

Marikana: Taking a Subaltern Sphere of Politics Seriously

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to open up the realm of what counts as political in the context of the Marikana strikes and subsequent massacre. It does primarily by taking into account the social, political and cultural context of Mpondo workers on the mines. Many narrow Marxist and liberal frameworks have circumscribed the conception of the 'modern' and the 'political' so much so that political organisation which falls outside of this conceptualisation is often regarded as 'backward' or 'archaic'. It will provide an examination of the history, culture and custom of men, who have, for almost a hundred years migrated back and forth between South African mines and Mpondoland. This not only reveals differing modes of organising and engaging in political action, but also that the praxis of democracy takes many forms, some of which are different and opposed to what counts as democratic in Western liberal democracy. By considering what I argue, following some of the insights from the Subaltern Studies collective in India, to be a subaltern sphere of politics and history, it is possible to better understand the way workers organised and acted.

The thesis also argues that most labour and nationalist historiography has been silent on the political contributions of women because of how Marxist/liberal analysis frames struggles through disciplined notions of work and resistance. Rather than objectifying workers as representatives of a homogenous and universal class of people devoid of context, the thesis has linked 'the worker' to the community from which s/he comes and community specific struggles, which are supported and sustained, often, by the parallel struggles of women in the community.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Camalita Naicker', with a stylized flourish below the name.

Camalita Naicker

2014 – 02 - 18

Abbreviations:

AbM – Abahlali base Mjondolo

AMCU – Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union

ANC – African National Congress

COSATU – Congress of South African Trade Unions

LOA – Living out Allowance

Lonmin – London Mining

NUM – The National Union of Mineworkers

RDOs – Rock Drill Operators

SACP – South African Communist Party

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Introduction

The Marikana massacre, which took place on the 16th of August 2012, has been variously described as a tragedy, a disaster, a watershed moment, a moment of rupture and the first post-apartheid state sponsored massacre of citizens. It has also been considered a 'turning point' in South African society (Leggasick, 2012: 420). Many in the elite public sphere have compared the murders to the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 when police opened fire on people presenting themselves at the Sharpeville police station to hand in their 'dompasses' in defiance of the Apartheid pass law system (Frankel, 2013, Hart 2013:2, Stupart, 2013, News24 2012, Smith, 2012, Buccus, 2013, etc). This comparison has obvious merits due to the parallel use of state violence to effect a massacre. However, there also some respects in which the comparison has limits. Others like Tolsi (2013) and Figlan (2013) have pointed to similarities with a historical event, less well inscribed into elite nationalist history - the Mpondo Revolts of 1960.

Of the 45 people who lost their lives at Marikana, on or before the 16th of August, 31 were from the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa. Of them, the majority were from Mpondoland in the Transkei (Alexander et al, 2011: 196). Mpondoland has a special significance in the history of mineworkers in South Africa. In the first instance, Mpondoland has been one of the historic labour sending areas in South Africa. TEBA (The Employment Bureau of Africa), "an institution (previously) owned by the South African mining industry, has historically recruited large numbers of people from the former Transkei, the highest number of people recruited for the mines consistently coming from the Cape Province" (Lacey, 1981: 196). During the Mpondo Revolts in the 1960s, TEBA was boycotted as part of the resistance to state policies in the reserves because the brutal effects of the migrant labour system were already making themselves apparent (Mbeki, 1964: 136). This thesis suggests that this history becomes significant, and that we should return to this site of contestation, in order to historicise and contextualise contemporary struggles rooted in migrant histories. This period is also significant because it marks a resistance to full proletarianisation and a commitment to the commons, still extant but rapidly deteriorating. This form of resistance is a challenge to modernist conceptions of the political, be they liberal or Marxist. The thesis argues that this history provides an

alternative framework for understanding the massacre because it is rooted in the cultural social and political context of many mineworkers' home-context. It argues that understanding how Mpondo society was organised in pre-colonial times, as well as the political tools used during the Mpondo revolts of 1960, reveals a subaltern sphere of politics, which is often silenced in nationalist historiography and ignored by most liberal and/or Marxist analysis, for different reasons. In the former, the Mpondo Revolts threaten the way in which the ANC places itself at the heart of its own narrative. It is also a challenge to elite nationalist discourse, and the way ethnicity functions to create differentiated systems of access to the public sphere allowing some inclusion in 'civil society' and 'modernity,' while others are still required to perform some kind of 'cultural authenticity'.

In his book, *Define and Rule: Native as Political Identity*, Mahmood Mamdani (2013) describes how British colonial indirect-rule created two differentiated systems of law, which he describes as the 'bi-furcated state.' In the colonial occupation of Africa, it was not merely that people were divided and ruled, but rather that the project became to 'define and rule' – a process whereby the colonised were divided into two different categories, which would have two different trajectories of growth (Mamdani, 2013: 49). This categorisation saw the colonised split between, 'races,' and 'tribes,' in which 'non-natives' (i.e. migrants or those not indigenous to sub-Saharan Africa, like Asians, Europeans, Arabs, etc.) were defined as separate races and the 'native' population (indigenous to Africa) were separated into tribes (Mamdani, 2013:47). This separation meant two different legal systems: all *races* were governed under a single law: civil law, and thus formed part of civil society. However, tribes, which were far more differentiated by colonial authority, were governed by different sets of customary law. Mamdani, (2013: 48) describes this technology of the colonial state as having very specific ends

*“With **races**, the cultural difference was not translated into separate legal systems. Instead, it was contained, even negotiated, within a single legal system and was enforced by a single administrative authority. But with **tribes**, the case was the opposite: cultural difference was reinforced, exaggerated, and built up into different legal systems, each enforced by a separate administrative and political authority. In a nutshell, different races were*

meant to have a common future; different tribes were not. The colonial legal project – civil and customary – were an integral part of the colonial political project.”(Author’s emphasis)

Mamdani’s emphasis on space and origin as the key terms of classification meant that “the state portrayed the native as the product of geography rather than history” (Mamdani, 2013: 47). This spatial differentiation is central to understanding how the ‘native reserves’ and later Bantustans functioned as ‘zones of exclusion’ (Pithouse, 2012: 7), outside of ‘civil society,’ and how rural African people were subject to traditional authority enshrined in customary law. Today, the incorporation of Traditional Authorities into the South African government system has meant the perpetuation of a colonial system of customary law, where some people are, on the basis of their space, subject to a different system of law which still functions to exclude them from civil society and as ‘natives.’ This ‘tribalisation,’ serves to crystallise tradition and culture, in a way that ‘tribesmen’ are still seen and regarded as outside the ‘modern.’ As Mamdani, (2013: 51) explains, “Unlike race, which claimed to mark a civilizational hierarchy, tribe was said to be a marker of cultural diversity.”

This is central to understanding how culture and tradition are crystallised in these spaces and how, often, people who come from former Bantustans are culturally essentialised and seen as outside of modernity. It is, also, what allows commentators on Marikana to refer to striking workers as ‘muti-crazed’ criminals. There is a profound difference between attempts to culturally fix people as products of geography who remain outside of the modern and opening up the way in which the idea of ‘modernity’ is conceptualised and circumscribed.

In his critique of some forms of Marxist theory, Chakrabarty (1992: 4) describes the way in which Marxist theory creates a linearity of time, in which we can separate the “pre-bourgeois” from the “bourgeois,” and the “pre-capital” from “capital” (Chakrabarty 1992: 4). While Chakrabarty is not denouncing Marxist theory as an emancipatory tool, he is problematising the way in which this very particular European experience of industrialisation comes to stand for the universal experience

of *Time and History*, in which modernisation theory presents to us 'phases' and 'periods' and ways to solve 'problems' along the way to reaching self-governance.

In *Provincialising Europe*, Chakrabarty (2000: 8) describes this historicist consciousness, as “a recommendation to the colonised to wait,” the distinction between those who were ‘ready’ for self-governance, and those who had to be told, “not yet.” For Chakrabarty, this critique of historicism, is of necessity, central to the question of political modernity in the non-western world,

“If “political modernity” was to be a bounded and definable phenomenon, it was not unreasonable to use its definition as a measuring rod for social progress. Within this thought, it could always be said with reason that some people were less modern than others, and that the former needed a period of preparation and waiting before they could be recognized as full participants in political modernity. But this was precisely the argument of the colonizer—the “not yet” to which the colonized nationalist opposed his or her “now.” The achievement of political modernity in the third world could only take place through a contradictory relationship to European social and political thought.”

Thus, the critique of Marxist and modernist theory is not ignorant of the fact that there are many Marxisms. Marx himself was a complex figure and his own thought became more composite and nuanced later in his life when he became more sympathetic to rural struggles and peasant actions (see Anderson, 2010). What is important, however, is to highlight how some forms of Marxist thought, which have been created around the texts and writing of Marx, rather than around Marx himself or his own intellectual project, have attempted to create a linearity of time, history and progress and how this has functioned to limit the conception of ‘modernity’ and even democracy. This circumscription has serious consequences for how the Marikana massacre has been framed in the elite public sphere in South Africa and in the academy and must be addressed as such. It is also important to note that Marxist historiography has a particular framing within the South African academy, this thesis does not attempt to exhaust the possibilities of a Marxism that, to quote Aime Cesaire (1972: 22), “made to the measure of the world” could be an inclusive and emancipatory project. It does

however take cognizance of how this discourse (whether cohesive or not) is currently framed in some of the South African academy and public sphere and how this serves to occlude aspects of workers organisation and lived experience in the context of Marikana.

Since the Marikana Massacre occurred very recently in South Africa's history, most responses and accounts of the strikes and the subsequent massacre have been through the mainstream media and there have been few academic publications so far. The mainstream media has tended (it would be impossible to provide a comprehensive analysis of every article), to focus on the breakdown of union bargaining structures of the NUM, the failure of Lonmin and the state to adequately deal with the strikes, or the economic implications of 'strike-action'. When the massacre started, there was startling silence on the part of the government and trade unions. While President Jacob Zuma, took a month to speak publicly about the violence used by police at Marikana, which he did at the funeral of cleric in KwaZulu Natal (Timeslive, 2012), the chief of the South African Communist Party, Blade Nzimande described strikers' actions at Marikana, as 'criminal.' Nzimande's response was in fact a defence of Cyril Ramaphosa, a board member at Lonmin, now Deputy President of the ANC and formerly the first president of the National Union of Mineworkers). Ramaphosa, according to Dali Mpofu (the lawyer representing the slain miners and their families), sent emails to Lonmin management and government officials, on the eve of the massacre, saying that the strikes "are plainly dastardly criminal acts and must be characterised as such," and then called for "concomitant action" (Timeslive, 2012; Citypress, 2012). This was the discourse from which most mainstream reporting occurred. In fact, Jane Duncan's (2012), analysis of newspaper reports on Marikana found that, of 153 articles from over a dozen major South African news publications,

"Miners' voices outside of the National Union of Mineworkers' (NUM) and the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), accounted for a mere 3% of sources: the lowest of all the source categories. Of these miners, only one miner was quoted speaking about what actually happened during the massacre, and he said the police shot first. Most miners were interviewed in relation to the stories alleging that the miners had used muti to

defend themselves against the police's bullets, as well as the miners' working and living conditions.

This shows clearly how the official media conceptualise mineworkers as being outside the realm of civil society, or 'official voice' and therefore not useful as sources on what occurred on that day. Indeed it is clear that for most of the mainstream media there was not even any interest in what their version of events might be. On the few occasions when strikers were interviewed it was clear that the only issue that mineworkers were thought to be authorities on was *muti*, which echoes colonial attempts to culturally and ethnically essentialise them.

For most of the mainstream media organisations, especially the South African Broadcasting Company (SABC), Marikana was a spontaneous event, which surprised and perplexed, and the men on the mountain were made to look as if they were muti-crazed, simple-minded workers who were destroying 'hard-won' union bargaining structures. This narrative denies that the workers' had their own political project or that they were organised, disciplined, and that it was their conception of democracy and justice, informed by a subaltern sphere of politics, which led them.

Later on media coverage would become more nuanced. In 2013 the *Mail and Guardian* devoted a space online for special reports on Marikana; writer Niren Tolsi and photographer, Paul Botes, travelled the country collecting stories from the family members and loved ones of the men killed at Marikana, there have been few attempts to humanise the people involved in and affected by the strikes. In their December, 2012 edition *Amandla! Magazine*, which describes itself as a progressive magazine standing for social justice, devoted a section to the massacre too. Spliced in between the humanising stories of mineworkers and their lives in Marikana were articles written by *Amandla!* correspondents and other contributors. Many of the articles take a very formulaic approach. In fact the overwhelming presence of words like the 'working class' and 'working class power' give an uncomfortable feeling of writers' often crude attempts to fit empirical evidence into already existing theoretical frameworks. In an article entitled, *Embryos of Working Class Power and Grassroots Democracy in Marikana*, Thapelo Lekogwa and Luke Sinwell (2012:24), begin by stating, "The formation of a workers' committee is an act of power by the working

class. It has shaken capital by advancing far beyond trade union bureaucracy.” Yet, they go on to add,

“At the risk of being ultra-critical of their exercise of working class power, their main demand has been for more money, not less capitalism or the formation of a workers’ party...The Challenge posed to anti-capitalist forces is to embed their ideas within the consciousness of the strikers while simultaneously enabling the strikers to lead them” (Lekogowa and Sinwell, 2013: 25).

The portrayal of mineworkers, as representatives of working class power, allows the easy objectification of people who need to be embedded with a certain kind of consciousness, rather than understood in their own social, economic and political contexts. It is not untrue to say that workers’ went beyond trade union bureaucracy, however the article doesn’t explore what that means, and in what ways their political praxis is informed from outside of trade union experience. Rather, it is attributed strictly to ‘class consciousness,’ even if, by their own admission, the workers themselves were not articulating a Marxist/socialist or even workerist position.

The authors of this article, in fact, also authored a book with Peter Alexander, Botsang Mmope and Bongani Xezwi. The first book to appear, merely two months after the massacre, *Marikana: A View from the Mountain and a Case to Answer*, is an example of how uncritically applying narrow and reductionist Marxist frameworks of class analysis to any protest can go awry. The triumphalist tone taken by Alexander, et al, in the book gives the impression that the writers were led, not by people’s daily lived experiences and the context from which they make life decisions, but by a pre-given and reductionist form of Marxist theory which provides a linear trajectory of workers’ struggles as universal historical fact. For instance, when Alexander et al, note,

“But not all has been bleak. While we have been saddened, we have also been inspired. The strike at Lonmin symbolised, as much as ever, raw working-class power – unhindered by the tenets of existing collective bargaining and middle-class politics. The workers developed their own class analysis of the

situation at Lonmin and, instead of being silenced and falling back when the steel arm of the state mowed down 34 of their colleagues, they became further determined, and more workers united until all of Lonmin came to a standstill". (2012: 9)

Or, two pages later:

"The workers' agency and leadership is no obscure radical rhetoric or theory of ivory tower academics or non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Rather, it is the unfettered praxis of the working class – which could not be contained, even with national security, the ANC, NUM, and the ideology of the ruling class pitted against it" (2012: 11).

There are two assumptions here. Firstly there is an idea that there is something to be gained, learned, or celebrated from the massacre of 43 people. That in fact, rather than a horrific event which should have never occurred in the first place, we should celebrate the 'unfettered praxis of the working class.' The use of the word "unfettered" is troubling for various reasons, not least because of the way it evokes the image of black workers needing only the right moment of provocation to unleash their inner barbarism. It reinscribes the liberal idea that this kind of collective action cannot be organised, thought-out and well planned; that it must due to the 'nature' of people like mineworkers who are outside of realm of 'civil society' to behave as, in the disturbing words of Peter Bruce (2012), editor of *Business Day*, "a 7,000-strong band of armed and angry miners." Secondly, it assumes it was the intention of the workers, acting as the 'working class' to 'smash capitalism' or to realise a socialist ideal knowing they had the "ideology of the ruling class pitted against **IT**" (my emphasis) rather than people demanding a decent living wage.

It is clear that this kind of rejoicing is not only indicative of the ways in which dogmatically adhering to theory can limit one's understandings of any historical event or even allow one to ignore the myriad other narratives and experiences present, but it also promotes the idea of categorising and objectifying people to such an extent that death becomes a victory rather than a tragedy.

In *The Revolution of Everyday Life*, Raoul Vaneigem (1967: 29) critiques precisely this idea of ‘necessary suffering,’ in which ‘suffering’ becomes “dogma –fodder:” a necessary case for theory to further an –ism. He charges the Marxist Left with continuing to fetishize history, even when they expelled Christian religion, which viewed suffering as the basis for reward in the afterlife, yet failed to do the same with suffering itself: “suffering, far from disappearing, found new pretexts for its existence in the requirements of history, itself suddenly trapped in the famous one-way street.” In Alexander et al’s extensive interviews, which have no doubt been an incredible resource for many commenting on Marikana, the narrow set of structured questions, does not leave space open for interviewees to speak about other experiences which they thought were important and relevant to their own lives. Questions about race, community, housing, services, family etc., are completely absent in the narratives presented in the book, as are any attempts to follow up when interviewees start to speak about these issues. Instead, one sees the replication of standardised questionnaires geared towards fetishizing and over-stating the importance of narrow class theory.

Many have pointed to the limitations of using reductionist Marxist and euro-centric analysis when considering post-colonial societies. Frantz Fanon articulated the need to stretch Marxist frameworks when thinking about colonial society because of the specific way in which colonialism created two different ‘species.’ Labour historian, Dunbar Moodie has pointed to the limitations of South African labour historiography in failing to adequately consider the cultural context and everyday lived experiences of mineworkers in South Africa, and rather, relying heavily on trade union theory and nationalist historiography to explain workers’ actions. For a long time now, the mines, which have been the centre of economic production in South Africa have been theorised using a very narrow framework of, mostly, modernist theory to the exclusion and marginalisation of culture and context. In order to understand the particularities of the mines in post-apartheid South Africa, there must be more significant attention paid to the cultural context from which mineworkers come.

Suren Pillay, Micah Reddy and Crispin Chingono are some who have written about the Marikana massacre, and taken into consideration the cultural and rural spheres which have been completely left out of the narratives by others. Suren Pillay has

emphasised the importance of re-visiting what Mahmood Mamdani has called, the 'bi-furcated state' in South Africa, in which Marxist analysis fails to consider the particularities of race and ethnicity in the logic of colonialism and in-direct rule, yet he does not go into details about what form this discussion would take. While it is incredibly useful to raise the limitations of current analysis, it does not explore what an alternative account might look like. Reddy, however, who wrote a thesis entitled, "*Unrest on South Africa's Platinum Mines and the Crisis of Migrancy* (unpublished MA) goes further in linking the rural Eastern Cape to the urban mining space through the crisis of migrancy. While he is one of the few people, discussing the men who work at Lonmin as migrant labourers still rooted in the rural socio-political and economic context, his analysis is limited to socio-economic factors. He argues that the rural areas are no longer producing enough to provide a subsidy to migrant labourers and therefore this puts them under more pressure to earn money for two households, and the discussion only briefly addresses cultural factors.

Crispen Chingono's (2013), booklet called *Marikana and the Post-Apartheid Workplace Order*, gives a broad overview of what happened at Marikana, a brief history of Lonmin and unrest on the mines and a reliable and detailed account of the events leading up to the massacre and the constitution of worker committees. While Chingono is one of the few people who discusses the cultural context of mineworkers at length; including the cultural significance of the 'koppie,' and the traditional beliefs of the workers who used *muti* and carried traditional weapons and consulted *sangomas* (traditional healers), the discussion does not give these 'cultural artefacts' any further significance beyond traditional practice. When Chingono (2013: 28) outlines that *sangomas* are consulted for various reasons: for instance to help overcome opponents during times of warfare, or gathering on the mountain represents a moment of crisis for a community, there is a failure to delve deeper into the culture of people who come from Mpondoland in the Eastern Cape and to link culture to the political. Here, it appears that culture functions as a way in which to clarify the obscure features of what should, otherwise, be considered a modern strike. Cultural analysis is a way of explaining away an aberration rather than exploring the use of cultural political tools within the strike. While trade unions are used to explain 'worker action' and political decisions, 'culture' is galvanised to make symbolic gestures more palatable to the reader who would otherwise struggle to explain or

rationalise such beliefs through western/euro-centric or modernist discourse. In his conclusion, far from bringing the large range of political tools mineworkers used, be it through culture and traditional practices, or trade unionism into dialogue with each other, Chingono (2013: 33) makes an extremely dry political science related statement,

“Marikana is important in understanding the new post-apartheid industrial relations regime. It demonstrates worker’s power and agency even when their formal collective voice, in the form of unions, has been subdued. This affirms that power can be asserted from below if only it is claimed.”

Unfortunately, the work of all three, Chingono, Pillay and Reddy, as well as almost all the existing academic literature on Marikana, is silent on gender and women, although there have been various media reports which have told their story. What is interesting about Marikana is that the women’s movement appeared very publicly and militantly during and after the strikes. For this reason, there has been more attention paid to the women living there than previously. However, they are always treated as if they represent separate issues, either they are the widows, wives, or daughters of deceased mineworkers, or as they are fighting separate struggles. One of the aims of the thesis is to tell both the story of the men on the mountain and the forms that their political organisation took, and the story of the women’s movement, and how both these struggles, not only help to sustain each other, but are together representative of community struggle.

The thesis suggests that it is possible to trace this subaltern sphere of politics, informed by culture and custom, from its inception in Mpondoland to its transfusion on the mines from the early 1930s to 1984. In 1984, the arrival of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) marks a new period of formal bargaining structures and trade unionism on the mines. It argues that, as the relationship between workers and the NUM begins to break-down, workers’ have sought to once again return to older modes of organising that are outside of and different to, the way in which union structures work. It argues that, rather than seeing ethnicity or culture as detracting from a broader class struggle, it is crucial to understand the context of mineworkers in order to understand how their conceptions of democratic praxis informs the way in

which they organise. It also examines the changing nature of space on the mines after the introduction of shack settlements and women and children on the mines. It examines the consequences of this for understanding workers' struggles as rooted in and connected to community struggles, in which women play a large role. This has also been left out of, or marginalised within Marxist/liberal frameworks of struggle and resistance.

What this thesis aims to do, in part, is to create the kind of dialogue that will open up the realm of what counts as political, especially given the way in which political modernity is still, largely, framed within narrow Marxist and liberal understanding of society. It will provide an examination of the history, culture and custom of men, who have for almost a hundred years migrated back and forth between the South African mines and Mpondoland. This not only reveals differing modes of organising and engaging in political action, but also that the praxis of democracy takes many forms, some which are different and opposed to what counts as western liberal forms of democracy. What Marikana requires then, is for us to consider a subaltern sphere of history and politics, following the Indian subalternist school, in order to understand the way workers' organised and acted. By considering this internal logic, it is no longer possible to see the 'worker' as an isolated universal subject of capitalist exploitation. Rather, the worker must be linked to the context and community from which s/he comes.

The thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter outlines a broad theoretical framework that provides a lens through which the following three chapters can be read. It outlines the limitations of modernist and elite nationalist theory and highlights the powerful work that silencing does within history and the consequences this has for present day South African politics. It also points to the way in which economic and modernist theories of society often taken a masculinist form, replicated, sometimes, in nationalist discourse. It has often been the case in South African nationalist historiography that women have been relegated to the margins of the political and that they have often been seen as non-actors unless their contributions have been through mainstream urban political activity and this narrative often finds its way into how contemporary politics is read. It then offers a way in which we can begin to think about history outside of the historical method prescribed by euro-centric discourse,

and to locate the history and politics of the subaltern as a way to challenge hegemonic and elite historiographies. What the thesis attempts is to use this critique, to write a living history of the subaltern sphere of politics present in Marikana today.

Chapter two discusses how the rural sphere in South Africa has been silenced in most elite nationalist historiography and how this has functioned to ignore the history and political praxis of people living in rural areas. It specifically discusses the history of the Mpondo Revolts of 1960. This history provides insight and context into the political tools and pre-colonial democratic practices of people in Mpondoland, who travelled to the mines for many years. It also points to a gap in the recent historiography of the Mpondo revolts that leaves women's political contributions and activities out of the political sphere. It outlines how cultural context, which explains how men and women sometimes practice politics differently and separately, is not fully explored in the mainstream narrative, even while it is, in other ways, posing a challenge to elite national discourse.

Chapter three provides the link between political praxis in Mpondoland, evidenced through the Mpondo revolts, and how Mpondo men on the mines were engaging politics from 1948 to 1984, when there were no unions for black people on the mines. It argues that most labour historiography in South Africa has focused largely on class analysis or modernist theory and relied heavily on national liberation narratives to explain workers' organisation on the mines during this period even in the absence of formal union structures. Furthermore, up until the 1970s, most men came from rural areas that were not as directly involved in national liberation struggles, which were mainly occurring in the urban centers. Moreover, it argues that there must be an attempt to re-read this history with the new knowledge of subaltern history and politics and to engage the cultural context of people, outside of the universal worker subject, which most Marxist analysis requires. This re-thinking allows deeper insight into what was happening on the mines during this period and why, workers in Marikana flouted union bargaining structures and chose instead to return to cultural political practices during the 2012 Lonmin strikes.

