coloureds, and Indians to carry documents authorizing their

²⁰⁴ Kleinenberg assert that she is not sure of her Father's actual occupation in the railways

²⁰⁵ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

²⁰⁶ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

presence in restricted areas. Harley recalled how ‘the police vans occasionally drove around the neighbourhood and stopped black people whilst demanding to see their passbooks’. This experience horrified her and would later have a lasting impact on her understating of South African politics that combined gender resistance and the liberation struggle.²⁰⁷

Politicisation: family, educational background, and marriage

Education, family, and marriage shaped and influenced the political identities of anti-apartheid women activists. These factors also raised women’s political consciousness during their childhood. Joan Kerchhoff’s maternal grandfather shaped her political identity as a child. Her grandfather, Dr. Lloyd, was a local doctor in Dundee who used to attend the people of all races. Kerchhoff and her brother Derek used to stay with their maternal grandparents quite often, and they also used to accompany their grandfather when he rode his horse to rural areas in Dundee to attend to people of all races. Dr. Lloyd had his surgery at the back of the house, and people used to come to his house quite often. She used to assist her grandfather in his surgery while he was treating his patients. Her visits to her maternal grandparents impacted her political consciousness as she became exposed to a non-racial outlook at a tender age. Her political activism was shaped not only by her grandfather but also by her uncle and aunt who were affiliated with the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR).²⁰⁸ SAIRR was founded in 1929 as the first national multiracial organization to advocate for interracial cooperation in South Africa.²⁰⁹ The SAIRR was founded as a liberal research institution.²¹⁰ The involvement of her uncle and aunt in the SAIRR influenced her whilst growing up. Kerchhoff used to stay with her uncle and aunt when her parents were away, and she got exposed to the SAIRR literature. This provided her with an insight into the liberal outlook.

Kerchhoff’s marriage drew her to political participation. In 1957, at a birthday party, she met Peter Kerchhoff whom she knew as a student at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg. In 1958, just after six months out of university, they got married. Peter was studying a Bachelor of

²⁰⁷ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 05 November 2019.

²⁰⁸ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 May 2019.

²⁰⁹ Grace Davie. *Poverty Knowledge in South Africa: A Social History of Human Science, 1855-2005*. (Cambridge University Press, 2015) 73.

²¹⁰ Kelly Gillespie. “Containing the “wandering native”: Racial Jurisdiction and the Liberal Politics of Prison Reform in 1940s South Africa”. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. (2011, 37:3) 501.

Science in industrial chemistry at UN where he got an AECI scholarship. His father was working on the railway whilst his mother was a secretary. His father was involved in the Torch Commando and used to go at night to march with others in the city centre.²¹¹ His parents were also members of the United Party; however, during this period he was not keen on politics and was only involved with rugby and was keen on sports.²¹²

One of the AECI bursary requirements was that upon the completion of his degree, Peter had to pay back the bursary by working for the AECI for a few years. They moved back to AECI at Umbongintwini where Peter worked as an industrial chemist. They spent a year in Umbongintwini and had their first child Jennifer in 1959. In 1959, Peter was transferred back to Modderfontein and moved with Joan and their newborn baby girl. They spent a year in Modderfontein where Peter was working for the AECI as an industrial chemist. In 1961, they returned to Pietermaritzburg after Peter got a job as a chief chemist at Hulett Aluminium (ALCAN). In October 1960, the government held a referendum in which white South Africans were asked to vote on whether the country should become a republic. Joan and Peter both voted no to South Africa coming to a Republic and it was during this time that they became interested in politics. Following the referendum, South Africa became a republic in May 1961.

Shortly after returning to Pietermaritzburg in 1961, Kerchhoff gave birth to her second child, Sue. A year later, in 1963, Kerchhoff gave birth to her third child, Clare. In 1964, Peter went to Rhodesia on an assignment to investigate problems with the production line of aluminum foil for milk caps. According to him getting to Zimbabwe was quite an experience as this was the first time in his life to experience non-racialism in hotels, restaurants, and in public areas, which was not possible in South Africa. Whilst he was away, Joan was raising their three little children. In April 1966, the Kerchhoff family welcomed their fourth child Jill. In 1968, Peter was more involved in a more production-orientated management job and started to be aware of the issues of workers and their wages.²¹³ In 1969, Peter had an opportunity to leave South Africa again and go to Canada and England. Hulett's Aluminium sent him on this trip to learn

²¹¹ The Torch Commando was a war veteran's movement which emerged in 1951 as a response to the proposed violation of the Constitution by the Nationalist Government through the removal of the Coloureds from the Common Roll without the requisite two thirds majority. Gwendolen Carter. *The Politics of Inequality: South Africa since 1948*. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1958) 303-333.

²¹² Alan Paton Centre (hereafter cited as APC), Peter Kerchhoff interview by Jennifer Verbeek, Pietermaritzburg, 10/11 February 1998:1-3, APC 98.

²¹³ APC, Peter Kerchhoff interviewed by Jennifer Verbeek, Pietermaritzburg, 10/11 February 1998. 3-4, APC 98

more about the aluminum factories in Canada and England. Whilst Peter was away, Joan took care of their four little children.

Unlike Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg described her family as apolitical. In 1952, Kleinenberg's mother got remarried to George Armitage, who was a car mechanic. In December 1952, Mary left the children's home, together with her two sisters, and went to live with her mother, her new husband, and his two children. This meant there were five children in the family. Her family was not politically active; she recalled: "My family was a typical conservative, working-class Rhodesians who was unaware of the racial inequality."²¹⁴ However, her political identity as a child was shaped by her mother's kindness to everyone. She recalled:

At that time milk, bread and vegetables were delivered to homes, and my mother knew all the delivery people, she asked about their families, knew about their children, and always gave them tea and biscuits on the back verandah. This might not seem much, but it was unusual, and it made me aware of the fact that we all had similar aspirations"²¹⁵

In 1953, she enrolled in Mabelreign Girls High School in Harare (then Salisbury). Mabelreign Girls High School was a white-only girls' school. Kleinenberg was unaware of school politics but, towards the end of her schooling, she became interested in politics in general, much to her parent's dismay. She recalled:

In 1958, I campaigned for Edgar Whitehead, of the United Federal Party, who advocated that all people who had achieved a certain level of education should vote. As far as I was concerned this was better than nothing. He was Prime Minister from 1958 to 1962. I think it was friends and just a general feeling for justice that got me involved.²¹⁶

Edgar Whitehead favoured racial integration and the pursuit of a policy aimed at the attainment of a multiracial society. He was also prepared to lower the franchise and allow the African petty bourgeois to vote. The United Federal Party won the election and Whitehead became the Prime

²¹⁴ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

²¹⁵ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

²¹⁶ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

Minister of Rhodesia. During his tenure as the Prime Minister, there was a shift in racial policy orientation in Rhodesia as Africans were inducted into the country's political system.²¹⁷ In 1957, when she was 18 years old, Kleinenberg matriculated in Mabelreign Girls High School. After her matriculation, she enrolled in a Business College and concentrated on bookkeeping. In 1959, after completing a year in the Business College she got enrolled at the local nursing College and then nursed at Bulawayo General Hospital. She recalled:

I wanted to do something to help people and nursing seemed the obvious choice at that time so in 1959 I started nursing, having completed a year at the Commercial College. I do not think becoming a nurse had any impact on my political activism because hospitals were segregated so I only nursed white people.²¹⁸

Anne Harley, unlike Joan and Mary, was raised in an active political family and was exposed to oppression and inequality from an early age. Racial segregation and discrimination were prevalent in Pretoria during the 1970s period. Harley's mother became a member of the Progressive Reform Party (PRF) upon its formation in 1975.²¹⁹ Harley's mother was uncomfortable with the Progressive Federal Party's policy of qualified non-racial franchise requirements for voter qualification. She believed in universal suffrage and that every adult citizen should have a right to vote regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, and social status. She was also a critic of the apartheid system as she firmly believed that it was wrong and immoral. In the late 1970s, she stood for the City Council with no hope of winning as Afrikaners dominated Pretoria and she opposed apartheid. Harley also assisted her mother by putting up posters and rolling up newsletters. The Harley's received threatening phone calls, and people threw stones at their house, subsequently, her mother stopped running for the City Council.²²⁰ The Committee for a United Opposition and the Progressive Reform Party merged to form the

²¹⁷ Stephen Hintz. "The Political Transformation of Rhodesia, 1958-1965". *African Studies Review*. (1972, 15:2) 173-183.

²¹⁸ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

²¹⁹ In February 1975, Harry Schwarz and three other Members of Parliament (MPs) were expelled from the United Party. Following their expulsion, in February 1975 they formed the Reform Party. The Reform Party's political ideology was similar to that of the Progressive Party as both organisations were predominately English-speaking liberal parties. In July 1975 the Progressive Party and the Reform Party merged and formed the Progressive Reform Party. See Brian Hackland. "The Economic and Political Context of the Growth of the Progressive Federal Party in South Africa, 1959-1978". *Journal of Southern African Studies*. (1980, 7:1) 5.

²²⁰ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

Progressive Federal Party (PFP) on 5 September 1977. There were eighteen MPs, two Senators, and fifteen MPCs in the new party. On 30 November 1977, John Vorster the South African Prime Minister called snap elections and the PFP became an official opposition party.²²¹ Harley's mother was involved in the Federal Congress, which was the Progressive Federal Party's highest decision-making body. Harley recalled how 'every year [her] mother would go to the national PFP's congress whereby there would be discussions about the party's policy.'²²² She recalled that her mother was clear about what was right and what was wrong, and she was quite involved within the party in terms of its policymaking. Harley's mother was uncomfortable with some of the policies adopted by the PFP; however, she had to fall in line with the general ideas and principles of the party.²²³

Harley's father died in 1974 when she was ten years old. Her father's death impacted Harley's life as her mother was left alone to raise four young children. Her mother had a liberal outlook on life as she was a member of the PFP. Being raised by a widowed mother who was also a political activist would later have a lasting impact on Harley's theorisation of South African politics that combined gender resistance and the liberation struggle. In June 1976, fifteen thousand students associated with the South African Student Movement sprang into action and revolted in Soweto. The students were revolting against the Bantu Education language policy which made Afrikaans one of the compulsory languages in secondary schools.²²⁴ Following the Soweto Uprising, Harley's mother educated her about the socio-political conditions in South Africa. This provided her with a better insight into injustices occurring in South Africa.²²⁵

Harley grew up at a time when South African society was highly segregated and stratified along racial, class, and gender lines. The reservation of the Separate Amenities Act was passed by the South African government in 1953. This law was intended to enforce racial segregation in all public facilities, including transport and buildings, in order to limit interracial contact in South Africa. In the aftermath of the Sharpeville Massacre in 1961, South Africa faced a flight of foreign capital. South Africa's economic isolation compelled it to form new alliances with East

²²¹ Hackland, "The Economic and Political Context of the Growth of the Progressive Federal Party in South Africa, 1959-1978", 6.

²²² Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

²²³ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

²²⁴ Robert Ross. *A concise history of South Africa*. (Cambridge University Press, 2007) 153.

²²⁵ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

Asian countries. Because of its economic ties and trade ties with the Asian countries, South Africa granted the Asians the status of “honorary whites”. This allowed the Asians to reside in white areas and conduct business freely.²²⁶ As the two countries were isolated from the international community, relations between Taiwan and South Africa improved significantly in the mid-1970s. This resulted in the rise of immigration to South Africa from Taiwan. The South African government improved the treatment of Chinese South Africans as the Taiwanese were also granted the “honorary whites” status.²²⁷ The government declared that Asian people would be considered white and would be required to attend white-only schools. Apartheid was fully entrenched whilst growing up in Pretoria. Harley recalls an incident when she just started high school. The Taiwanese ambassador’s children who attended her white-only school were thrown off the bus because they were not white. However, they were considered ‘white’ according to Pretoria’s Group Areas Board. This incident had an impact on Harley whilst growing up as it provided her with a better insight into the racial inequities in South Africa.²²⁸

Political Activism

Joan Kerchhoff’s younger brother Derek Attridge enrolled at the University of Natal in 1962 to pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree. Colin Gardner was one of Derek’s English lecturers. Colin was a staunch member of the African Christian Institute and the South African Liberal Party. Derick became good friends with Colin and was inspired by his political and ethical outlook. Together they participated in various protests such as the torchlight march in June 1966. This march was held at the University of Natal in response to the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) president’s suspension. This march was also against the exclusion of African, Coloured, or Indian students from “white” universities. Through Derick’s friendship with Colin, Joan also got to know him.²²⁹ By 1968, Colin Gardner had become the Vice-Chairman of the Liberal Party in Natal.²³⁰ In 1969, Colin invited Kerchhoff to attend a meeting of the Christian Institute. The Christian Institute of Southern Africa was formed in August 1963

²²⁶ Richard J. Payne. “Japan’s South Africa Policy: Political Rhetoric and Economic Realities”. *African Affairs*. (1987, 86:343) 167-169.

²²⁷ Yoon Jung Park. “White, Honorary White, or Non-White: Apartheid Era Constructions of Chinese”. *Afro-Hispanic Review*. (2008, 27:1) 128-130.

²²⁸ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

²²⁹ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 May 2019.

²³⁰ Randolph Vigne. *Liberals against Apartheid: A History of the Liberal Party of South Africa*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan) 221.

in Johannesburg by members from various races and denominations.²³¹ The intention of the Christian Institute was to publicize the injustices caused by the apartheid system in South Africa.²³² Kerchhoff's attendance at the Christian Institute meetings in 1970 provided her with a better insight into the injustices occurring in South Africa.²³³ In 1970, Derek and his girlfriend Anna Ridehalgh visited Joan and Peter Kerchhoff. Derek had left South Africa in 1966 to study at Cambridge University on a Queen Victoria Club Scholarship. In England, Derek was able to meet exiled South Africans and read books banned in South Africa, and this heightened his awareness of the struggle. He became active in the anti-apartheid movement in England. On a visit to South Africa, Derek spent time with Joan and her husband Peter Kerchhoff. They had many discussions about the political condition in South Africa. These discussions planted seeds of awakening and enhanced awareness in Kerchhoff about the socio-political conditions in South Africa. They also provided her with a more in-depth insight into the anti-apartheid movement.²³⁴

In 1971, Joan Kerchhoff joined the Christian Institute and encouraged Peter to join the organisation as well. He eventually agreed and joined the Institute shortly after. They met the Institute's leader, Beyers Naude, as well as Manus Buthelezi, Brian Brown, and Theo Kotze, through their membership in the Institute. Working with these people significantly increased their awareness of the oppression and injustice that prevailed in South Africa.²³⁵ The involvement in the Christian Institute impacted their attitude, and it also increased their awareness at a deeper level of societal issues. Peter joined the Anglican Church in 1973, which brought him to contact with a larger group of South Africans. Joan Kerchhoff was also influenced by her husband Peter to join the Anglican Church.²³⁶ In July 1948, the Anglican Church passed a resolution condemning apartheid. However, the church only condemned

²³¹ Peter Randall. "Not without honour: the life and work of Beyers Naudé". *Not Without Honour. Tribute to Beyers Naudé*. Peter Randall ed. (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1982) 28.

²³² Beyers W. Kistner. "Beyers Naudé's Witness: A Pauline Interpretation". *Many Cultures, One nation: a Festschrift for Beyers Naude*. Charles Villa-Vicencio and Carl Niehaus eds. (Johannesburg: Human and Rousseau, 1995) 41.

²³³ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 May 2019.

²³⁴ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 June 2019.

²³⁵ Alan Paton Centre (hereafter cited as APC), Submission to the TRC from Peter Kerchhoff on his Detention: 12 June 1996: Submission made 8 December 1997, APC 11/4/1/6/4.

²³⁶ APC, Peter Kerchhoff interviewed by Jennifer Verbeek, Pietermaritzburg, 10/11 February 1998. 6, APC 98

apartheid in words and failed to oppose it actively.²³⁷ Yet, within the Anglican Church, there were a few outspoken members who vigorously opposed apartheid in the 1950s, these outspoken members identified with the black struggle. Trevor Huddleston, Michael Scott, Archbishop Geoffrey Clayton, and Archbishop Joost de Blank condemned apartheid and deemed it immoral and unjust for dividing communities and church members across racial lines.²³⁸ Michael Worsnip asserts that divisions arose within the Anglican Church as the whites did not understand the brutality that was unleashed by the apartheid government upon black people.²³⁹ Joan and Peter started to be frustrated by the church's lack of a proper response to the injustice as it was complacent in challenging apartheid policies. They both moved into discussions around trying to set up a group in Pietermaritzburg that would challenge the churches stance on the issues of injustice. They also wanted this group to work with the churches in connection with the issues of injustices and encourage action on the part of churches to do something about the injustices. They started a series of meetings with church leaders, church clergy people, and ordinary folks.

Joan Kerchhoff met Paddy Kearney during this period as he was also involved and often attended group discussions.²⁴⁰ This small ecumenical and non-racial group elected Peter as its convenor. The main goal of the group was to formulate a process by which the church in the Natal Midlands could become more aware of and participate in opposition against the apartheid system.²⁴¹ Linking the people who were devoted to the issues pertaining to justice contributed significantly to Joan and Peter's growing awareness of the country's situation. During this period Joan and Peter attended introductory education courses which were run by the Christian Education and Leadership Training (CELT) under the auspices of the Anglican Church. This course empowered and brought them into contact with many people. Peter Kerchhoff recalled: "it was also a very empowering workshop, quite a long one; four or five days I think, but it certainly brought us into contact with a wide range of people and again, South African, in the true sense of the word and that also had a powerful impact on us. Certainly, for me, I think,

²³⁷ Charles Villa-Vicencio. *Trapped In Apartheid*. (Claremont, David Phillip publishing, 1988) 176

²³⁸ Peter Walshe. "The Evolution of Liberation Theology in South Africa". *Journal of Law and Religion*. (1987, 5:2) 300-301.

²³⁹ Michael E. Worsnip. *Between the Two Fires: The Anglican Church and Apartheid, 1948-1957*. (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1991). 25-45.

²⁴⁰ APC, Peter Kerchhoff interviewed by Jennifer Verbeek, Pietermaritzburg, 10/11 February 1998. 8-9, APC 98.

²⁴¹ APC, Submission to the TRC from Peter Kerchhoff on his Detention: 12 June 1996: Submission made 8 December 1997, APC 11/4/1/6/4.

more so, because I was very new in the Church and this workshop linked us with a group of people who were committed to so-called justice.”²⁴²

In 1972, the Christian Institute in Pietermaritzburg sought a secretary to manage the Institute's work in the office. Kerchhoff quit her job as the Librarian at the Natal Society Library, applied for the Christian Institute secretary position, and was hired.²⁴³ In her job description as the secretary of the Christian Institute in Pietermaritzburg, Kerchhoff sent out notices of meetings to the Institute's members and paid bills for the Institute. She also took minutes of the Institute meetings and prepared reports for the Institute Chairman, Manus Buthelezi. Manus Buthelezi had served as the Natal regional director of the Christian Institute since 1972.²⁴⁴ In 1975, Manus Buthelezi left the directorship of the Christian Institute in Pietermaritzburg. Soon after the departure of Manus Buthelezi, Brian Brown was elected as a director in 1975. Brian Brown was an ordained minister in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa who had been appointed to be deputy to the Director of the Christian Institute, Reverend Beyers Naude in 1970. He soon relocated from the head office of the Christian Institute to Pietermaritzburg. Soon after Patrick Dube moved to the United States of America. Brian, who was a minister, did not spend most of the time in the Institute's office as he had a family to support. Hence, Kerchhoff was left alone in the office to do the office chores. The government used to harass the Christian Institute in Pietermaritzburg. Kerchhoff recalls an incident that took place on the morning of 16 December 1975 when the Christian Institute in Pietermaritzburg held an alternative Covenant Service. Kerchhoff remembers that when she arrived in the morning, she found a trail of smelly human waste on the doorstep of the office which they suspected was dumped by the police. Soon after the beginning of 1976, Cosmas Desmond became a Director of the Christian Institute. The money that was raised locally was not considerable in Pietermaritzburg; thus, the Christian Institute in Pietermaritzburg heavily relied on funding from the head office.²⁴⁵

By the mid-1970s, the Christian Institute opted to support the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) which had gathered mass support in high schools and townships. The Christian Institute also decided to raise funds for the Black Community Programs (BCP). In October 1977

²⁴² APC, Peter Kerchhoff interviewed by Jennifer Verbeek, Pietermaritzburg, 10/11 February 1998. 8, APC 98.

²⁴³ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 May 2019.

²⁴⁴ James Kenokeno Mashabela. “Manus Buthelezi: The Church leader, liberation activist and scholar in the South African context”. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*. (2016, 42:1) 4.

²⁴⁵ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 May 2019.

following the Soweto Uprising and the death in detention of Steve Biko, the Institute and its leadership were banned, along with the Black Consciousness organisations.²⁴⁶ In Pietermaritzburg, the Security Police raided the Christian Institute office. However, most of the Institute books, files, and furniture had been moved to Durban since its Director Cosmas Desmond had relocated to Durban to finish the book he was writing.²⁴⁷ Whilst working at the Christian Institute, Kerchhoff was exposed to books that were banned by the government, and this also heightened her awareness of the inequities in South Africa.²⁴⁸

Following her marriage in 1963, Mary Kleinenberg and her husband who was an Agricultural Extension Officer were posted to a very rural area in Rhodesia where their closest white neighbours were two priests at a Catholic Mission some distance from them. Kleinenberg during this period was staying at home raising her children and managing the household. She focused on raising her children and family care whilst her husband was working. Her husband was very interested in politics though he did not act on this. She was invited by an older woman to join the local women's group and learned a great deal from the rural women who treated her as one of their own. The women's group often met at her house because she had running water; however, she had no electricity, and many of the other members of the club had to fetch water from a river. She recalled: "We had tea, did handwork, gardens, and a lot of the talk revolved around family and children in particular. My husband and I only spent one year in that environment, but I will never forget how that club welcomed this young, lonely person".²⁴⁹ Living in rural Rhodesia and being part of the local women's group had an impact on her life as this was the first time that she interacted with black people on an equal footing, and this also exposed her to a non-racial outlook. Kleinenberg and her husband had many discussions about the political condition in Rhodesia. These discussions enhanced her awareness of the socio-political conditions in Rhodesia. She recalled:

We discussed politics a lot, local and international, but I was the one who became active and actually wanted to do something about current injustices.

We lived in Malawi for a short time and there we met several Americans who

²⁴⁶ Walshe, "The Evolution of Liberation Theology in South Africa", 304-305.

²⁴⁷ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 May 2019.

²⁴⁸ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 June 2019.

²⁴⁹ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

had joined the Peace Corps and were working in Malawi. Political discussions took place all the time, and we all greatly admired President Kennedy who founded the Peace Corps.²⁵⁰

In 1977, Kleinenberg moved to Pietermaritzburg. The reason for relocating to Pietermaritzburg was because her husband got a job there. She recalled: “By 1977 we had lived in Rhodesia, Malawi, and England, and my husband was offered a job in Pietermaritzburg, so we came here. The marriage was already in difficulty, and we were divorced in 1979”.²⁵¹ Shortly after moving to Pietermaritzburg, Kleinenberg witnessed the socio-political injustices of the apartheid system. During this period the apartheid government increased its political crackdown, ending a nationwide student uprising that broke out in Soweto. Fifteen thousand students associated with the South African Student Movement had sprung into action and revolted in Soweto in June 1976. The students were revolting against the Bantu Education.²⁵² The socio-political and economic upheavals that were taking place in Pietermaritzburg during this period provided Kleinenberg with a better insight into the socio-economic injustices. This shaped her political consciousness and motivated her to advocate for social change and justice. She recalled: “I did experience being offered service before people of colour even if they were ahead of me in a queue – this I refused pointing to the person before me. I was just aware of the total injustice of legislated racism– in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) racism existed but it was not legalised”.²⁵³

Following the death of Anne Harley’s father in 1974, her mother opened a bookshop. The censorship of literature was introduced by the South African government in the 1960s. The Publication of Entertainment Act of 1963 established legal means for controlling publications. This Act primarily targeted opposing political views.²⁵⁴ Thus the bookshop provided a safe space for contemporary black writers and poets who were critical of the apartheid state. In the evenings, there were poetry sessions by contemporary black poets. In her teens, Harley worked in the bookshop in the evenings and after school to earn extra pocket money. Working in the bookshop impacted her life as this was the first time she interacted with black poets, writers,

²⁵⁰ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

²⁵¹ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

²⁵² Robert, *A concise history of South Africa*, 153.

²⁵³ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

²⁵⁴ Walter Ehmeir. “Publishing South African Literature in English in the 1960. Research in African Literatures.” *New Voices in African Literature* (1995, 26:1) 111-112.

and activists. Working at the bookshop also exposed her to a non-racial outlook and even to black literature. The only black people she had interacted with whilst growing up were the domestic workers and gardeners who worked in her home.²⁵⁵

Harley's job in the bookshop was to file the new material banned by the apartheid government under the Publications and Entertainment Act. This material included numerous Communist publications and books associated with socialist states. The bookshop also possessed banned publications that upheld racial equality and anti-racism and anti-colonialism publications. One of these books is '*And a threefold cord*' by Alex La Guma²⁵⁶ While working at the bookshop Harley got exposed to publications that raised her awareness. One of the publications she was exposed to that also raised her awareness was the *Staffrider* magazine. The *Staffrider* was an arts magazine published in 1978. This scholarly and cultural magazine used photography, short stories, and poetry to promote southern African history and protest narrative. It also provided a publishing platform for artists, writers, and photographers to speak against cultural and racial oppression.²⁵⁷ In the late 1970s, Harley's mother joined the Black Sash movement. Her mother's activism and involvement in the Black Sash shaped her political consciousness.²⁵⁸

In 1980, Harley matriculated at the Pretoria High School for Girls and decided that she wanted to be a Librarian. Harley's decision to become a Librarian was not only influenced by working at her mother's bookshop, but her mother's sister also influenced it. Harley's maternal aunt worked as a librarian at the University of Cape Town and served as a role model. It was agreed that she would go and live with her aunt in Cape Town. In 1981, she enrolled for a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Cape Town. When she arrived at UCT student activism was very high as there was a strong branch of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and the Students Representative Council at UCT was politically active.²⁵⁹

The 1980s witnessed growing political turbulence in South Africa due to the rise of student protests and youth activism. In May 1980, the UCT SRC held a picket outside the International

²⁵⁵ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

²⁵⁶ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

²⁵⁷ Mike Kirkwood. "Staffrider: An Informal Discussion". *English in Africa*. (1980, 7:2) 22-31.

²⁵⁸ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

²⁵⁹ NUSAS was a liberal and multi-racial students' movement which was founded in 1924 to represent the interests of university students. Benjamin Kline. "The National Union of South African Students: A Case-Study of the Plight of Liberalism, 1924-77". *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. (1985, 23:1) 139-140.

Meat Producers Congress. This picket aimed to bring the delegate's attention to how local bosses treated their workers. The SRC president Richard Wicksteed and 48 UCT students were arrested and faced charges under the Riotous Assemblies Act.²⁶⁰ When Harley arrived at UCT, she did not join any political organisation. She was uncomfortable with student politics due to the violent form of protest that was employed by the SRC, which included the disruption of lectures. She believed that to organize mass-based support and win the students over, the SRC had to engage in more normative, less disruptive forms of action. She felt that the SRC did not spend enough time engaging the students for them to rally behind their course. Harley asserts that: "at that stage NUSAS which was the main student body on campus was quite good at holding meetings and putting up a poster but with that sort of popular protest I got a sense that many people who were involved in it did not take time to explain to me what was going." She disapproved of the disruption of lectures tactic used by NUSAS because she felt that the organisation did not try hard enough to persuade the students to participate in boycotts.²⁶¹

Harley started to work at the Chancellor Oppenheimer Library as a student assistant in 1983. Working at the Library brought her in contact with many black students. She recalled: "you would get to know them especially if you were working in the evenings as you would see the same students coming in and you would get friendly and interact with them". She attended the Economic History module with some of the black students. In turn, she discussed socio-political issues with some of her black classmates. These discussions with her black classmates increased the level of her political awareness. During this period, many people were talking about Antonio Gramsci; she recalled: "in the courses that I was doing, I was encountering Marx but not Gramsci."²⁶² It was the black students that introduced her to Gramsci's theory of hegemony through the discussion that she had with them in the library. This was the first time she was engaging with black people on an equal footing. In 1984 she completed her BA degree and enrolled for an Honours degree in History.²⁶³

²⁶⁰ https://www.aluka.org/stable/pdf/10.5555/al.sff.document_rep19811100.026.022.000

²⁶¹ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 05 November 2019.

²⁶² Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

²⁶³ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

While Harley was doing her final year at UCT in 1984, she met Truluck.²⁶⁴ They got married soon after in 1985. The Group Areas Act was firmly established at UCT as it made it illegal for black students to live in the white suburbs surrounding UCT's campus. Thus, black students who were accepted to study at UCT were forced to stay in distant "non-whites" residential areas and were not allowed in university residences. They were also barred from participating in university social events.²⁶⁵ UCT authorities were reluctant to oppose the Group Areas Act, which prohibited white students from living together with black students. Black students were forced to find alternative accommodation in former hostels and distant African townships.²⁶⁶ In 1984, the UCT SRC led by Glen Goosen began to challenge the repressive conditions imposed on black students. In April 1984, the SRC participated in "squatting action" organised by black students. Students pitched up tents in front of the university's main hall to protest the denial of black students' accommodation in the university residence.²⁶⁷ On 22 August 1984, Harley took part in the placard demonstration on De Waal Drive and the steps of Jameson Hall in support of racial integration of the university residences. In 1985, the SRC organised a graduation boycott in which students deliberately absented themselves from the graduation ceremonies in solidarity with the black students. Harley was one of the students who boycotted her graduation in 1985.²⁶⁸ The protests and demonstrations for the university residences' racial integration were widely supported by black and white students. As a result of these protests, all UCT student residences were opened to black students.²⁶⁹

In July 1984, there was an intensification of the anti-apartheid struggle. This intensification led to the outbreak of violence in South Africa's black townships in response to police brutality, including deaths in detention and police shootings.²⁷⁰ This outbreak of violence led to the government declaring the State of Emergency on 28 July 1985, which gave the police power to detain people without a charge. On 28 August 1985, Allan Boesak organised a march to

²⁶⁴ This name is a pseudonym meant to protect the Anne Harley's ex-husbands' identity.

²⁶⁵ Gonda Perez., N. Ahmed., Leslie London. "Racial discrimination: Experiences of black medical school alumni at the University of Cape Town, 1945-1994". *South African Medical Journal*. (2021, 102:6) 575.

²⁶⁶ Saleem Badat. *Black student politics, higher education and apartheid: From SASO to SANSCO, 1968-1990*. (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1999) 283.

²⁶⁷ Thierry Luescher. "Racial desegregation and the institutionalisation of 'race' in university governance: the case of the University of Cape Town". *Perspectives in Education*. (2009, 27:4) 418.

²⁶⁸ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 05 November 2019.

²⁶⁹ Badat Saleem. *Black Student Politics, Higher Education and Apartheid: From SASO to SANSCO, 1968-1990*. (Pretoria: HSRC Press, 1999) 283.

²⁷⁰ Jeffrey Herbst. "Prospects for Revolution in South Africa". *Political Science Quarterly*. (1988, 103:4) 667.

Pollsmoor to demand the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela. Police violently disrupted the demonstrations, leading to the death of 28 people by the end of the week. This sparked severe unrest across Cape Town. Following these events, the students at UCT organised a protest demanding Nelson Mandela's release as part of the Free Mandela Campaign and the police fired tear gas at them. Harley was part of the protest and had strong views against the apartheid system due to her political upbringing. Her university years were marked by political awareness. However, her husband had a different and apolitical background and was uncomfortable with becoming politically active. They soon started to drift apart and eventually got divorced in 1987 after three years of marriage, not having any children.²⁷¹

Just like Harley's husband, many white people in South Africa were ignorant about the consequences that the oppressive and repressive apartheid system had on black people. They were not concerned about the plight of black people.²⁷² They lived in privileged white communities and were very far removed from the political and economic realities of black people.²⁷³ Yet, not all white people were ignorant about the injustices and the inhumanity perpetrated by the apartheid system. The injustices suffered by black people under apartheid disgusted a few white people, who decided to join the anti-apartheid movement.²⁷⁴ These individuals were committed to a movement that they had not been forced to commit to, given the white privileges that they enjoyed due to the whiteness of their skin.²⁷⁵ The socio-political and economic upheavals that were taking place in Pietermaritzburg in the 1970s provided these activists with a better insight into the socio-economic injustices. This shaped their political consciousness and motivated them to advocate for social change and justice. The political crackdown during the 1970s period was to silence the opposition to the apartheid system. In 1970, there was an intense state crackdown, which heightened the Black Sash's determination to end it. The Black Sash protested firmly to end the apartheid system which they deemed unjust, unfair, and unacceptable during the 1970s.²⁷⁶

²⁷¹ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

²⁷² Trevor Huddleston. *Naught for Your Comfort*. (London: Fontana, 1957) 17.

²⁷³ Max du Preez. *Pale Native: Memories of a Renegade Reporter*. (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2003) 62.

²⁷⁴ Hassim, *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa contesting authority*, 61.

²⁷⁵ Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort*, 17-18.

²⁷⁶ APC 12 Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Jennifer Verbeek, Pietermaritzburg, 6 May 1998 at PACSA, PMB: 1-5.

These activists not only became involved in the Black Sash Movement in the Natal Midlands region, but their commitment saw them getting involved also in the network of like-minded organisations such as the Christian Institute, PACSA, and student movements of which the Black Sash was part. In late 1976, a group of concerned Christians started a study group which led to the establishment of a Christian Social Agency in Pietermaritzburg, PACSA. Kerchhoff joined her husband Peter Kerchhoff to become a founding member of PACSA. The main aim of PACSA was to raise awareness about the atrocities committed by the apartheid regime since it was also a faith-based organisation it also aimed at pulling the white churches into the struggle against apartheid.²⁷⁷ In the first months of PACSA's existence, Kerchhoff collected photographs and slides which showed appalling conditions in various parts of the city of Pietermaritzburg and its neighbourhood. She visited African townships surrounding Pietermaritzburg and spoke to the black people about the effects that segregation and apartheid had on their lives. In its first public meeting in 1979, Kerchhoff showed photographs and slides in sequence, with the title: "How my neighbour lives." These slides challenged the critics in the audience, who argued that the difference between the rich and the poor was exaggerated. This was also an attempt to bring awareness to the public. Those who attended the meeting were appalled to see the vast disparities in housing, roads, lighting, water provision, security, and schools between black and white people.²⁷⁸ Collecting photographs and slides depicting the socio-economic conditions of various parts of Pietermaritzburg provided Kerchhoff with a better insight into the Pietermaritzburg communities' inequalities.²⁷⁹

Harley's participation in the student movement was because of the strong views she had against the apartheid system due to her political upbringing. During her upbringing, Harley's mother who was a Black Sash activist discussed her political ideas with her children. Growing up, Harley was inclined to debate, and she wanted to know why people believed the things they did. This inclination grew deeper during her university years when she became more politically active in the student movement. Harley's mother was always proud of her daughter, her beliefs, and her role in the student movement. This had a significant impact on her theorization of South African politics which linked the liberation struggle and gender resistance. Her university years

²⁷⁷ APC 11/3/1/1. PACSA Overview 1979-1989, Document

²⁷⁸ Kerchhoff, "Standing with marginalised people: a thread running through 20 years", 6-7.

²⁷⁹ APC 11/3/1/1. PACSA Overview 1979-1989, Document

increased the level of her political awareness. This motivated her to be more interested in politics on a national level. This interest in national politics greatly influenced her to become a researcher as she sought to expose the effects of the apartheid system on Africans. By closely examining the childhood years of the protagonists in this chapter, I gain a greater understanding of the impact that shaped and defined their political activism from childhood. This chapter revealed that the activism of the Black Sash activists in the Natal Midlands was shaped and defined by their parents' political involvement from childhood. Although Kleinenberg and Kerchhoff's parents were not formally affiliated with any organized political party, however, they were cognizant of the political goings-on of the time. The nuanced narratives in this chapter reveal that women's politicisation and activism cannot be homogenized and must be seen within diverse spaces.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the personal narratives of Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley. It analysed the socio-economic and political factors that shaped and defined the three women as political activists. It further identified and discussed the multiple factors that shaped and defined their political consciousness. Through their biographical profiles, this chapter provided a more in-depth insight into their early life and the factors that shaped their political identity during childhood. It further examined the impact that the exposure to the racial paradigm and apartheid during their childhood years had on them and their families. Lastly, it explored their family's political activism and the role that their families played in shaping their political identity during their childhood. This historical context revealed how the early lives of these women activists were shaped and defined.

CHAPTER FOUR

Intra-Racial and Inter-racial cooperation between the Black Sash and other women's organisations

Introduction

This chapter examines how the Black Sash and other women's organisations worked across race and class lines and how women mobilized as a collective. It begins by examining the inter-racial and intra-racial cooperation that existed between the Black Sash and other women's organisations. It then moves on to provide a more in-depth insight into women's political collective organisation in the Natal Midlands and helps us to understand the complex relationship that existed between the Black Sash and other women's organisations. This chapter will highlight areas of collective resistance with other multiracial organisations, through the narratives of the three women. It further illustrates how the contribution of Pietermaritzburg activists such as Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley shaped and defined both regional and nationalist history. This chapter contextualizes the narratives of the three women, as it will also explore the Black Sash's role in monitoring removals and violence; the Black Sash's advice office role in issues of labour compensation and pass laws; and the Sash's role in the regional Inkatha-ANC conflict. Lastly, it dispels the historical inaccuracy that Pietermaritzburg was the centre of political violence. This historical inaccuracy often causes the pivotal role played by Pietermaritzburg activists to be overlooked.

The 1950s decade is marked as the period of mobilization of women of all races in South Africa. This period was a turning point in women's resistance history and marked the beginning of organised women's movement that formed part of the broad struggle for liberation. This period also witnessed a shift towards non-racialism. This came as a result of the racialised and segregated politics that existed during the 1940s, women were politically segregated. This to some extent hindered inter-collective racial resistance. However, in the 1950s, women sought to move beyond racial segregation. The gender dynamics shaped the Black Sash and the FEDSAW as their overt goals and intentions were common. Both these groups of women were fighting against the exclusion of women in the anti-apartheid movement and from white party politics.²⁸⁰

²⁸⁰ Kathryn Sturman. "The Federation of South African Women and the Black Sash: constraining and contestatory discourses about women in politics, 1954-1958". (Masters Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1996) 5-11.

Therefore, the first section of the chapter examines how these organisations provided leadership for women. This section further explores in what ways the Black Sash and the FEDSAW differed in mode of strategy, ideology, and methods in terms of challenging apartheid. It also analyzes whether and in what form the Black Sash and, the FEDSAW supported or spearhead a feminist agenda. The involvement of women in the Black Sash and, the FEDSAW during this period saw led to tension there was an accepted notion that the women's primary role was being wives and mothers. It further examines how both these women's organisations created an awareness of women's oppression and whether and in what form did they seek to challenge gender roles. Moreover, it examines the relationship that existed between the Black Sash and other women's organisations from 1955-1994. In particular, it looks at Black Sash's relations with the UDF and a wave of women's organisations that emerged in the 1980s, such as NOW. It further examines how the Black Sash worked towards non-racialism within the liberation movement.

This period saw the formation of the FEDSAW in 1954 and the Black Sash in 1955.²⁸¹ During the formation of these two organisations, women were divided across racial, class, and ethnic lines. These organisations were distinctive in their social base as the Black Sash operated in the white political system. At the same time, FEDSAW worked in the realm of political resistance against the white minority rule.²⁸² During this period, the Black Sash was failing to work with black people as its members had a conviction that an association with "non-whites" would see the organisation being shunned by the white community. This exemplified the depth of the racial divide between women during this period.²⁸³ The membership of the Black Sash grew to 10 000 women during this period, and most of these women were housewives. The Senate Act issue arose at a time when the Liberal Party politics was in turmoil. This led to women getting involved in politics on a large scale.²⁸⁴ Following their march against the Senate Bill, the Black Sash was discredited by the National Party. It depicted its membership as a group of frustrated women who had decided to participate in politics as an outlet due to their failure in the domestic sphere. The National Party used the gender of the Black Sash membership as a

²⁸¹ Roger B. Beck. *The History of South Africa*. (London: Greenwood Press, 2000) 70-77.

²⁸² Kathryn Sturman. *The Federation of South African Women and the Black Sash: constraining and contestatory discourses about women in politics, 1954-1958*. (Masters Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1996) 5.

²⁸³ Cherry Michelman. *The Black Sash of South Africa: A Case Study in Liberalism*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1975) 78.