Chapter four deals with the changing spatial landscape of the mines in the post-apartheid era. It is here that the link between worker and community struggles

becomes apparent, given the changing nature of space and community on the mines. It becomes more difficult to deny women's roles and contributions to political life on the mines in South Africa when we are confronted with the Marikana massacre. For the first time, women on the mines have made a public statement about living and working and being on the mines, a realm of experience previously ignored or silenced in most labour historiography. After the 1980s, mine-compounds were ethnically de-segregated and in the recent past, mine companies began to offer a living out allowance (LOA) to mineworkers who preferred not to stay in the hostels. As a result, there was an immediate growth of shack settlements around the platinum belt. With the development of shack settlements has been the introduction of family life on the mines, which has brought with it a new form of community politics that has not adequately been addressed in the public sphere or in new labour literature. It shows the continuation of a subaltern sphere of politics on the mines evidenced by the worker committees, and it shows how these struggles are linked to, and reinforced by the struggles of women and community. The chapter presents research done in Marikana in November 2012 and it is an attempt to write a living history of people who currently occupy the shack settlement called Nkaneng.

Most of the research presented here was done with the Marikana women's group called *Sikhala Sonke*. This happened for three reasons. The first, was that the appearance of an active women's organisation on the mines, linking their community struggles to the struggles of the men on the mountain was of immediate interest to me, particularly because it interrupted some, triumphalist, masculinist, Marxist analysis of the massacre at the time and it revealed a gendered space usually ignored in the mainstream media and academy. The women of Marikana made their existence and struggles public during and after the Marikana massacre, and shattered the quiet assumption that the mines remain a space that is inhabited by men only, or that their contributions remain purely sexual. Examining the cultural context of migrant labourers, through rural and urban struggles, helps to conceptualise how the political sphere for women is constructed and how they exercise their political agency. Secondly, at the time of visiting Marikana, it was extremely tense and most of the men were not allowed to speak to journalists, researchers and outsiders on advice from their lawyers since most of them were involved in legal battles or about to be called to the Farlam Commission to give evidence. Most of the men I spoke to were

family members or friends of the women in *Sikhala Sonke*, who very generously, offered to convince some of the men to speak to me. Lastly, the first book to appear about the Marikana massacre, by Peter Alexander et al, echoed the sentiments of an overly triumphalist and resolutely masculinist class analysis. Not only did they miss the significance of cultural context and the subaltern sphere of politics present at the mines, but also they completely ignored the strong links between the workers' struggles and the struggles of the community. This is of course, extremely unfortunate, since they were able to access the resources to go to Marikana immediately after the massacre had occurred and were able to speak to people before lawyers started putting pressure on them not to speak to anyone from outside their community. Thus the chapter also aims to tell some of the stories which were left out of mainstream analysis, or which occupied different spaces within it. It is an attempt to address many issues at the same time, precisely because of the messy and complex nature of politics in the Nkaneng community.

Chapter four also outlines the experience of visiting Marikana and how the research was conducted. The research was conducted according to what Lather (1988), calls a participatory research design that focuses on sequential interviews conducted in an interactive, dialogic manner that entails self-disclosure on the part of the researcher to foster a sense of collaboration. She also refers to 'member checks' as a way of ensuring the researcher does not impose their interpretive definitions on the data and it remains open-ended. "Member checks" are then a process of checking (whether one is doing interviews or participant observation) that all members of the group are happy with the process of the research and the questions being asked (Lather, 1988). Thus the series of semi-structured interviews undertaken focused on participatory research methodology in which the research design was worked out with the people involved in the research to create the maximum amount of space for the people to articulate their own experiences of themselves and their lives.

In many ways the research was undertaken with the idea of showing the intersection between race, class and gender politics and to show how, even if it is difficult, academic work cannot attempt to tell only certain parts of a complicated story. In fact, complex stories are often more humanising, and avoids the trap of objectification that pure class, race, or gender analysis, done separately, sometimes achieves. During the

two weeks I spent listening, talking to and spending time with the women in *Sikhala Sonke*, and other people I was able to speak to, I began to understand more and more the limitations of theory, and here I am referring modernist theory, to explain lived experiences of people who straddle two different worlds and realities, and the importance of presenting it in this way.

The following body of work will make this subaltern sphere of history and politics more visible in an attempt to broaden and deepen our understanding of Marikana, and the modes of politics occurring on the South African mines.

Chapter One

An Alternative Framework for Understanding

“While taking care not to deny the importance of the leading players, more profound historical study takes the whole into account: spectators, situations, the canvas of the immense commedia dell’arte. Once the historian and the explorer of human reality realise they have been fooled, and begin consciously linking history and the knowledge of mankind with life - everyday life - in the past and in the present, they will have left their na’ivety behind.”

Henri Lefebvre, The Critique of Everyday Life

This chapter provides a conceptual framework that sets up the possibilities for alternative understandings of the Marikana strikes and the massacre presented in the thesis. Rather than transposing a pre-determined method or framework onto an event, the literature explored here allows for different kinds of knowledge, understanding, and histories to inform the way we think about an event like this. It is an attempt to undiscipline the way in which knowledge about certain ‘big’ events is produced and to offer a different kind of process in which stories that have been silenced can be re-visited, alternative histories revealed and the process for writing a living history, re-thought.

The chapter argues that current popular evaluations of the Marikana massacre, through both liberal and Marxist analysis are inadequate to understanding the political implications of the massacre. It is important here, to note that rather than conflating liberal and Marxist ideologies, it is more useful to see this framing as directed towards their similarities when it comes to the circumscription of modernity and rationality. Both liberal and Marxist discourse have a teleology of development and progress (discussed in the introduction) which are based on an inherently productivist idea about life and the social world, at the heart of which lies the notion that labour is what is required to be fully human (Pithouse, 2014). Furthermore, and particularly important to this thesis, is that they both take on a very masculinist form which whether consciously or not, circumscribes the realm of the political particularly to the public sphere.

Therefore, often, purely economic analysis of the mines creates a linearity of South African history, rooted in modernist forms of historiography, and leaves out a whole other sphere of political activity, which is silenced as a result. The chapter outlines the shortcomings of this analysis, points to the gaps in understanding that it offers and shows how often, this analysis is used to form elite nationalist historiography which silences other narratives. It also reveals how, often, elite nationalist historiographies, take on a masculinist form where women's activism and contributions are seen as outside of the public/political realm and are thus forced into categories of private domesticity.

This kind of elite conception of politics denies the everyday lived reality where people practice politics in different and sometimes opposing ways, which I refer to as the 'subaltern' sphere, following the Indian subalternist school of thought. By making these events visible and rejecting a purely urban-centric ANC-led history of resistance we might find other narratives of struggle present which help to inform our present. It is important to consider how these forms of silencing work to mystify resistance in the public sphere. The chapter ends by offering an alternate way to read national history and provides a basis from which we can write the living history of Marikana today.

The limitations and consequences of Economic Analysis

In the Introduction, the brief discussion on the limitations of the existing literature on Marikana pointed to how narrow class analysis functions to silence other narratives. This however is not a recent development in the historiography of labour in South Africa. This discourse takes its cue from the way workers' strike activity on the mines have always been conceptualised through narrow forms of class analysis, discussed in detail in chapter three.

There is a long history of framing worker's struggles in this way, which is most certainly due to the way in which workers' struggles are conceptualised using narrow Marxist or liberal frameworks. In fact, the seminal text in the literature on the South African mineral-based economy is Harold Wolpe's famous paper, written in 1972, *Capitalism and Cheap Labour Accumulation in South Africa: From Segregation to*

Apartheid. Wolpe first attempted to show the link between class, race, and the migrant labour system in South Africa. While Wolpe's paper was illuminating and, one of the first and few, attempts to show how Apartheid used racial laws and the reserve policies to create a system of white capital and cheap supply of black labour to the mines, it privileges class analysis and fails to capture other narratives of workers' experiences in their communities as well as the gendered nature of work in the reserves. Labour historians, Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout (2010: 242) have also highlighted the shortcomings of over-stating economic exploitation as the trigger for worker agency, which most neo-Marxist labour historians have done following Wolpe, because it does not allow one to explore how moral geographies operate and shift over time.

The privileging of class analysis achieves two things that are of importance when considering the historical events culminating in the Marikana massacre. Firstly, the way in which these forms of liberal and Marxist analysis use European teleology to create linear trajectories of progress and experience finds its way into most post-colonial nationalist historiographies following an elite Eurocentric conception of nationalism. These elite nationalist historiographies, not only serve to silence other narratives that do not fit with modernist conceptions of struggle and liberation, but they also, often, take a masculinist form. This form, following reductionist Marxist and liberal, conceptions of what counts as work, resistance and struggle creates a gendered historiography in which women are silenced or domesticated. These two consequences deserve greater discussion.

Silencing and Elite Nationalism

Lungisile Ntsebeza and Thembela Kepe (2011: 5) have argued that the rural sphere in South Africa's countryside has been marginalised in the history of resistance to colonialism and Apartheid in South Africa. For them, "The question that faces South Africans, as well as those who have an interest in South African issues, is how history features in post-Apartheid South Africa. Critical questions include, what is remembered, recorded, and by whom, and crucially the manner in which different histories contribute or do not contribute to current understanding of nationhood" (Ntsebeza and Kepe, 2011: 3).

The Mpondo Revolts, which lasted nine months and, in some cases, endured well into the 1960s, were sustained for a longer period than most urban struggles in South Africa, and Ntsebeza and Kepe (2011: 21) make the important point that urban struggles culminating in the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960, still do not over-shadow the popularity and significance of the events in Mpondoland occurring roughly around the same time. Yet this event, which presented an organic, organised, militant peasant rebellion, has been silenced in most nationalist historiography and the rural sphere has been portrayed as quiescent and backward. The Mpondo revolts, which were a sustained resistance to colonial and apartheid policies and an affirmation of people's defence of democracy in Mpondoland, in many ways shatter modernist conceptions of the political and the way struggle should be organised, which has always been seen as an urban, 'progressive,' project.

Michael Neocosmos is useful when thinking about the relation between certain forms of liberal and Marxist historiography and post-colonial elite nationalism and the idea of the 'modern' is constructed. For Neocosmos (2012: 532),

“It is important to note that, in the case of the study of anti-colonial resistance movements in Africa, not only has political subjectivity rarely been central, but when it has indeed been the object of study, it has been regularly reduced to its social location as well as interpreted, ‘anthropologized’ and translated into an idiom comprehensible to liberal or Marxist post-enlightenment historical science. Various described as ‘religious’, ‘tribal’, ‘ethnic’, ‘traditional’, or ‘pre-capitalist’, many such subjectivities have been distinguished from those of modernity precisely by relating them to their apparent social foundations. While so-called traditional, ethnic and religious expressions of resistance have been seen as being typical of ‘tribal’, ‘peasant’ and other primarily rural-based movements, urban ones have been seen as focused on more evidently recognizably modern characteristics such as those of class and nation.

The treatment of the rural within this framework has meant that the west has failed to adequately come to terms with the fact “that supposedly ‘ethnic’, ‘traditional’,

‘religious’ or any so called ‘pre-modern’ cultural idioms could be deployed in the field of politics not to advocate a return to a supposedly golden past, but to affirm humanistic and popular-democratic demands for a better future (Neocosmos, 2012: 534). The discourse of Eurocentric rationalism has always rendered the rural as backward and pre-political so much so that there is little understanding of the subaltern sphere of politics in elite publics, even today.

This denial of the emancipatory potential of people organising outside of the categories of class and nation has certainly influenced African historiography which has, for a long time been unable to break-free from the western methodology that shape the theoretical canons of history as a discipline. The African historian Peter Ekeh (1997: 28) explains this phenomenon well:

“Even when post-colonial Africa has tried to reclaim its history from Europe, the autonomy of African history and religious experience has been compromised through nationalist experience which reacts to western dominance by replacing the contents of imperialist history and theology with African images while adopting imperial methodologies that built up the models which have led to the conclusions rejected by them.”

Shaka Zulu for instance, the great warrior king, is allowed his space in nationalist historiography, not merely because he was a great king or warrior, but because of the ease with which narrative of nationhood fits within European models of historiography.

In fact the subalternist Dipesh Chakrabarty (1992: 1) adds that the dominance of “Europe as the subject of all histories is a part of a much more profound theoretical condition under which historical knowledge is produced in the third world.” European knowledge and history appears as solely capable of uttering the universal, while the non-European remains mute and forever the empirical evidence to the theoretical canons.

The Mpondo revolts would be an awkward insertion into this kind of historiography because the peasant rebellion, calls into question ‘regal’ power and relies on other

forms of organisation captured neither by the way in which western theory circumscribes modernity nor 'tribal' ethnicity.

The Mpondo revolts, as a political anti-colonial intervention, interrupt the kind of rigid ethnicity that is promoted as part of the South African rainbow nation, in which people are crystallised as bearers of 'African culture and tradition,' that allows systems of patronage to be kept in place and denies access to the universal, in what Mahmood Mamdani has called 'the bi-furcated state'. Therefore, the multicultural 'rainbow nation' rhetoric which proliferates in popular nationalist discourse today does not easily allow for alternative understandings of ethnic and cultural politics and seeks rather to silence them. Furthermore, the narrative that the nationalist elite chooses, to tell the history of the liberation struggle, requires a modernity and linearity in which the rural and cultural struggles do not easily fit, because it interrupts the urban-centric, modernist struggle of the ANC-led liberation historical narrative.

The Haitian historian of the Haitian Revolution, Michel Trouillot, provides a key thought when thinking about writing any history in a post-colonial society when he asks, "How do we begin to write the history of the unthinkable, how... as part of a continuous discourse on slavery, race and colonisation, do we break the iron bonds of the philosophical milieu in which it was born? (1995:73). *In Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Trouillot speaks about the silence on the part of the international academy on the black slave rebellion which led to the Haitian Revolution of 1789, and the establishment of the first independent black state. He highlights how even while the rebellion was taking place, the intellectuals, who had been writing about freedom, universal suffrage and the rights of man (sic), were unable to accept the idea of a slave uprising so even then, they began to find ways to silence it because they could not understand it.

Trouillot (1995: 72) says, "When reality does not coincide with deeply held beliefs, human beings tend to phrase interpretations that force reality between the scopes of these beliefs. They devise formulas to repress the unthinkable and to bring it back within the realm of accepted discourse." Trouillot documents the way in which slave resistance was reduced to individual acts that denied political content and universality, in which " Slave A ran away because she was not fed properly by her

master, Slave B killed herself in a fatal tantrum, Slave C poisoned her mistress because she was jealous” (Trouillot, 1991: 83). Thus, the rebellious slave became in turn “the maladjusted Negro, a mutinous adolescent who eats dirt until he dies, an infanticidal mother, a deviant” (1991: 83). He (1995: 96) describes this kind of silencing as having two categories: forms of erasure, and banalisation. The former is either a general silencing of resistance in pretending it did not happen, or phrasing it in terms that make it appear “not as bad as it seems.” The latter is a trivialisation of mass organisation in which single stories are given different interpretations where struggle is rooted in individual claims rather than in a fault within the system. Both are present in current narratives on rural resistance as well as mineworker strikes. The attempt to drain, from rural and other more contemporary, struggles which appear ‘unthinkable’ all political content is part of a broader process of disciplining knowledge in which European thought and ‘modernity’ remain at the center of political action. The idea of rural resistance and other forms of political praxis which function differently from the way in which the ‘modern’ is conceptualised threaten the way elite nationalist historiography functions to create ‘modernist’ narratives of resistance to colonialism and apartheid and the continuation of the bifurcated state in the post-apartheid era.

Marxist analysis and Women

The universalisation of Marxist analysis has been incredibly useful to understand how capitalist domination works in society. As noted above, the work of Wolpe, Martin Leggasick and other Marxist writing on the creation of ‘native reserves’ revealed the racially stratified system of capitalism under colonialism and apartheid clearly. Yet, what happened was not the inability to see how the native reserve systems were able to ‘subsidise’ African labourers so the mines could undercut wages and increase profits, but, rather a failure to move beyond the economic view of labour to the issue of how women’s contributions have been relegated to narratives about economic rural subsidies in the reserves and not women as agriculturalists and care-workers and organisers.

The Italian autonomist Marxist feminist Sylvia Federici (2008:92) problematises this gap in most Marxist literature when she argues, that Marx's critique of capitalism has been hampered by the inability to conceive of value-producing work in the process of capitalist accumulation. "Had Marx recognised that capitalism must rely on both an immense amount of unpaid domestic labour for the production of the work force, and the devaluation of these activities in order to cut the cost of labour power, he may have been less inclined to consider capitalist production as inevitable and progressive" (Federici, 2008: 92).

Often what this form of Marxist class analysis does, in addition to privileging certain spaces, and certain actors, is to produce a particular configuration of resistance and struggle which, because of the significance placed on the factory floor or the mine shaft, often takes a masculinist form particularly within a nation-building project.

These narrow Marxist thematisations of resistance and work are taken up by some feminist discourse. This sometimes does the work of disguising the sphere of politics of the woman unwaged labourer and the home as the space of both her oppression and the basis from which she is able to organise and resist. Yet, women in the home; women as social reproducers; women as political activists etc. have always been attacked by some forms of narrow feminist discourse which assert that women who resist the state or are involved in political action which centers around their role as mothers or care-givers are not feminist.

Take for instance, South African academic Shireen Hassim's definition of feminist movements after she notes, "Women's movements and feminist movements are not the same thing" (Hassim, 1991: 72).

"A women's movement can be defined as women organising on the basis of their identities as women, in exclusively female organisations, taking up issues that they consider important. A women's movement can contain within it conservative elements that organize women from a particular social base but do not seek to question the power relations within that base, let alone within society more generally. Feminism, on the other hand, has a direct political dimension, being not only aware of women's oppression, but prepared actively

to confront patriarchal power in all its manifestations. Socialist feminists would refuse to separate the struggle against patriarchy from struggles against capitalism (and apartheid)”.

Nombaniso Gasas, critiques this sort of narrow conceptualisation and arbitrary distinction, situating her argument within the broader critique of the goals of feminism she asks “What and who is a feminist?” (Gasas, 2008: 227). In her paper, *Feminisms, Motherisms and Patriarchies: Women’s Voices in the 1950s*, Gasas outlines how women in South Africa in the 1950s, organising on the basis of their various identities, and frequently as mothers, were exercising their own agency: “Women were learning new political skills...This pushed women into re-evaluating their own attitudes towards themselves and encouraged a greater feeling of assertiveness and solidarity with other women” (Gasas, 2008: 227). Thus Gasas’s (2008: 226) appeal for a non-linear and nuanced, contextualised approach which understands that “women straddle many positions (whose) lives defy the binaries that are dominant in South African feminist academic discourse has resonance here specifically in response to the narrow thematisation of South African women’s involvement in the political sphere. Perhaps, it would be appropriate to situate this argument in lights of Gasas’s (2006: 217) that “we must acknowledge the different forms of self-representation, the choices that are available to women.”

Furthermore, the discourse of reproductive care which focuses on the investment made by women, many mothers and wives, in thousands of hours of unwaged housework and care work in the form of sex, care, love, medical attention and education, remains a history which is outside of conceptions of work, resistance and the realm of the political. Often it is feminist literature itself, which unproblematically accepts reductionist Marxist notions of work, organisation, and resistance rooted solely in the economic.

The way in which these categories have been assimilated even in so called ‘progressive’ histories is indicative of how disciplinary method becomes difficult to escape. Even in the recent historiography on the Mpondo Revolts, the lack of consciousness on the part of historians is evident when it came to retrieving from the archives the everyday lived reality and struggles of women in Mpondoland. Not only

does the literature preclude the everyday, but also women whose everyday resistance is what, as James Scott (1985) puts it, happened ‘in-between rebellions’ since women did not often go to war but exercised political agency from within the home or religious spaces.

Often certain kinds of Marxism fetishise the factory or the mine and the big insurrections and protests that take place within these spaces, leaving out the everyday negotiated resistance taking place in the home or in workers’ communities, and usually by women. By examining what is left out of narratives of factory workers’ resistance that focus only on major strikes and riots and miss the daily struggles over leisure, wages, privileges, and respect. Scott, believes that “vital territory is won and lost here too.” In fact, in his famous essay, *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, James C Scott (1985), expresses a frustration with the historiography of peasant rebellions which not only favoured large-scale North American peasant insurrection, but was also blind to the internal space-time that is not visible at first glance and which cast peasant’s as non-historical actors and merely contributors to statistics.

Scott’s response to this was to create a historiography that also covered the vital day-to-day struggles of peasant resistance. It was not only the big insurrections that were important but also rather, how people negotiated and resisted in their everyday lives in order to survive or resist an oppressive system. Scott (1985) realised, that for the peasantry, “scattered along the countryside and facing even more imposing obstacles to organised, collective action, everyday forms of resistance would seem particularly important.”

Scott (1985) calls these everyday forms of resistance, “ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups” which included foot-dragging, dissimulation, false –compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth.” It is these ‘*ordinary weapons of the weak*’ that allow us to understand what the “peasantry does ‘between revolts’ to defend its interests as best it can’. It is here in the realm of the everyday, where many political contributions women make are to be found. It is not merely that women have been left out of narratives of resistance, but also how these categories of resistance are constituted, and how, now, being aware of the method of

this kind of historiography, it requires us to re-think the possibilities for writing a living history of Marikana today.

Writing a Living Subaltern History

When we are faced with what Michel Foucault describes as disciplinary method that constantly shapes the canons of historical knowledge there needs to be several de-colonial processes occurring simultaneously. The first is to recognise which histories are silenced and an attempt to show how silencing functions to produce elite discourse. The second is to re-think and make visible marginalised stories. It may be useful to employ Chakrabarty's (1991: 23) notion of "a history that deliberately makes visible, within the very structure of its narrative forms, its own repressive strategies and practices, the part it plays in collusion with the narratives of citizenships in assimilating to the projects of the modern state all other possibilities of human solidarity." This is an important insight for reflection on historical disciplinary method, since this elite conception of the political disciplines anti-colonial struggle within particular margins. It is subalternist theory that offers a way in which to understand how elitism takes both colonial and nationalist forms and how we might use this theory to conceptualise and write about an otherwise, silenced or marginalised sphere of history and politics.

In the introduction to *Subaltern Studies: A Reader*, Ranajit Guha (1997:xv) describes the project of Subaltern Studies as creating an alternative mode of thematization, whose function it would be "to illuminate rather than hide the non-unitary character of that (national) politics." Rather, it would draw attention to "the other domain" treated in dominant discourse as of no importance or even as altogether non-existent". For Guha, (1997: xv) "The failure of elite discourse to, in both its imperialist and indigenous nationalist varieties, identify, far less interpret, many of the most significant aspects of our past (which) follows from a thematization framed rigidly by the presuppositions of its monistic view of colonial power relations" in which the study of colonialism "opens up in entirely new ways to bring into relief the manifold diversities that it has been beyond the oversimplified elitist interpretation to cope with" (1997: xv).

Subaltern studies then, offers a way of examining parts of history that do not ‘fit’ within statist and elite nationalist figurations, in which there is an “official domain of politics.” Consequently, in order to truly understand how people function in society, one must understand what their conception of society is, and often this is informed by culture and custom¹.

If the starting point then is not to take elite nationalism, often informed by linear trajectories, as the category through which we tell historical narratives of struggle and resistance, what are the possibilities for human solidarity if we are to begin to think beyond these, often state-driven, projects?

One example of this kind of subaltern sphere of politics is what S’bu Zikode, Chairperson of the urban shackdwellers movement in Durban, *Abahlali base Mjondolo* (in Neocosmos, 2012: 532) calls a “living politics,” which is “the movement out of the places where oppression has assigned those who do not count.” For Neocosmos (2012: 532), “politics begins at the point of displacement, and it is the inability to grasp the subversion of place which lies at the core of a failure to understand the politics of emancipation.” For him, politics is emancipatory and it is this conception of the political that is useful here. Urban social movements like *Abahlali base Mjondolo* in Durban, articulate a politics which is often ignored or banalised in the elite public sphere not only because they occupy a subaltern sphere but also because of the mode of political action that is sometimes employed. In his book, *Fanonian Practices in South Africa*, Nigel Gibson (2011: 21) describes the modes of politics employed by Abm as a “humanstic development based in life,” where:

Outside of civil society, indeed ‘barred’ from civil society (unless subordinated to an NGO which represents them in civil society), the organised shack dwellers have forced themselves into political society. By initially

¹ E.P Thompson’s description of culture and custom is useful here, rather than the reified static conception of culture at play in popular discourse in South Africa today. In his book, *Customs in Common*, following Bordieu’s ‘habitus,’ he describes custom as ambience, not as fact but “as a lived environment comprised of practices, inherited expectations, rules which determined both limits to usages and disclosed possibilities, norms and sanctions both of law and neighbourhood pressures” (Thompson, 1991: 102). It was precisely this confluence of practices, examined in chapter two, that came together in the peasant rebellion of 1960 and which appeared again more than fifty years later at Marikana.

coming together and acting on their own, they have put post-apartheid society on trial, challenging its raison d'être: its morals and values. By creating their own organisation they have also created a self-conscious that has shattered any 'impulsive position,' insisting, that they are not dependent on anyone else but 'immanent' in themselves (1967a: 135). Insisting also, that they are not a potentiality of something but are, the shack dwellers' movement has articulated a living politics that challenges the ascriptive idea of South African citizenship.

Thus, it is important to note that this mode of politics that challenges ideas of citizenship and the way in which the poor and marginalised are represented in the elite public sphere, definitely has resonance with other urban struggles around the world. Often challenges to the state are framed as mob-like uprisings rather than an attempt to understand the internal logic of people practising politics outside of the elite domain.

Raoul Zibechi (2012: 11), writing about urban social movements in Cochabamba, Bolivia, reiterates that elites and masses sometimes tend to mobilize in completely different ways, particularly in post-colonial societies.

"The former do so vertically, closely linked to the institutions; social action takes place in a "cautious and controlled" manner and its high point comes in electoral contests. However, the mobilization of the poor is, on the contrary, horizontal, more spontaneous and based "on the traditional kinship and territoriality or associations of class" that appear linked to the insurgency. The characteristics of a horizontal mobilization enable it to reveal the hidden aspects of cooperation that, upon bursting forth, displays what is implicit" (Zibechi, 2010: 11).

For Zibechi this sphere of politics is defined by its kinship base and the ability of people to organise outside of the state or state institutions. For him, it is important to state the role of spontaneity in subaltern politics because poor people are so often not taken seriously, when they are involved in political acts of defiance that do not fit categories of 'organised protest' and are hence silenced by these categories:

“The poor of the cities do not usually formulate explicit agendas with key strategies and tactics laid out, nor political programmes or demands but as is often the case in the history of the oppressed, they make the road by walking. One can only posteriori reconstruct the coherence of the journey that always seems to pass by or amend the initial intentions of the subjects (Zibechi, 2012: 190).”

This is evidenced again in the organisation of workers at Marikana, who did not expect what would happen after they chose to act outside of the union. In fact the decision to go directly to management before consulting their union, taken perhaps spontaneously, would later lead to the mass scale organisation after they were met with bullets from NUM officials and consequently the constitution of independent worker committees outside of union and bargaining structures.

Often the failure of elite nationalism to recognise a subaltern sphere of politics, and to grasp the significance of this mode of politics, results in a criminalisation of the poor, who organise outside of the ‘official domain.’ E.P Thompson makes a similar claim in his essay, *The Moral Economy of the Crowd*, in which people are appealing to a sense of community and custom in order to bring the price of staple foods down. Often these people were seen as hungry mobs of people who were rioting only because their stomachs were empty, and the rowdy crowds were often dismissed because it did not appear as if they were rational, reasonable and appealing to the political principles of morality and equality. This sense of custom and community is also missing in the economic analysis of worker struggles, which sees the worker as isolated and in an one-dimensional relationship to capital. In post-colonial society, it is particularly limited to use the concept of class alone to consider the exploitation and domination of a black mineworker. The idea that workers represent one homogenous class of people, devoid of context, allows the proliferation of the kinds of violent insurrection that is often fetishised by the left. The feeling the death of 34 black mineworkers evokes, cannot only be representation of class struggle but rather what Kimberlé Crenshaw (1997:7) has described as the ‘uncomfortability’ with the use of black violence in narratives of struggle or political unrest. “The problem however, is not so much the portrayal of violence itself as it is the absence of other

narratives and images portraying a fuller range of black experience” (Crenshaw, 1991:7). The way in which slave and peasant resistance has always taken on a grotesque form of violent images, not unlike Quentin Tarantino’s portrayal of slave vengeance in *Django Unchained*, illustrates this narrative of violence - as – life - history. Here again, some forms of Marxism, the kind that is also evident in Alexander *et al’s* book, that see Marikana as a necessary event in the march towards socialism miss the inherent racism in this kind of analysis. Moreover, the reaction of the elite public in South Africa, particularly the state, which arrested workers rather than expressed outrage at the massacre, re-inscribes the idea of the poor black body as dispensable to History.

To explore the narratives of people who form part of a subaltern sphere of history and politics requires a sensitivity and awareness of the everyday lived realities of many people who live and work at the mines and who form part of communities, families, and relationships that are rooted in different cultures, customs, traditions and histories.

This chapter has presented many different sets of ideas particularly because it is the aim of this thesis to think about the political meanings of Marikana, outside of narrow thematisations and frameworks. It has presented four key points, the first of which is to critique a narrow class analysis of workers’ struggles on the mines and to show how this is inadequate for thinking about the political meanings of Marikana. The second is to show how this form of analysis is rooted in Eurocentric historiography and how this is often assimilated into post-colonial elite nationalist historiography which silences other histories that do not ‘fit.’ The third has been to show how this elite nationalist historiography often takes a masculinist form and how often historians and even some forms of liberal and Marxist feminism serve to marginalise and silence women’s political actions. Lastly it has offered a different set of ideas which can be used to broaden our understanding of Marikana and the implications for thinking about workers as part of communities with specific cultures and customs; here a subaltern sphere of politics can be located where workers’ organise in different ways from an ‘official sphere’ of politics, which is not often grasped by the state or middle-class intellectuals alike. It is here also, where workers’ everyday lived realities and their communities are particularly important, and that is where, in many cases, the

political activity of women takes place. If subaltern studies was highlighting an absence of the subaltern from history, there must be a parallel attempt to show how women remain stuck in the kind of domesticity which consistently renders them outside of the realm of the political, even when, at times of insurrection, subaltern men appear politically active, women are often relegated to the margins.

The next chapter will explore these four points with reference to the Mpondo Revolts of 1960, and how re-visiting this historical event, and re-reading it, may allow for a different understanding of the ways in which we can interpret the Marikana massacre, and the roots of the political tools the men on the mountain used to organise.

Chapter Two

Sediments and Silences: The Mpondo Revolts of 1960

This chapter will present an examination of the ways in which the political and cultural tools, which were used in the Mpondo Revolts and which were carried over from Mpondoland, to the mines, over years of migrant labour contract, which reveals a political sphere absent in both liberal and narrow Marxist modes of analysis. It also makes historical links and connections between the people who have come and gone through the mines and back to Mpondoland for many years, and how this space and these memories have informed their current struggles for life and for dignity.

The Mpondo Revolts of 1960 have remained largely silenced in nationalist historiography because of the relative threat the event poses to the nationalist narrative of anti-apartheid struggle and current understandings of nationhood that place the African National Congress (ANC) at the centre of both. Thembele Kepe (2013) has noted that the revolts remain marginal to nationalist historiography because of the way in which ethnicity is mobilised in the current political climate, in which the revolts are used to reinscribe traditional authority as opposed to the challenge posed by the amaMpondo rebels. This kind of silencing is a powerful mechanism, which allows the construction of certain nationalist discourses, to the exclusion of other narratives that have the potential to shatter neatly defined and hegemonic categories of resistance. In the Introduction to their edited book on the Mpondo Revolts, Ntsebeza and Kepe (2011: 12) provide an excellent starting point when they say of the section of the book titled: *The Rural in the Urban*,

“The question could be phrased thus: ‘How did the Mpondo rebellion of the 1950s and 1960s impact on the politics and organisational abilities of Mpondo migrant workers in the urban areas?’ Phrasing the question this way is important given the influence of modernisation which views the rural (traditional) as ‘backward’ and the urban as ‘progressive.’ The logic of modernisation suggests a linear approach where the rural learn from the urban and not vice-versa.

The chapter begins with a historical overview of the creation and implementation of reserve policy resulting in the migrant labour system, it goes on to examine the conditions which made the Mpondo Revolts possible in 1960 and the cultural political tools employed in the revolts. These political tools are evidenced through what is referred to as “mountain committees” the bodies which were constituted by ordinary peasants who organised and sustained the revolts. The chapter then argues that this sphere of politics is important to our understanding of events at Marikana; it further highlights another gap in the historiography of the Mpondo Revolts that of the political activity of women and the work performed by women in the reserves. This historiography, if re-visited, will help us to understand the constitution of work, resistance and a subaltern sphere of politics better and we can use this knowledge to write a living history of Marikana today, rooted in notions of dignity and community organisation.

Laying the Foundations: The History of Native Reserve Policy in South Africa

In 1894 Cecil John Rhodes took the first steps towards the segregated reserve policy to serve mining capital interests in the form of the Glen Grey Act (Lacey, 1981:13). The Act, which divided the land of that district into surveyed private holdings limiting the carrying capacity of the land and levied taxes collected by headmen indirectly forcing the ‘surplus’ people into the capitalist sector, would later inspire J.W Sauer to draft the 1913 Native Land Act. While the British had always favoured indirect rule through chiefs and practiced this at the Cape and Natal, (Ntsebeza, 2011: 32), the Afrikaner farmers were against the reserve policy because they favoured master-slave relationships which meant African ‘labour’ would work and live on their farms (Lacey, 1981: 25). For white Afrikaners who opposed the Native Land Act of 1913, which would see large tracts of land allocated for African people and would require whites to move off some future reserve land, “such areas would be spoiled or wasted by natives” (Lacey, 1981: 31). Indeed while The Native Land Act of 1913, Native Registration Act of 1917 and Native Reserve Act of 1927, (which saw mass removals of African people to areas without water or electricity) were being passed, the silence and lack of consciousness of white people was overwhelming as they fought over where cheap African labour was required the most (Lacey, 1981: 104, Mbeki 1964: 29). The need for the apartheid government to remove African people from towns and

urban centres, in order to force them into work on the mines or farms, forced the National Party to revisit the United Party's reserve policy and consider re-tribalisation which was seen as the best means of rural control (Lacey, 1981:94, 106).

In his seminal text, *The Peasant's Revolt*, Govan Mbeki rigorously describes the 'bastardisation' of the traditional system and the attempt to draw the Chiefs and headmen into the machinery of the state. At first, as Mbeki (1964: 42) describes, many chiefs bought into the Transkeian Territorial Authorities, because they thought they could really achieve self-government, autonomy, or a relative stake in the government of the union of South Africa. However it was soon clear that the chiefs who formed part of the United Transkeian Territories General Council (UTTGC), whose Xhosa pun was *Utata woj' inj; emsini*, (father has had dog's meat blackened with smoke), were just puppets of the state who would later vote in the Bantu Authorities Act (Mbeki, 1964: 33). The once, relatively inclusive and constantly shifting and changing tradition of chieftaincy was now being crystallised in colonial 'tribal' law, and the chiefs paid by the South African government, were being made to subtract all kinds of taxes from their subjects who were forced into migrant labour as a result.

The migrant labour system, which persists around the mining areas in South Africa today (Breckenridge, 2011) is still at the centre of understanding struggles for land, wages and dignity in contemporary society. The history of mineworkers and their families reveals a constant battle to protect the commons against the system of racial oppression and capitalist attempts to fully proletarianise the rural population of the Transkei. It must be mentioned that a purely 'working class' reading of the migrant labour system would be completely inadequate to understand the kind of resistance being waged since the advent of colonialism in South Africa till today. Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout (2010: 242) have argued, that positioning economic exploitation as the trigger for worker agency, which most neo-Marxist labour historians have done following Wolpe, does not allow one to explore how moral geographies operate and shift over time. While others like E.P. Thompson and Dunbar Moodie have added the notions of justice and integrity to the structural analysis, Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout are also trying to root worker struggles in conceptions of dignity, even though this takes a very modernist form.

The privileging of big history, broad class narratives, and struggles has always been the preferred methodology of most social historians. By highlighting issues of community, justice, integrity, and most importantly dignity, it is possible to release the analysis of Marikana from the straightjacket of dogmatic Marxism and to focus rather on workers as people who form part of a broader community. This point will be revisited later in the thesis, which examines recent work on Marikana which uses the narrow lens of class analysis and therefore fails to express other realities of working and living conditions at Marikana, including and most especially the work done by women in reproducing miners.

It was Harold Wolpe (1972) who first theorised the system of racial capitalism in the country hypothesising that colonialism and Apartheid were set up to create the condition for the exploitation of cheap African labour. The reserve economies were kept going so that the costs of maintaining and reproducing the proletariat would be lowered and mining capital could rely on the part subsidy of agricultural production in the reserves (Westaway, 1993:18; Lacey, 1981: 224). The reserves then became a labour source and many writers of the time concluded that the introduction of betterment schemes in the 1930s, focused on 'saving the soil' because "the reserves had to be poor enough to create a supply of labour and prosperous enough not to produce miners who were malnourished and unhealthy" (Lacey: 1981: 42). However, Westaway (1993:25), Mbeki (1964) and Ntsebeza (2011) all refute the ideal rural output hypothesis. Since mining houses themselves weren't calling for policy to restore or stabilise African agriculture and there was no objective ecological crisis (Westaway, 1993: 25), they credit it to the rise in conservationism and modernity science in South Africa after World War II. The role of land had become less important after the decline of agricultural activities on the reserves (Ntsebeza, 201: 6). Consequently, the focus had now shifted to the reserves as breeding grounds of the work force and as peripheral spaces of control rather than subsistence and production. Thus, it was conservationism combined with anthropology that led to the introduction of betterment schemes in the reserves, which coincided, with other government policies, like the maintenance of a cheap labour force, but was not as a result of them (Westaway, 1993: 50).

Conservationism in South Africa had first been introduced in relation to white farming. In a bid to be more scientific, rational and modern the South African state was encouraged to allow research, testing and then later re-shuffling of entire areas and living spaces in a bid to “save the soil” (Westaway, 1993: 45, Mbeki, 74). Thus betterment, the modern science that was supposed to save the soil and increase agricultural production in the reserves was instated with disastrous outcomes. Betterment schemes required fencing off areas of land for ‘rehabilitation,’ rotational grazing, culling of livestock due to over-grazing, and the mass resettlement of people in areas targeted for betterment (for greater discussion of this see Westaway, 1993, Mbeki, 1964 and Ntsebeza, 2011). People lost arable land, their cattle could not graze freely, and living arrangements were changed. People who previously enjoyed the privacy of large homesteads where they could host religious events or hold parties and gatherings without judgement, or merely enjoy the privacy of their own homes, were now forced to live close to people they hardly knew and in western –style houses which increased visibility and surveillance of each other (Westaway, 1993: 21).

By the early 1950s, it was clear that betterment had failed. There was also widespread agreement in the reserves that it was not poor soil, or over-grazing that was the issue but lack of land as a direct result of racist state policy (Mbeki, 1964 Ntsebeza, 2011, Westaway, 1993).

This kind of programme was not the first of its kind either, in Tanzania and other African countries; colonial missions had also tried to ‘rehabilitate’ African societies through various self-help schemes. In an attempt by the colonial state to capture the peasantry through community development programmes under the technical development paradigm of “self-help,” the colonial state used interventist methods and punishments to enforce compliance. In Tanzania, “African cultivators were to construct terraces, undertake tie-ridging, were forced to grow particular crops according to specific horticultural practices. Attempts were made to tackle perceived over-stocking in pastoralist areas, and control disease through compulsory dipping. The result of this new pro-active and invasive approach was increasing resentment, passive (and sometimes active) resistance” (Jennings 2007: 75). Having lost the peasantry, who then formed an alliance with the liberation movement, the colonial state sought to create a privileged class of farmers (Jennings 2007: 75), which is what

the NP government tried to do in the Transkei when it played the Mtwaku district against Gwili-Gwili, offering them extra benefits and more access to farming resources to join the betterment scheme and cut off Gwili-Gwili (Westaway, 1993: 80). Yet the continuation of these resettlement schemes into the post-colonial area was met with as much resistance and opposition by people who were still unwilling to be ignored. This is evidenced through the diastorous effects of Ujamaa in Tanzania, when Nyerere tried to implement the re-villagisation of people.

This is not unlike attempts to relocate people, without consultation in Zimbabwe. In *Suffering for Territory*, Moore (2005: 2) describes the resistance of people, who were previously squatters, refusing to join the post-colonial states' resettlement schemes. He argues for a spatial sensitivity to cultural politics and demonstrates how people who are "not self-sovereign exercise agency through – *suffering for territory*, in which people invoke memories of suffering for territory or *kutambudzikira nyika* and *kushingirira nyika*, to stake claims for post-colonial land rights (Moore, 2005:2). These terms are shaped by local practices, and "*nyika* is at once local and national, spanning the semantic terrain of chiefdom, country, and nation. It specifies no single sovereign or mode of subjection. As a contested terrain of landscape, *nyika* is simultaneously symbolic and material" (Moore, 2005:3). While they lived inside the resettlement territory in Kaerezi, they lived outside of planned settlement sites, which they referred to as *maline*, the lines – the same name given to imposed colonial settlements (Moore, 2005:1).

This contestation of space, which starts from a point of colonial spatialisation, is often, as evidenced by the post-colonial state in Africa, a politicisation of space in which poor people, who are outside of 'civil' society and the elite public sphere, are seen as unable to think, or take decisions for themselves (see Neocosmos, 2012; Pithouse, 2012). The stress on consultation and participation often supercedes nationalistic interpretations of liberation struggles especially in rural areas, which are often marginalised by urban politics and movements.

In many ways the Mpondo revolts were the local praxis of custom and tradition which shares points of connection with many groups of dispossessed people in the global

South, who use their common resources and local political practice to influence a larger system in which they feel they should have a stake.

The History of the Peasants Revolt

Politics begins exactly when those who “cannot” do something show that in fact they can.

- Jacques Ranciere, Politics and Aesthetics

There have been many attempts, especially amongst early anthropologists, to create the image of African people as outside of the political realm, led by primordial rituals and beliefs. Paul Landau (2012:250) describes this emerging anthropological tribal model, as one that

“Influenced the worldwide image of colonised people, as people struggling with “change,” to conserve their “traditional ways,” as if the trouble under colonial rule were due to their own intransigence, their inability to adapt. The question of land and autonomy was removed and an image created of the tribesman facing the world from his oasis of custom and ritual.”

The history of political tradition and practice thus still remains eclipsed by colonial literature unwilling to deal with struggles for autonomy and dignity which now, returning to the archive we must attempt to retell.

In Mpondoland by the late 1800s, traditional authority was a loose association of district chiefs usually recognising a paramount chief according to lineage; people chose their allegiance on the basis of the area that they occupied. Size, solidarity, and custom of a ‘tribe’ varied according to the extent of outside threats and the personality of the paramount (Hunter, 1961: 379). While there was no standardisation in Mpondoland, chiefs were usually the commanders in chiefs of their respective armies, responsible for the allocation of land, and the arbiters of district disputes (Hunter, 1961: 392). The mutual relationship between the chief and his people was measured by generosity of the chief. People were called upon to work together to build huts and cultivate land and the chief, who was always expected to live and work amongst

people, would also have to provide refreshments and hear the grievances of anyone in his district who called at his kraal (Hunter, 1961: 394).

The re-introduction of 'tribal' authority in its static, codified form and the use of African Chiefs to impose betterment and later 'Stabilisation' in 1954 on African people is largely seen as the reason for the Peasant Revolt's in 1960s (Mbeki, 1964, Hendricks, 2011, Ntsebeza et al, 2011). The power of the chiefs, who previously enjoyed a relative measure of legitimacy, was attacked from two directions: the government and the people. While Mbeki (1964: 47 – 50) is adamant that the entire traditional authorities system had been corrupted by the chiefs, who had bought into the Transkeian Authorities System, the various resistance to the system of traditional authorities do not reveal so neat an analysis.

In Eastern Mpondoland, where the first and most violent outbreaks of the revolt began, people were entirely against Chief Sigcau for many reasons: not least his participation in the Bantu Authorities system and his insistence on betterment. In addition, they viewed his Chieftaincy as illegitimate; since it was his brother Nelson Sigcau who, it was widely believed, had the birth- right to rule (Pieterse, 2011: 53). In other places, chiefs were deposed because of their refusal to adopt the Bantu Authorities Act or betterment and their support of local struggles. Chief Moilola at Marico was deposed because women refused to carry passbooks; Chief Moramoche at Sekhukhuneland was deposed for not accepting Bantu Authorities or Bantu Education in 1956, in Gwili-Gwili Headmen Myeki led the resistance against betterment. Chief Ntlabati was banished for his involvement in the All African Convention (AAC) with I.B Tabata, a representative of the Khongo and author of the pamphlet *Rehabilitation: A New Fraud*. Tabata, claims Ntsebeza, (2011: 37) is actually the first theorist of what Mamdani later called the bifurcated state in *Citizen and Subject*.

Many chiefs were coerced at gunpoint, or did not have the betterment schemes explained to them. For others their consent was fabricated, taken for granted when they were silent or not even solicited, and when they were required to implement the policies, people started to get increasingly enraged (Westaway, 1993:62). Others however, like the despised Paramount Chief Botha Sigcau and the puppet chief Victor Poto, publicly and actively pledged their allegiance to the National Party government

and did their bidding. The people who were the biggest supporters of betterment were the new professional class that had risen as a result of reserve administration, the teachers, nurses, NAD (Native Administration Department) officials, policemen, headmen and other professional people who were estranged from peasant life and drawn into other kinds of labour (Westaway 1993:75, Ntsebeza, 2011: 6). Thus, it is generally agreed that the peasants, mostly the uneducated and illiterate, were the people who organised, mobilised, and resisted the implementation of betterment and eventually led the revolts (Westaway, 1993: 75; Ntsebeza, 2011: 38, Mbeki, 1964, 111).

In the years, months and weeks as the resistance intensified leading up to the 6th of June 1960, when the police dropped tear gas and opened fired on a gathering of people on Ngquza Hill followed by the declaration of a state of emergency that finally broke the resistance, peasants resisted consistently and determinedly, wanting to have their grievances heard. Steinberg (2011) recounts the day of the massacre through various documents and accounts of people,

“The whites took Botha Sigcau, king of Eastern Mpondoland, up in a helicopter. They flew him to Ngquza, and there the helicopter stopped, hovering just over the rebels. Then the white commander put a rifle in Botha Sigcau’s hands, and he said: ‘Whether we end this rebellion is your decision to make. We can do nothing if you cannot fire the first shot. The choice is in your hands, not ours’. Botha Sigcau thought for a little while, took the rifle from the white man, aimed at the rebels below, and fired the first shot. It hit a man in the chest and killed him. That is how the massacre began.”

Botha Sigcau and his followers were met with anger of the crowd, when they burned them out of their huts, Tim Gibbs (2010; unpublished), tells how “To the Chiefs’ own deep shame, they had run away from their own people. How disgraceful and absurd it was to see a chief guarded by police (and home guards) armed with revolvers! – mere hirelings, not true supporters or followers.” The chiefs who had previously been surrounded by their people and always in dialogue with them were now trying to get away from them for fear of what they would do, and the royal system was in total flux

and upheaval. While the government was trying its best to keep order in the Transkei through the chiefs, many chiefs who did not agree with betterment were being targeted as allies for the ANC.

In the antagonistic relationships which grew in the Mpondo royal family, it was often the daughters and sons of these chiefs who later joined Umkhonto We Sizwe, or supported the rebels. Zoleka Langa remembers that it was around this time that the ANC, which was ‘looking for people of influence and position,’ made contact with Chief Babini (her father). ‘I was just a school girl at that time, but I would sit with him and advise him.’ These seditious conversations were too much for Kaiser Matanzima. Chief Babini was jailed repeatedly until his health collapsed and he died” (Gibbs, 2010; unpublished). Winnie Madikizela was also one such daughter, who hid rebels in her hut, unbeknown to her; the same rebels had just come from burning down her father’s hut. Columbus Madikizela had been a collaborator and was very unpopular amongst the rebels, according to Gibbs (2010; unpublished); he later admitted that Winnie had been right to support the rebels and to oppose the bantustans.

People all over Mpondoland and the rest of the Transkei opposed betterment fiercely. Fence cutting was a popular form of resistance and took place in Wittizehoek, Lusikiski, Sekhukuneland, Gwili-Gwili, Mtakwu, and the Mbau area (Westaway, 1993, Mbeki, 1964). There were many clashes between the people and the state. In Bizana, the resistance was very strong and it is often said to be the incitement point of the revolt.

In Wolf River, the resistance was most fierce and collective, one man was forced off a cliff for being pro-betterment, and people collectively disrupted government meetings that tried to disenfranchise squatters (Westaway, 1993: 100). In Zululand, Tokazi, opposition to rehabilitation was so strong that clashes between the peasants and police occurred when Chief Dinizulu accepted the betterment scheme. Thereafter, the whole community was ordered to move, those who did move were attacked by peasants for being collaborators (Mbeki, 1964: 46). The government responded with even more terror and brutality, in the year 1960, 4769 men and women were arrested, 30

amaMpondo were sentenced to death (11 were reprieved), there were 22 deaths in all, and hut burnings were widespread especially the huts of chiefs, headmen, and collaborators or people who spread government propaganda in support of betterment (Mbeki, 1964: 117).

Yet, people remained determined and continued to act collectively. Mbeki stresses the discipline, rationality and humanity of the mountain committees: even in the face of brute force of the state, most people were asked to leave their huts before they were burned down and when violence and death did occur it was at the height of the revolts when people were scattered, disappeared, exiled or arrested and could no longer take collective decisions (Drew: 2011: 79).

A big part of the Mpondo resistance is mired in discussions about traditional kinship mountain/hill committees sometimes also referred to as Ikongo or the Congo. The mountain committee, so named because men usually met on a mountain or a hill, was significant because mountains were spiritual places where the ancestors were said to dwell and where rituals were performed, They provided protection during wars, and were places where people could meet undisturbed (Drew 2011: 76). There are various interpretations about the committee as manifestation of a subaltern politics where people critiqued the state “and gave voice to a politics at the centre of which lay the ancient and enduring problem of authority and social health (Pieterse 2011: 60).