²⁸⁴ Michelman, *The Black Sash of South Africa: A Case Study in Liberalism*, 29.

political tactic to discredit the organisation.²⁸⁵ The Black Sash lacked feminist consciousness as they adopted a passive tactic of protest by wearing black sashes over one shoulder and standing silent outside parliament. This form of protest was considered to be an acceptable form of public action by white, middle-class English-speaking women.²⁸⁶ It gained praise and public support from the English press as it was seen as a dignified way of protesting.²⁸⁷ The Senate Bill campaign expressed their dissatisfaction with discriminatory apartheid legislation rather than political activism about women's issues. The Black Sash during this period did not seek to challenge their traditional domestic and gender role of being housewives and mothers.²⁸⁸

The Black Sash and Women's Activism in the late 1950s

In 1955, the Minister of Native Affairs Hendrik Verwoed announced that from January 1956 African women would have to carry passbooks. This was to restrict and regulate their movement in urban areas.²⁸⁹ This announcement was met with resistance as the FEDSAW women organised a march to oppose the new pass laws in October 1955 in Pretoria.²⁹⁰ In August 1955, the FEDSAW resorted to organising a protest against the pass laws. The Black Sash vigils against the Senate had an impact and motivated the FEDSAW. Helen Joseph, an executive member of the FEDSAW, had participated in the Black Sash's vigil. However, she was disappointed that the Black Sash had not invited the FEDSAW to participate in this vigil. Joseph reiterated that the FEDSAW would invite the Black Sash to join their protest, which was a protest of all women. The FEDSAW executive invited the Black Sash movement to join them for support in the mass demonstration against the pass laws. However, the Black Sash refused to join the protest.²⁹¹

The FEDSAW wanted white women to be included in their protest against the pass laws. Nonetheless, most organisations with a white women membership were apolitical or conservative and FEDSAW's ties with the liberation movement alienated them. After its

²⁸⁵ Hacking, "Personal Memories of the Black Sash 1955-1994", 4.

²⁸⁶ Cheryl Walker. "Book review of Yuval-Davis & Anthias (eds) Women-Nation-State". *Agenda: Empowering women for gender equity*. (1990, 6) 318.

²⁸⁷ Mirabel Rogers. *The Black Sash*. (Johannesburg: Rotonews, 1956) 242.

²⁸⁸ Walker, "Book review of Yuval-Davis & Anthias (eds) Women-Nation-State", 318.

²⁸⁹ Ken Luckhardt and Brenda Wall. *Organize or Starve! The History of the South African Congress of Trade Unions*. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980) 301.

²⁹⁰ Lodge, *Black Politics*, 143.

²⁹¹ Helen Joseph. *Tomorrow's Sun: A Smuggled Journal from South Africa*. (London: Hutchinson, 1966) 65-66.

formation in 1955, the FEDSAW was eager to establish close links with the Black Sash, but the organisation Sash distanced itself from the Federation.²⁹² The Black Sash's refusal to support the FEDSAW's protest indicates a critical difference between the two organisations. The Sash was wary of being associated with the liberation movements. During this time, most of the Black Sash members were conservative and did not want to be associated with a communist-influenced organisation. The Black Sash members also perceived the Congress Alliance as a radical organisation that sought radical change. The Black Sash was against this notion as it was initially formed not to seek radical change but to protect the constitution. The refusal of the Black Sash to participate in the 1956 FEDSAW joint protest against passes for Black women damaged its image within the Black community; however, the relationship between these two women's organisations remained cordial.²⁹³ For the Black Sash to distance itself from the FEDSAW was a strategic move as their association with the non-racial women's organisation would alienate the white, upper-class constituent that they were trying to mobilise support.²⁹⁴

The Black Sash declined the invitation from both the ANC and SAIRR to join the demonstration against the Group Areas Act. According to the Sash joining a mass protest against Group Areas removals violated its constitution.²⁹⁵ This resulted in black and multiracial organisations doubting their sincerity and commitment to the anti-apartheid movement.²⁹⁶ Throughout its forty years of existence, the Black Sash was hesitant to join forces with other organisations. The Black Sash members felt that affiliation with other organisations would limit the ability of their organisation to be autonomous.²⁹⁷ During the 1958 period following the National Party's victory in the elections, the Black Sash began to be an outspoken opponent of apartheid. This resulted in a leadership split and also in the further decline in membership and this characterised the smaller but radical anti-apartheid organisation²⁹⁸ The Black Sash opened its first advice office in 1958 at Athlone. During this period, they began engaging in multi-racial politics by working with other women's organisations. The Sash appealed to the ANCWL to

²⁹² Mary Burton. "Women Organize". *The Black Sash*. (1987, 30:2) 14.

²⁹³ Dorothy Hacking. "Personal Memories of the Black Sash 1955-1994", unpublished paper, 1994.

²⁹⁴ Michelman, *The Black Sash of South Africa: A Case Study in Liberalism*, 42.

²⁹⁵ Michelman, *The Black Sash of South Africa: A Case Study in Liberalism*, 70.

²⁹⁶ Cherry Michelman. "The Black Sash of South Africa: 1955 to 1969". (PhD Dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1971) 132.

²⁹⁷ Benjamin Eileen. "An historical analysis of aspects of the Black Sash, 1955-2001". (Masters Dissertation: University of Stellenbosch, 2004) 65.

²⁹⁸ Michelman, *The Black Sash of South Africa: A Case Study in Liberalism*, 63-70.

send volunteers to work in their advice office. Lettie Malindi, an ANCWL member, was amongst the first volunteers who worked as their interpreter. The opening of the first office in collaboration with other anti-apartheid women's organisations was a watershed moment in the development of the organisation. The Athlone advice office was located in the same building with the ANCWL offices and marked an association of the Black Sash with the ANC.²⁹⁹

In 1960, the Black Sash removed all the barriers in its constitution that prevented it from working with the "non-whites" organisation. This resulted in the alienation of the conservative members of the organisation and most of the white community. The non-member business community significantly reduced their financial support in the organisation.³⁰⁰ The organisation's main objective was to assist the Africans who were affected by apartheid laws.³⁰¹ The advice office during this period played an important role in helping the black community with legal and social aid. It also assisted the Black Sash in understanding the impact that the apartheid system had on the black community.³⁰² The 1960s were difficult years for the Black Sash due to the political crackdown, which silenced opposition and stopped their political activity.

The relentless state crackdown during the 1960s following the Sharpeville and Langa massacres saw political organisations and their activists placed under banning orders, restricted from almost all social and political contact with others, detained, driven into exile, or serving prison sentences. Numerous political trials were underway, and South Africa became a police state.³⁰³ The Black Sash during this period decided to focus on the advice office work. The Black Sash members' husbands feared for the safety of their wives and were also concerned that their activism and opposition to the apartheid government would jeopardize their businesses.³⁰⁴ These women defied their husbands and challenged the accepted social barriers.

Following the banning of the ANC in 1960, the Black Sash advice office volunteers took over defending Africans suspected of violating the pass laws.³⁰⁵ This resulted in the security police's

²⁹⁹ Spink, *The Black Sash: The Beginning of a Bridge in South Africa*, 64.

³⁰⁰ Michelman, *The Black Sash of South Africa: A Case Study in Liberalism*, 86.

³⁰¹ Michelman, *The Black Sash of South Africa: A Case Study in Liberalism*, 87-89.

³⁰² Spink, *The Black Sash: The Beginning of a Bridge in South Africa*, 147.

³⁰³ Denis Goldberg, *The Mission: A Life for Freedom in South Africa*. (Johannesburg: STE Publishers, 2010) 99.

³⁰⁴ Spink, *The Black Sash: The Beginning of a Bridge in South Africa*, 55.

³⁰⁵ Spink, *The Beginning of a Bridge in South Africa*, 64.

frequent raids in the Black Sash's Athlone advice office.³⁰⁶ The state forced several of its advice offices to shut down.³⁰⁷ In October 1963, the organisation opened its membership to all South African women, regardless of race and class.³⁰⁸ However, the banning of the ANCWL in 1960 resulted in the decline of the FEDSAW.

The Black Sash and other women's organisations in the Natal Midlands

In the 1970s, women in the Natal Midlands began to regroup, following the political dormancy and massive crackdown in the previous decade.³⁰⁹ Joan Kerchhoff joined the Black Sash in the Natal Midlands in 1973. There was a small group of women who were almost like a Women's Institute, and this group included political activists such as Bunty Biggs, Fleur Webb, Maimie Corrigan, Pam Wellington, and Joy Roberts. They assembled tables in Pietermaritzburg at the Old Cathedral Hall and sold fresh food products such as marmalade, pot plants, jams, and plants to raise funds. They also held protest stands and stood outside the Old Cathedral wearing their black sashes in protest against the apartheid system which they deemed unjust, unfair, and unacceptable.³¹⁰ Kerchhoff recalled: "When I first joined it was more like a Women Institute, as we sold jams and plants and things to raise funds. More importantly, we had anti-apartheid speakers at public meetings and of course the stands outside the old cathedral".³¹¹ The Black Sash women were photographed at the protest stands by the security police. The security police took their names and photographs as a form of intimidation to deter them from continuing with the protest stands. She was much involved in participating in the protest stands, and most of the white people had a very negative attitude towards them as they threw stink bombs, and toilet rolls and shouted sexist remarks at them. However, they were motivated to take part in the protest as they felt they were doing something to show the government that there was opposition to their policies.³¹²

Kerchhoff recalled: "in the early days of the Sash it was important to me to have contact with other like-minded women. It felt so necessary not to be alone in one's stand against the

³⁰⁶ Michelman, *The Black Sash of South Africa: A Case Study in Liberalism*, 120.

³⁰⁷ Robert Davies, Dano Heara and Sipho Dlamini. *The struggle for South Africa: a reference guide to movements, organizations, and institutions*. (London: Zed Books, 1988) 384.

³⁰⁸ Spink, *The Beginning of a Bridge*, 58.

³⁰⁹ Cheryl Walker. *Women and resistance in South Africa*. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1991) 275.

³¹⁰ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 June 2019.

³¹¹ APC 3 Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Lorenza Cowling, Pietermaritzburg, 30 August 2010: 2.

³¹² Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 June 2019.

government of the day”.³¹³ The group protest stands were more comfortable as there was a sense of solidarity amongst the Black Sash women in the Natal Midlands. The single protest stands were more nerve-racking as the public was rude and sexist. Because of their gender and social notions about gender and about the women’s place in the home, they were subjected to sexist remarks during protests. Often white males came to them and shouted that women should not involve themselves in politics as their place was in the kitchen. However, this did not deter the brave Black Sash activists from organizing more protest stands. The social ostracism she faced from the white community deepened her to the anti-apartheid movement.³¹⁴ Talking about her experience in the protest stands, Fleur Webb³¹⁵ recalled: “You know people, like middle-class white ladies doing their Saturday morning shopping, would give us a wide berth, we were an embarrassment. Quite a lot of the young black people did not have a clue about what we were doing. A few people, like Colin Gardner, bless his heart, would drive past and hoot and we got cheered by that”.³¹⁶ Soon after they used Maimie Corrigan’s³¹⁷ flat for their meetings as the security police kept track of their activities in the Cathedral. Kerchhoff stated it was important in the Sash’s early years to reach out to other like-minded women, she recalled: “It felt so necessary not to be alone in one’s stand against the government of the day”.³¹⁸

During this period, 210 women delegates gathered in Durban to form a federation of black women in December 1975. The name of this federation was the Black Women’s Federation (BWF), and it brought together forty-one organisations and was influenced by the Black Consciousness Movement. This organisation focused on black women's experiences and aimed at combating the injustices suffered by black women under apartheid.³¹⁹ The BWF had similar roots to the multi-racial FEDSAW which had ceased to exist by 1963 due to the state political

³¹³ APC 3 Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Lorenza Cowling, Pietermaritzburg, 30 August 2010: 4.

³¹⁴ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 June 2019.

³¹⁵ Fleur Webb nee Gower was a member of the Natal Midlands Black Sash who joined the organisation in 1962. She was one of the protest-stand organisers for the Natal Midlands Black Sash in the 1960s and 1970s, and spent time getting permission from the authorities, composing slogans, and arranging the printing of posters for the Saturday morning protests in Commercial Road, next to the cannon. She was also the wife of the Colin Webb who was the Vice-Principal of the University of Natal, Durban.

³¹⁶ APC 5 Fleur Webb interviewed by Mary Kleinenberg, Pietermaritzburg, 19 July 2011: 7.

³¹⁷ Maimie Corrigan one of the founders of the Black Sash in the Natal Midlands. She took part in its first and most striking national enterprise: the convoy of cars converging on Cape Town to demonstrate against the Senate Act in 1955. Her activism saw her getting involved also in the network of like-minded organisations such as the Liberal Party. She was also among the first volunteers to serve in the Black Sash Pietermaritzburg Advice Office when it was established in 1975. Peter Brown. “Maimie Corrigan”. *Reality*. (1981, 13:4) 16

³¹⁸ APC 12 Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Jennifer Verbeek, Pietermaritzburg, 6 May 1998 at PACSA, PMB: 1-5.

³¹⁹ Hassim, *Women’s organizations and democracy in South Africa contesting authority*, 61.

crackdown. The BWF had the same goals as the FEDSAW but only admitted black members because it opposed the laws governing black people. Some within the BWF such as Winnie Mandela and Thenjiwe Mtintso advocated for the exclusion of whites. Mtintso argued: “Whatever we do in this country, be it on the economic, social, or political level, it has to be by blacks, for blacks, period. It does not matter how well-meaning white people maybe they can never deliver me from the hands of the Nationalists whatever they do, they must try to work within their own community and concentrate on liberating their counterparts. I’ll be doing the same thing in the black community”.³²⁰

As a result, the Black Sash was excluded from the BWF. The government banned or detained most of the BWF leadership within five months of the organisation’s formation. During this time, the BWF was prohibited from holding political gatherings and rallies, and after its second conference in 1977, the BWF was officially banned.³²¹ Joan Kerchhoff asserts that the Black Sash continued its work as a service organisation during this period. The Natal Midlands Black Sash advice office had been opened in Pietermaritzburg on Thomas Street, at the corner of Church Street in February 1975.³²² It was situated in the Trade Union Advisory and Coordinating Council (TUACC) offices on Thomas Street.

The advice office aimed to assist the people who had been brutalised by the repressive laws, teach them how to exercise their rights, and campaign against discrimination. This office also handled employees issues, unemployment insurance, and pension cases.³²³ The Black Sash during this period assisted poor people, particularly women who came to the advice office having problems with issues such as pension payments, unemployment insurance, and domestic worker problems.³²⁴ The formation of the Black Sash advice office marked the distinctiveness of the Natal Midlands region as it led to the fostering of a close relationship between the Sash and trade unions in Pietermaritzburg. The shared office space with trade unions meant that clients who were referred to the office had work-related issues.

³²⁰ Chioma Filomina Steady. *The Black women cross culturally*. (Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1981) 246.

³²¹ Hassim, *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa contesting authority*, 61-62.

³²² APC 12/1/1/2 Natal Midlands Region Advice Office opened 20 Feb 1975- reports 1975-81

³²³ *What is Black Sash?* (Pietermaritzburg: Natal Midlands Region of the Black Sash, 1991), 8.

³²⁴ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 May 2019.

Amid labour unrest following the Soweto Uprising of June 1976, several trade unions were banned. Due to the trade unions banning in 1976, the advice office took on some trade unions' administrative activity. This is evidenced by the large-scale retrenchment, unemployment, and dismissal cases that the advice office dealt with in 1977, following the economic recession. The workers in Pietermaritzburg faced the economic recession's effects as much as in other areas. This resulted in the advice office dealing with many cases ranging from trade unionism. Many of these cases were forwarded to the advice office by the banned and unregistered trade unions.³²⁵ Despite being one of the last regions to establish an advice office, the Natal Midlands was the only one that operated in such close collaboration with the trade unions. Nalini Naidoo a Black Sash Natal Midlands advice office volunteer described this close collaboration between the Black Sash and trade unions in Pietermaritzburg as a 'wonderful and symbiotic relationship'.³²⁶ Kerchhoff worked in the advice office twice a week assisting Busi Victoria Nyide who was a full-time caseworker at the advice office. Kerchhoff recalled: "The main issues that we dealt with were UIF and Workers Compensation etc. The whole issue of setting up the advice office was quite a contentious and difficult one. Many people felt that we should be involved in political issues opposing the government on specific issues. The advice office was accepted as a complementary to that".³²⁷ Kerchhoff's primary responsibility in the advice office was case recording, strategy planning, and correspondence management. She also wrote letters and correspondence to the employers enquiring about the cases of retrenchment, underpayment, and unfair dismissals. She monitored pay points where corrupt officials made life difficult for the elderly claiming their monthly pensions. She also provided those who came to the advice office with information so that they would be able to help themselves and taught them about their rights. Working in the advice office provided Kerchhoff with a unique opportunity to gain empathy for the lives of the Africans who had been rendered invisible by the apartheid system. Listening to the people's stories was a moving experience as it provided her with deep insight into the injustices that were inflicted by the apartheid system on Africans.³²⁸ Kerchhoff asserts that through working advice office volunteer, she learned lots of valuable

³²⁵ *Sash Magazine (SM)*, 19(2), August 1977. 27; Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 May 2019.

³²⁶ Christopher Merrett. "Masters and servants: African trade unionism in Pietermaritzburg and the Natal Midlands before the early 1980s." *Natalia*. (2018, 48) 24.

³²⁷ APC 3 Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Lorenza Cowling, Pietermaritzburg, 30 August 2010: 1.

³²⁸ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 June 2019.

skills, including not creating dependency on clients and also about empowering people to help themselves.

There were major political upheavals and changes in apartheid South Africa following the Soweto riots of 1976. During this period there was rejuvenated political resistance due to the repressive and oppressive restrictions imposed by the apartheid government. This led to Kerchhoff joining the Pietermaritzburg Council of Churches, and her main work was with the Dependants' Conference.³²⁹ This Council collaborated with the Defendants' Conference, which was a ministry that assisted the families of political prisoners and detainees. It also promoted justice and human rights by facilitating church conversations about political and economic issues. It also focused on justice and human rights by facilitating church discussions on local political and economic issues.³³⁰ The intense state crackdown during this period saw ten *uMkhonto weSizwe* members who hailed from Pietermaritzburg being sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for aiding ANC members to undergo military training outside South Africa. These political prisoners left their families without support, and most of these political activists were usually breadwinners.³³¹

The Pietermaritzburg Council of Churches decided to offer support to these political prisoners' families by providing them with monthly grants to live off. This grant was sent by the South African Council of Churches Dependants' Fund from the head office in Johannesburg. This grant was sent every month to Pietermaritzburg and was passed on to the families who came into the office every month to collect their grants. The Pietermaritzburg Council of Churches had a Dependents' Conference Committee, and Kerchhoff was the committee's secretary. One of the primary roles of the secretary of this Committee was to administer the grants that came from the SACC. As the secretary of Committee, Kerchhoff assisted in administering the grant and gave it to the families of the political prisoners who came to the PCC offices every month to collect it.³³² Kerchhoff, alongside the Dependents' Conference Committee which included Azaria Ndebele and Sigqibo Dwane of the Federal Theological Seminary also raised funds

³²⁹ APC 12 Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Jennifer Verbeek, Pietermaritzburg, 6 May 1998 at PACSA, PMB

³³⁰ Mabongi Mtshali. The Revd Victor Vivian Siphon Africander, 1930-1990: Obituary. *Natalia*. (1990, 24:20) 65-66.

³³¹ Dlamuka, "Connectedness and disconnectedness in Thembe yakhe Harry Gwala's biography, 1920-1995: Rethinking Political Militancy, Mass Mobilisation and Grassroots Struggles in South Africa," 150-155.

³³² Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 June 2019.

locally for schooling and the education of political prisoners' children. The Dependants' Conference committee also assisted the wives of the political prisoners so that they would be able to visit their husbands on Robben Island. Kerchhoff recalled that Harry Gwala and Anton Xaba's families were one of the few families that were assisted by the Dependants Conference whilst these two activists were incarcerated in Robben Island. The Red Cross paid the travel allowance of the wives of political prisoners to Robben Island. Kerchhoff was responsible for organising their transport by booking their train tickets. She also booked their accommodation in Khali House in Cape Town where they used to reside during their stay. She was also responsible for applying for their permits to the Department of Justice. She developed a personal friendship with Elda Gwala and Regina Xaba the wives of Harry Gwala and Anton Xaba as she used to organise their visitation permits. Kerchhoff was able to sustain the liberation struggle by assisting families of political prisoners, and raising funds for schooling, and the education of political prisoners' children.³³³

The rise of women's collective political activism in Pietermaritzburg in the 1980s

The 1980s witnessed the growth of women's collective political activism in Pietermaritzburg. During this period women became involved in a resurgent wave of grassroots organisations.³³⁴ To illustrate this point, we can refer to the testimony of Mary Kleinenberg who decided to join the Black Sash in the Natal Midlands in 1980. She began to work as a volunteer in the Black Sash advice office in Pietermaritzburg.³³⁵ She recalled: "I was not sure exactly how I could help, but I felt that I could help. In a few weeks, she had me knee-deep in so many issues and I hit the ground running. There were many legal issues we had to tackle."³³⁶ Kleinenberg asserts that when she began to work in the advice office, she became good friends with Pat Merrett and the two had many discussions about the political condition in South Africa. Patricia Lynne Merrett an advice office convenor in the Natal Midlands following the resignation of Sheila Hindson in 1976. Merrett was married to Christopher Edmond Merrett who had been the

³³³ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 May 2019.