There is also evidence of a large number of influences on the rebels at the time and they engaged with a range of political groups and organisations, including, no doubt, what E.P Thompson called customary politics.

In her book, *A Taste of Freedom*, Helen Bradford, (1988:1) says “Oppressed and far flung, isolated and illiterate the rural poor have for generations been given contemptuous nicknames by urban black sophisticates and have been largely neglected by political movements.” Yet, the Mpondo Revolts revealed a moment when a subaltern sphere of politics came into dialogue with a range of disclosed possibilities. One such was the launch of the Industrial Commercial Worker’s Union (ICU) in 1919. The ICU was able to mobilise the rural poor in a way in which no other political movement has done to date, infused with the traditions and demands of

ordinary South Africans it spread quickly and gained 150 000- 250 000 members in a short space of time (Bradford, 1988:2). They also admitted women, tried to raise farm worker wages, and engaged in dockworker strikes in East London (Bradford, 1988:5). The influences on the ICU and the later breakaway Independent ICU (IICU) were myriad². Firstly, the Communist Party of South Africa had begun to realise the importance of the agrarian question in South Africa, (Bradford, 1988:2) and Clements Kaladie, the first secretary, who studied Trade Unionism in Britain, started the *Workers Herald* publication in Johannesburg and affiliated the ICU to the International Trade Union of Amsterdam (Hunter, 1961: 567). The ICU definitely had influence in Mpondoland, especially as an idea taken up by people and interpellated into local politics. It mixed with Garveyism, and the Israelite movement (which was an African church movement combining European and African specifically Ethiopian church beliefs) and the more controversial Wellingtonites (Hunter, 1961: 570).

Self-appointed, Wellington Buthelezi, and others took on the aegis of the ICU in Mpondoland, collecting membership fees, ordering people to kill their pigs and preached that the domination of Europeans would end when Garvey arrived in American planes. This swamped a lot of actual ICU activity in the area since people did know not who was an official agent and who was not (Hunter, 1961: 570). These movements themselves were highly infused with the Christian beliefs of the people, and the ICU and the Wellingtonites even took to holding their own Sunday Services (Hunter, 1961: 573). Charles Palwa who led the resistance in the Mbau area, certainly had the backing of the IICU, which had a good following in the area, and it thus became very convenient for chiefs and government to blame the revolt on the ICU and the ANC (Westaway, 1993: 88).

Some like Mbeki have tried to link the word Congo to Khongolosi, or Congress, i.e. the ANC. However, Drew (2011: 70) and Ntsebeza (2011: 26) say there is not enough evidence to support this claim, and in fact it was the broad-based demonstrations in

² For a greater discussion on the influences and spread of the ICU in Southern Africa see Van der Walt, L. 2007. The First Globalisation and Transnational Labour Activism in Southern Africa: White Labourism, the IWW, and the ICU, 1904–1934, in *African Studies*. Vol. 66. No.2-3.

the Transkei that influenced the ANC to take mass action and not the other way around³.

In fact, in the early 1900s already, people began to gather on mountains. Enoch Mgijima, who preached the end of European domination and believed that the day would soon come when Europeans would be swept into the sea and African people would be free, led the Israelite movement, combining African beliefs with Christian ones (Hunter, 1961: 563). Mgijima and the Israelites clashed with police several times in the years between 1918- 1920 after they began to occupy Ntabelanga, a mountain in the Bulhoek district, because he believed that God wanted them to meet there. In May 1920, the police opened fire on people gathered on the mountain, after Europeans began to complain about the ‘squatters’ and their anti-white sentiment, 163 ‘Israelites’ were killed, and 125 were wounded. Mgijima was ex-communicated from the American parent church because of his ‘politics’ (Hunter, 1961: 564).

Almost forty years later, in Mpondoland in the 1960s the mountain comes into focus once again. Leonard Mdingi, one of the organisers of the Mpondo Revolts believed that the hill was a space of peace and blessing by the ancestors where one could discuss matters; they met on Ndlovu Hill (Beinhardt, 2011: 101). The Khongo was said to have branches in Bizana, Lusikisiki, Thonduke, and Dundee and was represented by RM Tutshane at the AAC annual conference in 1948 (Drew, 2011: 70). According to Mbeki, the mountain committee and Ikhongo was indeed the same council, known for their resistance to Bantu Authorities as well as setting up of people’s courts, the boycotting of grave-digging and funerals for immoral leaders and most importantly the diverting of taxes away from the state to a collective fund for the poor (Mbeki, 1964: 134)⁴. When the state set up a commission of inquiry after the massacre at Ngquza Hill, people became even more angered because they had participated in the commission in the hopes that the state would finally hear them and take their grievances seriously (Mbeki, 1963: 122). In many ways, reminiscent of

³ Drew (2011: 70) argues that the ANC in fact had little focus on the rural countryside, and even though Mbeki was committed to rural struggle, the Transkei Organising Body (TOB) in which he was involved later affiliated itself to the All African Convention (AAC) which was itself affiliated to the Non European Unity Movement (NEUM).

⁴ Even though Sitas (2011: 183) claims one interviewee, Qabula, thought of the Congo as a white man’s fabrication there are many who do believe it existed and have testified to this.

imbizos (district meetings with the chief) people attended and presented their concerns, when the demands of people were ignored, they rejected the outcomes of the commission and stopped paying taxes, diverting them instead to the mountain committees and boycotting white traders in Bizana who often doubled as recruiting agents for the mines (Mbeki, 1963: 122).

Again we return to why, if this was an extraordinary story, is it left outside mainstream history? Some believe it is because of the ANC's urban bias, or perhaps because their influence was not strong in the Transkei during that period (Ntsebeza, 2011: 6). Perhaps, it is because they were rooted in the urban elite space, that peasants in the rural areas appeared backward and still beholden to the kind of traditionalism from which they were trying to distance themselves at the time. Or perhaps it was because, as Leonard Mdingi said, never about changing the government but rather it was about having the government listen and respond to its people. He felt that Anderson Ganyile over stressed the influence of the ANC, especially when they had failed to respond to pleas for financial help for legal fees (Beinhardt, 2011: 110). The gulf between the Mpondo rebels and the ANC deepened after that. By 1981 Rowley Arenstein, a Durban based lawyer and activist, who aided the rebels and referred them to the ANC, pulled away from the organisation saying he did not think the ANC took the rebels seriously and spoke down to them despite the scale and depth of their organisation (Beinhardt, 2011: 111).

Thus, it was clear that the rebels were, however influenced, organising by themselves, outside of the nationalist framework that the ANC was using to wage its own battles in the urban centres. It is this 'non-unitary character of politics,' what Guha (1997: xvi) refers to as "the other domain," of history "treated in dominant discourse as of no importance or as altogether non-existent" which Westaway (1993:103) highlights in the discourse on resistance in Western Mpondoland. He argues that while Bundy and Beinhardt are concerned with the "realm of the parochial, every day, spontaneous rural struggles" (Westaway 1993: 106), social historians like Hendricks and De Wet fail to consider the everyday resistance that occurred in western Mpondoland as 'proper' resistance. By privileging only big insurrections and mass forms of actions Hendricks and de Wet are de facto "insisting that resistance has a typical form

(which) results in failure to recognise countless activities as instants of resistance” and simultaneously casting the people of Western Mpondoland as submissive. In fact by discounting these *ordinary weapons of the weak*, history of the peasant revolts takes on exactly that character which James C Scott is warning us against.

Yet, Hendricks continues this line of thought even in his co-authored 2011 article, tellingly entitled *All Quiet on the Western Front: Nyandeni Acquiescence in the Mpondoland Revolt*. Even while he mentions that there was in fact some resistance in Mpondoland, like fence cutting, he diminishes their significance by declaring these were “symbolic resistance – akin to damaging telephone poles and obstructing roads with stones – rather than objections to fences as such” (Hendricks and Peires 2011: 134). What he means by “rather than objections to fences as such” remains extremely unclear since fences were a huge part of betterment policies which people, in Eastern and Western Mpondoland alike, opposed and about which they were not consulted (see Mbeki 1963, Westaway 1993). Fence cutting, in fact, has always been a powerful revolt against enclosure of the commons throughout history. E.P Thompson (1991: 119), describes fence-cutting as being “stubbornly maintained as a lawful assertion of right” in which people revolted against the enclosure of commons to which they felt was a common right to be respected in accordance with custom.

Hendricks and Peires, (2011: 137) later qualify what they mean by saying, “It is apparent therefore, that widespread hostility to Rehabilitation and Bantu Authorities existed in the west as well as the east but was insufficient in itself to trigger a comparable revolt.” This certainly does raise questions around what counts as revolt or resistance and what doesn’t? If we are to take seriously the idea of the subaltern project and its focus on everyday struggles then we must level the critique within this realm.

It is in this domain of the everyday, where we find the letter writing and attempts to seek justice, in what Mbeki (1983: 101) calls a rigged legal system. People spent money to contact lawyers, to seek representation and to be heard even if that meant mobilising through the system. In some ways this worked, sometimes to the benefit of people and in other times not, but there was definitely a two way relation between

state power and rural resistance and the direction and nature of rural resistance impacted directly on the strategies used by the state (Westaway, 1993: 107).

Thus, every 'little' resistance made up the event that we today consider the Mpondo Revolts, which culminated in the violence of 6th June 1960 that could have been avoided if the everyday concerns were taken seriously by the chiefs and the state. It is these attempts to participate in the political and for people to have their voices heard that must also count as part of an attempt to alter an unjust system.

The disciplining of history then, requires a reciprocal 'radical different perspective'. What we witnessed in the Mpondo Revolts was that ultimately no one party, no one group was able to take responsibility for leadership or to substitute itself for the will of the people. It is in this 'other domain,' where popular resistance is framed by moral codes and custom and what Guha (1997: xviii) describes "as idioms derived from the communitarian experience of living and working together." The Mpondo Revolts cannot be seen merely as a revolt against betterment schemes and state policy, since there exists a whole sphere of complex nodes of resistance that coalesce around the dignity of space, the right to be heard and against the enclosure of the commons.

Yet within the attempts to reclaim these narratives from hegemonic elite nationalist discourse, is another sphere of banalisation and silencing which remains to be uncovered, documented and thematised within the discourse of the peasant's revolt.

The *other*, 'Other domain'

'The familiar is not necessarily the known', said Hegel. Let us go farther and say that it is in the most familiar things that the unknown - not the mysterious - is at its richest and that this rich content of life is still beyond our empty darkling consciousness, inhabited as it is by impostors, and gorged with the forms of pure reason, with myths and their illusory poetry.

- Henri Lefebvre,

Critiquing the Everyday, Volume 1

What forms of rich life remain beyond our "empty darkling conscious"? One such is perhaps, the reproduction of life itself and the forms of erasure, which it has

undergone. This can be seen significantly in the work of the mainstream accounts of the Mpondo Revolts. While Ntsebeza and Kepe make apology for the lack of women's voices in their edited volume *Rural Resistance in South Africa: The Mpondo Revolts after Fifty Years*, none of them seem to be interested in incorporating these other histories of marginalised voices into the narrative. With the exception of Ari Sitas in the volume who interviews a woman trade unionist in Natal, the others seem to be fine with apologising for the gap in their literature written with almost 53 years hindsight, while still claiming to be undoing the marginalisation of rural voices.

Mbeki (1963:17) makes the well-known point that voting lines in the 1963 Transkei elections were telling made up of women and elderly people because most of the young men had gone to the mines and secondary industries. Yet he fails to account for the organisation and protection of the commons so evident in Moodie's (1994) accounts of men on the mines resisting proletarianisation and relying on their wives to keep the imizi going in their absence as they sent money home. In fact, the amaMpondo were known to prefer the mines because they had food and accommodation paid for so they could save more money to send home (Moodie, 1994: 106).

Women did not only keep the homesteads going in the absence of fathers, husbands and brothers. Women were also drivers of direct action during the Mpondo revolts. The boycotts organised in Bizana, against white traders in the 1960s, lasted for six months (Beinhardt 2011:106) and as in Marikana shop owners were approached for money to help with food and legal fees. In Bizana, those who did not offer assistance were boycotted. The boycott has often been a very successful mode of resistance in South Africa from the boycotts of red meat and Simba Chips to Colgate during apartheid - often when factory workers went on strike it was matched by a community boycott of the factory product (Naidoo, 2010: 86). Women, the household keepers, are often at the centre of these activities and make decisions about which household good to buy and where to buy them. They are certainly the ones who keep these boycotts alive. They also, through their other subsistence activities keep people alive, and yet there is little acknowledgement of these political decisions taken on a daily basis.

For the last two centuries at the very least, planting and harvesting (before the introduction of ploughs) have always been, what Victor Poto, Paramount Chief of Western Pondoland aptly described as “women’s work” (Hunter, 1961: 74). Usually when a woman joined a family in Mpondoland, whether she was the first, second or third wife, she would be allocated her own plot of land, as was customary. This is the land from which she would cultivate, harvest, and then cook meals for her family, with the help of other women who formed collective working parties during planting and harvesting seasons and eventually her youngest son would inherit her property (Hunter, 1961: 20-25). Cattle (and sheep), which used to be at the heart of agrarian economies were usually looked after and herded by men. Women would have to look after pigs, chickens, goats, fetch water up to three or four times a day, collect firewood, clean the umzi which included re-plastering floors with dung, weed fields, cook and were involved in various arts and craft making (Hunter, 1961: 102 -106). In addition, it is estimated that already by 1929, 46.7% of males over the age of 18 were away from home doing migrant labour (Hunter, 1961: 108). It is this agricultural labour and building of the umzi, to which men contributed wages and little else, which, goes unacknowledged in the literature and in accounts of ‘work’ and resistance. This is evident in Ntsebeza and Kepe’s (2011) book and even in historical accounts of the reserves (see Lacey, 1981), which focus on policy rather than people. Yet, at the heart of the revolts was the protection of the commons and at the root of theorisation about the reserve subsidy is agricultural production, of which women are at the center. Federici (2008: 92), has already problematized the unwaged and devalued nature of this invisible work and how it adds value to the household, yet it becomes more stark in the case of Mpondoland and the Transkei at large because of the demographic of people who performed most of the agricultural labour. Since most men were at the mines, it was women who bore the burden of agricultural production and care work even after men return from the mines (see Roberts, 2009).

While there are detailed analyses of some organisers of Mpondo revolts, like Anderson Ganyile and Leonard Mdingi, no mention is made of any details of people involved in or organisational detail of events like the boycott of cattle dipping, a contentious issue in the reserves at the time of betterment and then stabilisation in 1954. Even though Mdingi clearly states that they joined the cattle dip boycott, which was organised by the women in Ixopo who stoned the dip tanks (Beinhardt, 2011:

100) there remains no detailed account of this in mainstream literature. Later on his chapter, Beinhardt (2011: 104) asks his interviewees about the mountain or hill committees: “Were women allowed to attend? To which Mdingi replies, “No no, no women were there I think this stems from the traditionalist point of view that men will meet and discuss the affairs of the community and women are only told what has been decided upon.” In his analysis, Beinhardt (2011: 104) says, “They missed the irony about lack of consultation.” Yet, Beinhardt seems to miss the irony of his own assertions that women were clearly being silenced and marginalised by men in the mountain committee while interviewing someone who was saying that men were supporting their boycotts and even respecting prayer time in their mountain committees. Furthermore, not only does it ignore tradition and custom as a reason for this exclusion (not asked), it denies that women had other spheres of political activity not shared by men, which does not preclude any communication between them as is clear from the few mentions of women’s involvement. As Mdingi said in his interview, “most people were not Christian but accepted the importance of a prayer: “It was mostly the women who go to church.” This custom is revisited in chapter four, where men and women in Marikana speak about different spheres of political activity for men and women and why only men were allowed to go to the koppie.

Beinhardt’s analysis unfortunately slips into the mode of second wave white feminist discourse. Gasa (2007: 214) speaks specifically to the issue of silencing raised by Beinhardt by first highlighting the inadequacy of feminist scholarship that sees at its core asking questions about or paying careful attention to gender stratification or sexual division of labour in one’s analysis of social relations and hierarchies; secondly she states that the issue has never been about silencing, especially amongst black South African women in the 50s and 60s. Rather during this period, the women were loud and articulate and thus the issue was whether they were being listened to as opposed to whether they were silenced. Saying that the women were absent at the meetings should not be taken as evidence for their silencing, especially since it is clearly the case that they were involved in various activities like boycotts, food organisation, farming and were not being politically silenced rather there is a whole ‘other domain’ of political activity ignored and therefore silenced in the literature. What is described in the historiography as the political activities of the Mpondo Revolt, which I have argued point to a subaltern sphere of politics, still precludes

women from this political realm because their actions are either silenced, banalised or domesticated by their sex.

For instance, Mbeki describes how “Women played an active part in the campaign against Bantu Authorities. They remained at home when men took to the hills, and raised the war cry to mark the arrival of police land rovers. They wore black to show that Pondoland was in mourning. They refrained from any action that might bring strife” (Mbeki, 1964: 125).

Furthermore, in Zeemont in 1951, the women of Dinokama protested when the National Party government tried to depose their chief for not imposing pass laws on the women in that area. When Verwoerd sent Chief Moiloa a letter ordering him to tell his wife to carry a pass, he wrote back saying, “Who the hell is this Verwoerd? I have never heard of him before. Why is the government interfering with other people’s wives?” (Gasa 2007: 226). The point is well made; resistance was never levelled purely on one plane. While it would be impossible to claim that women in the reserves under apartheid enjoyed absolute autonomy, this is also because they were living under a racist repressive regime. Furthermore, woman has never, as a sex, enjoyed absolute autonomy in the history of humankind, not even from her own body, Simone de Beauvoir makes this point extremely well in *The Second Sex*, but she has always made attempts to assert her autonomy.

This implies then, that Beinhardt, and other historians writing at the time were at pains to provide dignity in the way of detail to men of the Mpondo revolts and yet continue to silence women with statements like those. We also know that women were used as casual labour in the reserves and paid substantially less than men and that they, like the men, were required to do unpaid forced labour by assisting in building government infrastructure (Mbeki: 1964: 98, Gibbs, 2010). Yet the added burden of being women meant they were also required to cook for the men who were labouring: there were no provisions and they had to find the food themselves, “even if her own children go without, they (the government) do not care” (Mbeki, 1964: 99).

This is one of the only accounts of women in compulsory labour, yet it also fails to link this to the way in which the government curtailed women’s movements by

introducing passes so they could reserve secretarial and other “women’s jobs” for poor white women (Lacey, 1981: 270). Even when black labour was required in the towns, the single-occupation, males only, mine –compound style housing was so designed to keep the family and wives in the reserves (Lacey 1981: 269), which suited some neo-tribalists just fine.

What is extremely surprisingly is that accounts of a peasant revolts at the center of which are struggles for land and for agrarian production should have so little account of women. Or that “the women” are referred to as a homogenous entity who don’t need the kind of detail or complexity afforded to men who were on the front lines.

It has historically been women who are the agrarian producers of the world. Most anti-systemic struggles have not been fought primarily by industrialised workers but by the rural, indigenous, anti-colonial, anti-apartheid feminist movements of the world (Federici, 2008:92). Anti-apartheid feminist movements here, refers to a broader movement of women who understand the global intersection of race, class and gender politics and the need to struggle against all three forms of domination at the same time. Silvia Federici (2008: 127) says that “women are the subsistence farmers of the planet – they make up the bulk of subsistence but this hard to measure because it is unwaged, unmeasured and often not considered work.” Following Marx, some Marxist historians have sometimes unproblematically taken up the capitalist criteria for what constitutes work (Federici, 2008: 95), yet women’s contributions in the Eastern Cape have always been central to subsistence and keeping families alive. Later, this notion of the commons, which men and women both invest in, which has shifted and evolved over the years will be discussed in further detail. What is significant here however, is that there is evidence that women were involved in political activities and subsistence work during the Mpondo revolts which has remained on the peripheries of history. So much so, that we are unable to fill many of the gaps in the history of women’s organisation during this period.

What is clear from the literature however is that the Mpondo Revolts were organised by ordinary peasants, disciplined, and militant. These struggles were about daily issues in the lives of people: arable land, culling of stock, fencing of land. It was not the surge towards equitable industrialisation by the proletariat trying to capture state

power, it was the defence of the commons, a resistance to proletarianisation. There was no ideology other than the right to be heard and a right to the commons. The centrality of the question of land and the way in which people identified with their land and space is evident in their struggles for it. The Mpondo revolts took the authorities by surprise, none of the chiefs thought that they would ever be burned out of their huts or that traditional councils would be boycotted and money, political faith and hope would be put in the hands of peasant organised mountain committees. It is clear also that these were community collective efforts to ensure the continuation of the way of life that people were used to and the kind of society they wanted to live in. People opposed the tribal authorities system not merely, because they were unhappy about Bantu Authorities, but also because of the lack of consultation, lack of information and lack of consideration of what people wanted. Their participation in meetings and even in the commission after the massacre shows their willingness to be involved in decision-making processes. Yet, their concerns were not taken seriously. The cultural political tools which were used in the Mpondo revolts to assert political claims and to express anger and discomfort were not merely limited to Mpondoland or the Transkei, and made their way to the mines with the young and old men who went back and forth for many years.

This chapter has provided a historical account of the creation of the migrant labour system as a direct result of the Native Land Act and Reserve Policies of the colonial and Apartheid governments. It has highlighted how people resisted betterment, corrupt chief systems, and the apartheid state through a subaltern sphere of politics that is outside of liberal and reductionist Marxist understandings of resistance and struggle. The way in which people resisted proletarianisation does not follow the linear historical trajectories outlined by economic class analysis. It therefore requires an examination beyond economic understandings and an attempt to reveal the internal logic of culture and custom of Mpondoland that informed the subaltern political sphere of action. This is revealed through re-visiting past and recent historiography. It also, however, pointed to a gap, even in recent attempts, to give voice to a silenced history of peasant revolts in which the work, resistance, and contributions to struggle by women are missing from the historiography. This lack of knowledge does not allow us to gain a fuller picture of all kinds of political organisation and activity that was occurring in Mpondoland and how the struggles of

men and women, sometimes separate, sustained each other. The rich historiography that does exist on the Mpondo Revolts however, allows us to make certain links between this mode of politics and the mode of politics present on the mines during the years before unionisation and then after the breakdown of the NUM at Lonmin in 2012. This will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Mpondo Men on the Mines: Mmereko for Tiro

The last chapter discussed some of the cultural political tools peasants used during the Mpondo Revolts in the 1960s, which reveal a hidden history of a subaltern sphere of politics that is excluded from elite nationalist historiography, and which focuses largely on urban-centric modernist narratives of resistance. It also highlighted the way in which recent attempts at making this sphere of political resistance visible exposes a gender – biased historiography where women’s contributions to resistance and political life in the South African rural countryside still, remain muted. Further, it pointed to a long history of migrant labour between the former Transkei, particularly Mpondoland, to the South African gold and later platinum mines.

This chapter performs three functions. Firstly, it further explores the notion of silencing within nationalist historiography by examining the historiography of worker organisation by several South African labour historians. It offers a critique of some labour history that relies on nationalist modernist - trade union narrative to write a history of mineworkers’ political organisation and activity on the mines. It argues that apart from a brief period of unionisation in 1946 the NUM only arrived on South African mines in 1984, consequently the space between these periods cannot be a political vacuum which is filled purely by a national liberation narrative, particularly because migrant labourers mostly came from rural areas. What becomes clearer as one reads the history of labour in South Africa is that the emphasis on nationalism, trade unionism and the state seem to be transposed onto the history of earlier periods of worker organisation in the country. This labour historiography does not acknowledge or include the cultural, social, and political influences of the context from which migrant labourers come. It therefore imposes purely modernist and economic frameworks onto a period where formal trade unionism is absent. Secondly, it analyses the influence of culture and custom on the political organisation of workers and considers what space there exists in the literature for this kind of analysis. Lastly, it points to a return to cultural and subaltern forms of political organisation and political expression on the mines during the 2012 strikes across the platinum belt and particularly in Marikana, given the failure of the NUM and workers’ loss of faith in the union.

The Limitations of a Modernist and Nationalist Reading of South African Labour History

Since there is a clear gap between the brief establishment of the African Mineworkers Union (AMWU) in 1946 and the arrival of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in 1982 worker resistance cannot be attributed to trade unionism or the national liberation struggle alone. It is true that union politics came to reflect national politics in the country after the 1970s: the 1973 Durban Strikes were the beginning of an attempt to form a mass-based political union that soon aligned itself with national liberation movements. It must be stressed though that the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) only came to the mines in the early 1980s. Mining companies, like Anglo and De Beers, which had previously rejected the idea of black unionisation, began to allow union organising as part of broader re-structuring of worker controls in preparation for the coming post-apartheid political order.

The years from 1948 to 1982 are thus usually filled with a nationalist narrative of struggle, as if there were a political void on the mines between the two periods where poor uneducated black mineworkers were waiting to once again become unionised and therefore politicised. If the history between these two periods is re-read, then a different perspective begins to emerge, where mineworkers were practicing more organic and horizontal forms of democracy by employing the cultural political tools from home to the new political and social context in which they found themselves. It is here that we can once again locate the subaltern sphere of politics in the history of amaMpondo people.

Aside from the African Mineworkers Union (AMWU) in the early to mid-1940s, African workers were not allowed membership to any unions between these two periods (see Moodie, 1994, Van der Walt, 2007, Buhlungu, 2009). For many labour historians, who rely on unionism as the basis for worker action and progress, the history of the labour movement then focuses on these two periods, and there is usually a lull between them. Dunbar Moodie (2007: 164) makes this point well in his review of the three-volumes of *A History of Black Mineworkers in South Africa*, commissioned by the NUM and written by Vic Allen, which remains a foundational

text on labour history because of the lack of a comprehensive history of the NUM and mineworkers more generally:

If one insists, as Allen seems to, that organized worker resistance can be expressed only through a union, one ends up unable adequately to explain the 1922 strike and is left to scramble around for every little tidbit one can find to exaggerate the importance of the AMWU in 1946. The second volume deals with the "interregnum" between 1948 and 1982. There were no unions on the mines during this period, so Allen takes a detour into more general South African history, dealing especially with the rise of independent unions and the Soweto student uprising, to move his reader from the 1946 strike on the mines to the establishment of the NUM in 1982.

Furthermore Moodie (2007: 163) critiques Allen's reliance on purely structural understandings of mineworkers' lives, even after having done extensive research with NUM ordained access to informants, which meant in Moodie's own words that "the significance of the life histories of his informants was lost on him; to ask the right questions, one needs to know the specificities of events." Thus, the daily struggles of people in the compounds and the social and cultural contexts of their lives outside of it "are reduced to "the monotonous uniformity" of miners' lives "over the last 90 years," (Moodie, 2007: 163). This methodology endures until today.

One example of over emphasising structural analysis and the national narrative can be seen in the work of Sakhela Buhlungu. In his article, *The Rise and Decline of the Democratic Organisational Culture in the South African Labour Movement, 1973-2000*, Buhlungu (2009) argues that the democratic culture or what he calls union democracy was born out of the 1970s moment, in which black consciousness and the 1973 Durban strikes played a huge part in influencing trade union culture and practice. For him this was modelled on notions of union democracy in Britain and the United States but took its shape from the experience of black trade unions from 1900s to the 1970s (Buhlungu, 2009: 91). Thus union democracy formed part of the political and ideological counterculture of the broader liberation movement, which "sought to demonstrate the movements' moral and political superiority over racial discrimination and apartheid by operating in a democratic fashion" (Buhlungu, 2009: 91). He

attributes the rise of this kind of union democracy to apartheid state repression, which had crushed AMWU and other trade unions before, making it extremely difficult for militant mobilisation within black trade unions. Consequently, “It was within this context that a democratic culture or union democracy became useful. Union activists learned that a union that relied on a few charismatic leaders was more vulnerable than one with layers of active members and democratically elected leaders” (Buhlungu, 2009: 94) which later led to the concept of worker-control fiercely defended in the unions till today. There is no attempt to show that this was already the praxis of democracy by migrant labourers before the arrival of the NUM or formal unionisation, since a having a few leaders was often a dangerous practice and made it easier for management to identify and intimidate workers.

While Buhlungu (2009:107/108), in the last two pages of the article, mentions that these democratic practices cannot be considered outside of the cultural and traditional milieu in which they took root, there is no mention by what is meant by this cultural milieu and furthermore there is no attempt to understand the period of organisation between the 1940s and 1970s, where there were a great many battles being fought on the mines daily, before and after the arrival of unions. Buhlungu, in an entirely modernist argument, assumes that democracy only comes out of the Durban moment and not pre-colonial practices, even though as the last chapter has shown, there is a large body of evidence for the various democratic practices amongst rural amaMpondo people and the subaltern sphere of politics which this occupied.

In the last chapter also, the influence of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) was briefly discussed, but it is important to return to this history because in many ways it offers us something outside of the nationalist labour history presented by many and it is often seen as the root of black trade unionism in South Africa. Lucien Van der Walt (2007), reiterates that we cannot take the state as the sole analytical tool when speaking about labour history in South and Southern Africa, because of the transnational character of this labour history which “played a critical role in shaping working-class movements, which straddled borders and formed sections across the region and beyond it” and because “ideological, ethnic and racial divides within the working class across southern Africa played a more important role in constituting divisions than state borders.” Van der Walt (2007) discusses the way

the ICU spread throughout the Southern African region from South Africa to what is now Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, in which migrant workers and educated elites set up branches of the ICU in various ports and carried news between Kaladie in South Africa, himself born in Nyasaland (Malawi) and educated in mission schools, and other organisers. Furthermore, global influences like Garveyism, the International Workers of the World (IWW) and International Socialist League (ISL), which also had some influence on the culture of the trade union, ran almost counter to the politics of white labourism. White labourism, which arrived with white workers from Australia and soon had a local South African practice combining labourite parliamentary socialism with a commitment to white supremacy soon spread from South Africa northwards to other white workers in Mozambique, Northern and Southern Rhodesia, the Congo and South West Africa (Namibia) (Van der Walt, 2007: 228).

What Van der Walt illustrates is that although European models of trade unionism influenced the ICU, as with trade unions in the 70's and 80's (see Buhlungu, 2009), there was a confluence of transnational actors, influences and politics that came together and made up the history of the ICU, which cannot be patterned along state borders, especially because these borders were often not present at the time. Accordingly, he describes the movement and culture of the ICU by the "human rivers of labour flowing within the sub-continent (which) profoundly shaped the spread of the ICU northwards from South Africa and gave it an additional element of transnationalism" (Van der Walt, 2007: 240). Yet, even in some narratives of the ICU, the stress on its 'transnational' nature does not leave space for a discussion about the way in which the union was no doubt infused with the cultural traditions of the people who constituted it.

While it is impossible to attribute the trade union movement and labour history in South Africa to one element, as can be gleaned from the discussion above, what is clear is that the discussions around labour movements today fail to adequately consider the various influences on the ICU and further, what happened when unions like ICU and AMWU came to a quick end. It appears that structural analysis alone cannot offer us a comprehensive history about the origins of union democracy or

worker-control and attributing it to national liberation narratives or modernist theory seems to be inadequate a framework of understanding.

As a result, reducing this history to an elite nationalist dialectic does two things: firstly, it creates a modernist narrative that is shaped by economic understandings of progress and organisation; secondly and consequently, it creates a masculinist historiography in which gender is attributed purely to culture and not, also, as a constituent part of the project of nationalism itself.

For example, in another article entitled: *Union Solidarity Under Stress: The Case of the National Union of Mineworkers in South Africa*, Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout (2008: 267-268) trace the way the NUM's politics shifted from Black Consciousness, of which Cyril Ramaphosa was a follower to the more congressional and charterist politics of Elijah Barayi during its integration into the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985. This shift also heralded the NUM and COSATU's close alliance with ANC politics and the national liberation struggle and a shift from worker-control to a more centralised and leadership based union politics (Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu (2008: 268).

While they outline the problems inherent in this shift, as well as the changing nature of union politics after 1994, 'gender' which "remains a blind-spot' in the union, is attributed to the way in which NUM's members "traditionally drew on a masculine sense of pride for their solidarity" (Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu, 2008: 279). While masculinity and gender will be discussed later, it is also important to note there was not an uncontested tradition of masculinity within the trade union movement in South Africa⁵.

⁵ In her article, *Generations of Struggle: Trade Unions and the Roots of Feminism*, Iris Berger traces the feminist tradition present in the unions in the 1980s to its roots in militant family histories and women who were doing and saying the same in the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union in the 1930s. When the ICU started to admit and focus on drawing more women into the union. It was through the militancy of Charlotte Maxeke and others, that the ICU was pushed to take gender equality more seriously within the union (Berger, 2008: 187), which had a fair membership of female workers. This was a period in which African women; leaving the rural areas and entering the towns to eek out their own living were not willing to be passive in the face of state repression.

The masculinity inherent in trade union politics today, which will be re-visited later, takes a particular form especially after the 1970s in South African society and the arrival of young proletarianised youth on the mines. Perhaps it would be more apt to discuss the issue of masculinity and the challenges it poses for women on the mines today by more closely examining the shift in politics in South Africa after the 1970s and the masculine form which nationalism often takes. Moodie (1994) discusses at length the different forms masculinity took on the male-dominated mines up to the 1970s and how this was based on men who were investing in their rural homesteads, which they would return to when their contracts on the mine had ended.

So while one there is obviously a need to read labour history in the context of the socio-political context at the time, the national narrative has its limitations, and it fails to offer enough explanation as to the culture of worker organisation in the long periods before unionisation. It is here that we must return to the cultural political tools and the subaltern sphere of politics that existed amongst amaMpondo on the mines before the arrival of the NUM in 1982.

The Cultural, Social, and Political Setting on South African Mines before the NUM

Mbeki (1964), Moodie (1994) and Hendricks (2011) describe amaMpondo people as historically proud and loyal to (legitimate) authority. On the mines in the Witwatersrand, the compounds were ethnically divided and the system of management paralleled that of the Bantustan. It is important to note that the continuities between ethnically segregated reserves and ethnically segregated compounds on the mines allow us to make very clear observations about this period, this becomes far more fluid and nuanced after the 1970s. Many of the people who came from Mpondoland lived together and shared news from home and it was amaMpondo men from the Transkei, who were the known as the rock drillers.

The power structure the men arrived to on the mines was hierarchal. The ethnically segregated single-sex male compounds were made up of several rooms, (some of which housed up to and more than 16 men in a room). The room official, or *isibonga*,

was an elected representative, usually an older and wiser person chosen by the occupants of the room. He would counsel people and take their grievances to the *induna*, this also paralleled systems of patronage in the hierarchy of chiefs who surrounded themselves with *amaphakati*, councillors without whom the chief would usually not take decisions (Hunter, 1961: 394). The *induna* was a mine official and there was one *induna* per every ethnic group who had their own black ‘police boys’ who helped maintain “law and order.” It was the *induna* who reported to the compound manager and the compound managers were then accountable to the mine manager (Moodie, 1994: 108).

Before the re-structuring of the mines in the 1980s and the arrival of the NUM, most mines in South Africa functioned according to what Moodie, following E.P. Thompson, describes as ‘the moral economy.’ Moodie (1994: 86) defines moral economy as “encompassing mutually acceptable rules for resistance within systems of domination and appropriation.” Mineworkers expected certain things from mine officials and in return, mine officials came to expect less disruption, violence, or strikes from workers. Some of these were: wages comparable to other mines, a decent quality of food, fair adjudication of disputes, equal treatment for each ‘tribal category’ of workers, and informal rules which involved “a considerable measure of latitude in allowing workers private lives of their own in regard to matters such as homosexuality, beer brewing, hospitality for visiting friends, dagga smoking and other “forbidden practices”” (Moodie, 1994: 86). These informal rules, known as the mine ‘imiteto’ were in practice into the 1980s and only began to change in the late ‘70s and then slowly transformed with the introduction of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) in the 1980s. The imiteto consisted of three interlinked levels, 1) formal rules and regulations; 2) the unwritten but well-established rules by supervisors underground (moral economy of the mine) and 3) those less well established informal customs among workers which made up migrant cultures (Moodie, 1994: 84). The moral economy was not practiced in a cultural vacuum, and the experience of the mineworkers, which they brought with them to the mines, provided the collective power to enforce it by the internal relations of workers. Such mobilisation was not spontaneous but emerged from established social networks (Moodie, 1994: 96). These established social networks relied on a sense of cultural pride and organisation, something that remains outside of most labour historiography.

AmaMpondo people were a powerful group even on the mines, and the only group who had adopted their youth organisations to mine life (*iindlavini, amaqaba, amanene*)⁶ and they were not afraid to fight for their honour which meant that complaints by them were taken more seriously on the mine by management. In fact amaMpondo people quickly gained a reputation on the mines for being troublemakers because of their pride – “they fought so they are not looked down upon. They are also seen to be physically stronger” and they became the high-paid rock drillers because of this reputation (Moodie, 1994: 184). It would be rock drillers (RDOs), many from the former Mpondoland, who would start the strike at Lonmin in 2012.

One of the main functions of migrant cultures on the mines was commitment to the independence and satisfaction of patriarchal proprietorship over a rural homestead. Home-networks were sustained so that mineworkers could return to their rural lives one day, which represented ownership and building of a long-term creative project (Tiro) with their wives in the imizi (Moodie, 1994: 20-23). In the 1940’s about 45% of amaMpondo mineworkers from Lusikisiki were deferring their pay in full and perhaps 60 – 70% of their pay was repatriated (Moodie, 1994: 33). The tension with the individual unfulfilling life which is merely represented as a means to an end (Mmereko), is representative of a resistance to proletarianisation and a “practical integrity that not only is inconceivable outside of social existence but also lived out courageously within” (Moodie, 1994: 23).

Reproductive – Work and ‘Traditional’ Masculinity

The joint project of men on the mines sending money home was not merely an investment in their future homesteads but also the recognition of the care-work their wives would have to perform when they were sent home or when their contracts came to an end. While it is true that the introduction of shack settlements and women on the mines has changed the spatial setting of the mines, many amaMpondo men (young and old) still return to their rural homes when they leave the mines. They depend on having a rural home to return to and the care-work of wives when their mining

⁶For discussion on migrant cultures see Moodie, 1994: 22- 23, 34.

contracts end because most of them are discarded and sent back home without any retirement or compensation packages even when they are ill. For mineworkers, the mines are merely a means to an end that enables them to make their part of the contribution to the homestead and to ensure they will be cared for when they return.

In her report on Silicosis amongst former miners in the Eastern Cape, Jaine Roberts (2009), gives a devastating account of ex-miners' lack of access to healthcare and information on respiratory diseases in relation to dust prevalent in the mining industry. Only 2 out of 205 former mineworkers had gained any knowledge of ODMWA (Occupational Diseases in Mines and Works Act 78 of 1973 as Amended) while in mine service, which meant none of them were informed about the possibility of compensation for respiratory disease or medical check-ups. From the 205 men who had returned from the mines with symptoms of respiratory illness, Roberts (2009:67) reports 98% had been married, 83.9% were still married, 10.2% were widowed, and 3.9% were divorced with only 1.9% single. Most of the men reported that their health had deteriorated so badly by the time they returned home from the mines, that their wives had to take care of them, find food and prepare it for the family in addition to taking care of children (Roberts, 2009: 67, 104). 92.8% of her sample reported that, despite the efforts of wives, they experienced hunger and periods of not having food monthly with no compensation or medical care from the mines (Roberts, 2009: 129). The care work provided by women in rural areas to young children and then to sick ex-miners who have returned home is compounded by the lack of access to good healthcare or compensation by the mines. Roberts (2009: 85/86) also suggests rock-drillers are most susceptible to silicosis because of their proximity to dust, as one interviewee put it, "They sent the older group home in exchange for strong active people, they sent us home, and that was it."

Mine-work has profoundly shaped the life experience, expectation and health of people in the Transkei and often the sick and discarded men, sent back home to the rural areas are easily forgotten despite the daily contribution they make to the economy of the country. In an article titled, *Suicide amongst former mineworkers in the sub region of the Transkei*, Banwari Meel (2003), tracks stories of returned mineworkers, sent home from the mines, unable to find other work because of their health and relying on their wives for support. Meel (2003:88) raises the point that

there has been no comprehensive study done on mental illness or suicide amongst former black mineworkers. In the five case studies that she presents, the suicides amongst former mineworkers, and in one case a child of a former mineworker, are directly linked to how working in the mines has shaped the life trajectories of people in this area. The ex-mineworkers, unable to cope with the reality of life at home, commit suicide. Accordingly the focus on the household, or building the *umzi*, as the centre of reproduction was definitely seen as a project in which both men and women would have to contribute, the men by working on the mines and sending money home, and the women by sustaining the homestead and caring for them when they returned. Often the joint nature of the project of building a homestead is missed by labour historians who only stress economic and political organisation and fail to see or acknowledge how traditional, cultural and social context plays a larger role in a collective decision making process.

For instance, the form of masculinity prevalent in trade unions today, is somewhat different from what 'manhood' represented before the 1980s. The latter was rooted in "presiding justly over a homestead and not in 'warrior' syndrome", much to Moodie's (1994: 38) surprise. In fact, many of the older men interviewed in 1988 spoke of their wives in rural homesteads, as having 'ubudoda' (manhood) which was linked to the men's moral definition of manhood rather than being biologically determined. They explained women could have attributes of 'ubudoda' especially when men were away from the homestead and they had to take on those roles (Moodie: 1994: 38). Often the kind of work that is being performed reflects a certain gender role that isn't always tied to sex. In the same interviews which Moodie (1994: 39) conducted, none of the men agreed that a man could have womanhood, except in a metaphorical sense that implied cowardice, although he never probed them as to what this meant for younger men in mine marriages.

Mine marriages, also known as *Nxontshana* marriages, also signify the difference between the older generation of migrant mineworkers and the younger more proletarianised youth that would come to the mines later and are part of understanding how gender functioned differently at the mines, where roles which would usually be ascribed to women were performed by younger men. It also highlights the recognition

of reproductive labour as care-work and the assumption that the one who performs it would need to be compensated in other ways, mostly through material goods.

These mine marriages which were part of the mine *imiteto* and often functioned according to seniority, the older men, especially the *izinduna* would have their pick of the young men who came to the mines, whom they took as wives. These younger men would perform 'wifely duties' like sewing, or housekeeping and cooking, and the older men took 'care of them providing money, clothes, alcohol and gifts, they would also engage in 'ukumetsha' or 'thigh-sex.' (Moodie, 1994: 122). Although mine marriages helped in resisting the 'temptation' of town women and the danger of becoming *amatshipa*, then going home to die in poverty and humiliation, one could save one's money to invest in the home as well as stay "faithful in a system in which their future lies in what can be built up at home by their wives" (Moodie, 1994: 141). In fact, as Moodie (1994: 141) discovered through his interviews with mineworkers, even those who took town lovers usually tried to retain their rural links.

Mine marriages were very much a part of the structure of the mines and migrant culture, although not everyone took mine wives, it was not a practice that was looked down upon, until the arrival of more proletarianised and urban -politicised youth in the 1970s who saw mine-marriages and 'thigh-sex' as old-fashioned. For them, masculinity represented 'manhood' not defined through a joint-project of building a rural home, but to seize the opportunities to earn higher wages, live in better conditions and to create a new world for themselves. Before this, like in the reserves, people used their systems of patronage to extract whatever benefits they could from the system, which they found themselves in, wanting to merely make enough money to send home and eventually leave the mines. For many this is still the goal.

The Political Organisation of amaMpondo Men on the Mines

According to Moodie (1994: 194), amaMpondo men had a wider circle of trust and solidarity than did home-friend networks amongst other groups. Although the ethnic assertiveness grounded in their firm networks on the mines gave them a reputation, especially when faction fights broke out, the other accounts of Mpondo pride and loyalty to authority makes one wonder whether the illegitimacy of the mine

management system is perhaps what made amaMpondo more violent than they were back home, especially given the moral outrage at Botha Sigcau's Chieftaincy and the way in which Dunbar Moodie describes the moral economy on the mines.

Moodie (1994: 86/87) explains that in many instances compromise had to be reached through speaking and engaging directly with management when interventions at *induna* or *isibonga* level failed. Outside of any formal unionisation, it is evident then that mineworkers turned to other forms of organisation outside of the trade union tradition and fused cultural forms of political organisation with the new space in which they now found themselves at the mines. It is here that we can locate various continuities with the subaltern sphere of politics taking place before and during the Mpondo revolts and the way in which these political tools were carried over to the mines when Mpondo migrant labourers had to deal with conflicts in the work place.

Moodie (1994: 88) outlines the way in which collective action was frequently used against injustice at the compounds, even though protests sometimes turned violent "such violence was generally directed against mine property that represented the source of the grievance" and compound manager feared the wrath of the mine manager if workers were not kept happy (Moodie, 1994: 89).

Yet, before 1973, violence was rare and Moodie (1994: 92) remarks that even though there were thousands of mineworkers present in the compounds over many years, "gold miners were remarkably disciplined in expressing grievances and turned to violence against management only when representation by other means failed." Moodie's accounts of worker action echo some accounts of the Mpondo Revolts where people as Mbeki noted, remained extremely disciplined and adhered to a plan of action that was collectively discussed and decided upon. He outlines the way in which the police were always ready to intervene on behalf of the mines, and on 19 July, 1928, in a classic case on Van Ryn Deep, mostly isiXhosa-speaking workers bypassed the compound manager, *indunas*, black mine police and gathered on the lawn to approach the general manager himself. They wanted to speak to the manager only and refused to leave until he appeared. Only one person was arrested, even after they retreated to the bushes and got sticks and stones and threw them at the police.

The ONE person arrested was sentenced to three months hard labour (Moodie, 1994: 90, my emphasis).

Again in June 1974 at Harmony Mine workers complained about wages being increased on the other mines but not theirs. The Chamber of Mines met hastily in Johannesburg and implemented increases immediately. Wages had been unequally rising and this immediately brought wages into contention along moral economy lines (Moodie, 1994: 244). Eight years later, in 1982, when wage increases on Gold Fields and Gencor mines were only half as much as Anglo American mines, almost all the mines controlled by the former erupted in violence (Moodie, 1994: 244). Thus Moodie (1994: 244) concludes “Although we have few details about how Gold Fields and Gencor mines organised in 1982, worker behaviour made it clear that differences between wage increases amended by the different mining houses were at the heart of the action, once again the moral outrage at the inequities between these mines had inspired militant protest demonstrations”.

The tradition of meeting on the mountain was definitely carried over to the mines and it is a thread that seems to run through the history of mineworker revolts until today. In the early years before the arrival of the NUM and then even after unionisation, people would go to the mountain in difficult times to discuss work matters and the way forward, or to show their discontent. In 1973, 200 machine drillers at Western Deep Mine refused to go underground and wanted to meet with management, they went to the hill to discuss, when they came down they had decided to try to stop the nightshift, the mine police opened fire on them killing 12 people and wounding 28 (Moodie, 1994: 246).

What are the possibilities for understanding the way in which workers organised before the entrance of the NUM on the mines? Perhaps a starting point is the striking continuity between practices of collective action and the demand to be heard directly by the authorities. People in Mpondoland and workers on the mines placed great significance on appearing in person to meetings and to address gatherings, they were often suspicious of people who brought letters, not only because many were illiterate but because voting was not the favoured mode of democracy in large meetings (Beinhardt, 2011: 105). This is again reminiscent of the importance placed on imbizos

(mass district meetings) in Mpondoland where, ‘consultation,’ “means discussion until some measure of agreement is reached. In accordance with custom in law courts and traditional meetings no vote is taken, rather the matter is thrashed out until some compromise is reached (Hunter, 1961: 26). This was characterised by the proverb, *Isaala kutyelwa siva ngolophu*, which meant, “He who refuses to take advice hears by a hot wind” (Hunter, 1961: 26).

When electing leaders on the mines it was consensus that was stressed, often people would talk for hours until they agreed on a leader, if there were two favourites and no-one could decide on one often a third candidate whom everyone agreed on was chosen to avoid factions (Moodie, 1994: 260). This seems somewhat in contrast to Buhlungu’s (2009: 92) claim that most commentators on union democracy have tended to stress ‘formal’ aspects like elections and attendance at meetings, rather than more ‘substantive’ aspects. For him, “this preoccupation with formal aspects of union democracy fails to comment on the growing instrumental orientation of current practices of union democracy, namely, that union activities more generally tend to focus more narrowly on collective bargaining” (Buhlungu, 2009: 92). Yet the evidence which Moodie (1994) provides is that the stress on meeting attendance and elections (with democratic consensus not voting) presented organic forms of democracy which amaMpondo miners were already accustomed to from home. This more organic and horizontal praxis of democracy occurs in a subaltern sphere of politics which is missed by modernist interpretations of worker action because it takes place in a different form from what Guha describes as the “official domain.” Recognising these different forms not only allows for an understanding of how they function to deepen democracy but also provides a critique of the kinds of labour historiography which assumes that mineworkers were unpoliticised and inactive during the period between 1946 and 1982. Or further, that they were introduced to democratic practices and ideas of worker control exclusively through the unions.

What started in rural Mpondoland was carried over to the mines in a different form yet consensus was the dominant mode of interaction. Often when people felt their grievances were not taken seriously by the induna, whom they felt was already illegitimate because he was not popularly elected, they would inform their isibonga (Moodie: 1994: 88). People would gather, sometimes in thousands, outside the

compound managers office, sit, and wait until he noticed and sent someone to talk to them and hear their grievances. This usually happened quite promptly since compound managers dreaded such meetings because they would bear the wrath of the mine manager if workers were unhappy or not at work (Moodie: 1994: 89). Like the chiefs in the Mpondo revolts, the manager would have to come and speak to them as an equal within the bounds of the moral economy. Often the isibonga would be the spokesperson, they avoided choosing leaders and would rather have someone air the grievances of the group. In this way, what was most important to the workers, like the peasants in the revolt, was to be listened to.