³³⁴ Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority*, 61.

³³⁵ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

³³⁶ Trish Beaver; "Remembering: women on the front lines". *The Witness*, February, 6 2012.

Deputy University Librarian at the University of Natal since 1979.³³⁷ She was associated mainly with the advice office, although she participated in Sash activities.³³⁸ These political discussions enhanced her awareness of the socio-political conditions in South Africa. She recalled:

I think the local person who influenced me the most was Pat Merrett, a great friend and a tireless coordinator of the advice office, and member of the Black Sash movement. I think we all influenced each other, we were a close-knit group, and spent a lot of time talking, not only about what was happening in the country and in the Black Sash.³³⁹

Working in the advice office gave Kleinenberg a unique opportunity to be exposed to equality across racial lines as there was no hierarchy, and everyone was treated equally. She gained valuable knowledge about everyone's inherent dignity as she grew up being exposed to a hierarchal society where black people were considered inferior. She also gained valuable experience in unlearning the racial paradigm that she had been exposed to while growing up.³⁴⁰ She recalled:

I worked on Saturday mornings and found the long queues and the desperate people very depressing, but it felt absolutely necessary to help in what was very small ways. Seeing the daily grind of people who were denied access to their rights certainly shaped my political consciousness. I was treasurer of the advice office committee for some years and then became Chairperson.³⁴¹

Volunteering in the advice office gave middle-class white women a rare opportunity to develop genuine empathy for those suffering from the repressive and oppressive apartheid system. Kleinenberg asserts that listening to people's stories in the advice office was both a humbling

³³⁷ Christopher Merrett. *A Culture of Censorship: Secrecy and Intellectual Repression in South Africa*. (Cape Town: David Philip, 1994).

³³⁸ APC 13 Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Alleyn Diesel, Pietermaritzburg, 21 March 2013.

³³⁹ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

³⁴⁰ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

³⁴¹ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

and moving experience. It also provided her with a better insight into the injustices inflicted by the apartheid system on Africans. The growth of women's collective political activism in Pietermaritzburg coincided with the State of Emergency that was declared on 12 June 1986. This State of Emergency led to the detention without trial of twenty people in Pietermaritzburg.³⁴² The security police were drawn to Joan and Peter Kerchhoff's political activism. As a result, on 12 June 1986 were awoken by the police officers. They searched the house and took a few papers from Kerchhoff, including the Black Sash list and the mailing list. The security police also wanted to take her diary, and Peter objected, then he was detained.³⁴³ Women's collective collaboration work across races increased significantly during this period due to their support for the political detainees incarcerated. As Nana Mnandi recalled: "We would cook food and take it to comrades awaiting trials. Saras Chetty [wife of A.S. Chetty] was there, Indian women would cook biryani, give it to us and we would take it to the comrades".³⁴⁴ During the 1986-1987 State of Emergency period, Pietermaritzburg had 268 cases and most of those detained were members of the United Democratic Front (UDF).³⁴⁵ Nana Mnandi recalled: "Lulu Gwala [Harry Gwala's daughter] would encourage us, women, to attend each and every trial in PMB, she would say 'the comrades need all our support,' and she taught us that there's not even a single comrade that we should not support. ""³⁴⁶

The police held Peter Kerchhoff in solitary confinement and interrogated him for many weeks.³⁴⁷ Many detainees suffered from psychological pressures which were brought on by many hours of interrogation and solitary confinement.³⁴⁸ Peter recalled: "Generally detainees were coping, but the problem was communicating this to those on the outside. The harassment of detainees' families made the situation much more difficult for them. They were without support and vulnerable to abusive, threatening and hoax telephone calls".³⁴⁹ Kerchhoff was harassed by the police while Peter was detained. She recalled: "I was visited while Peter was in

³⁴² Alan Paton Centre (hereafter cited as APC), Joan Kerchhoff vs. Minister Law & Order: Court Case 1986. PC 11/4/1/2

³⁴³ Colin Gardner. (2011) 'The day the emergency was declared'. *The Witness*. 13 June.

³⁴⁴ Our Africa. "On the Brink of civil war". 14 December 2017, Youtube, 09:18.

<https://youtu.be/mDY0NOHKRpg>.

³⁴⁵ Christopher Merrett. Emergency of the State: Detention Without Trial in Pietermaritzburg and the Natal Midlands, 1986-90. *Natalia*. (2011, 41) 13.

³⁴⁶ Our Africa. "On the Brink of civil war". 14 December 2017, Youtube, 09:18. <https://youtu.be/mDY0NOHKRpg>

³⁴⁷ Colin Garner. Peter Campbell Kerchhoff 1934-1999 (obituary). *Natalia* 29, (1999), 95.

³⁴⁸ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 May 2019.

³⁴⁹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report, Vol. 3, 192.

detention by Warrant Officer Smuts several times. I was taken to an office from home. I was fetched at home, taken to the office told that they wanted this and that they wanted photographs- I was under surveillance and harassed by the security police".³⁵⁰ In July 1986, Kerchhoff filed a court case and wanted the Supreme Court to declare Peter's arrest and detention unlawful. Kerchhoff recalled: "In July 1986, I filed a court case in the court. I wanted the court to declare the arrest and detention of Peter to be unlawful".³⁵¹ The full Court of three Judges sitting in the Natal Provincial Division delivered a joint judgment on 14 August 1986, dismissed the case with costs, and also refused to order the release of Peter Kerchhoff from detention.³⁵² While most high-profile detainees were released after fourteen days in detention, Peter Kerchhoff and A.S. Chetty were held for 96 days before being released in September 1986.³⁵³ Kerchhoff wrote a poem titled *Detention without Trial*, which provides an oblique reflection on Peter's incarceration. Writing poetry became her response to particular events and experiences.³⁵⁴

Those who joined the Black Sash in 1986 following the State of Emergency saw it as an avenue to fight against the apartheid regime.³⁵⁵ This organisational shift saw the Black Sash taking on work that stretched further than individual cases into the domain of structural inequalities and political issues. The Pietermaritzburg advice office began to focus on old-age pensions. They saw it as an issue that encompassed the struggles that faced most of their clients. It was able to deal with the oppressive administrative processes faced by Africans, unequal state treatment based on race, and the government's inability to provide and maintain sufficient and efficient welfare for Africans.³⁵⁶ Kleinenberg recalled:

The Black Sash gained a lot of credibility through advice office work because the problems that we tackled were very real and came from people seeking help. The information collected was fed into the advocacy work where campaigns were, and still are, successfully put together. As well as the

³⁵⁰ APC 12 Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Jennifer Verbeek, Pietermaritzburg, 6 May 1998 at PACSA, PMB: 12.

³⁵¹ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 May 2019.

³⁵² APC 11/4/1/2 Joan Kerchhoff vs. Minister Law & Order: Court Case 1986.

³⁵³ Colin Gardner. (2011) 'The day the emergency was declared'. *The Witness*. 13 June.

³⁵⁴ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 May 2019.

³⁵⁵ This was the second State of Emergency; the first partial State of Emergency was declared on 20 July 1985 by President PW Botha did not target Natal.

³⁵⁶ Mary Kleinenberg and Christopher Merrett. *Standing on Street Corners: A History of the Natal Midlands Region of the Black Sash*. (Pietermaritzburg: Natal Society Foundation, 2015). 235.

one-on-one advice-giving, volunteers monitored pension pay points because there was often a lot of corruption.³⁵⁷

During the 1987 period, Kleinenberg became the regional representative and liaison person of the Natal Midlands region in the Sash Magazine. Her primary responsibility was to send the Black Sash Natal Midlands news and activities conducted by this region to the magazine editor for publication.³⁵⁸ In 1988, the Black Sash held a picket against restrictions on press freedom, the banning of anti-apartheid organizations and the detention of anti-apartheid activists.³⁵⁹ The Natal Midlands Black Sash was extremely active, with protest stands and meetings, all undertaken by courageous women under the security police's constant surveillance.³⁶⁰ Kleinenberg recalled:

They [security police] took video photos, some from the back, and it was very intimidating, and I do know that some members felt weak in the knees and couldn't take part in these protests. I don't think they had film in the camera, but anyway they might have. They also drove up and down the road taking registration numbers from cars when we had meetings and also at public meetings. So, they were always around and there was always a feeling of intimidation.³⁶¹

In 1988, the Natal Supreme Court was frequently cast into the political area to decide upon the clashes between the government and anti-apartheid organisations. On Saturday, 30 April 1988, Kleinenberg and ten Black Sash members picked up their posters in preparation for a group protest against South Africa's attack on neighbouring states. As they moved towards the appointed place to take up their positions at the appointed time, the *Natal Witness* photographer asked if they would quickly regroup and pose, holding their posters, for a photo.³⁶² They were arrested for violating the Internal Security Act as this gathering was deemed illegal by the apartheid regime. They had obtained from the Magistrate permission to have a protest stand for half an hour. Following their arrest, the security police took them to the police station where

³⁵⁷ APC 13 Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Alleyn Diesel, Pietermaritzburg, 21 March 2013: 2.

³⁵⁸ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

³⁵⁹ Spink, *Black Sash: The Beginning of a Bridge in South Africa*, 271.

³⁶⁰ Marianne Thamm. "The conscience of white South Africa". *Daily Maverick*. May 14, 2015.

³⁶¹ APC 13 Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Alleyn Diesel, Pietermaritzburg, 21 March 2013: 5.

³⁶² *Sash Magazine (SM)* 31(3) December 1988: 46.

their fingerprints and mug shots were taken since they were accused of a criminal offense. Michael Cowling, an advocate and a senior academic at the University of Natal, defended them without charge. On 7 October 1988, the accused were acquitted, and the Magistrate eventually threw the case out, expressing difficulty in understanding why a case had been brought before the court.³⁶³ Bobbie Mensky asserts that their position in white South Africa allowed them to take risks that landed some of them in jail, as he put it, “get away with being a bit cheeky” with white authority figures. Mensky asserts that their white privilege enabled them to take a principled stand against the injustices of apartheid more effectively. Often their involvement in the anti-apartheid movement created conflict as they were ostracised by their white friends, however, many spouses encouraged the Black Sash to work.³⁶⁴ Kleinenberg asserts that her arrest deepened her commitment to the anti-apartheid movement. She recalled: “The arrest certainly deepened my political conviction, making me much more determined to do whatever was possible, within our belief in non-violence, to bring down the regime.”³⁶⁵

During this time following the repressive State of Emergency, there were very few prominent women’s organisations that were organising and mobilising women in Pietermaritzburg the Black Sash was one of them. The Sash organised social campaigns to advocate for the release of detainees and political prisoners, the repeal of the death penalty, the lifting of the State of Emergency, and the removal of the South African Defence Force in the townships. Mary Kleinenberg vividly recalls the security police's presence when they held their protest stands calling for the release of the detainees. The security police tried to intimidate the women by taking down their names and addresses, commenting where they lived and worked, and photographing and videotaping them.³⁶⁶ In 1986, the State of Emergency regulations were extended to some of its members in the Natal Midlands region who were also detained for various periods.³⁶⁷

³⁶³ APC 13 Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Alleyn Diesel, Pietermaritzburg, 21 March 2013: 6.

³⁶⁴ Scott Kraft. Under Black Sash’s Banner, Affluent South Africans Battle System: White Women Wage Own War on Apartheid. *Los Angeles Times*, November 28, 1988.

³⁶⁵ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

³⁶⁶ APC 13 Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Alleyn Diesel, Pietermaritzburg, 21 March 2013. 5.

³⁶⁷ Alan Paton Centre (hereafter cited as APC), Natal Midlands Region Annual Report- March 1987, APC 4/1/1/3.

The scale of the repression was unprecedented as the political activists were detained without trial.³⁶⁸ Meanwhile, in the Natal Midlands, this period saw a high number of detainees disappearing. This raised questions about detainees during parliamentary debates and asking parliamentary questions about the detainees at that stage was the only mechanism that the PFP could try to find out about what happened to the detainees. In 1987, the PFP was looking for a researcher to work in its research office in Parliament. To illustrate the relentless state crackdown during this period we can refer to the testimony of Anne Harley who decided to apply for the researcher position and was subsequently hired. In her job description, Harley phrased the parliamentary questions that the PFP Members of Parliament would address to the Parliament's government ministers. She had to conduct research on the detained people, and those killed in the violence, and frame the PFP parliamentary members' questions. While she was working as a researcher for the PFP research office in Parliament, in Pietermaritzburg political violence was brewing. Anne Harley recalled, "During the State of Emergency, I was working as a researcher for the PFP research office in Parliament. Therefore, I had to conduct research about the people who were detained and killed in violence in Natal Midlands and frame the questions for the PFP parliamentary members that they would address to the government ministers in Parliament."³⁶⁹ She got numerous phone calls from the people in Pietermaritzburg to alert her about the violence that was taking place in that area. Some people wanted her to convey their parliamentary question to the PFP Members of Parliament about the Natal Midlands region's violence. Through those phone calls, she began to develop awareness about the political violence that was occurring in Pietermaritzburg.³⁷⁰

Political violence was beginning to build up in Natal, between the Inkatha Cultural Movement (renamed Inkatha Freedom Party in 1990), UDF and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) during this period in September 1987.³⁷¹ The escalation of violence resulted in the closure of many schools in townships near Pietermaritzburg.³⁷² This was due to the

³⁶⁸ Alex Callinicos. South Africa: End of Apartheid and After. *Economic and Political Weekly*. (1994, 29:36) 2357.

³⁶⁹ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

³⁷⁰ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

³⁷¹ Denis Philippe. Indians Versus Russians: An Oral History of the Political Violence in Nxamalala (1987–1992). *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*. (2006, 24:1) 64-93.

³⁷² "Suffer the Children: Refugees and Disrupted Schooling in Natal". *Patterns of Violence: Case Studies of Conflict in Natal*. Anthony Minnaar ed. (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1992) 259-264

invasion of schools by groups of armed men.³⁷³ The 1988 period saw Kleinenberg being elected Co-Chairperson of Black Sash in Pietermaritzburg with Fidela Fouche. During this period, the collaboration work across races of the Black Sash with other women's organisations in Natal increased significantly. In May 1989, Jabu Ndlovu a prominent trade unionist and UDF political activist was assassinated alongside her husband and daughter at their home in Imbali Township. She had called for unity and helped to make peace between Inkatha and UDF youth in 1988 when the political violence broke out.³⁷⁴ On 19 June 1989, the Black Sash held a protest stand immediately after Jabu Ndlovu's funeral to protest against the police's insensitivity in refusing family members admission into the church to attend the funeral. Kleinenberg and other Black Sash members arrived before the 200 quotas were reached and were allowed into St Mary's Catholic Church, Pietermaritzburg. The restrictions under the emergency regulations determined that only 200 mourners were permitted to attend the funeral. When they realised that there was a problem they asked if they could change places with the relatives outside the church: however, the police would not allow this.³⁷⁵

The political marches during this period were a common occurrence. On 2 September 1989, the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) organised a march to Parliament in Cape Town.³⁷⁶ This march's main aim was to protest against the exclusion of blacks from parliamentary elections on 6 September 1989. The police detained the Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu and three aides. The police in Cape Town surrounded St. George's Cathedral and a neighbouring Methodist church to stop the march by anti-apartheid protesters. Two Protestant anti-apartheid activists, Rev. Allan Boesak and Rev. Beyers Naude, were also taken into custody by the police. This march in Cape Town led to countrywide demonstrations.³⁷⁷ In Cape Town, more than 2000 people assembled at Rondebosch Common. Harley was then asked to present the findings of her research; she recalled this event: "I had to present my research there and weirdly I had laryngitis, I had lost my voice, but I was there at the meeting and somebody else had to do my

³⁷³ John Aitchison. "Numbering the dead". *Political violence in the Natal Midlands*. John Aitchison, Wendy Leeb and Vaughn John eds. (Pietermaritzburg: Centre for Adult Education, 2010) 21.

³⁷⁴ Jean Fairbairn. *Flashes in her soul: The life of Jabu Ndlovu*. (Cape Town: Buchu Books, 1991) 56-59.

³⁷⁵ *Sash Magazine (SM)* 32(2) September 1989: 44.

³⁷⁶ The Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) was an anti-apartheid movement formed in August 1989 through the alliance and association of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the United Democratic Front (UDF): Anthony W. Marx. South African Black Trade Unions as an Emerging Working-Class Movement. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. (1989, 27:3) 395.

³⁷⁷ J.A. Du Pisani., M. Broodryk and P.W. Coetzer. "Protest Marches in South Africa". *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. (1990, 28:4) 589-590.

presentation.” The demonstrators then walked from Rondebosch Common to District Six and the final stop was on the parliament, Harley was one of those who were at the forefront of this march.³⁷⁸ The protesters were stopped by police, the police fired tear gas cannisters at the demonstrators and sprayed them with water cannon purple dye, making them easily identifiable for arrest. Many protesters, including Harley, began to disperse. One protester, Philip Ivey climbed onto the armoured police vehicle and took hold of the water cannon turning it back on police and spraying many surrounding buildings. This protest which was named the Purple Rain Protest became a defining symbol of civil disobedience and was one of the last demonstrations outlawed by the apartheid government.³⁷⁹ On 2 September 1989, Kleinenberg joined the South and Addington Beaches protest in Durban. The beach protest aimed to demand the Separate Amenities Act's repeal, which permitted municipal officials to segregate public facilities by race. The police used tear gas and water cannon to disperse 1,000 students at a university protest against the election and also against the racial segregation of public facilities. When the students, most of them white or Indian, failed to disperse, the police deployed water cannon, which soaked the demonstrators with purple dye. Some were injured as they fled, and 24 students were arrested.³⁸⁰

On 23 September 1989, women from the Black Sash and other organisations planned a march in Pietermaritzburg to commemorate the 1955 women's march to Union Building. They were served with a court order banning the women's march. However, they defied the court order and proceeded with the march, which started with a religious service at St Albans Cathedral. A police helicopter hovered overhead while calling the police to disperse the women.³⁸¹ Kleinenberg recalled: “We organised a huge protest after police had surrounded St George's Cathedral in Cape Town, trapping protesters, at our protest we had women from many organisations joining us to make a ring around the Anglican Cathedral.”³⁸²

Kleinenberg suggested to the Black Sash members that they should form a chain of women around the Anglican Church. More than a thousand women from Pietermaritzburg attended this

³⁷⁸ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 05 November 2019.

³⁷⁹ Dene Smuts, Shauna Westcott. *The Purple Shall Govern: A South African A to Z of Nonviolent Action*. (Oxford University Press: Centre for Intergroup Studies, 1991) 45-80.

³⁸⁰ “Tutu and 3 Aides Arrested at Cape Town Protest.” *The New York Times*, September 5, 1989.

³⁸¹ ‘Pietermaritzburg response’. *Sash Magazine (SM)*. (1990, 32:3) 45.

³⁸² APC 13 Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Alleyn Diesel, Pietermaritzburg, 21 March 2013, 5.

march and observed a 15-minute period of silence around the Cathedral of the Holy Nativity and St Peter's Church. In Loop Street, the protesters stopped in front of Loop Street police station and handed a memorandum to the South African Police captain. The success of this march was due to the fact that more than a thousand women from different organisations participated in it. This march saw the women's political collective organisations uniting across different political, economic, racial, cultural, and religious lines.³⁸³

The role of the Black Sash in the regional Inkatha-ANC conflict

The early 1990s period saw rising tensions in the Vulindlela region. The upper part of this region was recognised as an Inkatha area and the lower part, a UDF stronghold. This led to the development of politically homogeneous areas.³⁸⁴ A geographic area was linked with a specific political group.³⁸⁵ The unbanning of the ANC in February 1990 drastically increased tensions in this region.³⁸⁶ On 25 February 1990, following its' unbanning the ANC held a rally of 100 000 at Ellis Park Stadium in Durban. Nelson Mandela addressed the rally and called on women to play their part in ending the conflict, by saying: "Women of Natal, in the past and at crucial moments, you have shown greater wisdom than your menfolk. It was you who, in 1929 and again in 1959, identified and struck out at one of the roots of our oppression. You launched powerful campaigns against beer halls. Women such as Dorothy Nyembe, Gladys Manzi, and Ruth Shabane showed sharpness of mind by closing the beer halls when the men were rendered useless by alcohol and families were being broken up. I hope that the women will again stand up and put their shoulders to the wheel together with the community to end the strife and violence".³⁸⁷

A month later on 25 March 1990, KwaZulu Minister and Inkatha leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, addressed a rally at King's Park stadium.³⁸⁸ On 25 March 1990, political violence broke out at Edendale. Joan Kerchhoff recalled this incident: "I think it was the 27th of March, I took some

³⁸³ 'Pietermaritzburg response'. *Sash Magazine (SM)*. (1990, 32:3) 45.