Once again, this contrasts with the picture Buhlungu (2009) paints in which union democracy gains momentum and popularity in the 1970s, because of state repression. In fact the appearance of the five madodas on the koppie at Marikana once again proves not merely the lack of faith in leadership, but also the need to have representatives of the people and not decision makers on behalf of the people as well as continuity with the politics of the moral economy rather than union democracy. It was also a way of protecting themselves against management who may victimise leaders of a strike. This moral economy is also evidenced by the way in which chiefs were expected to provide their subjects with land and protection in return for work and allegiance, which was in no way uncontested if chiefs were seen to be neglecting their end of the bargain (see Hunter, 1961, Guy, 2013, Mayer and Mayer, 1961).

This collective memory is not exclusive to migrant labourers at the mines, many amaMpondo who left home after the revolts remember them, through personal experience or oral history as being a definitive moment in their political education. Ari Sitas (2011: 180) recounts interviews with former Transkeians who were now migrant labourers in Natal who felt that what was significant was not the material defeat of the Mpondo Revolts but the gain of pride in themselves. In fact, fellow non-Mpondo workers said that they “were stubborn in their hope for freedom” and “shared a common trauma based on the brutality of “the experience” which later influenced their engagement in trade unions and union organising (Sitas, 2011: 180). The amaMpondo came to dominate mine politics because of their strong organisational abilities and home-networks, but more importantly because of the compound system, which made organising easier since people from the same ethnic groups lived

together. Although there is also strong evidence that people also organised on the basis of their work teams which were often made up by people who were from different ethnic groups (see Moodie 1994).

In many ways, the spatial organisation of the compounds lent itself to increased accessibility between workers, who were able to meet and organise with greater ease, even though the conditions mineworkers lived in were appalling. Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout (2012: 245) speak about the various regimes of control, which acted on the bodies of mineworkers as they left one node of spatial control, in the reserves, and moved into the compounds on the mines. In effect the compounds, situated close to the mines to enable drawing a large number of men into the mines at any given time, were complemented by the apartheid geography of spatial control: black people were forbidden in the white towns, and mine police, which often got support from the apartheid state police bolstered control of the work force and violently crushed any kind of protest (Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout, 2012: 245). Yet the way in which these spaces of control were used to organise and to meet, was something that the NUM capitalised on when they eventually came to the mines in the 1980s and tackled the indignity of the small, squashed and over-crowded compounds (Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout, 2010: 248). In some ways the policy of ethnically segregated compound systems as well as the home-friend networks also laid the foundations for the bitter faction –fighting that would rock the mines during the ‘70s and ‘80s (Moodie, 1994: 82). This would eventually force mining companies to de-segregate the compounds and allow the NUM to unionise workers and restructure the ‘tribal’ system on the mines. Although this system was extremely flawed in many ways, it was also what facilitated the retention of migrant cultures and political tradition for that period of time, making it easier for amaMpondo to respond to issues of living conditions in a collective way.

The Changing Moral Economy and the deterioration of the NUM

There is no doubt that the Mpondo revolts had some influence on migrant labourers who were coming and going through Mpondoland during those years, and continued to work on the mines for many years after. The nature of the relation of miners to mine management through the moral economy may have had a substantial amount to

do with the idea of *mmereko* and *tiro*, something that later generations were less tied to as they became more isolated from rural land and embarked on new struggles for access to urban land and belonging.

The 1973 gold price hike reformed things dramatically. The politics and changing South African economy in the latter part of the 1970s brought a new kind of worker to the mines, there was a shift on the mines from a largely illiterate peasant workforce (with its migrant cultures) to one that now included numerous better-educated proletarian if still migrant workers (Moodie, 1994: 4). The NUM relied on interpersonal networks to spread the word, sign up members and to work at building union structures at the workplace. The re-structuring that took place in the 1980s as part of a broader-restructuring of the South African economy and labour practices in preparation for the end of apartheid, meant the end of the *induna* system, and the beginning of union shaft stewards (see Moodie 1994, Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout, 2008). In fact, all black workers had respect for the ‘representative’ aspect of the unions and for their work in combatting unfair dismissals and what they viewed as ‘more equitable *imiteto*’ on the mines (Moodie, 1994: 258). There were several continuities between the ways in which people had organised previously and union organising. Often decisions taken at meetings were binding whether one was present or not, the meaning of elections was still consensus: even if one did not raise objections in the meetings one was subject to the outcomes. Thus, “in such a conception, a compromise that accommodates the minority is much preferable to reliance on a bare majority” and open discussion was less about bringing matters to a vote than negotiating a concern (Moodie, 1994: 262).

The introduction of young people with revolutionary and perhaps in their view more ‘modern’ ideas, the eroding old moral economy of the mines and the introduction of the National Union of Mineworkers had profound effects on the mines, even though some still carried their memories of the Mpondo revolts with them into the trade unions, there were varying responses to the new power configurations. What is clear is that the NUM only appeared on the mines after the 1980s, and before this men relied on their own custom, a subaltern sphere of politics, which made unionisation appear threatening, especially to traditionalists, when the old moral economy began to change albeit very slowly. Even as more educated proletarianised youth came to the

mines from urban townships in South Africa and Zimbabwe, less tolerant of bad conditions because they did not have land to go back to, they still had to reckon with the old moral economy preferred by the older mineworkers who had already been there on several contracts (Moodie, 1994: 242).

The moral economy soon expanded to include wage disputes, after the gold price hike (Moodie, 1994: 244). The response to uneven rising wages in the mining industry, an issue that was raised by the younger proletarianised men, was incorporated into the old moral economy and the NUM began to organise workers into the unions. In many ways this organisation was eased through the labour law reforms introduced by the apartheid state in the 1980s (Buhlungu, 2009: 98).

There is little space for a comprehensive retelling of the establishment of the NUM but there are various sources available (see Allen, 2003, Buhlungu, 2010, 2009, Moodie 2010). What is clear from the trajectory of the NUM in recent years is that the vigour, consciousness and energy which encapsulated the arrival of the “Organise or Die” giant, has waned and mineworkers are once again returning to direct meetings, democratic consensus and “equitable imiteto.” At Lonmin in 2012, the rock drill operators’ (RDOs’) first attempt to speak to management, bypass union channels and present themselves in the tradition of the old moral economy was precisely because one shaft had received a wage increase and Karee Mine had not. They were denied an audience and after many attempts at a meeting with both their union and mine management, they returned to yet another custom, they gathered on a little koppie which sits behind the Nkaneng shack settlement, which they call ‘the mountain.’

Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout, Eddie Webster, Karl Van Holdt, Dunbar Moodie as well as other academics at the Society Work and Development Institute (SWOP) have done extensive research on the NUM and labour movements in South Africa, and there is general agreement that organising workers into a union on the South African mines in the 1980s was no easy task. However, Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout (2008), point to a general trend in the trade union movement which follows the argument made by Buhlungu (2010) in his book *A Paradox of Victory: COSATU and the Democratic Transition in South Africa* that COSATU’s loss of organisational power is largely due to membership growth over the last two decades which has changed the

face of the union from a working class site of struggle and worker power to a middle class union. It now encompasses a whole range of professional white collar workers including teachers, lawyers, accountants etc. all of whom form part of the same union now in which the increasingly hierarchical relations of leadership positions has served to bureaucratise the union further (Buhlungu, 2010: 120). In addition the expanded political and representational role of COSATU in the context of the new democracy and the opening up of the South African economy to global markets have had a further negative effect on union organisations particularly in the workplace (Buhlungu, 2010: 161). For Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout (2008: 284) “the NUM mirrors all the achievements, setbacks, and problems facing the other unions from the militant tradition of unionism that is represented in COSATU. This changing union landscape offers new challenges, which according to Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout (2008: 283/4) include the introduction of women on the mines and upward mobility. The latter points to the increasing distance between paid shaft stewards from mineworkers: shaft stewards become alienated from their membership base and take on the role of businessmen which has led to a decline in the practice of consultation with members and more unilateral decision making.

Furthermore, the NUM has failed to deal with the change in space: most mineworkers now live in towns or shack settlements. Furthermore, the union has still never managed to adequately deal with and overcome issues of ethnicity, language and nationality, which remain huge issues within these spaces, as the next chapter will show. In fact, they point to “just how fragile non-racialism can be, particularly when it is confronted by ethnic mobilisation” (Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout, 2008: 285), and the real issues which this mobilisation sometimes masks, which can be seen clearly in Moodie’s (1994) article on faction fights.

This chapter has sought to show the inadequacy of a nationalist narrative of labour history to explain the defence of union democracy by militant mineworkers. Since there was only one brief period of unionisation on the mines by AMWU in 1946, it is impossible to credit the rise of union democracy purely to the internal political events taking place in the country at the time. Furthermore, we know that most of the mineworkers who came from Mpondoland were part of the native reserve system and lived in the former Transkei which was a Bantustan during this period. It is evident

from the discussion in the previous chapter that the rural areas were largely marginalised by urban movements like the ANC and people practiced politics within a sphere which was in many ways outside of the elite urban nationalist sphere. Therefore, it is not illogical to assume that before the 1980s and the arrival of the NUM on South African mines workers were using political tools that were familiar to them to organise. The increasing gap between the NUM leadership and its members has meant that mineworkers have turned once again to a subaltern sphere of politics to express their discontent at both poor work conditions and with formal union bureaucracy which has failed them.

The arrival of more politicised and proletarianised youth on the mines, the restructuring in the 1980s and the post-apartheid economic restructuring as well as the end of apartheid law system has meant many changes on the mines, including the introduction of large shack settlements, which mineworkers now occupy with their families. The next chapter will discuss how it is no longer possible to see worker struggles outside of community struggles because of the new social context in which workers now find themselves on the mines, and the forms which these 'new' ways of organising and political action take and how these have been fused with the cultural, social and political forms of organisation from workers' home contexts.

Chapter Four: Worker Struggles as Community Struggles

The last chapter outlined the limitation of some South African labour historiography that relies on nationalist or Marxist narratives to account for worker action on the mines. It highlighted the need to re-visit the gap between the brief period of unionisation by AMWU in 1946, and the arrival of the NUM in 1984 and to explore the ways in which workers were organising their struggles without union structures. Furthermore, it explained the limitations of seeing worker struggles outside of historical, social, and political context and it showed the continuation of pre-colonial political practices, through migrant labourers on the mines. It then argued that in order to adequately theorise the nature of political activity on the mines today, it is important to see how cultural political practices, or what I have called a subaltern sphere of politics on the mines, has returned given the failure of the NUM to satisfy workers' needs in recent years. Thus far, the critique levelled at labour and nationalist historiography is that it has silenced a whole sphere of politics that would enhance our understanding of how battles are fought and won between mineworkers and the mines in South Africa.

This chapter links both the rural and the urban to understand the current context of mineworkers in Marikana today. Much has changed since the segregated and ethnically constituted single-sex hostels and the literature does not seem to reflect the changes in the spatial construction of mine-communities today. As the previous chapter has shown, most of the men who go to the mines from the former-Transkei and particularly Mpondoland, still have intentions to send money home and one day to return to the commons after their labour contracts have ended. However, many now have family members, including daughters, wives, and sons who have joined them in their shacks at the mines, often, to look for work. People generally still maintain the distinction between 'home' which is the Eastern Cape and Nkaneng, the shack settlement. Yet, together, the men, women, and their children in Marikana now constitute a new community that did not exist there before. The strikes and the subsequent massacre were an extreme moment of crisis for all and it was responded to, not merely through the constitution of worker committees but also as a community. If we are to speak about the worker, beyond productivist Marxist and economic understandings, then we must begin to provide, analyse, and give

attention to the communities, which the workers are rooted in as people. In the case of the mineworker, these communities exist both in the rural and now, more recently, in the 'urban' mining space. The previous chapters have shown how the rural has and continues to influence and shape politics in the urban space. This chapter goes further in writing part of a living history of Marikana, which is conscious of all who live and work there. It is an attempt to show how worker struggles are often rooted in community struggles and vice-versa, and that to divorce them, as some Marxist historiography has done, misses a whole sphere of political activity that could offer more insight and understanding into 'worker' struggles and how they are linked to other struggles for dignity. It reveals, through interviews with the women's organisation and some Lonmin employees, that there is definitely a subaltern sphere of politics that exists at the mines still, which has fused with rural and urban, pre-colonial and post-colonial ways of organising. What remains however, is a fidelity to a conception of democracy, and attempts to deepen and explore democratic praxis in a more meaningful and participatory way than the 'official domain' of politics would allow marginalised people. The continuation of a sense of justice, loyalty and community is evidenced through the interviews and time shared with people who were unable and unwilling to divorce what happened on the 16th of August to broader practices of injustice by Lonmin against its employees and how the company, the government and the union had ignored and discarded the communities of people they were supposed to protect and to be accountable to. The chapter performs various functions and tries to tell several stories, which are only some of many narratives. It begins with women's contributions to community struggle, not only because women have been relegated to the margins of history for so long, but also because what is particularly interesting about the women's group in Marikana is that it was formed precisely during the moment of crisis in the community when there was a political, social and economic gap which the women had to face alone while the men were on the mountain. I have chosen to do this through various life stories of some of the women in the community. The first part outlines the formation of the women's organisation, why it is important; the issues it tackles (like land, housing and services) and the functions it performs in the community. Most importantly it reveals the sometimes silenced political, social and reproductive work of women and how this creates the environment in which workers' struggles become possible and, in some cases, successful. The second part of the chapter discusses the living history of the

subaltern mineworker at Lonmin and how race, domination, and exploitation continue to fundamentally shape people's experiences of the places in which they live and work. Finally, it considers the importance of acknowledging and considering cultural context, precisely because this allows for an understanding of the subaltern sphere of politics present on the mines and the cultural political tools which mineworkers have once again begun to employ outside of union structures. It is, in many ways a counterforce to the limited understanding that some narrow Marxist and nationalist historiography offers in which the worker is theorised purely as a subject of capitalist exploitation devoid of agency, subjectivity, and most crucially context. Suren Pillay (2013: 37) has noted of the Marikana Massacre that "Where capital has provided the ideologically privileged turnkey for locating unions in a universal history of capitalism, the work as a migrant in a community resides within a subaltern history of colonialism and apartheid." Perhaps it would be more useful to say that the migrant in the Marikana community resides within a subaltern history of colonialism, apartheid, and elite nationalism. It is within this space, that the following body of research can be located.

Arriving at Wonderkop

I arrived at Wonderkop on the 1st of December 2012, after meeting Nomzekhelo, Wendy and Ncomeka in Johannesburg. They had been attending a 1in9⁷ workshop learning to print t-shirts and I called Nomzekhelo, I had seen her number on an online statement for the Women's group in Marikana. She said I should pick them up at 8am at Johannesburg Park Station and we could drive to Marikana together. So I did.

Nomzekhelo Primrose Sonti is a strong, loud and cheerful woman. She moved to the North West Province eighteen years ago from the Eastern Cape in search of work. She found work at Samancor, a mine near Mooiwooi, for a few years before being transferred to Eastern Platinum working for a company inside the mines, which sold

⁷ Formed in 2006 to support Fezeka Kuzwayo, who brought a rape charge against the current president Jacob Zuma. The One in Nine Campaign is a feminist collective motivated by the desire to live in a society where women are the agents of their own lives. The Campaign supports survivors of sexual violence – those who report the crimes to the police and engage in the criminal justice system as well as those who choose not to or are unable to report their rapes. The campaign also works with individuals, communities, collectives, and organisations to generate feminist analyses of social problems and focuses on strategies for mobilisation and mass action. (See oneinnine.org.za)

clothes to mineworkers. She moved to a shack settlement in Wonderkop at Lonmin, Marikana in 2000 because it was close to where she was working at the Eastern Platinum mine. In 2012, she left her job because she was not earning enough money. In fact, she earned the same salary for the 18 years that she worked for Eastern Platinum. Her employers became increasingly more hostile towards her because of her involvement in community activism. They cancelled her leave because she did not attend work during the strikes and she started facing intimidation by employers.

Now she refers to herself as an activist. She is the secretary of the ANC aligned South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) branch at Wonderkop and she is one of the founders of the Marikana Women's Group. The women's group has also been referred to as the 'Women's Forum' and the 'Women's Movement' since they were only able to register it at the end of 2013 under the name *Sikhala Sonke*, which means, 'We cry together.' Nomzekhelo is a natural leader, commanding wide respect within the community, and is knowledgeable about how things work between the mine, the unions, the government, and the community. Ncomeka and Wendy have recently joined *Sikhala Sonke*, and they travelled with Nomzekhelo to the 1in9 workshops in Johannesburg.

Ncomeka Mbulawa, moved to Wonderkop a few years ago from Lusikisiki, Eastern Cape with her mother and a few of her brothers and sisters. Her father has worked for Lonmin as a whinge-operator since 1975 and her fiancé is contracted to Lonmin through an external company. Some of her siblings have been educated near Marikana at the surrounding schools and eventually they all moved to join their mother and father on the mine. She is 28 years old, has two children, and is currently unemployed. One of her children lives with her at the Nkaneng shack settlement and the other stays at her home in Lusikisiki with her granny. She is quiet and more reserved than any of us in the car, but during the time I am in Marikana we get along very well and she lets me sit at her house when I have nothing to do and we talk and watch television. She is soon to be married, which scares her a little. The custom is for her to stay in the Eastern Cape as a *makhoti* [married woman] with her husband's family to look after his mother. She does not want to go back, well at least not to look after someone's mother. One day during the drive to Marikana town, where people have to go to buy grocery items they cannot get at the shops in Wonderkop, Wendy

tries to convince her to tell her fiancé she doesn't want to go. They both laugh as they talk about what they are told to wear, to eat and how to speak. Wendy says she is pretty sure God did not say it should be so, and thinks it strange that Ncomeka has to look after someone else's mother, "where are these women's other children?" she asks. Wendy relates a story of her friend who called a family meeting when she arrived at her husband's home. After she thanked everyone for welcoming her, she told them they should not stop doing what they normally did on account of her arrival: if they swept, they should not stop because she was there; if they cooked, they should not stop if she was there. Apparently, everyone was super surprised, but didn't say anything. Ncomeka is intrigued but says it's the law and her fiancé is a mummy's boy anyway, so she will go for a month to appease people and return to Nkaneng to be with her husband.

Wendy Pretorious, is 34 and is now divorced. Her family is originally from King Williams Town in the Eastern Cape and they moved to Welkom when she was 11 years old because her father found work on the mine there. The mines slowly started to close and with them employment opportunities for many. Her father found work at Lonmin and had to leave his family in Welkom and relocate again. Six months ago, she decided to join her father to look for work on the mine, but this has not happened yet. Her father is a general worker at Lonmin and she was hopeful about finding work at the mine before the massacre. Now she is a little scared and hopes that as a member of *Sikhala Sonke* they can start other activities that will allow them to make some money.

We share stories while we drive to Marikana, Nomzekhelo knows many short cuts and it only takes us about an hour and a half to get there. Arriving on the mine is a surreal experience, if one has never grown up around the Witwatersrand. Nothing prepares one for the endless mounds of earth and rubble, impressive machinery, vehicles, giant shafts and long conveyor belts in the sky joining one massive concrete building to the next, everything looks a bit post-apocalyptic at first. Yet, Nomzekhelo makes it easy to weave in and out of unnamed roads; passing one mechanical process after another, all the way across the mines to arrive at Nkaneng, without an access card. When we got to one access point, the guard stopped us, Nomzekhelo rolled down her window and spoke to him briefly in isiXhosa explaining who she is and that

we “were with her.” He let us through, while she turned to me and said, “we don’t know each other, but we understand each other.” Eventually we arrived at a Lonmin signpost pointing to the different shafts, finally the last arrow on the board pointed right to ‘Wonderkop Village’ and to the shack settlement Nkaneng.

Nkaneng

The landscape of the mines has changed dramatically since the end of the compound system. The new “living out allowance” is now an option for those who choose not to live in the single-sex hostels. The money offered by the mines to those mineworkers who chose to take it, has meant the creation of large shack settlements around the mines as those workers who want to live with family or on their own, which would allow them to cook their own food and live with a fair amount of privacy move into their own shacks. The shack settlement is now home to hundreds of people, mineworkers and their wives, or husbands, their children and the animals they keep.

In isiXhosa and Sesotho, ‘Nkaneng’ is described by people who live there as, ‘taking away something by force’ and is the name given to the shack settlement, which symbolises the on-going struggle for land and services, people say they are literally there; ‘by force’ because no one seems to care about them and everything is a struggle. Chingono (2013: 12) also notes that it represents the intersection between ethnicity and settlement patterns. Nkaneng is home to mostly isiXhosa speaking people from the Eastern Cape, and a few other provinces in South Africa as well as other migrant labourers from Lesotho, Mozambique. This has created tension between people who live in the shack settlement and those who are able to live in RDP houses and receive services based on their ethnicity because the land here is owned by the Tswana Chief Bob Edward Bapo ba Mogale.

Nkaneng is divided into two sections. The ‘old part’ of the shack settlement is where some are connected to electricity or have pre-paid meters and access to taps. In the ‘new’ section, people do not have access to taps and many do not have electricity. There are no roads in the entire settlement. This is one of the major problems for people living there since everyone has to walk to the main road for taxis and other transport.

On the other side of Wonderkop, is the hostel section, where the male-only hostel blocks persist and the few family units available look like prison barricades with no yard, for the many children who are milling around, to play in. People sit outside in the boiling heat, as mineworkers come and go the whole day through, watching the buses take them and bring them back, watching men and a few women walk back and forth in their PPE (personal protective equipment). We pass taxis as they weave in and out of untarred roads, which are often barricaded by big cement blocks in the middle. We pass the closed National Union of Mineworkers office, a space they share with the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the African National Congress (ANC). No one one has been there since the massacre and the offices remain closed.

When we get to the store where Thumeka works, some of the women whom we were going to meet are already there and Nomzekhelo and Thumeka hug after not having seen each other in while.

Thumeka Magonwanya arrived in Wonderkop in December 1999, looking for “greener pastures.” Born in Stutterheim, in the Eastern Cape, she left to Cape Town to study dress-making and returned to Stutterheim where she could not find work. Thirteen years ago, she moved to Wonderkop hoping to find employment as a dressmaker. When she could not find any work, and in lieu of resources to start making garments, she began selling things in the street which did not raise her enough capital either. She soon found work at a tavern where she earned R700 per month. She now works as a cashier at a Somali-owned wholesaler in Wonderkop. She has not found greener pastures yet, but she says she is still trying. In the meanwhile, she says the Somalians are good to her and allow her to hold meetings at the shop when she is at work and cannot attend them at the office on the other side in Nkaneng. She is a member of SANCO and a founding member of the Women’s Group, *Sikhala Sonke*. Her daughter currently works for Lonmin handing out explosives underground. Thumeka refers to her as “her son,” because she is her only child and she has gone to the mines to make money for them, as a son would do.

Nomzekhelo and Thumeka organised for me to meet with some of the women the next day in the office. The office is a large tin roofed structure with a concrete floor

that floods when it rains and heats up quickly when it is hot, it is used as a community centre and a meeting space for SANCO and now *Sikhala Sonke*.

Sikhala Sonke

Sikhala Sonke was started during the Lonmin Strikes in 2012. Nomzekhelo Sonti and Thumeka Magonwayana were two of the founding members of the organisation. It was initiated by the women who organically started to mobilise in the community because they were left to take care of homes and children and had the added responsibility of caring for the men on the mountain: husbands, brothers, sons and friends. They started to seriously think about an organisation of their own which would endure after the massacre through conversations with each other as well as through conversation and support from the women in the Marikana Support Group in Johannesburg. For Nomzekhelo and Thumeka there was no other choice than to support the men on the mountain and the women and children who were suffering because of the strike. Thumeka described the situation, as just really sad, “It was sad because the other women, they didn’t even have food in their houses. So we were helping each other. If I’ve got bread I would give my neighbour as well so she’s got something to eat with their children. So it was very sad. It was very sad. And other men didn’t even have money because they have to pay the mashonisa’s the loans, so it was very bad⁸.”

They began praying together everyday after the first men were shot in Marikana, and approaching police to ask why they were in their community with Nyalas and guns. They soon started organising food by asking the people in the community for donations, mostly the Somali traders, and began to take food to the mountain daily. This food and support enabled the men to stay on the mountain in counsel together and to remain defiant.

⁸ Many of the women who I spoke to also spoke about the money-lending schemes and the outrageous amount of interest one had to pay to loan-sharks every month. Often mineworkers wages are not enough to sustain the home and they take loans to subsidise their wages, during the massacre this increased exponentially since many of the women had to take loans because the men were not being paid and they had to find money to take care of the home, children and wounded men.

After 44 mineworkers were murdered and 78 injured by the 16th of August, the women suffered a further blow with the subsequent arrest of 270 of the striking miners, 150 of who said they were subject to police brutality in prison (Lantier, 2012). During this dark period in Marikana, many women had to face harsh conditions in the community while their husbands, brothers, sons, lovers and friends were dead, in hospital, arrested or traumatised from the events of the days leading up to the massacre.

Most of the women joined *Sikhala Sonke* because it was a time of a crisis; they needed to support the men on the mountain but they also felt the extreme pressure of not having an income during the strike and they all bore the brunt of police brutality. They began organising outside of the worker committees in their own spaces since they were not allowed to go to the mountain. Chingono (2013: 24) also acknowledges the mountain as having traditional Xhosa symbolism attached to it, he notes, “In Xhosa culture when there are problems in the family that need to be resolved the men converge at the kraal and the women are excluded as this is a gendered space. This symbolism is important given that many of the workers who converged at the koppie were from a Xhosa ethnic group with a strong attachment to their traditional beliefs.”

In fact, many women responded in the same way to the mountain and the meetings held there. They often spoke as if it were something I should be aware of, especially the fact that they were not allowed at the mountain. Here again there seemed to be an allusion to the generational links between the Mpondo Revolts and Marikana. Others too recalled the massacre and the images it invoked of Ngquza Hill, whether memories of a time of revolt or oral history passed on to them (see Tolsi, 2013, Figlan, 2013, Gasa (2013:pers. comm). Although they would send messages back and forth and take them food, consistent with how women supported the mountain committees of the Mpondo Revolts, women did not attend. In an interview with an Mpondo woman, whose great grandfather was an Mpondo Chief in Port St Johns, she reiterated that in Mpondoland men and women practice politics separately and independently. Remembering stories of the Mpondo revolts, she said we must not mistake women’s absence at mountain committee meetings for lack of politics, because politics were never discussed in the home. The men went to the mountain and

the women met separately, and that is how things are done. Often men used medicines and *muti* that women were not allowed to use and vice-versa.

Many women in *Sikhala Sonke* confirmed that the reason women did not go to mountain was because the men were using *muti* they were not allowed to use. Therefore, they “agreed with them” and decided to form their own organisation. Often the representation of *muti* in academia and in elite public spaces comes from a colonial conception of Africans who make and use their own medication as ‘backward’ or is often placed as the antithesis to western modernity, science, and rationality.

For example, in their article on the *Movements, Protests and a Massacre in South Africa*, Patrick Bond and Shauna Mottier (2013: 297) condescendingly mention “dysfunctional spiritual suspicions (e.g. the use of *muti*/traditional medicine against bullets which allegedly wears off in the presence of women).” Of course, while it is true that strikers were blessed by a traditional healer, a similar practice in almost every religion in the world where people seek comfort and counsel in prayer and religious practice when they are about to enter into a situation with uncertain outcomes, there is no reason to suggest that saying “*muti* will protect me against bullets” is any different from a Christian declaring “God will protect me” before he/she goes to war. Any interpretation of the use *muti* as backward, tribal, savage, like Bond and Mottier (2013: 287) have done, echoes what Michel Trouillot (2003) has described as ‘The Savage Slot’ and is nothing less than the use of colonial language and the re-inscribing of colonial categories and must be firmly rejected.

Therefore, in keeping with the traditional and cultural ways in which men and women discussed politics and made political decisions, including sometimes meeting separately, the women of Marikana formed a crisis organisation. They organised shelter and food at first. Then, when the police began entering the community, breaking down doors and shooting through people’s shacks, they decided to organise a march against police brutality⁹. They were denied a permit for the march they had

⁹ Things became extremely tense after the NUM shot at their own members, and that is when a large number of men, who were not RDOs and others who were not even employed by Lonmin decided to join the strike and for some this was linked explicitly to the fact that they formed a community. One

initially planned but eventually it went ahead on the 29th of September 2012. It was again through the support of the women in Johannesburg that they were able to go ahead with the march even though they were denied the opportunity to deliver a memorandum, which they had initially planned to do.

The march, initially due to be held on the 22nd of September 2013, was twice banned by the Rustenburg and Madibeng municipalities. The reasons offered were unconstitutional, and the women of Marikana took both municipalities to the North West High Court for denying them the right to protest. The first refusal was communicated via sms on the 20th of September. It stated they had not met the requirement of a seven-day notice period and therefore their march could not go ahead. This was a false accusation. The Rustenburg local municipality then communicated in writing that the “purpose of the march does not meet the requirements of the Gatherings Act.” However, it is illegal for the authorities to regulate protests based on their purpose, as the Act does not allow for this. This appeared to be pure censorship and an attempt to impose a blanket ban any political marches in the platinum belt. In 2013, Jane Duncan and Andrea Royeppen reported that the right to protest was not respected by the Rustenburg district municipality who routinely denied people approval for protests based on arbitrary reasons. The Rustenburg municipality began to create their own list of criteria which protestors had to comply with that were not listed in the Regulation of Gatherings Act (RGA) in order to limit the amount of protests occurring in the region, particularly around the platinum belt (Duncan and Royeppen 2013). Rather than seeing protest as democratic expression of dissent and dissatisfaction, the municipality has responded with threats and attempts to undermine democratic participation.

This is not a new form of repression under Jacob Zuma’s government either. The ANC-led government has increasingly begun to deny people the right to protest and

person who spoke to Chingono (2013: 27), said, “As a community when we saw the police pass through our settlement we could see they were prepared to use force...we all resolved that we have to be involved for this was no longer just a workers’ issue but a community struggle.” For another worker, “At first it was an RDO issue but as the strike progressed they demanded everyone to support them...even those passing by on the road they would call them to come and support them. For a Zimbabwean informal trader, he was at the Koppie out of fear rather than solidarity: “We had no choice but to be at the koppie and show them our support. It was either you are on their side or they would see you as the enemy. They have to force everyone to see their logic for the strike” (Chingono, 2013: 27).

has often responded with violence when protestors hold government responsible for lack of public services and accountability. Most notably, the shack dwellers' movement in Durban, *Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM)*, has been involved in an ongoing battle against the state for land and housing and for respect and dignity to be able to choose where and how people within the movement live. They have often been met with repression, authoritarianism and even claims of a 'third force'¹⁰ being behind the movement in South Africa. In a response to these accusations titled, *We are the Third Force*, Sbu Zikode, Chairperson of AbM, states: "The Third Force is all the pain and the suffering that the poor are subjected to every second in our lives. The shack dwellers have many things to say about the Third Force. It is time for us to speak out and to say this is who we are, this is where we are and this how we live. The life that we are living makes our communities the Third Force."

In a recent report, titled *Take Back the Streets: Repression and Criminalisation of Protest Around the World*, the International Network of Civil Liberties Organizations outlines a global crackdown on peaceful protests through excessive police force and the criminalization of dissent. The report highlights a growing tendency to perceive people exercising the right to protest, a fundamental democratic right, as a threat requiring use of force by the police. It details a 2005 report about the experiences of social movements *vis - a - vis* the implementation of the Regulation of Gatherings Act, in which "the FXI [Freedom of Expression Institute] identified a disturbing pattern where social movements and organizations stridently opposed to government policies were isolated and targeted by local authorities through an overly technical interpretation of the RGA, imposition of unreasonable conditions on protest marches and outright prohibitions of gatherings based on flimsy and unsupported reasons" (INCLO, 2013: 46).

Even when the illegality of state policy is revealed¹¹, this often leads to further repression from the state. Still, many social movements and organisations utilise the

¹⁰ The third force is a term used to describe apartheid police personnel that covertly supported popular violence against the liberation movement.

¹¹ In 2009, AbM was successful in over-turning the KwaZulu-Natal Elimination and Prevention of Re-emergence of Slums Act in the KwaZulu-Natal High Court, Durban where it was declared unconstitutional. Despite this legal victory they have continued to face repression from the state and in 2013, there have already been three political assassinations of AbM members in the Cato Crest Shack settlement. (see Pithouse, 2013)

state legal system, which they rely on to maintain democratic principles. This response highlights the inability of the South African state to take ‘those who do not count’ seriously as reasonable citizens who are capable of thinking for themselves. In fact, Trouillot’s banalisation category of silencing seems to echo through narratives of “service delivery protests” or ‘irrational’ mineworkers who broke with ‘hard-won’ bargaining structures. Implicit in these claims, is the unthinkable notion that people are able to organise outside of the state, and outside of the party or the unions to demand access to public goods and services to live a dignified life. Thus, they are denied claims to the political and are marginalised and repressed because of the threat they pose to the conception of the nation or democracy. Partha Chatterjee (2004: 47) makes a similar point about the way in which a “widening arena of political mobilisation” causes “much discomfort and apprehension in progressive elite circles” where the complaint from the political elite and middle-class society is that politics has been “taken over by mobs and criminals.”

Even when that same subaltern sphere of politics shows more reverence for due-process, consultation, negotiation and the praxis of democracy than the thug-like politics of Zuma’s ANC, the appearance of poor people in these elite spaces is often met with shock and disdain. For example, when AbM spokesperson Bandile Mdlalose was arrested on the 17th of September 2013 and detained for seven days before she was granted bail, for protesting against the murder of seventeen-year-old Nqobile Nzuza by the police, she said

“It was a way to silence me, it was a way to silence me and others who were protesting against the murder of Nqobile Nzuza. No one has been arrested for the murder of Nqobile, or the murder of Nkululeko Gwala or Thembinkosi Nyathi. And yet, people protesting against murder are beaten and I was arrested. I REFUSE to keep quiet and the sell the people who really fought hard for me to have a Constitutional Right of Freedom of Expression.”

When she appeared in court again in November, she was told by the magistrate that just because she was dressed smartly doesn’t mean they have to treat her differently. Implicit in this derogatory remark was that she did not belong in those clothes or in that space because the law was meant to protect proper citizens, a category which she

did not occupy.

Similarly, the women in Marikana displayed the same commitment to participatory democracy and belief in due legal process when they contested the Rustenburg and Madibeng municipalities, as well as the North West police force in the Rustenburg High Court and won the appeal. They did so despite threats and attempts to intimidate them because they were exercising their access to citizenship, something which government would rather deny poor people. Even though they had been repeatedly ignored and denied the right to march, they maintained a fidelity to democratic and political principles. In a statement released before the march on the 29th of September, they wrote:

SA: Statement by Wonderkop Community Women's Association, on North West High Court ruling that the Women of Marikana have the right to march (29/09/2012)

We, the women of Marikana, have won a decisive victory against the Rustenburg and Madibeng Municipalities, which have twice banned our planned peaceful march against the Marikana police station. The High Court has ruled in our favour, setting aside the prohibition by the municipalities and telling us that we have the right to march. Our march is to protest the police violence in Marikana, which has led to the death and injury of many dozens of members of our community. We feel unsafe and scared in our communities and this is because of the police, who have behaved like criminals.

Our first effort to march was on Saturday 22nd September, and following an unlawful prohibition by the Madibeng municipality, we notified to march on Saturday 29 September. The Madibeng and Rustenburg municipalities conspired, together with the Marikana Police Captain and North-West police, to prohibit our march for a second time. We had followed all legal requirements of the Gatherings Act, and had made every effort to cooperate with the authorities, but confronted bureaucratic confusion, obstruction and unlawful conduct by officials of the two municipalities and the police at every turn.

Following the second banning, we briefed our lawyers to take the matter for a review decision by the High Court. Following ten hours of legal argument, the Court vindicated us by overturning the unlawful prohibition of the march by the two municipalities. The Court has confirmed what we already know – that we have the right to march! We will continue with the march, along the route that we have planned, to the Marikana police station to protest police violence and brutality.

We are deeply disturbed by the authorities' interference with our right to assemble, by the unlawful decisions of the municipalities, by the attitude of officials and police to our right to assemble, and by the undue influence of the police in the notification procedures outlined in terms of the Gatherings Act.

We believe that the North West police have placed a blanket ban on all protests and marches in the wider Rustenburg area. The Judicial Commission begins its work on Tuesday 2nd October and it is important that it be conducted in a spirit that is open and which listens to our voices, if we are going to trust in its outcomes. We must have our right to assemble and express respected by the authorities and we call on the Commission to support the creation of this necessary climate.

We know that other communities across the country experience the same problems as us when it comes to our democratic and constitutionally protected rights to assemble and express. We condemn this regular prohibition and banning of our legitimate protests. This is not the democracy we all fought for!

We march for justice for the death of our husbands, fathers, sons and brothers at the hands of the police. We march for justice for the death of Paulina Masuthlo, our sister, who died on the 19th September, a few days after she was shot with rubber bullets by the police. We march for justice for the shooting of three other women with rubber bullets on Saturday 15th September.

We have had enough of the violence, and the fear and the criminality of the police. We want justice and we want to restore our community and our homes to places of safety. This can only happen when the police fully withdraw from Marikana, and when the police are held to account for their violent and unlawful actions.

**WE MARCH TO CONDEMN BRUTALITY AND CALL FOR JUSTICE FOR
MARIKANA!**

In addition to highlighting the state's attempt to politically silence what was happening within the community of Marikana, the women of Marikana also link their repression to a broader struggle against state repression in South Africa, where those who don't count are constantly criminalised and excluded from civil society.

Although they won the right to march, which they did with 800 women from the community, they were also denied the opportunity to hand over a memorandum they had prepared. In this memorandum, they expressed their anger and disbelief at the shooting of three women in the community and the death of a councillor, activist and friend, Paulina Masuthlo.

Paulina Masuthlo was a PR Councillor for the ANC in Marikana. Nomzekhelo, who was a close friend of hers, describes her as

“a brave woman. She was the hero. She was supporting those strikers who were fighting for their demands, just money. Even on the memorial service for these 34 people on the mountain there, it was only Paulina, who were wearing the mining uniform which is white uniform with the gumboots, with the makaraba helmet. She was nice. She was showing everybody that she is supporting this.”

Most of the women who knew her testified to her brave character and her fierce loyalty to the community, and during the strikes, her support for the men on the mountain and their families. In many ways, she was the example of how people at

Marikana conceptualised local government, community leaders and the entrenchment of political principles and democratic practices rather than commitment to a party structure. Thumeka mentioned that even on the day of her funeral there were people who said some members of the community and within the ANC did not like her. Even though she was unpopular with the ANC for supporting the miners, Nomzekhelo captured her commitment well when she said,

“Hayi, it was her work, because when you are the councillor, you are standing for the people in everything, its bad or its right you must be with the people. You see? You mustn’t go away if something is bad for the community you must be there because you are voted, you see? You are working for them. Even at Karangua, at the court, everyday we were with Paulina there, she was trying even for food for the people, she was supporting even those guys who were in jail, trying to get food, trying to get water, everyday.

Paulina was shot on the 15th of September when police entered the Nkaneng community and started shooting at women and children with rubber bullets and using tear gas as they went through the settlement searching for weapons. While some reported that she was shot during a protest (see Nash, 2013) Nomzekhelo, who was with Paulina near the office waiting for other women to arrive for a meeting, remembers it vividly,

So they come with the hippos there, I didn’t see even the registration number for that hippo. They just come and shoot. So I didn’t run, even Paulina, because we were not expecting them to shoot, because we have done nothing, we hold nothing, because we are women you see? So they just come and they shoot. Even me, myself I don’t know how I survived at that time because I was next to Paulina. I just turn, looked on the side where the Hippo was coming, where the other women were running, and the others just turned, when it comes, when I heard the first shot, I just turned on my side like this and just closed my eyes, waiting for the bullets on my back but fortunately they didn’t. They shoot Paulina on this side, and they shoot the other two ladies on the other side...

Paulina was then taken then taken to the mine hospital with the help of someone with a vehicle in the community. From there, she was transferred to a hospital in Rustenburg for the bullet wound in her leg. On the following Monday she underwent an operation to have the bullet removed from her leg. On Tuesday, she called Nomzekhelo to say everything had gone well and that she would be discharged on Wednesday 19th September, 2012. When Nomzekhelo called the hospital on the Wednesday afternoon, they told her Paulina was dead. She, Paulina's sister and a few others who went to the hospital were in complete disbelief. For them, it is impossible that she would have died from a rubber bullet wound to the leg especially when she was fine after the operation. They were obviously devastated and received no proper explanation from the nurses who gave them the news. None of the people who were close to her believed that she died from the bullet wound and though they do not know what happened or who did it, many of the women I spoke to including Nomsekehlo, Thumeka, Wendy, Nomceka and Ncomeka's mother Florence Mbulawa believe she was poisoned¹². Paulina's death was a huge blow to the community and to the already waning faith in the system and democracy.

It was also devastating for other reasons. Despite countless efforts to engage the councillor of the ward, SANCO and the women's group were repeatedly ignored. Nomzekhelo described SANCO, in a similar way in which she described the role of a councillor, which was based on the principles of transparency, common humanity and open democracy and here again, the stress on democratic consensus rather than representative democracy is apparent:

The aim of SANCO in the community is to develop the place, which we are living in. The duty of the SANCO it is for the whole community, never mind you depend on which organisation, you are ANC, you are UDM, you are DA, what what. As long as you are in South Africa and you are staying here on that place you are the SANCO, because you are the resident of that place. So SANCO it stand for helping all those communities who are staying there, such

¹² There has been at least one other case of alleged poisoning of an activist in hospital. In 2012 Bhekimuzi Ndlovu, was visited in hospital in Durban by ANC members, after being shot by police during a protest. Shortly after they left his hospital room, he became violently ill and died. The cause of death was alleged to be poisoning (Pithouse, 2013)

as problems, assistance, everything you see, everything that is happening that is wrong, even the corruptions, we look after the corruption.

Nomzekhelo and Thumeka described the councillor who did not believe in the same values as SANCO, as being ‘divisive’ in the community. They had initially voted for him because he knew the problems of ‘this side’ (Nkaneng) but when he became councillor he continued to ignore them like the former councillor did. By refusing to recognise the existence of SANCO as well as taking no action after the massacre or during the strikes, the councillor has offered no support to the community.

In addition, many women said that they would not vote in the 2014 elections if Zuma was elected at Manguang. After the massacre, although many had not lost faith in the government’s ability to positively change their situation, their main concern was that the municipality and the government were continually ignoring them. The fact that Zuma had not even come to Marikana during the strikes or after the massacre was a clear indication of his disinterest in them, and that he had failed them, especially when it came to the issue of land.

The Land on which Nkaneng is built

There are 38 shack settlements around the Rustenburg platinum belt, and in 2010 Lonmin estimated that “50% of the population who lived within a 15km radius from its mining operations lived in informal (sic) dwellings and lacked access to basic services (Chingono, 2013: 9). As a result, people in Nkaneng have had an on-going battle with the municipality over the issue of land and services. Although most people who live there acknowledge its temporary nature, because the Eastern Cape is still home, the conditions in which they are forced to live in return for their labour is unacceptable by any measure. Even today, ethnicity on the mine is still a contributing factor to broader and more generalised tensions between people. Since they do not have access to what is Tswana traditional land, they are all technically living in Nkaneng illegally and government and the mine have made no attempt to reckon with the new spatial configurations and consequently the community that has emerged, as a direct result of the ‘living out wage’ and persistent migrant labour system. They have also failed to provide proper services for their workers and their families. Aside from

basic services, there are no schools or crèches on the mine and the colonial mind-set of the mines to support the mineworker with only enough money to reproduce himself, ignores the growing poverty in rural areas as well as the very obvious new households on the mines.

The women of *Sikhala Sonke* say the land the shack settlement occupies, as well as the land Lonmin stands on belongs to the Tswana Chief Kgosi Bob Edward Mogale of the Bapo ba Mogale Royal Family. Mogale will not cede the land to them, so they cannot build formal housing. The formal housing (brick structures) that does exist belongs to Tswana people, who are allowed to get RDP housing in that area because of ethnic citizenship. Traditional authorities tell people like Nomzekhelo, they do not belong there and the land is not for Xhosas. The municipality is as unhelpful and Lonmin has taken no responsibility for housing the mineworkers and their families who have to face this reality.

The Bapo ba Mogale family are not happy with the shack settlement on what should be Batswana farming land and are demanding more money from Lonmin. Lonmin however has ignored the entire community there and refuses to help or to pay any money to the Bapo ba Mogale family who, according to women in *Sikhala Sonke*, regularly receives money from Lonmin and demands that their children and relatives receive jobs over isiXhosa people. They would like the government to buy the land for them so they are able to live and build on it. According to Nomzekhelo they,

“Want to stay here freely because now, its still an informal settlement and then we don’t have any services. But the problem now, if they want us to vote for them they are coming and mobilising on our side and we are voting for them because its our organisation which is ANC, and we like them. But now we are very very disappointed, because this democracy its long time its 18 years but nothing happened here at Wonderkop as you see. We don’t have roads, we don’t have water, we don’t have toilets, we don’t have houses, everything we don’t have. Although we are voting, although we are the ANC members you see.”

While many have suggested that the pervasion of ethnicity in people’s narratives

about life on the mines, is attributed solely to xenophobia and ethnicism or traditional patriarchy (Bond, 2013: 297; Cronin, 2012) this must also be seen in context. It is useful to consider what Stuart Hall, called the possibility of a Gramscian analysis of race and ethnicity. Gramsci referred to a “national specificity,” to describe the different levels in “in complexly structured societies composed of economic, political and ideological relations” in which according to Hall (1986), it was important to consider “the character of different types of political regimes, the importance of cultural and national-popular questions, and the role of civil society in shifting the balance of relations between different social forces in society” (Hall, S 1986, quoted in Goldberg, 2009: 514).

While it is true that under Zuma’s presidency, the emergence of an ethnic, patriarchal, homophobic and misogynist politics has proliferated South African state politics, ethnicity at Marikana is experienced in direct relation to people’s material existence and support networks, particularly during the strikes and the massacre. In fact, Nkaneng (made up predominantly of isiXhosa and then Sesotho speaking people) is now the majority community around Lonmin and Crispin Chingono (2013: 8) explains, “As a result the question of who is local and alien is often contested but quite crucial in understanding the socio-economic and political dynamics in those communities. Pillay (2013: 32) makes the important point that ‘cultural artefacts’ [sic] which workers bring with them into a strike “interrupts the desire in much of this scholarship (South African labour studies) for a revolutionary worker subject, that is fully universal without the particularities of race or ethnicity.” He adds that it is important for us to reckon with the migrant worker both as a product of capital but also as part of a history of in-direct rule and colonial governmentality (Pillay, 2013: 50).

Thus the frustration with being continually ignored by government and Lonmin based on their ethnicity must be taken seriously and not seen as the lack of a proper emancipatory process or historical project, which has its base in euro-centrism. It is on the basis of this exclusion that *Sikhala Sonke* has in some ways attempted to step in and take action to try to improve conditions in the community. This has not meant exclusion based on ethnicity or even vigilante violence as some have suggested (see Cronin, 2012). Rather, they have started through SANCO and now *Sikhala Sonke* to

offer people help with identity documents; complaints about the councillor; rape; domestic abuse; and other forms of social services, which their municipality has denied them. One of their main concerns now is a road.

In Nkaneng, there are no roads, and few cars struggle over the uneven muddy dirt roads that taxis refuse to drive on. Everyone must walk to the main road to get taxis. For many this is a very long distance, when it rains many cannot leave their homes. Few vehicles go in and out, mostly there are big trucks delivering goods to stores: every few days one is bound to see a huge *Carling Black Label* truck delivering more beer to the '*Never say Die Tavern*' next to 'the office'.

The roads are the pivot of a whole range of activities that are denied to the community as a result: for example not being able to buy large grocery items, or attend school or work when it rains heavily, which is extremely common in the summer. Most importantly, it is impossible for ambulances to reach sick or injured people inside Nkaneng because of the road, especially crucial during the strikes and the massacre. Although they do not have other services, the old part of the shack settlement has some form of electricity or pre-paid meters, and people in the new part illegally connect to electricity as well. Some also have taps in their yards and others are allowed to buy 20l of water for R2, which is what Ncomeka pays, still that is a struggle for some. There are also long-drop toilets that are not ideal but "at least something." Nomzekhelo, Thumeka and others in *Sikhala Sonke* feel if they are able to get a gravel road they would have made some positive contribution to life in Nkaneng. They have approached Lonmin many times for gravel; their response was that they do not have any trucks that can deliver the gravel to them. Nevertheless, Nomzekhelo says, "But it was long time ago when they said that. So if we can get help of the trucks and the permission to get that gravel, we as the women, we can do that ourselves. Not to ask somebody to help us on the road, we can do it by ourselves. If somebody, a man wants to help us, he can come and assist but we can do as *Sikhala Sonke* that road." What is clear however is that they can no longer wait around for government to help them and they must organise by themselves.

Organisation at Point Zero

For them it is incredibly important to link oppression in the home and the mines. When the men went on strike, they decided to start their own organisation not only because there was a crisis but also because they needed to contribute to improving the community, something that would strengthen the struggles of the men at that moment and in the future. The creation of *Sikhala Sonke* at this time of crisis is not an exception in the history of women who organise when their home space is threatened and when their children go hungry or when their political freedoms are curtailed.

For instance the women's anti-pass marches that took place from the early 1900s into the late 1950s in South Africa is testament to a tradition of women's political organisation against repressive state policy. Nomboniso Gasa (2008: 136) discusses how African women in 1913 were most affected by the new pass laws the state had begun implementing in May, in which "In that month alone, the arrests for pass infringement quadrupled." Many women were carrying up to 13 passes, which had direct economic and social consequences for the women who were supplementing their husbands already meagre salaries, and who had migrated from the Cape and other places to seek a better life (Gasa, 2008: 135). At first, they received little support, not only from the state, which they petitioned regularly, but also from within the national liberation movement. Many, including Sol Plaatjie and Dr Abdul Aburahman, thought the women acted out of turn and without consulting the leadership (Gasa, 2008: 135). On 28 May, 200 women marched to the center of Bloemfontein with placards and songs demanding an audience. On the 29th 80 women were arrested and all of them refused to pay their fines, filling the limited capacity gaols (Gasa, 2008:137). By the end of the women's marches on local government, many of the men were ready to concede that the women were far more militant, determined and not afraid to openly defy the white man, as Plaatjie reported in his newspaper, "We, the men who are supposed to be made of sterner stuff than the weaker sex, might well hide our faces in shame" (Gasa, 2008:137).