³⁸⁴ Anthony Minnaar. "Patterns of Violence: An Overview of Conflict in Natal during the 1980s and 1990s". *Patterns of Violence: Case Studies of Conflict in Natal*. Anthony Minnaar ed. (Pretoria: HSRC, 1992) 5.

³⁸⁵ Bonnin, "Spatiality in the Construction of Identity: African Women and Political Violence in KwaZulu-Natal", 28.

³⁸⁶ Betty Glad and Robert Blanton. "F. W. de Klerk and Nelson Mandela: A Study in Cooperative Transformational Leadership". *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. (1997, 27:3) 567-568

³⁸⁷ Nelson Mandela. *Nelson Mandela: The Struggle is My Life*. (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1990) 222.

³⁸⁸ David Matas. "Black on Black Violence". *No More: The Battle against Human Rights Violation*. David Matas ed. (Toronto: Durndun Press Limited, 1994) 99-105.

phone calls. People were desperate and were saying to me ‘Please, tell Peter the impis are coming to attack us.’ I remember answering some phone calls from some of those people in those areas being attacked. There is nothing much that could be done then, but afterward, there were many meetings set up with people who were willing to help in numerous ways”.³⁸⁹ On Wednesday, the 28th of March 1990, when the fighting was intense, Rev Tim Smith recalled: “About 35 people were killed, nearly 150 houses set alight and people fled down into the areas of Esigodini and Edendale by the thousands, I phoned Archbishop Hurley to give the news, since our mission at Esigodini was taking in refugees every minute, at one point reaching nearly 12 000”.³⁹⁰ On 28 March 1990, Kerchhoff went to the Pietermaritzburg City Hall to assist the refugees who were housed thereafter they fled their homes. They saw David Ntombela accompanied by Inkatha supporters on their way to parliament. Kerchhoff feared that Ntombela and Inkatha supporters were on their way to attack the refugees, so they fled from the City Hall. Timothy Smith recalled this incident: “Joan Kerchhoff and I had been there from early morning, and I said to her I really can't go on sitting here - I need to get a sandwich. So, we went up to the Cathedral to get it and walked back not realising the shift of forces that had and there was David Ntombela behind us with about fifty men with guns and then ultimately, he came onto the platform and as you know, the hall emptied pretty smartly”.³⁹¹ On Thursday, 29 March 1990, the Natal Midlands Crisis Committee (NMCC) was constituted by the Natal Midlands Black Sash. The main aim of this Crisis Committee was to provide support to political violence victims; monitor and raise awareness about the political unrest. Kerchhoff was part of the NMCC and monitored violence in the Natal Midlands region.³⁹² The Monitoring Group compiled a list of all the known people who had been killed and recorded statements from the refugees who had fled Edendale.

Joan Kerchhoff and Mary Kleinenberg were both parts of the 24-hour Monitoring Group of the Crisis Committee that compiled information and testimonies from the refugees about the Seven-Day War and released it to the press and other interested parties. Kerchhoff recalled:

³⁸⁹ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 May 2019.

³⁹⁰ Tim Smith. *They Have Killed My Children: One Community in Conflict 1983-1990*. (Pietermaritzburg: Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness, 1991) 20.

³⁹¹ APC 25 Timothy Smith interviewed by Ruth Lund, Pietermaritzburg, 28 October 1998 at PACSA, PMB: 51-52.

³⁹² Kleinenberg and Merrett, *Standing on Street Corners*, 140-150.

People whose houses were burnt or who had fled were streaming into church halls and community halls. I went out to St Albert's Mission in Esigodini and I was asked to note down people's names, where they came from if they were ill, and how they were. There were doctors who were going to help. Women, children, some elderly men, just pouring in with very little blankets, or just the clothes they stood up in because they had run in fear.³⁹³

On 29 March 1990, four homesteads were burnt at Songozima area in Elandskop, this resulted in two women's deaths. Following this incident, women organised a peaceful protest march.³⁹⁴ Happy Blose, Nana Mnandi, and Lulu Gwala, who was the branch secretary of Dambuza ANCWL mobilised women and organised a peace march. The Natal Midlands Black Sash was also invited to take part in the march.³⁹⁵ However, the male hierarchy of the ANC in the Natal Midlands region was against the notion of a women's peace march.³⁹⁶ On 29 March 1990, a strong delegation of 500 women who came from Edendale Valley, and other Pietermaritzburg areas undertook a march to the Plessislaer Police Station in Edendale. The riot squad responded by blocking the road, threatening to use tear gas, and demanding that the women disperse. Kleinenberg recalled: "We pointed out that they had not fired teargas at armed impis during the previous two days and we thought it unreasonable to threaten women on a peace march, but they were impervious to this argument".³⁹⁷ Kleinenberg, Jane Worsnip, Louise Hall, Clare Kerchhoff, Anton, and Bridget Krone were arrested. The situation became volatile as the police threatened to shoot the protesters with live ammunition. Kleinenberg asserts that they got their heads out of the police van and managed to persuade the women outside to disperse.³⁹⁸ The women were taken to Plessislaer Police Station where their names, addresses, and photographs were taken. They were accused of instigating the women's protest and participating in an illegal gathering.³⁹⁹ They were released later on that day and were forbidden to re-enter the Edendale

³⁹³ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 May 2019.

³⁹⁴ Christopher Merret. A small civil war: political conflict in the Pietermaritzburg region in the 1980s and early 1990s. *Natalia*. (2013) 27.

³⁹⁵ Mxolisi Chrisostomas Dlamuka. "Connectedness and disconnectedness in Thembeyakhe Harry Gwala's biography, 1920-1995: Rethinking Political Militancy, Mass Mobilisation and Grassroots Struggles in South Africa". PhD dissertation, The University of the Western Cape, 2018), 276.

³⁹⁶ Wendy Annecke. Women and the War in Natal. *Empowering Women for Gender Equity*. (1990) 18-19.

³⁹⁷ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

³⁹⁸ Nalini Naidoo. Women activists, past and present". *Concord*. (2005, 8) 8

³⁹⁹ APC 13 Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Alleyn Diesel, Pietermaritzburg, 21 March 2013: 5.

area.⁴⁰⁰ Kleinenberg recalled: “We were warned that we should drive straight out of the area as it had been declared an unrest area. In a private discussion, we decided to comply with the request to leave the area, although we were aware that the women were meeting at the Edendale Lay Centre”.⁴⁰¹ When the march disbanded by 11:00 am assemble for a meeting at Edendale Lay Centre. They were joined by Harry Gwala, the ANC chairperson in the Natal Midlands region who had been recently released from Robben Island.⁴⁰² One woman who participated in the march recalled: “In March we marched to Plessislaer and when we came back Baba G (a reference to Harry Gwala) said: ‘Women you are naughty-you mustn’t do this. You must listen to me and do what you are told. You mustn’t do something without asking first. You have no right to do this’.⁴⁰³ Gwala condemned the women for daring to organise the peace march without his permission and most women were angry and very hurt. However, the condemnation for taking strong action for peace did not deter their political commitment.⁴⁰⁴

When the violence was rife in the Natal Midlands during this period the Black Sash members were called as a deterrent, and they monitored funerals and attended vigils on weekends. The Black Sash members in the Natal Midlands region formed Imbali Support Group and often slept in Imbali township homes overnight as a form of protection against the police and the attackers. Imbali Support Group also gathered reports of violent incidents within Imbali and assisted Imbali residents in liaising with the police. Harley asserts that assumption behind the Imbali Support Group was that having white to monitor the situation could serve as a deterrent to violence. However, violence persisted. Much of the information collected by Imbali Support Group was accepted in courts and taken seriously by the police because it came from white people.⁴⁰⁵ The bravery of political violence monitors that went to sleep in Imbali to prevent some of the families from being attacked inspired her to continue to do her research; Monica Wittenberg asserts: “it was the extent that they (political violence monitors) were willing to put themselves on the line, in a way they were not involved just for the sheer thrill of it but they just did it because it was the right thing to do.”⁴⁰⁶ Harley conducted a lot of interviews with the

⁴⁰⁰ APC 13 Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Alleyn Diesel, Pietermaritzburg, 21 March 2013: 5.

⁴⁰¹ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

⁴⁰² Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

⁴⁰³ Annecke, Women and the War in Natal. *Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, 18-19.

⁴⁰⁴ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

⁴⁰⁵ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

⁴⁰⁶ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

people in Pietermaritzburg affected by the political violence and most of these interviews provided her with an insight into the political violence as the government officials refused to acknowledge the role it was playing to perpetuate the violence.⁴⁰⁷

The Seven Day War which began on 25 March and ended on 31 March 1990 led to the displacement of 20 000 people and led the deaths of 200 people.⁴⁰⁸ Kerchhoff recalled: “I remember the funerals. I can still see in my mind the rows of coffins covered in blankets, the mourning women, and men. There were just so many dead. The people in those areas who were attacked were not necessarily involved themselves, they were the families of those involved in the conflict.”⁴⁰⁹ During that period, the violence was being presented and variously labelled by the regime as “black on black,” Inkatha versus UDF/ANC. Harley asserts: “people like John Wright as a historian had been very aware of how the South African regime was supporting Inkatha.”⁴¹⁰ Harley’s job as the Black Sash researcher was to do analysis of the political violence. She recalled attending court cases and reading affidavits. She recalled: “I spent a lot of time in what was then called the Natal Society Library reading newspapers reports”.⁴¹¹ Harley also spent most of the time gathering information at PACSA and Imbali Support Group offices as both these organisations were involved in monitoring the violence.⁴¹²

Harley asserts that interacting with the political violence monitors such as Nhlanhla Hadebe from PACSA was quite important as it deepened her political conviction. She recalled: “I ended up sharing a house with Nhlanhla Hadebe who was one of the violence monitors, so I knew him very well and we were able to de-brief a bit about what we were doing.”⁴¹³ Harley played a significant role in providing the Natal Midlands region with empirical evidence, about the causes and the factors that fuelled the violence. She also went to violence-plagued communities in Natal Midlands and conducted interviews with the people who had been affected. She recalled: “I remember interviewing the then Minister of Police, Adriaan Vlok, and knowing that he was lying but there was nothing I could do about it as a little researcher. So, for me what was

⁴⁰⁷ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

⁴⁰⁸ Mathew Kentridge. *An Unofficial War: Inside the conflict in Pietermaritzburg*. (Cape Town: David Phillip Publishers, 1990) 3-9.

⁴⁰⁹ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 May 2019.

⁴¹⁰ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

⁴¹¹ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 05 November 2019.

⁴¹² Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

⁴¹³ APC 11 Anne Harley interviewed by Mary Kleinenberg, Pietermaritzburg, 26 October 2010: 4.

important about it was that the stuff that was already in the public domain needed cataloguing, which made the involvement so blatantly obvious that no one could really argue against it”.⁴¹⁴

These interviews and the research conducted by Harley resulted in a book called *No Blood on Our Hands*.⁴¹⁵ Harley brought awareness about political violence in the Natal Midlands region. Her research provided so far undocumented empirical evidence that Inkatha was aided by the security forces and this fuelled political violence in this region.⁴¹⁶ This book further looked at the central role that was played by some of the government-controlled newspapers that failed to expose the realities of repression in the Natal Midlands.⁴¹⁷ She was also making an argument that white people were deeply complicit in what was happening, either because they did not try to find out what was going on or because they knew what was going on, but they misrepresented it.⁴¹⁸ She asserts: “On the other hand, I think it was quite well received by people who had been monitoring the violence, I think people felt that it was a fair reflection of what was going on.” This book was also well received by other researchers as it provided a deeper insight into the violence in Pietermaritzburg.⁴¹⁹

Being exposed to violence had a negative impact on Harley and on the violence monitors. She recalled: “The political violence was awful and people that I was working with were also psychologically damaged, as we would spend some days counting dead bodies, it was awful.” Harley and the violence monitors often received reports about the communities that had been attacked. They often visited these communities to speak to the people about what had happened, and, in most cases, they saw dead bodies, including those of children. The people who could not find their children often came to the Democratic Party office. They would identify missing children, Harley and Radley Keys who was the Regional Director of the Natal Inland Region of the Democratic Party and tried to them with the corpses in the mortuary. She recalled: “I think I was lucky because I was working for Black Sash and they recognized quite quickly the psychological impact that being exposed to political violence was having on me and they said to

⁴¹⁴ APC 11 Anne Harley interviewed by Mary Kleinenberg, Pietermaritzburg, 26 October 2010: 3.

⁴¹⁵ Kleinenberg and Merrett, *Standing on Street Corners: A History of the Natal Midlands Region of the Black Sash*, 150.

⁴¹⁶ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 05 November 2019.

⁴¹⁷ Anne Truluck. *No blood on our hands: Political violence in the Natal Midlands 1987- mid-1992, and the role of the state, ‘white’ political parties and business*. (Pietermaritzburg: Natal Midlands Region of the Black Sash, 1992) 15-20.

⁴¹⁸ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 05 November 2019.

⁴¹⁹ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 05 November 2019.

me, do you want to see a therapist, or do you want to have some kind of debriefing thing with us?”. Harley chose to have weekly sessions with Mary Kleinenberg and Jenny Clarence; she met regularly with them to talk about the violence.⁴²⁰ They prescribed to her a feminist book called “In Our Own Hands: A Book of Self-help Therapy.”⁴²¹ This book focused on how women can have access to, transform and use themselves and other aspects of therapeutic techniques that are usually inaccessible within the confines of privileged professions or expensive training programme.⁴²² These sessions were beneficial to her as she talked about the emotions that she was experiencing and also about the stuff she was dealing with.⁴²³

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter highlighted how the three different generations of the Black Sash employed different modes of resistance, methods, and forms of activism. Through the narratives of the protagonists, this chapter examined the central role that the Black Sash in the Natal Midlands played in sustaining the struggle by assuming roles as peacemakers. The role played by women during the Seven Day War has been downplayed and minimized by most academics interested in the subject. However, in post-apartheid South Africa, there have been numerous attempts by academics to study the nature of political violence and its impact on the communities of KwaZulu-Natal today.⁴²⁴ The involvement of women in the violence in Pietermaritzburg is one aspect of the conflict that has remained overlooked by academics. Most academics interested in the subject of political violence in Pietermaritzburg have used a gender-blind approach which overlooks the role played by women in the political conflict except for social scientists such as Debbie Bonnin who explored the political protest by women in Mpumalanga Township.⁴²⁵ The invisibility of women in studies on political violence in the Natal Midlands reflects the complex nature of South African society, which is characterized by

⁴²⁰ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 05 November 2019.

⁴²¹ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 05 November 2019.

⁴²² Sheila Ernst and Lucy Goodison. *In Our Own Hands: A Book of Self-Help Therapy*. (London: The Women's Press. 1981) 238.

⁴²³ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 05 November 2019.

⁴²⁴ Mxolisi Mchunu. “A history of political violence in KwaShange, Vulindlela district and of its effects on the memories of survivors (1987-2008)”. (PhD thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 2013).

⁴²⁵ Debbie Bonnin. “Claiming spaces, changing places, political violence and women’s protests in KwaZulu-Natal”. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. (2000, 26:2) 301-316.

deep levels of sexism. Therefore, this chapter sought to highlight the pivotal role played by Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley in the Seven-Day War. Through the narratives of these women, this chapter also highlighted the attitudes of the Black Sash toward the political violence in Pietermaritzburg. By closely examining the activism of the protagonists in this chapter, I gain an insight into the pivotal role played by the Black Sash in monitoring violence and its role in the regional Inkatha-ANC conflict. Furthermore, this chapter alluded to the distinctiveness of the Black Sash Natal Midlands region, which was marked by close collaboration between the Black Sash and trade unions in Pietermaritzburg due to the shared office space. Lastly, this chapter highlighted the significant role played by the Black Sash in the women's collective resistance and collaboration work across races. It also provided a more in-depth insight into women's political collective organisation in the Natal Midlands and highlighted the complex relationship that existed between the Black Sash and other women's organisations.

CHAPTER FIVE

Growing Apartheid Oppression, the Black Sash, and the Feminist Agenda

Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to reveal the ideological underpinnings of the Black Sash with regard to feminism and the eradication of gender oppression in the private and public sphere. The formation of the Black Sash saw the organisation becoming a vehicle for liberal women to fight the apartheid system. For thirty years, the three generations of Black Sash activists carried on sustained campaigns aimed at protesting against the immoral apartheid system. The 1980s saw younger members joining the Black Sash and this resulted in women's issues taking centre stage and being added to the organisation's political agenda. This resulted in the alienation of older and conservative members. However, the third-generation activists of the Black Sash advocated for the organisation to change as they demanded a more gender-sensitive approach. These members argued that the organisation needed to focus its attention on women's rights. Therefore, this chapter will examine how gender issues became an integral part of the Black Sash movement in Natal Midlands as a new generation of feminist scholars joined the organisation. It will also explore how gender issues/feminism were framed, contested, and negotiated within the Black Sash through the perceptions and experiences of Mary Kleinenberg and Anne Harley. Joan Kerchoff's narrative has been excluded in this chapter as she is the representative of the second-generation activists of the Black Sash that joined the organisation in the 1970s. These women activists who joined the Black Sash during this period adopted a new form of activism as they assembled tables and sold fresh food products such as marmalade, pot plants, jams, and plants to raise funds. They also held protest stands and stood on the street corners wearing their black sashes in protest against the apartheid system which they deemed unjust, unfair, and unacceptable.⁴²⁶ Therefore, this chapter will use the narratives of Kleinenberg and Harley as they are the representatives of the third-generation activists of the Black Sash that joined the organisation in the 1980s. This is the period when women's issues took centre stage in the Black Sash as this generation of younger women became active members in the organisation.

⁴²⁶ APC 12 Joan Kerchoff interviewed by Jennifer Verbeek, Pietermaritzburg, 6 May 1998 at PACSA, PMB: 1-5.

Collective Resistance

The 1980s witnessed growing political turbulence in South Africa due to the rise of student youth activism and mass-based resistance movement. This period also saw women playing significant roles in the unions and resurgent anti-apartheid organisations. The formation of these organisations was motivated by a commitment to the broad liberation struggle rather than to women's liberation.⁴²⁷

Gertrude Fester argued against the notion that the formation of these organisations was motivated by a commitment to the broad liberation struggle rather than to women's liberation. She adds that while there was a commitment to the broad liberation struggle, four out of eight issues listed by the UWO were specifically related to women's inequality.⁴²⁸ She further argued that non-racialism was built by these township "civics" groups and that "despite the very real class and race differences amongst us, UWO succeeded in building a comradeship amongst us as women and mothers".⁴²⁹ The mass-based resistance movement united trade unions, churches, political parties, and the Black Sash as an anti-apartheid movement also decided to join it. Women were starting to express their demands at this time as part of the national political struggle. The women's question was beginning to be raised more explicitly in the 1980s as a result of the resurgence of grassroots mass movements. In different regions in South Africa, women's organisations began to address the issue although to varying degrees. There was an organic development in other regions which began to be consolidated and crystallized nationally.⁴³⁰

This collective organisation and resistance were necessary as patriarchy was a major factor in Pietermaritzburg which affected and limited women's participation in the anti-apartheid movement. The patriarchal system, which was embedded in Pietermaritzburg's society just like in other cities in South Africa, prevented women from becoming actively involved in politics. The eruption of political violence in Mphohmeni in 1986 changed the women's role in the

⁴²⁷ Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa*, 58.

⁴²⁸ Gertrude Fester. "Women's Organisations in the Western Cape: Vehicles for Gender Struggle or Instruments of Subordination?". *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*. (1997, 37) 47.

⁴²⁹ Fester, "Women's Organisations in the Western Cape: Vehicles for Gender Struggle or Instruments of Subordination?", 52.

⁴³⁰ Leila Patel. "South African Women's Struggles in the 1980's". *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*. (1988, 2) 28-35.

Natal Midlands as they were confined to supporting men in the struggle and became active agents for peace.⁴³¹ Philippe Denis and Philani Dlamini assert that although women played a supportive role as peace agents in Mpophomeni, gender violence was a blind spot at the time as the struggle for liberation superseded that of women's emancipation.⁴³² In Pietermaritzburg, women began to participate in the structures such as street committees that were built by the UDF to defend themselves.⁴³³ For women, the war meant changes and extensions to their traditional roles and a greater need to mobilise with other women to make their voices and needs heard.⁴³⁴ They began to affiliate with women's organisations. The growth of women's organisations shows that women yearned for an independent representation where their voices could be heard. This resulted in the formation of the NOW branch in Pietermaritzburg in 1986.⁴³⁵ The patriarchal system entrenched in Pietermaritzburg served to restrict women's political involvement, but it also provided an opportunity for women to rebel against the system by engaging in active politics against their husbands' wishes potentially putting their marriages on the line.⁴³⁶

Black Sash, Patriarchy and Feminism

In 1986, the Natal Midlands Black Sash began to lean heavily towards feminism. This could be attributed to the younger member joining the organization in the early 1980s which saw gender and feminist issues entering the internal debate in the Black Sash. To illustrate this point, I can refer to the testimony of Mary Kleinenberg who was one of the younger members that joined the organisation in 1982 after working in the advice office for two years. She believed that the injustices that were taking place in Pietermaritzburg could be publicized, and, in the end, things could be changed. However, she did not believe that the country would become democratic in her lifetime. Kleinenberg recalled: "Some of the actions of the Government of the time were so

⁴³¹ Richard Abel. "Mpophomeni and the war in Natal". *Politics by Other means: Law in the Struggle against Apartheid*. Richard L. Abel ed. (New York: Routledge, 1995) 175-176.

⁴³² Philippe Denis and Philani Dlamini. "Multiple Layers of Memory: The History of Mpophomeni Told and Retold". *Alternation*. (2015 22:2) 73-99.

⁴³³ "Historical significance of three days of national protest, June 6, 7 and 8". *Phambili Special Supplement*. (October 1988).

⁴³⁴ Wendy Annecke. "Women and the War in Natal". *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*. (1990, 7) 13.

⁴³⁵ "Working on the ground is the way for NOW", in *SASPU National*, (1987), 16.

⁴³⁶ Nadine Gordimer. *Introduction: A Single Photograph, a Thousand Words. Women of South Africa: Their Fight for Freedom*. Peter Magubane and Carol Lazar eds. (Boston: A Bulfinch Press Book, 1993) 3.

outrageous that it just seemed like the right thing to do to join the Sash.”⁴³⁷ Mary Dyer noted the changes within the Black Sash when she returned to Pietermaritzburg in the late 1970s. Dyer recalled:

I came back, I think it must have been in very late 1970s when the Association for Rural Advancement (AFRA) started, and I agreed to be AFRA’s representative in the Black Sash committee. And there were whole lot of new people, a whole new generation of Black Sash people that had come in. Pat Merret, Fiona Bulman, Mary Kleinenberg, Julliete Hart were new in the organisation. And for me it was a great revelation to see a whole lot of new people rather than the same old people.⁴³⁸

When Kleinenberg joined the Black Sash in the Natal Midlands, she met prominent women such as Pessa Weinberg, Joan Kerchhoff, Joy Roberts, Fidela Fouche, Cara Pretorius, Didi Stephens, Hazel Barnes, Jenny Clarence, Mary Nathanson, Pat Dunne, Jane Worsnip, Al Diesel, Fiona Bulman, Lorenza Cowling, and Jo Stilau. Meeting these women sensitised her to gender issues. Her political perspective had been centred on race; however, she became exposed to gender-related matters after joining the Black Sash. This shaped her political awareness and provided her with a better insight into gender perspectives and oppression that was taking place in South Africa.⁴³⁹ She asserts that her family was horrified by her political involvement and participation in the organisation when she joined the Black Sash. She recalled:

By the time I was so very involved in the Black Sash my mother, sister, and other relatives still lived in Zimbabwe and were, at times, horrified by my involvement; however, during this time I was divorced, and my two children, teenagers, were a lot more radical than me, and encouraged my involvement.⁴⁴⁰

Jill Wentzel asserts that in the mid-1980s the Black Sash was moving away from its traditional liberal. This could be seen by the organisation’s response to unrest⁴⁴¹ during this period, Black

⁴³⁷ APC 13 Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Alleyn Diesel, Pietermaritzburg, 21 March 2013.

⁴³⁸ APC 9 Marie Dyer interviewed by Pat Merrett, Pietermaritzburg, 04 August 1995: 21.

⁴³⁹ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

⁴⁴⁰ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

⁴⁴¹ Jill Wentzel. *The Liberal Slideaway*. (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1995) 94.

Sash changed its focus to the issues brought to the attention of the organisation. Members argued that the organisation needs to focus its attention on gender equality. As a result, people's perception of the organisation changed, both among its members and the public. This organisational shift saw the Black Sash taking on work that stretched further than individual cases into the domain of structural inequalities and political issues. The Pietermaritzburg advice office began to focus on old-age pensions. They saw it as an issue that encompassed the struggles that faced most of their clients. It was able to deal with the oppressive administrative processes faced by Africans, unequal state treatment based on race, and the government's inability to provide and maintain sufficient and efficient welfare for Africans.⁴⁴²

In the early 1990s, gender issues became an integral part of the Black Sash movement.⁴⁴³ Kleinenberg recalled:

In my time this Sash was very feminist organisation and therefore different perhaps Cape Town was closest to us in this respect. Because we were so women-centered we became very involved with other women's organizations in the region, and so in much of our work we put women first. I don't think this was altogether approved of by some of our older members and by some of other branches. I think it was accepted that the work we were doing was important, but there was a feeling that maybe it wasn't quite Sash work. So yes, we were different, but I don't think in that respect we influenced anybody. As we have already said in our previous discussions, it was also a time of great unrest in KwaZulu Natal and the political violence was absolutely terrible and we were able to report what was going on here, with some accuracy, to other regions.⁴⁴⁴

To illustrate this point, I can refer to the testimony of Anne Harley who was involved in the establishment of the Gender Group of the Natal Midlands Black Sash in 1990. The Gender Group was interested in women's rights and dealing with many incidents of attacks on women,

⁴⁴² Mary Kleinenberg and Christopher Merrett. *Standing on Street Corners: A History of the Natal Midlands Region of the Black Sash*. (Pietermaritzburg: Natal Society Foundation, 2015). 235.

⁴⁴³ Fidela Fouché. "Women in the Natal conflict". *Sash Magazine*. (1991, 34:2) 29-30.

⁴⁴⁴ APC 13 Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Alleyn Diesel, Pietermaritzburg, 21 March 2013: 9.

including rape, and domestic violence.⁴⁴⁵ The involvement of this new generation led to gender issues becoming an integral part of the Black Sash movement.⁴⁴⁶ The leaders of the organisation recognized the importance to address these issues.⁴⁴⁷

Harley asserts that her involvement in the Black Sash during this period sensitised her the gender issues. Her political perspective had been centred on race; however, upon joining the Black Sash, she became exposed to gender-related issues. She recalled:

Up until that point, although I'd had quite strong views about women and women's rights, I don't think I had articulated that as a feminism, and I think I was very much encouraged to do that when I came and worked for Sash. So, I engaged a lot more with it as a theory and a philosophy and that was good as well. It allowed me to do a lot of things that I was already interested in and in a bit more of a systematic way, so it did really, for a while, become my life.⁴⁴⁸

In November 1990, the Black Sash Natal Midlands Gender Group in collaboration with the ANCWL and Rape Crisis established the Rape Education Action Project (REAP). The aim of REAP was to raise awareness about rape, and the Gender Group often held monthly seminars to discuss different aspects of rape. They also promoted the rape education programme due to the high number of rapes. This programme was designed to help the people who had been raped recover and bring their attackers to justice. The Rape Crisis provided a 24-hour telephone service by carrying a pager for a week at a time.⁴⁴⁹ Harley was part of the small group of women in Rape Crisis that provided counselling and support to rape survivors by telephone.⁴⁵⁰ She recalled:

⁴⁴⁵ Fouché, "Women in the Natal conflict", 29-30.

⁴⁴⁶ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

⁴⁴⁷ Abortion Reform Action Group Newsletter, April 15th, 1993. BC 668. Box 9, Folder 2. Black Sash Collection, University of Cape Town Special Collection Archives, Cape Town, South Africa.

⁴⁴⁸ APC 11 Anne Harley interviewed by Mary Kleinenberg, Pietermaritzburg, 26 October 2010: 6-7.

⁴⁴⁹ Mary Kleinenberg. "Pioneering women: Memories of Pietermaritzburg (Pmb) Rape Crisis". *Natalia*. (2018, 48) 3.

⁴⁵⁰ Dey, Kathleen., McDonald, Shiralee and Strydom, Sarah. "The Road to Recovery: You & Rape", Rape Crisis Cape Town Trust, 01 January 2017.

Rape Crisis was completely non-hierarchical – we took it in turns to chair meetings, organise finances and whatever else was necessary. I carried the pager for a week about every 5 weeks. This meant being on call if there was a crisis day or night. I was lucky enough to work in an office where I could go out and make up the time. I also helped women to report rape at police stations and was available to be in court with them if the case went that far. It was a huge responsibility. Being a member and working with abused women increased my commitment to feminism.⁴⁵¹

Harley facilitated the monthly seminars that discussed different aspects of rape and sexual abuse. In the 1980s intimate issues that affected women such as sexual violence had been put on hold as the national liberation superseded gendered oppression and women's emancipation. Phumelele Ntombela an anti-apartheid activist in the Natal Midlands recalled:

NOW comrades were asking, 'Why write about rape all the time?' These were seen as weird issues to focus on. They said people should speak about the state of emergency, not about wife battering...Even I don't remember once challenging a NOW meeting to speak about these issues. I just felt overwhelmed by the fact that it wasn't appropriate.⁴⁵²

The monthly seminars ran by the Black Sash, Pietermaritzburg Rape Crisis, and the ANCWL on rape resulted in a booklet called the *Say No to Rape*. The *Say No to Rape* booklet was written by Anne Harley, Mary Kleinenberg, Loraine Bassett Jenny Clarence, and Fidela Fouche. Its aim was to raise awareness and educate rape survivors and communities about how to report it. This booklet aimed to provide information about the physical and emotional effects of rape.⁴⁵³ The booklet was also distributed to crisis centres throughout the country and translated into Afrikaans and Zulu.⁴⁵⁴ *The Say No to Rape* booklets were also distributed around Pietermaritzburg, and they urged women who had been raped to come forward. One of the

<https://tears.co.za/wp-content/uploads/You%20and%20Rape%20English.pdf>

⁴⁵¹ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

⁴⁵² Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa*, 58.

⁴⁵³ Kathleen Dey., Shiralee McDonald and Sarah Strydom. "The Road to Recovery: You & Rape", Rape Crisis Cape Town Trust, 01 January 2017.

⁴⁵⁴ Kleinenberg, "Pioneering women: Memories of Pietermaritzburg (Pmb) Rape Crisis", 10.

booklets said for example: “Join a women’s group or organisation or start your own. In rich and developing countries, women around the world have used many ways to make sure their voices are heard. We need to spread the word that rape has no place in our country. Women are stronger working together than alone”.⁴⁵⁵ The monthly seminars also enhanced the collaboration work of these women’s organisations in the Natal Midlands.⁴⁵⁶ Kleinenberg recalled:

We formed a women’s group in the Sash, which was quite interesting, since it was a women’s organisation, anyway. But we were quite radical at that stage, and we wrote two booklets. The first was *Say No to Rape* written in the early nineties and it was reprinted a few years later as *You and Rape*. We also wrote *You and the Constitution* in 1992. Oh, I said the Rape booklet was written by the Women’s Group - in fact both of them were, and some of that women’s group had been members of Rape Crisis, so we did have some knowledge - obviously there was more research, and plenty of enthusiasm.⁴⁵⁷

The Natal Midlands region’s commitment to gender issues saw them being invited to join the two leading feminists Angela Davis and Radha Kumar for a morning’s discussion. Several members of the Natal Midlands were also invited to attend the seminar at the University of Durban-Westville. Kleinenberg recalled:

I was very privileged to meet some remarkable women visitors, largely through Patsy Seethal, an activist in this area. For example, I met Angela Davis, the well-known American author; Rhada Kumar and Vandana Shiva, who were environmental activists from India; Cheris Kramerae who compiled the feminist Dictionary; and Gayatri Spivak a fierce feminist activist, author and academic. She questioned my presence at a meeting because I was white, and I remember Patsy gave her quite a mouthful and said she didn’t think

⁴⁵⁵ Jamie Frueh. *Political Identity and Social Change: The Remaking of the South African Social Order*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003) 133.

⁴⁵⁶ Mary Kleinenberg. “Pioneering women: Memories of Pietermaritzburg (Pmb) Rape Crisis”. *Natalia*. (2018, 48) 10.

⁴⁵⁷ APC 13 Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Alleyn Diesel, Pietermaritzburg, 21 March 2013:7.

colour was relevant: she thought what people were doing was important and relevant.⁴⁵⁸

The Black Sash in the Natal Midlands was very active in socio-economic and socio-environmental issues. There was an environmental committee which was led by Fidela Fouche which was involved in environmental justice issues. Harley recalled:

I had been involved in Earth Life Africa in Cape Town and so when I moved to Pietermaritzburg, I made contacts with the Earth Life Africa people and Fidela's involvement in that, and her wanting to start a Sash environment group, was a really nice thing. It was bringing together a lot of the things that I really felt about.⁴⁵⁹

Environmental issues also became an integral part of the Black Sash movement. Harley recalled:

I felt that in the Midlands Sash we were pretty good and solid in terms of having active members and ticking over, but we were doing some interesting stuff that other Sash branches weren't involved in. I do feel that we were politically a little bit more radical, in terms of the feminist stuff a bit more radical, and in the environmental stuff, too, which was largely Fidela. It wasn't the kind of liberal, do good, let's recycle stuff, it was much more out there, and I think we pushed the boundaries, both in Maritzburg and in Sash. I think there were some people who looked at Midlands askance, but I think a lot of Sash really admired us. Some of the oldies were maybe a bit dubious.⁴⁶⁰

At the Black Sash's national conference in 1991, the issue of women's reproductive rights was first raised publicly. The abortion issue was hotly debated as it challenged the members' religious beliefs.⁴⁶¹ Over the next two years, the matter was also discussed at the regional level.

⁴⁵⁸ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Alleyn Diesel, Pietermaritzburg, 21 March 2013: 9.

⁴⁵⁹ APC 11 Anne Harley interviewed by Mary Kleinenberg, Pietermaritzburg, 26 October 2010: 6

⁴⁶⁰ APC 11 Anne Harley interviewed by Mary Kleinenberg, Pietermaritzburg, 26 October 2010: 6-7.

⁴⁶¹ Spink, *Beginning of a Bridge*, 249.

The issue of abortion divided the organisation across religious lines as members had to address this issue from their differing religious and ethical perspectives.⁴⁶²

Moreover, it also resulted in the alienation of older and conservative members. In the Natal Midlands, older members argued that the organisation had been formed to advocate for the rights of all South Africans and focusing on women's rights diverted the organisations from its mission. Black Sash older members Phoebe Brown and Joy Roberts recalled going to a Sash meeting and feeling out of place. Brown asserts:

There were a whole new lot of younger people, and we went to the meeting, which was an important one, I have forgotten why, and Joy said, "I think this isn't the right meeting we have come to.' We waited a while and then discovered it the Black Sash meeting. After that, she and I opted out because we thought we didn't know anyone anymore and their views were radical than ours.⁴⁶³

However, in 1993 the Black Sash took on issues that affected all races, classes, and genders. This included abortion and the abolition of the death penalty. The Black Sash held a national conference in 1993 at the Natal Midlands and adopted a resolution on abortion that was against the restriction of abortion. In the debates preceding the adoption of the resolution, the Black Sash members argued that the outlawing of abortion would result in the death of many disadvantaged women, mainly young black women.⁴⁶⁴ A long-standing Christian member of the Black Sash was opposed to the organisations' position on abortion and resigned from the organisation.⁴⁶⁵

Conclusion

This chapter has used the narratives of Anne Harley and Mary Kleinenberg to highlight how the Black Sash in the Natal Midlands negotiated and challenged gender issues. It produced new knowledge of the issue of gender concerns in the third generation of Black Sash activists. This chapter also argued that the influx of younger members in the Black Sash resulted in gender

⁴⁶² Ackermann, "Reproductive Rights and the Politics of Transition in South Africa", 125.

⁴⁶³ APC 6 Phoebe Brown interviewed by Mary Kleinenberg, Pietermaritzburg, 9 August 2011: 3.

⁴⁶⁴ Denise Ackermann. "Reproductive Rights and the Politics of Transition in South Africa". *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*. (1995, 11:2) 124-125.

⁴⁶⁵ Benjamin, "An historical analysis of aspects of the Black Sash, 1955-2001", 45.

issues becoming an integral part of the organisation. This saw issues of feminism entering the internal debate of the Black Sash and marked Black Sash's shift as it began to lean heavily towards feminism. This inevitably strained its unity as older members perceived that adding women's issues to the organisation's political agenda would distract the organisation from its purpose of advocating an issue for all South Africans. However, the women academics who joined the organisation during this period informed by feminist concerns wanted the organisation to adopt feminism as a guiding principle. They also advocated for more active involvement of the Black Sash in the struggle. The older generation believed that issues could be solved by passive debate and adhered to the traditional liberal values of the organisation's founders. To illustrate this point, this chapter used the testimonies of Mary Kleinenberg and Anne Harley to argue that the third-generation activists of the Black Sash found new ways of fighting apartheid, and this led to the evolution of the organisation's tactics as it found a new form of resistance that older members were not used to. The next chapter will focus on the multiple roles as political activists, mothers, and wives that the three women took in sustaining the struggle. It will also discuss the challenges that the three women faced as a wife, mothers, and activists and explore how they managed these multiple roles.

CHAPTER SIX

The Impact of Politics on Family Life

Introduction

This chapter will examine the central role that Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg and Anne Harley played in sustaining the struggle. In the anti-apartheid movement, were relegated to being wives and mothers. However, they were not passive bystanders as they took on multiple roles as wives, mothers and activists.⁴⁶⁶ Therefore, this chapter will examine the multiple roles both as political activists, mothers, and wives that the three women took in sustaining the struggle. It will problematize these multiple roles and highlight how their political activism affected their marital status and family life. Malou von Siviers uses the narrative of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela to argue that women in the anti-apartheid movement were put into the position of “wife of”.⁴⁶⁷ However, their political activism in the struggle suggests that they were prominent political figures in their own right. Therefore, this chapter will use the narratives of the three women to attempt to correct the picture

Political Activism and Motherhood in the Anti-Apartheid Movement

Women’s role in South Africa was defined by their motherhood. In the struggle for liberation, women justified their political activism by citing their responsibilities as mothers. Mamabolo et al, assert that despite other roles as women, motherhood seems to emphasise the need for mothers to be able to provide care for their children.⁴⁶⁸ According to Anne McClintock, mothers transformed their identities into mothers of revolution, and they were no longer viewed as mere housekeepers.⁴⁶⁹ Several anti-apartheid campaigns were conducted under the banner of

⁴⁶⁶ Mechthild Nagel. “I write what I like: African prison intellectuals and the struggle for freedom”. *Journal of Pan African Studies*. (2008, 3) 75.

⁴⁶⁷ Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Interview with Malou von Siviers, broadcast by Swedish TV channel 4, November 1999, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wq_ax-QthHrY (December 2021).

⁴⁶⁸ Itumelang Mamabolo., Malose Langa, Malose & Peace Kiguwa. “To be or not to be a mother: Exploring the notion of motherhood among university students”. *South African Journal of Psychology*. (2009, 39:4) 480-488.

⁴⁶⁹ Anne McClintock. “No Longer in a Future Heaven”: Gender, Race, and Nationalism”. *Cultural Politics*. (1997, 11) 116-118.

motherism.⁴⁷⁰ Julia Wells asserts: “The women who participated in the resistance movements had to transcend social norms which limited women’s activities to the sphere of home and family.”⁴⁷¹ Jacklyn Cock asserts that female cadres of Umkhonto WeSizwe (MK) used motherhood to justify their activism as one MK female cadre stated, “I am a guerilla because I’m a mother”.⁴⁷² Debbie Bonnin asserts that mothers used motherhood in their activism in Mpumalanga Township during the political violence in the 1980s. Bonnin told a story of one Mrs. Radebe who recalled how they, as mothers, stood firm against the abduction of young girls by Inkatha. Inkatha's violation of personal bodies through rape, the destruction of houses, and the demand to control the households transformed the women’s political identities in Mpumalanga Township.⁴⁷³

Joan Kerchhoff

Julia Wells asserts, “At some point, women’s political activism is bound to be perceived as interfering with their prescribed role as mothers.”⁴⁷⁴ Joan Kerchhoff’s activism took a toll on her life as she had to balance her dual roles as a political activist and a mother. She had to admit that her activism would have an effect on her family and friends. However, she was able to balance her motherhood role with the collective expectations as the interactions with the organisation were within a dual-parent family structure and family values. Motherhood provided a unique opportunity for Black Sash activists to align their collective identities and at the same time affirm their identities as mothers and continue as political activists. Ruth Wilson Gilmore asserts that during the apartheid regime in South Africa, women activists used motherhood to challenge the government.⁴⁷⁵ Motherhood did not hinder movement participation as the Black Sash emphasized the significant role of motherhood.⁴⁷⁶ The Black Sash activists

⁴⁷⁰ Deborah Gaitskell and Elaine Unterhalter. “Mothers of the nation: a comparative analysis of nation, race and motherhood in Afrikaner nationalism and the African National Congress”. *Women-nation-state*. Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias eds. (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1989)

⁴⁷¹ Julia Wells. *We now demand! the history of women's resistance to pass laws in South Africa*. (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993) 139.

⁴⁷² Jacklyn Cock. *Women and War in South Africa* (London: Open Letters, 1992) 152

⁴⁷³ Debbie Bonnin. “Spatiality in the Construction of Identity: African Women and Political Violence in KwaZulu-Natal”. *Society in Transition*. (1997, 28:1-4) 31-33.

⁴⁷⁴ Julia Wells, ‘The Rise and Fall of Motherism as a Force in Black Women's Resistance Movements’. (Conference on Women and Gender in Southern Africa, University of Natal, Durban, 1991) 15-30.

⁴⁷⁵ Ruth Wilson Gilmore. *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006) 25-30.

⁴⁷⁶ Spink, *Black Sash: The Beginning of a Bridge in South Africa*, 250.

successfully managed the tensions between motherhood and political activism by framing their involvement in the anti-apartheid movement as a means of enhancing their children's futures.⁴⁷⁷

Whilst she was working in the Christian Institute, Kerchhoff hired a black woman to take care of her children in the afternoons. After being injured in an accident, the lady stopped working for the Kerchhoff family. To balance her dual roles of motherhood and political activism, Kerchhoff utilised available services. She appealed to her mother for assistance, and she agreed to step in and help her with raising her children. Her mother was a great help, and the children were delighted to go to her if she and Peter were busy with political activities. When her mother was not available, Kerchhoff asked her friends in the neighbourhood to take care of her children. When her children were older, Kerchhoff was not involved in their activities, although she did her best. Both Joan and Peter tried to attend teachers' meetings, sports events, and school functions. At times, it was a balancing act, and Kerchhoff felt guilty about missing out on some of the children's activities due to her activism. Kerchhoff had to support her four children and her then-political activist husband Peter, she put in a lot of effort to strike a balance between her political activities and family life.⁴⁷⁸

Following the formation of the UDF there was a commitment from people in the Pietermaritzburg areas to link in. Peter Kerchhoff recalled:

The UDF was launched in Edendale from the 31st of October in 1983. And in that link, PACSA affiliated to the UDF that then brought us in touch with a whole lot of other people and in various ways we were able to gather support.⁴⁷⁹

Thus, Peter and Joan were invited to be part of the launch of the UDF Natal Midlands region in October 1983 at the Lay Ecumenical Centre as PACSA representatives. Robert Manzi, who was the chairman of the SRC at the University of Zululand, addressed the launch and echoed strong

⁴⁷⁷ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 May 2019.

⁴⁷⁸ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 May 2019.

⁴⁷⁹ APC 6 Peter Kerchhoff interviewed by Jennifer Verbeek, Pietermaritzburg, 10 February 1998 at PACSA, PMB: 22-23.

sentiments against the apartheid government. Peter Kerchhoff was also the key speaker at the UDF launch.⁴⁸⁰ Peter recalled:

But it was a very significant day and a very important day in Pietermaritzburg's history with the launching of the UDF and certainly, PACSA, not the political motivation, but in terms of what the UDF stood for, we affiliated to the UDF because they were echoing what PACSA felt was the new society, the new mandate, if you like, for a new society in South Africa.⁴⁸¹

On 18 February 1985, the state charged 16 UDF leaders with treason and contravening the Internal Security Act no 74 of 1982. This Pietermaritzburg Treason Trial was the first political trial targeting the UDF. The trials were set to take place in Pietermaritzburg, which was remote for the families of the trialists. Through her involvement with PACSA, Joan and her husband Peter got involved in the Detainees Support Committee (DESCOM) which organised food, clothing, and legal representation for detainees and supported the detainees' families.⁴⁸² Peter Kerchhoff recalled:

We discovered that with these treason trials being set up in Pietermaritzburg, families of the awaiting trial people lived in places where it was very difficult to move from or to get to Pietermaritzburg and certainly our international visitors, do find it very difficult to get to Pietermaritzburg - because there's not an adequate train service and buses are not that frequent between Durban and Joburg or Bethlehem and Pietermaritzburg - so you can imagine what it's like for people coming from rural areas to get into Pietermaritzburg.⁴⁸³

Joan and Peter rallied their support behind the awaiting trial prisoners and their families by assisting them when they came to Pietermaritzburg for the treason trial. They also assisted these families by trying to get them visitation permits to visit their loved ones in the Old prison. In

⁴⁸⁰ John Aitchison. "NGO's, the anti-apartheid struggle and PACSA". *Innovation*. (2000, 20) 8.

⁴⁸¹ APC 6 Peter Kerchhoff interviewed by Jennifer Verbeek, Pietermaritzburg, 10 February 1998 at PACSA, PMB: 23.

⁴⁸² APC 11/3/1/1/2 Peter Kerchhoff's submission to the TRC, 8/12/1997

⁴⁸³ APC 6 Peter Kerchhoff interviewed by Jennifer Verbeek, Pietermaritzburg, 10 February 1998 at PACSA, PMB: 22.

addition to that, they also helped both the awaiting trial people and even their families by setting up a programme at College Road where they would take meals to the prisons.⁴⁸⁴ Her involvement with PACSA and DESCOM saw her attending the prison trial and interacting with the detainees as she often delivered the meals with the PACSA Lunch Brigade.⁴⁸⁵ The apartheid government dropped the charges against 12 of the accused in December 1985. The remaining accused were released in June 1986; the trial against them collapsed after the state introduced suspect evidence.⁴⁸⁶

The state continued to harass Kerchhoff and her family as her husband was detained with over twenty people in Pietermaritzburg following the declaration of the State of Emergency.⁴⁸⁷ The detention of Peter Kerchhoff and many other PACSA members, put PACSA's Resource Centre on the back burner as other urgent matters were left unattended. Kerchhoff stepped in and became interim Director of the PACSA Resource Centre. She monitored the increasing violence and provided moral and material support for political detainees and their families. As the acting Director of PACSA's Resource Centre, she assisted those who came to PACSA because they needed food and shelter. She also visited the political detainees who were incarcerated at the New Prison and organised legal assistance and money for bail.⁴⁸⁸ During this period, PACSA impacted several areas as it encouraged serious thought about human relations and questions of justice.⁴⁸⁹ Kerchhoff recalled:

Monica Wittenberg and I were in the office on our own most of the time in the sense of being official PACSA people, but it was always full of the parents of the detainees and other people who came in and out and in fact one of them was the mother of Machina – he was called Machina because he

⁴⁸⁴ APC 6 Peter Kerchhoff interviewed by Jennifer Verbeek, Pietermaritzburg, 10 February 1998 at PACSA, PMB: 21-22.

⁴⁸⁵ Kerchhoff, "Standing with marginalised people: a thread running through 20 years", 6-7.

⁴⁸⁶ Patrick MacEntee. "The "Treasure" Trials at Pietermaritzburg and Delmas". *United Nations Centre Against Apartheid*, No. (1986, 23:86) 6-20

⁴⁸⁷ Alan Paton Centre (hereafter cited as APC), Joan Kerchhoff vs. Minister Law & Order: Court Case 1986. PC 11/4/1/2

⁴⁸⁸ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 May 2019.

⁴⁸⁹ Colin Garner. "Peter Campbell Kerchhoff 1934-1999 (obituary)". *Natalia*. (1999, 29) 95.

was blind. He was due to be hanged with Lucky Payi, and we made the arrangement for Machina's mum to stay over in Pretoria.⁴⁹⁰

Sipho "MaChina" Xulu from Sobantu Township in Pietermaritzburg was the chairman of the Sobantu Youth Organisation (SOYO). On 9 September 1986, MaChina was sentenced to death by hanging in Pretoria after he and fellow *uMkhonto WeSizwe* (MK) cadre Lucky Payi were convicted of killing another MK operative, Ben Langa, on suspicion that he was an apartheid spy. The police held Peter Kerchhoff in solitary confinement and interrogated him for many weeks.⁴⁹¹

Political activism and motherhood are two important aspects of South Africa's political history. They have a powerful relationship and were both vital to developing the anti-apartheid movement. Daughters who had an activist mother as a parent became politically conscious and engaged. Having an activist mother had a significant impact on the lives and ideologies of a daughter who was raised by them.⁴⁹² According to Anne McClintock, being a mother significantly influenced how women participated in the anti-apartheid movement. They used their shared experience as mothers as a justification for the mobilisation.⁴⁹³ Children of activists frequently felt abandoned by their mother's employment and political activism, according to Helen Scanlon's analysis of the relationship between family dynamics and activism.⁴⁹⁴ Shana Kleiner concurs with Scanlon and asserts that when the daughters grew older, they change the unfavourable opinions they had of their mothers, they became inspired by their mother's activism and adopt it.⁴⁹⁵

Kerchhoff was upfront with her children and often explained to them the nature of her work. Clare Kerchhoff argued that because she grew up in a home where both parents placed a high value on political education, her mother's involvement impacted her own. She asserts that when she was 15, her father gave up his well-paid job to start a Christian Agency, the

⁴⁹⁰ APC 12 Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Jennifer Verbeek, Pietermaritzburg, 6 May 1998 at PACSA, PMB: 11-12.

⁴⁹¹ Colin Garner. Peter Campbell Kerchhoff 1934-1999 (obituary). *Natalia*. (1999, 29) 95.

⁴⁹² Debbie Bonnin. "Claiming spaces, changing places, political violence and women's protests in KwaZulu-Natal". *Journal of Southern African Studies*. (2000, 26:2) 301-316.

⁴⁹³ Anne McClintock. "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family." *Feminist Review*. (1993, 44) 16.

⁴⁹⁴ Helen Scanlon. *Representation & Reality: Portraits of Women's Lives in the Western Cape, 1948-1976*. (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007) 1-318.

⁴⁹⁵ Shana Kleiner. "Like Mother, Like Daughter: The Intergenerational Link Between Mother Activists and their Daughters in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa". *Independent Study Project*. (2019) 6.

Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness (PACSA).⁴⁹⁶ Her mother had to support the whole family financially.⁴⁹⁷ Bengtson and Dunham argued that liberal people typically have liberal parents because motherhood is naturally linked to the family structure.⁴⁹⁸ This was evidenced by Clare Kerchhoff as her parent's outlook on life had a familial impact on her political consciousness as she became exposed to a non-racial outlook. Kerchhoff's activism affected Clare as her awkward adolescence was exacerbated by her "different" ideas and lifestyle. Well-meaning school friends often prayed for her redemption, while others called her "kaffir-lover". This was because she was in love with a black boy. At the University of Natal, in the 1980s, she majored in English and Psychology and taught for three years. She emphasises that her political education included some of her mother's lessons. Kerchhoff's political activism and Peter's detention in 1986 increased Clare's determination to resist apartheid. She became involved in the End Conscription Campaign (ECC). Her involvement in the ECC did not enhance her teaching career in a whites-only Christian National Education system. Her activism saw her leaving her teaching career and continuing her music studies. In mid-January 1987, she started to work for the Black Sash Natal Midlands advice office as a paid caseworker.⁴⁹⁹

Mary Kleinenberg

Mary Kleinenberg's first child Helen was born in 1964 and her son Barry in 1966. At the age of 22 in 1986, Helen certainly thought that peaceful protest was futile. However, she did not become involved in any political activity because she died in 1989 as a very young woman. Later, Barry and his partner were members of the communist party although it was banned, he was not active in any way.⁵⁰⁰ Kleinenberg's children were supportive of her activism. She asserts:

⁴⁹⁶ APC 6 Peter Kerchhoff interviewed by Jennifer Verbeek, Pietermaritzburg, 10 February 1998 at PACSA, PMB: 10.

⁴⁹⁷ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 June 2019.

⁴⁹⁸ Charlotte Dunham & Vern Bengtson. "The long-term effects of political activism on intergenerational relations". *Youth & Society*. (1992, 24:1) 31-51.

⁴⁹⁹ People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA). *Breaking the Silence Stories from the Other(ed) Woman*. (Auckland Park: Jacana Media Ltd, 2010) 137.

⁵⁰⁰ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

I do not believe that my activism affected my child-rearing capabilities because when I first joined the Black Sash my children were in their teens and very involved in their own lives, as well as encouraging what I was doing.⁵⁰¹

However, the rest of her family members were horrified by her political involvement and participation in the organisation when she joined the Black Sash in 1979. Her political involvement in the Black Sash and in the anti-apartheid movement during this period was taking a toll on her life as she was beginning to lose some of her close friends. She recalled:

In the early days, I did lose some friends – one man said that Black Sash women were wasting their time standing, in sensible shoes, holding posters that interested no one. A woman I was friends with said that I should have spent more time trying to save my marriage than a country that had little hope of becoming a democracy. Another said that actions like those of Black Sash women were completely useless given that South Africa would follow in the footsteps of Zimbabwe.⁵⁰²

This friend of Kleinenberg was referring to the political violence that broke out in Zimbabwe post-independence in February 1980.⁵⁰³

Kleinenberg argues that her marital problems had nothing to do with her activism. He, in fact, was encouraging her participation in the anti-apartheid movement and was an armchair politician who was very interested in politics though he did not act on this. Her ex-husband was a great help, and the children elected to live with their father following the divorce. This led to Kleinenberg becoming deeply involved with political activities following the divorce. She asserts:

Furthermore, meetings were at night, which meant I could feed, talk to and spend time with the children before going out, leaving them with their father. I only became deeply involved, which meant spending a lot more time working

⁵⁰¹ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

⁵⁰² Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

⁵⁰³ Emerson Mngagwa. "Post-Independence Zimbabwe". *Turmoil and Tenacity: Zimbabwe 1980-1990*. Cannan Banana ed. (Harare, College Press, 1989) 236; Joshua Nkomo, *The Story of My Life*. (London, Methuen, 1984) 219.

in the organisation, after I was divorced, and both children elected to live with their father who was a lot better off financially than I was.⁵⁰⁴

She was able to balance a paid job, working at the Black Sash Advice Office, and being a single mom in a new country coming to South Africa from Zimbabwe. She asserts:

I was only ever a single mother when my children stayed with me over some weekends, and when they were home, I devoted time to them. The conventional unit of father breadwinning and mother housekeeping was never part of my life, and so my children were used to the juggling that took place to ensure their domestic needs were catered for, they were safe and as happy as possible. So, you could say we were not a typical nuclear family. Also, at this time, my paid job allowed some flexibility, so I did not find it difficult to balance the rest of my life with my working life. I could work after hours to make up any time taken off during the day, but this didn't happen often, most Black Sash work took place in the evenings and over weekends.⁵⁰⁵

Kleinenberg asserts that relocating to Pietermaritzburg and meeting new people impacted her politicization and conscientization. She asserts:

Moving from Zimbabwe was a political decision. Neither my husband nor I were supporters of Ian Smith, and we had no desire to be involved in a conflict that involved right-wing White people asserting their so-called rights. So, we understood that the move to South Africa was permanent. However, leaving both our families was not easy, and it meant our children had no cousins, aunts, uncles, or grandparents, clearly difficult for them. Having lived in Malawi and England, both for two years, we understood how a longing for home, for country and people affected us. We were members of the Anglican

⁵⁰⁴ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

⁵⁰⁵ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

Cathedral community, and we were made very welcome by congregants, some of whom became good friends.⁵⁰⁶

Kleinenberg recalled that there was a lot of disapproval in the white community during this period, as there were many white people who were shouting insults at them at protest stands. However, some supported their actions.⁵⁰⁷

Anne Harley

Kathryn Spink asserts that friends and even the husbands of the Black Sash members saw the concerns for African communities as a futile exercise.⁵⁰⁸ The Black Sash members' husbands feared for the safety of their wives and were also concerned that their activism and opposition to the apartheid government would jeopardise their businesses.⁵⁰⁹ These women defied their husbands and challenged the accepted social barriers. Anne Harley was part of the protest and had strong views against the apartheid system due to her political upbringing. Her university years increased the level of her political awareness. However, her husband had a different and apolitical background and was uncomfortable with becoming politically active. They soon started to drift apart and eventually got divorced in 1987 after three years of marriage, not having any children.⁵¹⁰

The Black Sash movement rented an office on Chapel Street where Harley would conduct her research. The PACSA offices were also situated in the same building on Chapel Street. In this building, Harley met her second husband in 1990 who was working as a political violence monitor for PACSA. Both were involved in researching the violence in Pietermaritzburg. They got married in 1992. Harley's husband was politically active as he had been involved in the End Conscription Campaign and was also a South African Communist Party member.⁵¹¹ Harley asserts that she had many discussions with her husband who was heavily involved in monitoring violence in Pietermaritzburg. The discussions were quite important as they deepened her political conviction. One of her husband's friends and colleagues Skhumbuzo Ngwenya Mbatha

⁵⁰⁶ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

⁵⁰⁷ Mary Kleinenberg interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 03 June 2019.

⁵⁰⁸ Spink, *Black Sash: The Beginning of a Bridge in South Africa*, 60.

⁵⁰⁹ Spink, *The Black Sash: The Beginning of a Bridge in South Africa*, 55.

⁵¹⁰ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

⁵¹¹ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

was a field worker at PACSA and the ANC Chairperson in Imbali Branch was shot while dining with Harley's husband.⁵¹² This incident had a significant impact on Harley's husband, and he left PACSA shortly after this incident and joined an NGO that was involved in social research.⁵¹³

Conclusion

To conclude, it is significant to note that writing this chapter had a few limitations on the research data. As discussed in the methodology there were contemporary issues that Kleinenberg and Harley were not prepared to discuss their private lives. The dynamic of the interview situation where I as a black man was interviewing white women about their private lives might have affected what Kleinenberg and Harley were willing to discuss with me. This affected the writing of this chapter as it was written in a rather superficial form and could not flesh out some of the contemporary issues. Irrespective of the limitations, this chapter examined the central role that Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley played in sustaining the struggle. These women were not only at the forefront as political activists, but they played a pivotal role in raising and protecting their families during their husband's incarceration and during the breakdown of several marriages. Therefore, this chapter further explored the familial impact their political activism had on their child-rearing and parenthood and how their political activism affected their marital status. They successfully fulfilled their roles as wives, mothers, and political activists in the anti-apartheid movement. Even though they often worked in the background they should always be seen as equal partners in the anti-apartheid movement. They have taken on multiple roles, both as frontline political activists and mothers and wives caring for their families. They cared for their families and protected them during their partners' incarceration. They are examples of many women who contributed to the history of South Africa, but their narratives are continually omitted; if enunciated, it is under the shadow of men. Their significant role was relegated to a supporting role that remained ignored in South African history and this has belittled their contribution in South African history. Their political activism anti-apartheid movement suggests that they were prominent political figures in their own right and this chapter attempted to correct the picture.

⁵¹² Christopher S. Wren. In South Africa, New Suspicions That Hired Assassins Are at Work; February 13, 1992, Section A, 6.

⁵¹³ Anne Harley interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 19 June 2019.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

This thesis focused on the central role played by the Black Sash women in the anti-apartheid movement in Pietermaritzburg. This study gave special attention to the biographical narratives of three Black Sash activists in the Natal Midlands region. These women are Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley. Several key issues can be drawn from this thesis. Firstly, this thesis has highlighted that while existing scholarship on liberation narratives has gained momentum extensively since 1994, there is a historiographical gap in some areas. The South African anti-apartheid history focuses on black South Africans and overlooks the contribution of “non-black” communities to the anti-apartheid struggle. Thus, this study on the three Black Sash women integrated white women into South Africa’s anti-apartheid historiography. It demonstrated that the anti-apartheid struggle was collective and included a small group of whites. This study was motivated by concerns about the lack of literature on the significant role played by women in the anti-apartheid movement in Pietermaritzburg. This study argued that the socio-economic conditions that these women were challenged with shaped and defined their activism and political consciousness.

This study drew on three theoretical approaches in highlighting the role played by women activists in the Black Sash organisation. These theoretical approaches are social history, biography/microhistory and gender. Firstly, this study utilised social history. Social history explores the voices of the marginalised and moves away from focusing on the elite. It unearthed the life experiences and narratives of the marginalised groups including women. This study used social history to integrate the role of white women and contribute to the liberation narratives of South Africa. Social history also analysed the socio-economic and political factors that shaped and defined the political activism of Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley in the Natal Midlands. Oral interviews added value to this study as they gave these women activists an opportunity to narrate their own stories and tell the researcher their side of the story. This assisted in filling the silences that exist in the archives.

Secondly, the biographical lens used in this study sought to provide a more in-depth insight into their early life and the factors that shaped their political identity during childhood. Ciraj Rassool asserts that biographical studies played a significant role in the production of history in the

democratic dispensation.⁵¹⁴ This biographical study has allowed me to position the Natal Midlands region, a primarily marginalised area, in the liberation narrative to be the centre of focus. The Pietermaritzburg historiographical trend has not devoted much attention to biographies of people in the city. It has also neglected the significant contribution made by Pietermaritzburg in the national struggle in South Africa. This distorted historical analysis has left the social history of Pietermaritzburg and the historical contribution of this region in South Africa relatively neglected.

By making Pietermaritzburg a key area of analysis, this biographical study allowed regional histories to be highlighted. This study further allowed narratives of the Black Sash movement in Pietermaritzburg to be documented. The involvement of women in the anti-apartheid movement in the Natal Midlands is one aspect that has remained overlooked by academics. Rarer still are the contributions of women.⁵¹⁵ Therefore, this study allowed nuances in women's political activism to be documented, which is often lacking in South African historiography.

Thirdly, this study explored the lives of these women activists through the lens of gender theory. It mainly focused on the intersectionality of class, race, and gender relations. According to gender scholars, the intersections of race, class and gender had a big impact on influencing the women's experiences. They argued that these relations shaped women's activism in South Africa. These women activists grew up in a society that was stratified along racial, class, and gender lines. Being exposed to this stratified society and witnessing the gender inequalities perpetuated by the apartheid system from an early age played a pivotal role in their comprehension of the racial oppression of black people. Intersectionality provided a nuanced female perspective of these activists in their activism against the apartheid system as they experienced a variety of oppressions.

The Black Sash in the Anti-Apartheid Movement

The women within the Black Sash fought against the apartheid regime that conservative whites shunned. They served jail sentences and suffered hardship as they lost friends and were often socially ostracised. In this study, I argued that the Black Sash women devoted their lives to

⁵¹⁴ Rasool, "Rethinking Documentary History", 29.

⁵¹⁵ Dlamuka, "Connectedness and disconnectedness in Thembeyakhe Harry Gwala's biography, 1920-1995: Rethinking Political Militancy, Mass Mobilisation and Grassroots Struggles in South Africa," 16.

fighting the injustice faced by black people. They were willing to put their bodies on the line and go to jail and have their houses raided by the security police and were shunned by their friends and communities. Their dedication to the fight against the apartheid system makes their participation in the anti-apartheid movement unique. Their involvement in the anti-apartheid movement transcended the movement from being a black-versus white issue but rather against an oppressive system. The biographies of these women demonstrated that worked with all black women's organisations in the Natal Midlands such as the ANCWL and this transcended racial divisions. They, like other black women's organisations in the Natal Midlands, had a firm belief that South Africa need to become a democratic society where everyone had equal rights.

In order to understand the significance of Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley's contribution to the struggle against apartheid we may refer to what Naidoo said about the Black Sash that they "used the relative safety of their privileged racial classification to speak out against the erosion of human rights in the country."⁵¹⁶ Regardless of gender, it was difficult for the police to use the same violence against white women's organisations that they used against black women's organisations as this would have attracted media attention. They used their "whiteness" to rattle the society's foundations that lavished them with privilege.⁵¹⁷ The Black Sash's involvement into the liberation movement transformed it into a multi-racial movement.⁵¹⁸ They used their white identity to their advantage as the resource that they could contribute to the anti-apartheid movement. The visibility of the Black Sash members in the UDF campaigns served as a deterrent from the police. UDF activists believed that apprehending white women was not easy as black women due to the Black Sash members' race, gender, and class.⁵¹⁹

However, 'white privilege' also had ramifications. Joan Kerchhoff, Mary Kleinenberg, and Anne Harley constantly faced an identity crisis as they were part of the liberation struggle and

⁵¹⁶ Speech by Marcella Naidoo, National Director of the Black Sash, June 2005 see Adam Yamey. *Exodus to Africa: From Mosenthal to Mandela*. (Raleigh, NC: Lulu, 2015) 240.

⁵¹⁷ Scott Kraft. Under Black Sash's Banner, Affluent South Africans Battle System: White Women Wage Own War on Apartheid. *Los Angeles Times*, November 28, 1988.

⁵¹⁸ Michelman, *The Black Sash of South Africa: A Case Study in Liberalism*, 86; Barbara Hutmacher MacLean. *Strike a Woman, Strike a Rock: Fighting for Freedom in South Africa*. (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2004) 148; Fester, "Women's Organisations in the Western Cape: Vehicles for Gender Struggle or Instruments of Subordination?", 53-54; APC 4/1/2/1/2 Minutes of a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Natal Midlands Region of the Black Sash, Pietermaritzburg, 24 June 1983.

⁵¹⁹ MacLean, *Strike a Woman, Strike a Rock: Fighting for Freedom in South Africa*, 148.

yet, belonged to a racial group that did not share the same beliefs as them. They struggled to survive in their society which ostracise them and tried to give themselves and their families a sense of normality. Their political involvement in the Black Sash and in the anti-apartheid movement saw them facing social ostracism and political harassment. Their political activism received a lot of disapproval from the white community.⁵²⁰ They also endured sexist remarks during protest stands. However, the social rejection they faced from the white community deepened their commitment to the anti-apartheid movement.

Political Activism and Motherhood in the Natal Midlands Black Sash

This study further demonstrated that political activism and motherhood are two important aspects in South Africa's political history. They have a powerful relationship and were both vital to the development of the anti-apartheid movement. Children were often inspired and influenced by their parents' activism. For example, Joan Kerchhoff, daughter, Clare, became involved in the Black Sash as a field worker and in the End Conscription Campaign. Anne Harley was raised by a widowed mother who was a member of the Black Sash. This had a significant impact on her theorization of South African politics which linked the liberation struggle and gender resistance. Harley's narrative reveals the influence of strong and influential mothers and how they were catalysts in alerting their children to the injustices in South Africa. It also reveals how liberal politics played out in white families and how it aided political consciousness amongst white youths.

This dissertation provided a biographical narrative of how the political activist mothers managed their dual roles. It also showed that these women used the available services at their disposal to try and balance their dual roles. It examined how the Black Sash activists who belonged to the second generation negotiated their motherhood to align with the Black Sash's collective expectations. Motherhood provided a unique opportunity for Black Sash activists to align the collective identities and at the same time affirm their identities as mothers and continue as political activists. Motherhood did not hinder movement participation as the Black Sash emphasized the significant role of motherhood. The Black Sash activists successfully managed the tensions between motherhood and political activism by framing their involvement in the anti-apartheid movement as a means of enhancing their children's futures. This also made

⁵²⁰ Spink, *Black Sash: The Beginning of a Bridge in South Africa*, 60.

it easier for them to reconcile motherhood with political activism. They also used the parenting role to sustain themselves as movement members, and this provides us with a better understanding of how they persisted in the face of social rejection.⁵²¹

As alluded to earlier South African women's contribution on the road to democracy in literature has often been overlooked and reinforced women to the periphery of history. Despite their contribution to liberation struggles, women have always been occupying the roles of outsiders in society at large. These women were not only at the forefront as political activists, but also played pivotal role in protecting their families during their husband's incarceration and during the breakdown of several marriages. Therefore, this study further explored the familial impact their political activism had on their child-rearing and parenthood and how their political activism affected their marital status.

This study also outlined the contestations between national and feminist struggles. The Black Sash, like other women's organisations, such as NOW and FEDSAW were painstakingly aware that the struggle for the emancipation of women was intricately intertwined with the liberation struggle. However, the patriarchal attitudes that pervaded mainstream political organisations and society meant that women had to rethink their gender issues. Black Sash was no different. The Black Sash felt that the struggle for national liberation superseded women's emancipation. Throughout the struggle against apartheid, Black Sash women voluntarily side-lined gender issues, however, they continued to maintain their identities as wives and mothers. Contestations around gender issues emerged during the 1980s when there was an influx of new younger women academics in the Black Sash that the organisation shifted its attention towards women's issues.⁵²² This period also saw the evolution of tactics of the organisation as it found a new form of resistance, for example, these women began to participate in mass rallies, marches, UDF meetings, and political funerals. It was during this period that the collaboration work across races of the Black Sash with other women's organisations in Natal increased significantly. This marked the Natal Midlands Black Sash's shift towards non-racialism and collective resistance as it began to work closely with other women's organisations in the Natal Midlands. This

⁵²¹ Joan Kerchhoff interviewed by Sandile Kheswa, Pietermaritzburg, 28 May 2019.

⁵²² Fidela Fouché. "Women in the Natal conflict". *Sash Magazine*. (1991, 34:2) 29-30.

resulted in the development of a complex relationship between other women's organisations and the Black Sash in Pietermaritzburg.⁵²³

This study further outlined how the patriarchy that existed in Pietermaritzburg limited women's participation in the anti-apartheid struggle. As already mentioned in Chapter 5, Philippe Denis and Philani Dlamini assert that although women played a supportive role as peace agents in Mphomeni, gender violence remained a blind spot at the time.⁵²⁴ The patriarchal system entrenched in Pietermaritzburg served to limit women's participation in politics but, on the other hand, it also presented an opportunity for women to resist the system when they joined active politics against the will of their own husbands putting their marriages on the line.⁵²⁵

The Importance of this Research to me as an Author

In the last part of this concluding chapter, I would like to reflect on what it means for a black man to have worked on white women's history. Working on white women's history had a significant impact on me as a black man. Writing this thesis was, in different ways, terrifying, challenging, and joyous. The terror came in large part from the fact that it required me, to confront my own racial identity and gender status. This is because I, as a black man, was interviewing and writing the history of white women. It sensitized me to gender issues and exposed me to the gender privilege that has been a common theme in society for many years.

This research project has provided me with an insight on how the gender and political oppression characterised the anti-apartheid movement. It has also raised my awareness about how the gender inequalities perpetuated by the apartheid system continued to maintain the male advantage and hegemonic masculinities and, in turn, reinforced gender bias and discrimination against women.

This research drew on the biographical narratives of these three white women who have experienced the apartheid system in their lives. However, while it is essential to recognise the central role that the Black Sash has played in the anti-apartheid movement, one has to focus on

⁵²³ 'Citizens and Comrades Under the Law' Presidential Address by Mary Burton, Black Sash National Conference 13-14 May 1995.

⁵²⁴ Philippe Denis and Philani Dlamini. "Multiple Layers of Memory: The History of Mphomeni Told and Retold". *Alternation*. (2015 22:2) 73-99.

⁵²⁵ Gordimer, "Introduction: A Single Photograph, a Thousand Words in Women in South Africa: Their Fight for Freedom", 3.

these comments too. A biographical study on the Black Sash, however, alerted me to the contribution of “non-black” communities to the anti-apartheid struggle and also, that the anti-apartheid struggle was a collective, including a small group of whites.

To conclude, future studies should consider the liberation struggle within a wider framework in the Natal Midlands. In particular, the role of families and generational links existed between mothers and daughters who were actively involved in the anti-apartheid movement. It is only through this framework that the contribution of women in the Natal Midlands can shift from the margins to the centre in the liberation narratives of South Africa.

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APPENDIX 1

Informed Consent Document

Dear Mrs Kerchhoff,

My name is **Sandile Kheswa (212535097)**. I am a Masters candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus. The title of my research is: **Broadening the Black Sash's reach: a biographical study of women activists in the Natal Midlands**. The aim of the study is to document the role and contributions made by Black Sash women in the anti-apartheid struggle in Natal Midlands region. This study will give special attention to the biographical narrative of three women who were members of the Black Sash organization in the Natal Midlands region. These women are Mary Kleinenberg, Joan Kerchhoff and Anne Harley. I am interested in interviewing you so as to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter.

Please note that:

- The information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- The interview will take about *(30 minutes to about 1 and a half hour)*.
- The record as well as other items associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected file accessible only to myself and my supervisors. After a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the university, it will be disposed by shredding and burning.
- If you agree to participate please sign the declaration attached to this statement (a separate sheet will be provided for signatures)

I can be contacted at: School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg. / Howard College Campus, Durban.
Email: Sandilekheswa101@gmail.com

Cell: 0796255741

My supervisor is Professor Kalpana Hiralal who is located at the School of Social Sciences, Howard College Campus, Durban of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email Hiralalk@ukzn.ac.za

Phone number: 031 260 7536

My co-supervisor is Professor Philippe Denis who is located at the School of Religion, Philosophy & Classics, Pietermaritzburg Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email denis@ukzn.ac.za

Phone number: 033-260-5348

The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee contact details are as follows: Ms Phumelele Ximba, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Research Office, Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za, Phone number +27312603587.

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I, JOHN LYNETTE KERCHOFF (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE



27.05.2017

Interview Questions for Joan Lynette Kerchhoff

What is your name? Place of birth?

Describe your childhood years in the Natal Midlands?

What was it like growing up during the apartheid system? What impact did apartheid have on you and your family?

Was your family politically active?

What factors shaped your political identity during your childhood?

Which school did you attend?

Was it a multi-racial school?

Were you active in school politics?

Did you attend University/college? If so what degree did you register for?

Were you politically active at University/College?

Why did you join the Black Sash movement?

What role did you play in the Black Sash Movement?

As an activist how did you negotiate your activism in the context of race, class, and gender?

What were some of the challenges you encountered as a Black Sash activist?

Who was Peter Campbell Kerchhoff and what is his background?

Where and how did you meet Peter Kerchhoff?

When did you get married?

When were your children born? How did you maintain a balance between your family and political life, having to support your political activist husband, and raising your children? What was the experience with your children? Who took care of the children during your activism?

What challenges did you face being a mother and also being an activist?

What were the reactions of your family, spouse, parents of your participation in the Black Sash?

Between you and your husband Peter Kerchhoff who influenced the other to be involved in political activism?

What were the successes and failures of the Black Sash Movement in the Natal Midlands?

Were you imprisoned? If so for how long?

How were you treated?

Overall, what factors shaped and defined your political consciousness?

APPENDIX 2

Informed Consent Document

Dear Miss Kleinenberg,

My name is **Sandile Kheswa (212535097)**. I am a Masters candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus. The title of my research is: **Broadening the Black Sash's reach: a biographical study of women activists in the Natal Midlands**. The aim of the study is to document the role and contributions made by Black Sash women in the anti-apartheid struggle in Natal Midlands region. This study will give special attention to the biographical narrative of three women who were members of the Black Sash organization in the Natal Midlands region. These women are Mary Kleinenberg, Joan Kerchhoff and Anne Harley. I am interested in interviewing you so as to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter.

Please note that:

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Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I.....MARY GANIE WACHENBERG..... (full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded. (if applicable)

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

..

.....3 June 2019.....

Interview Questions for Mary Eunice Kleinenberg

What is your name? Date of Birth? Place of birth?

What was the name of your parents and their occupation?

Describe your childhood years in Rhodesia?

What was it like growing up in Rhodesia? What impact did growing up in a racially unequal society had on you and your family?

Was your family politically active?

What factors shaped your political identity during your childhood?

Which school did you attend?

Was it a multi-racial school?

Were you active in school politics?

Did you attend University/college? if so what degree did you register for?

Were you politically active at University/College?

When did you move to the Natal Midlands?

Why did you join the Black Sash movement? Is there an example of injustice you witnessed or an incident that had an impact on you and in turn made you want to join the Sash???

Could you highlight your experience in the Advice Office? How did your working at the Advice Office as a volunteer shape your political consciousness?

What role did you play in the Black Sash Movement?

In your interview with Alleyn Diesel you mentioned that when you firstly joined the Black Sash you met prominent women such Pessa Weinberg, Joan Kerchhoff, Joy Roberts, Fidela Fouche,

Cara Pretorious, Didi Stephens, Hazel Barnes, Jenny Clarence, Mary Nathanson, Pat Dunne, Jane Worsnip, Al Diesel, Fiona Bulman, Lorenza Cowling and Jo Stilau. Did they influence you politically?

Did you get married and have children? If so, how did you maintain a balance between your family and political life, having to support your husband, and raising your children? What was the experience with your children? Who took care of the children during your activism? What challenges did you face being a mother and also being an activist?

What were the reactions of your family, spouse, parents of your participation in the Black Sash?

As an activist how did you negotiate your activism in the context of race, class, and gender?

What were some of the challenges you encountered as a Black Sash activist?

What were the successes and failures of the Black Sash Movement in the Natal Midlands?

What impact did being arrested in 1988 and also in 1990 have on you and also on your family? Did it deepen your political conviction?

What role did you play in the Natal Midlands Crisis Committee?

How did the Black Sash in the Natal Midlands work towards non-racialism?

How was the relationship between the Black Sash and other women's organisations in Natal, Were there tensions/conflicts?

What role did you play in the Pietermaritzburg Rape Crisis? What impact did being involved in the Rape Crisis have on you?

What role did you play in the Natal Midlands Women's National Coalition?

Overall, what personal, educational, religious, socio-economic and political factors shaped and defined your political activism?

What do you think should be explored further about the History of the Black Sash Natal Midlands?

APPENDIX 3

Informed Consent Document

Dear Dr Harley,

My name is **Sandile Kheswa (212535097)**. I am a Masters candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus. The title of my research is: **Broadening the Black Sash's reach: a biographical study of women activists in the Natal Midlands**. The aim of the study is to document the role and contributions made by Black Sash women in the anti-apartheid struggle in Natal Midlands region. This study will give special attention to the biographical narrative of three women who were members of the Black Sash organization in the Natal Midlands region. These women are Mary Kleinenberg, Joan Kerchhoff and Anne Harley. I am interested in interviewing you so as to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter.

Please note that:

- The information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- The interview will take about *(30 minutes to about 1 and a half hour)*.
- The record as well as other items associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected file accessible only to myself and my supervisors. After a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the university, it will be disposed by shredding and burning.
- If you agree to participate please sign the declaration attached to this statement (a separate sheet will be provided for signatures)

I can be contacted at: School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg. / Howard College Campus, Durban.
Email: Sandilekheswa101@gmail.com

Cell: 0796255741

My supervisor is Professor Kalpana Hiralal who is located at the School of Social Sciences, Howard College Campus, Durban of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email Hiralalk@ukzn.ac.za

Phone number: 031 260 7536

My co-supervisor is Professor Philippe Denis who is located at the School of Religion, Philosophy & Classics, Pietermaritzburg Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details: email denis@ukzn.ac.za

Phone number: 033-260-5348

The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee contact details are as follows: Ms Phumelele Ximba, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Research Office, Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za, Phone number +27312603587.

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

ANNE HARVEY

I, *(full names of participant)* hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire, I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

(Handwritten signature)


DATE

19/6/2019

Interview Questions for Anne Harley

What is your name? Place of birth?

Describe your childhood years in the Natal Midlands?

What was it like growing up during the apartheid system? What impact did apartheid have on you and your family?

Was your family politically active?

What factors shaped your political identity during your childhood?

Which school did you attend?

Was it a multi-racial school?

Were you active in school politics?

Did you attend University/college? if so what degree did you register for?

Were you politically active at University/College?

Why did you join the Black Sash movement?

What role did you play in the Black Sash Movement?

As an activist how did you negotiate your activism in the context of race, class, and gender?

What were some of the challenges you encountered as a Black Sash activist?

What were the successes and failures of the Black Sash Movement in the Natal Midlands?

Were you imprisoned? If so for how long?

How were you treated?

How did your research with the “Reference group” and interaction with people whilst conducting your research deepen your political conviction?

How was the book *No Blood on Our Hands* received?

How did being exposed to the political violence have an impact on you?

19 February 2019

Mr Sandile Kheswa 212535097
School of Social Sciences
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Mr Kheswa

Protocol Reference Number : HSS/0783/018M

Project title: The role and contributions of the Black Sash Women in the Anti-Apartheid struggle in Natal Midlands region from 1980-1994

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received 28 June 2018, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully,

.....
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor Professor Kalpana Hiralal & Professor P Denis
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Maheshvari Naidu
cc School Administrator: Ms Nancy Mudau

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
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