The militancy of migrant women did not end there. In Potchefstroom, women also protested against new pass laws, which would directly affect their livelihood in beer brewing and income from housing boarders from the mines (Gasa, 2008: 141). In

1956 again, 20 000 women marched to Pretoria to hand over a petition to J.G Strydom against pass laws. Some have argued that these marches were framed around women's traditional roles and therefore were not feminist, however Nomboniso Gasa (2008) has shown how women were politically organising as mothers and wives and how, as Federici (2012) argues, women's homes are both a space of oppression and the base from which to organise. There are definite points of connection to other struggles organised around the home, which speaks to certain universal principles of crisis and struggle.

For instance, Manuel Castells, describes the way in which people in Glasgow, Scotland had been opposing rent hikes and long contracts since 1886 and by 1913 the Social Democratic Federation and the Scottish Federation of Tenants Association were fighting against rent hikes and demanding state housing (Castells, 1983: 29). The major pre-war organisational effort however, was started by working class women who formed the Women's Housing Association in 1914 that was the driving force of the rent strike (Castells, 1983: 29). The grassroots organisations that formed the Women's Housing Association were as a result of women's initiatives, especially during WW1 when men were away at war and the men left behind were subject to war-time mandate and regulation which required them in the, mainly munitions, factories (Castells, 1983: 29). In fact by November the number of strikers had reached 20 000 and 49 people were arrested, the men working in the factories threatened to strike and to flout the wartime regulations, since "they would rather risk that than have the wives and children of soldiers out in the street" (Castells, 1983: 29). The joint effort of these two sectors of society is explained by Castells (1983: 30) as "the secret of Rent Strikes: not only was there a common identity between shipbuilding industries, engineering and munitions workers (often working for the same firm) but also between the point of production and the communities where the workers lived."

Spence and Stephenson (2007) make a similar claim about the women who were involved in the 1984-1985 UK miners' strike. The paper argues that "one depiction of women's engagement in the strike has been privileged above others: activist women were miners' wives who embarked on a linear passage from domesticity and political passivity into politicisation and then retreated from political engagement following the defeat". However they argue, this is based on a masculinist view which does not

recognise the emotional political work and small scale action and organisation which women in general, and not just women married to miners, undertook and continue to undertake in their communities. This is a crucial point since while it is evident that often moments of crisis lead to militant organisation, there is no quiet passage from a de-politicised space to a politicised one and often these moments are a culmination of individual battles waged in the everyday lived reality of people, which become a collective political project. The point of insurrection thus naturally follows from the everyday space, in the case of most women: the home.

Annelise Orleck, writing about Militant Housewives in America during the Great Depression, highlights the way in which poor women in America approached their traditional roles with heightened urgency, yet they did not suffer alone. In fact, “the crisis conditions created by the Depression of the 1930s moved working-class wives and mothers across the US to organise on a scale unprecedented in US history” (Orleck, 1993: 2). They staged food boycotts and anti-eviction demonstrations, created large-scale barter networks and lobbied for food and rent controls (Orleck, 1993: 1). Orleck (1993: 3), explains how even though the housewives demonstrations received wide-spread media attention, their position as housewives was nonetheless ridiculed by some. Not only were women who were forced into these traditional roles mocked when they highlighted how implicitly their lives were linked to the political and economic spheres, but often women who do not fall into these traditional roles are demonised and over-sexualised. Both of these tropes perform the task of de-politicising any intervention that women make based on their own gendered lives, in society. Often even when these interventions, made on the basis of women’s roles as wives and mothers, are so explicitly linked to the political, the way in which it remains outside of mainstream historical nationalist accounts can be seen as nothing else but a deliberate attempt to write women out of HIStory.

Take for instance, the famous narrative of the Paris Commune recorded by Karl Marx, then Castells and then Alain Badiou, amongst others. Even when Badiou (2003), mentions that in fact women were instrumental to the incitement of the revolt, the character and shape of the politics of the women, and then the other Parisians is not mentioned. When Karl Marx writes about the Paris Commune of 1871, it is reminiscent of a great surge of working class power directed towards the capturing of

a state and the overthrow of the capitalist class through dictatorship of the proletariat. The only real reference he makes to women being a part of the commune is when he writes, “In their stead, the real women of Paris showed again at the surface-heroic, noble, and devoted, like the women of antiquity. Working, thinking, fighting, bleeding Paris-almost forgetful in its incubation of a new society, of the cannibals at its’ gates -radiant in the enthusiasm of its historic initiative! (Marx, 1989: 88). Aside from the overly triumphalist tone taken by Marx here, in *The Commune of Paris, 1871*, Manuel Castells tells an entirely different story especially about the women whom Marx compares to “women of antiquity”.

Castells (1983: 19) tells us not only were the women “the most active element in the mobilisation of people, in the combat with the army, in the neighbourhood meetings, and in the street demonstrations,” but that:

The great majority of these women were of ‘common’ origin. Their family situations were generally ‘irregular’ – according to the bourgeois morality – most of them living unmarried with men, and many being separated from their husbands. The press and legal system were extremely harsh to these women, dubbed the petroleuses, because of the derogatory rumour according to which they carried bottles of petrol to start fires in the houses of bourgeois families. Many of the women that went on trial as communards had a criminal record – a fact that reveals the conditions in the nineteenth century cities where common women were often used as a source of pleasure by rich men and a source of profit by poor men. The world of lower class women was always on the edge of urban deviance.

This has particular resonance with the caricature of women on the mines in South African literature, where these women too always appear on the edge of urban deviance. They are at the mines as prostitutes, mistresses or beer-brewers, or they are common women whose contributions are only sexual. There is no doubt that it has historically been the case that migrant women often had to attach themselves to men in one way or another because of the conservative patriarchal structure of apartheid law in South African society. However, the depoliticisation of sex as work, whether one is a wife, girlfriend, or sex-worker, creates the image of urban women as cheap

and therefore operating outside of the realm of the political. Yet, it is also the case that many women in Marikana have come to seek work, or to be with husbands and boyfriends or fathers and brothers, and to carve out a small space for themselves within the community and to improve it.

The formation of the women's movement in a time of crisis not only brought the home space into contestation as well as made visible the invisible social reproductive labour of women and their contribution to the waged labour of men, but it also shattered the historical depictions of life on the mines and the roles women occupied vis-à-vis men. After the women's march it was impossible for the media not to make at least a sweeping reference to, and in some cases to publish in-depth stories, about the women of Marikana. Even if the coverage did not engage with the political sphere of women's organisation, they had successfully managed to insert themselves into the narrative and to establish their presence at the mines and their ability to speak about and organise around the crisis within their communities. Whether this will be included in labour studies and historiography in the future however, remains to be seen.

By the beginning of December 2012, there were approximately 50 women in *Sikhala Sonke* who attended meetings at regular intervals, and what had started out as crisis relief had now evolved to encompass other issues around the community. These included working with male members of SANCO to start a committee that would attend the Marikana Commission of Inquiry weekly at Rustenburg and report to others. The Farlam commission, set up by the South African state has offered little hope thus far for the people in Marikana, and their sentiments echoed those of people in Mpondoland when the apartheid state set up a commission of inquiry after the Ngquza Hill massacre. They felt that the commission, which should be listening to the people, was trying to criminalise the men rather than bringing justice. They felt that this was the only way to ensure that they knew what was really going because of the distrust they had for the media during the strikes and the massacre.

Most of the women complained that the television coverage of the strikes as well as reporting on it was inadequate and bias and they were interested in telling their own stories. Many of the women believed the coverage did not reveal many parts of what occurred on the mountain that day. For instance, that police hippos had driven over

people or that some of the dead mineworkers' skins were severely discoloured, which family members noticed during their burial. Thumeka and others believe they were injected with poison or some other medication, since they found the empty syringes on the mountain.

In 2013, Nomzekhelo wrote a play about the massacre and the role of women performed by 50 women from the community at the one-year commemoration of the massacre on 16 August 2013. The play plot was described in a *Daily Maverick* article a few days later:

A woman leaves her Eastern Cape village in August 2012. She has no TV to watch the news, but she hears two men have been killed in the platinum mining town of Marikana, where her son lives and works. She leaves for Marikana immediately. She meets the women of Marikana and persuades them to approach the management at the Lonmin mining company to persuade them to accede to workers' demands. The women, however, are too late. The 16 August massacre begins as they journey to see the mine bosses. (Nicolson et al, 2013).

The play is based on the real experiences of the women who planned to go to the Lonmin management to plead with them to end the strike, because they had heard about the NUM shooting at NUM members and they had seen a large number of police being deployed to Marikana on the television. For Nomzekhelo, they were not even thinking of negotiating and would take anything: "Never mind what kind of peace it is, and at least enough is enough now, and they are hungry the people at the mountain and we stay alone here you see?" However, they were too late, by the time they started heading towards Lonmin the killings had already begun.

They died like animals: Struggles for dignity in Nkaneng

Nomzekhelo echoed the sentiments of many, when she said the police killed the strikers on the koppie like animals. When one mineworker described the appearance of the barbed wire with which police started enclosing the strikers, he said, “We are not chickens or pigs that we should be in barbed wire.” This appeal to a common humanity, despite being treated like animals, living with animals, working like animals and living like animals is characterised by the violence inherent in being treated like ‘those who do not count’. Whether through the confined, hot, dark claustrophobic space one is forced to work in, or the reality that one will find no reprieve from these circumstances at home relays a story of struggle that has been centuries in the making.

For Jacques Depelchin, (pers. comm) it seems as if every time capitalism remakes itself, every time it modernises it also takes something away. It erodes the consciousness of people so that we do not know that we are losing something in the process. Slavery has been modernised to the point where we no longer question the way in which it functions, we do not realise what it means for the universal qualities of humanity and human dignity, or for the particular histories of colonialism and apartheid. Indeed in *The Black Jacobins*, CLR James’ (1963: 11), provides historically detailed and visceral depictions of black slaves who were taken from Africa to Haiti and into mines and onto plantations for hours, worked like animals and housed like them too,

The difficulty was that though one could trap them like animals, transport them in pens, work them alongside an ass or a horse and beat both with the same stick, stable them and starve them, they remained, despite their black skins and curly hair, quite invincibly human beings; with the intelligence and resentments of human beings. To cow them into the necessary docility and acceptance necessitated a regime of calculated brutality and terrorism...

The long passage of time that chronicles the regime of calculated brutality from colonial law to apartheid state law and brutality still finds continuity on the mines today. The need to live a life with dignity and respect is also intrinsically tied up to

the experiences of working at Lonmin and its treatment of its workers. It is not merely that people do not have access to land and live in shacks without any basic services, but that they are there as a direct result of the mines as people who are resigned to work at the mines earning money to send home and trying to live well. The support they offer the mines is met with the realisation that the mines still treat people as cheap black labour power.

Solisi Wanda, who was born in Nkaneng, has spent his whole life living there. He started working for Lonmin in 2004 and quit his job a year before the massacre in 2010. He was at a SANCO meeting when he starting speaking about his experiences at Lonmin, which he referred to as a “paternalistic company” where,

“the environment there, the workforce, the relationship between the employer and employees everything seems to be a mess. The work is strenuous, people don’t get trained. You can see for yourself, they don’t have even nice places to live. You can’t carry on working for a company like that, they only using you whereas you don’t benefit from them. And then, most important is time, because time is going also, so when you busy wasting yourself in a company whereas you don’t derive anything useful from them, to me it’s a problem. I mean I start to be stressed until you decide to quit the company, because you don’t see any future in that company.”

For Solisi, working at Lonmin was also profoundly linked to being black and seeing the favouritism, nepotism and racism on a daily basis, in which treatment inside the work space was directly linked to how one experiences their own lives outside of it. For him, “when you look at white people they are staying in nice places, living in nice houses, and when you look at the (black) people all of them, they are suffering, look at the place now?”

For many at Lonmin, these racialised zones of exclusion represent a colonial world which Frantz Fanon (1967: 39) described as a world cut in two compartments and inhabited by “two different species” in which, “The cause is the consequence: you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich.” What Fanon (1967:39) calls the ‘human realities’ can never be masked by economic inequality

because “what parcels the world out is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race, a given species,” and it is life experienced as the ‘other’ species that comes to dominate narratives of working for Lonmin. This ‘other’ does not only function to de-legitimate claims of the universality of the working class subject, but it also undermines the post-apartheid rainbow nation citizen. Both discourses function to exclude the particularities of race and ethnicity and how it functions at capillary level in the lived experiences of South Africa. What both limited understanding of Marxism and Nationalism promote is the single-identity worker or citizen who is either subjectified by capital or the nation state. Thus, accounts of people’s everyday experiences of work and life in Marikana provide a living subaltern history excluded from the ‘official domain’ of politics and society alike.

For Silvia Tlkabane, one of the few employed women I spoke to, this is abundantly clear. Silvia grew up in Vryburg East and moved to Marikana West to find work at the mines in 2008. A few years ago, she moved to the RDP section of Marikana. She qualifies for RDP housing since she is from the area and she is Tswana. Silvia started working at Lonmin in 2008 as a construction helper underground; she was injured by a turn-style door at Lonmin and then sent to work on the surface while she re-covered. Her supervisors in the Human Resources (HR) department told her that it would be temporary and she would return to her job after some time. Although surface work is safer and usually better in terms of space and working conditions, people are paid more to work underground and the demotion to a surface cleaner meant a pay cut for Silvia. After a while, she was given the position permanently without consultation and a long battle with Lonmin ensued. Even though at the time of her injury in 2008 the mine ambulance collected her and took her to a mine clinic, Lonmin has since tried to claim that she was not injured at work and has evaded any responsibility for her injury, despite having had a medical examination to ensure she was in good health before starting work at the mine. Silvia has been fighting this case for the past four years and is still in the same position, after being expelled from the company once for what she describes as “exercising her rights,” she was reinstated in the same cleaning position after she consulted a lawyer. They still refuse to acknowledge her injury. She attributes to this to the work environment and the way people are treated in the workplace, in which consultation, respect, and formal structures are absent. After she

described her situation as well as her on-going intimidation by her supervisor she said,

“I’ve got so many (stories) to tell, because really I, if I talk about these issues, I feel like I can burst, because this company really it doesn’t treat us like human beings. We are nothing, especially we blacks, we are nothing. You’re compensated after you’ve taken some steps. But like just easy like that, it doesn’t do that. This company before it can do something for you have to act, if you don’t act nothing happens.”

In addition to all her supervisors and managers being white, Sylvia also has to contend with a hierarchy of toilets, which are reserved for some members of staff only. After reporting these issues to Human Resources and to her union, which was NUM at the time, she received no reprieve and her experiences supported what Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout (2008:270) described as the increasing gap between unions, their workers, and the serious tensions which racial discrimination creates between members and some shaft stewards.

In fact, the corruption, favouritism, bribes and ethnically constructed conflict within the mines which Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout (2008) describe at length is evidenced by Silvia’s experience of favouritism and nepotism on the part of management as well as people paying for promotions. For women bribes are an especially de-grading issue, while men can usually pay money for their positions, Sylvia says

“if you are a woman, you have to, to pay sexually, you have to sleep with him for the position and then after sleeping for the position, then you gonna get the position. So because me, I’m not doing that, I’m not sleeping with them, I’m not giving them briberies, that’s why I’m in the cleaning position. Because I am not exchanging anything for the position”.

This is again linked to many broader issues within the structure of the mines, like the assertion that “Women create difficulties for NUM and its members,” as well as some members capacities to turn a blind eye to sexual harassment and say “forgive those who put them under pressure” (Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout, 2008: 281). Buhlungu

and Bezuidenhout claim “What is remarkable about the NUM is the way in which they are able to accommodate various political traditions,” included in these are the BC movement, the charterist movement (ANC and SACP), the UDF and some left intellectuals. Yet, they have failed to incorporate any gender-based issues and women-specific needs into their organisation, or embrace them as political traditions.

Many women are changing their union affiliation from the NUM to the previously whites-only union because their women –specific issues like maternity leave, sexual harassment, housing and ablutions in the workplace are taken more seriously than they are in the NUM, or they do not join unions like the NUM at all because they feel they are underrepresented (Benya, 2013).

In many cases attempts to assert one’s dignity and exercise one’s rights, leads to intimidation which is further exacerbated by an abuse of power by supervisors and managers not monitored by shaft-stewards who are enjoying the new perks of their office jobs. The clear lines of patronage that exist on the mine are evidenced by the way Silvia was denied permission to attend her daughters graduation while others are allowed special favours, as well as other workers stories of having to pay for promotions.

Like Walter Diniso, who grew up in East London in the Eastern Cape and has been a general worker at Lonmin since 2008. Despite receiving training for various positions, he has never received a promotion, after each attempt, the company tells him the position is over-complemented, i.e. there are no positions available. For him, “they say it’s a democratic country, but when you see the progress, there’s no democracy, there’s apartheid. Most people in South Africa are greedy. When they are supposed to help you, they can’t do it for free. Even if you are in HR, and you know your job...but ey, this company, they want something.”

Another anonymous Lonmin employee experienced similar problems. He too is a general worker who receives R3000 a month. After attending various training exercises and receiving a section 3 qualification of engineering, as a boilermaker, he was never promoted. Yet, in his experience, there have been many white artisans with the same level of qualifications who are allowed to progress.

Both this worker and Silvia said it was clear that Lonmin did not want black people to progress, something that was echoed by many others. This is consistent with Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout's (2008: 272) research at Karee Mine, where many felt the workplace order was still partially like apartheid. For many, the experience of Lonmin as a workspace is fundamentally shaped by race, and the denial of their dignity at work has a direct connection with their material lives in the home and in their communities, Lewis, who did not give his full name, expressed this very clearly.

It was midday on a hot, dry, typically Highveld Sunday, and Lewis was washing his overalls in a bucket outside. He was in the company of a few men who were drinking beer and listening to music playing out of a car boot in the front yard of a group of connected tin shacks. Lewis called out to us, seeing the camera and throwing the overall out of the bucket and onto the floor, he started his monologue, with not even a question asked.

“How much can you pay me to wash your overall? 12.5%. I don't get it.” We were fighting for what? Why were we fighting? Why we were fighting? My wife is cross with me, she doesn't want me. But I'm working now, everyday I'm going at 3 o'clock. Get up and stand up and stand up and go to work. I'm working for what? Why am I working? For nothing, for this thing? Ai, fuck man. I'm tired. I want to resign. On January, I resign. No more, no more Lonmin, No more Lonmin. I want to stand up, and get up and think for my(self)...I want to leave this Lonmin alone. This Lonmin too, can leave me alone. Because it's like, look at there another guy. He looks at me, he says hey! Look at this guy Lewis, big man but he must do the washing. The boss on Monday, he wants to see the shesha bonakala [overall] for him. Skoon! [Clean] Who can help me? Ohh, I'm tired, I'm tired. I want to quit, because I quit. I quit. I quit. I'm not alone, all these guys want to go look for the box. 11.5 – Mahala. I'm right neh? Aii lady. Why do we want 11.5, for what? Why am I making this clean, for what? For nothing., he asks, who is very important, my family or this one (the overall)? My bosses say, why this sheesha bonakala and its not clean. How much he pay me to make clean my shesha bonakala? How much, and he say's, No man remember last of last

month, I pay you 200, and the first of this month I pay you another 200. Hey madoda. I'm gonna quit. I'm going to make clean this shesha bonakala for the boss on Monday. The first Monday January, I can make it iron, hey boss I quit. Take your shesha bonakala. Take it! I'm quitting now. No more on my hands, or my body this shesha bonakala, because you don't care for me. And I must care for the shesha bonakala, wash my shesha bonakala, make skoon my shesha bonakala. But what about my family huh? Look at this small boy, I can take him crèche now, But I got no money to take him to crèche. I'm quit, I'm quit. But I can make skoon the shesha bonakala for boss, that bass hey hey. That bass man! Because that boss...why my shesha bonakala is not skoon? On Monday, I'm going to shop, I'm coming, I can't buy a sweet for small boy. He's gonna cry to me, he's gonna say, yah tata, ungathi ungaluxoka ngoku. He gonna make the young generation, the respect, I deserve the respect. He deserves the respect. All these people, my family deserves the respect. Me also, I deserve the respect that's why I wash this shesha bonakala, what is the advantage for this one. Why? Why I can make every Monday skoon this thing. Look my shoes, they say, Lewis you will out me. Don't worry, because my boss he promised me, one day is one day and if my boss betaal me I can make it the big master.

Lewis did not say much else. He went into his room and came back with his pay slip, which had not changed since the strike. He was clearly traumatised by the events that took place, he repeatedly spoke about how he didn't want to fight and the strike was a "terrible time" in which it wasn't clear what they were fighting for because so many people had died already. He ended by saying, "A lot of people die from this, guys you see? Our brothers, my brother also too. I can show you the certificate for my brother. It better to leave this, you can come let me talk to them now, something has come on my mind" and walked away.

For Lewis and others, the feeling of disappointment and grief is an everyday experience, and they cannot understand how their own government could respond to them with such violence. It is certainly not the kind of triumphalism one sees celebrated in the work of Peter Alexander, et al. What is even more horrifying was how the NUM responded to its own members during that period. It was because of

that horror that mineworkers in Marikana decided to return to old cultural political practices of democracy and participation.

The NUM and the subaltern

By the end of November 2012, despite the fear of union rivalry and faction fights, many in Nkaneng had begun to wear AMCU t-shirts, and at the Farlam Commission in Rustenburg, the NUM “*Organise or DIE*” t-shirt bearers were mostly from outside Marikana. The once revolutionary slogan had taken on an entirely new meaning, as people dressed in “*Justice Now for Marikana Strikers!*” t-shirts wove in and out of the crowd gathered at the centre. Even though there were no longer people wearing the NUM’s t-shirt in Nkaneng, and the office they shared with the SACP and the ANC remained closed, everyone was extremely tense. There was a general feeling the NUM was now trustworthy, especially after reports of NUM officials shooting at their own members days before the massacre (see Sacks, 2013).

Most of the men on the mountain had been members of the NUM and there were splits in the community because of the decision to break with the hegemonic power of the NUM and for some, to join AMCU (Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union). Thumeka revealed how people who came from the same villages were not speaking to each other because of their differences over the unions.

For *Sikhala Sonke*, the choice was simple; they decided to support AMCU¹³, because they believed that if AMCU listened to the workers they could improve their situation and because they could not trust the NUM any longer. Although the strikes at Lonmin were organised outside of any union structures, after the massacre most workers quickly left the NUM and joined AMCU. By November 2012, it was estimated that AMCU had over 50% of the workforce as signed up members. By May, 2013, the estimated membership increased to 70% making them the majority union at Lonmin (Sobiso and de Wet, 2013).

¹³ Although AMCU was launched in South Africa in 2001, as a breakaway union from the NUM, it was only during the strikes on the platinum belt in the last two years that they gained a larger membership and won the rights of a bargaining structure.

The NUM earned its name as the ‘sweet heart union,’ because of the comfortable relationship it has shared with capital and the ruling ANC for years now. The union has become increasingly estranged from the initial mandate of dealing with ‘bread and butter issues’ (see Buhlungu, 2010, Buhlungu and Bezuidenhout, 2008, Buhlungu and Tshoaedi, 2012) yet; the massacre seems to have been the breaking point for many. The obvious narratives of bribery, corruption and collusion with capital explored above pales in comparison with the experience, like that of Tholakele, of having NUM officials and shop stewards open fire on their own members.

Tholakele ‘Bhele’ Dlunga, was born in East London in the Eastern Cape and is a Rock-drill Operator (RDO) at Karee Mine. He was also one of the organisers of the ad-hoc workers committee, elected by miners and constituted during the strike. When he explained the events leading up to the 16th of August 2012, he was still shocked and angry. There are detailed accounts of the events of 16th August (see Alexander et al, 2012), however the events leading up to the 16th when 10 people lost their lives at Marikana are still unclear, little proper investigation into them has taken place and no arrests have been made. Bhele (which is Tholakele’s clan-name and what he is called by friends and peers), relayed the events of the week from the 8th to the 16th of August, in which he says, all their attempts to meet with management and to talk about their demands were ignored.

Bhele explained how RDOs on strike tried to meet with management to speak with them directly, reassuring them that, “We are not fighting, we just want to talk. If you answer us, we can go back to work tomorrow.” However, that never happened, and on the 25th of October, he was arrested in his home and spent the next six days in jail where police repeatedly tortured him (see Marinovich, 2012). His was not an isolated experience, of the 270 mineworkers arrested on murder charges by the South African state under the apartheid Common Purpose Act, 150 reported that they were tortured in prison (Lantier, 2012).

The response of the state and the NUM, supposedly representing the majority of mineworkers at them time, with brute force, is a clear indication of the way in which the post-apartheid state under Jacob Zuma has become increasingly more violent and authoritarian. This realisation is not limited to the experience of workers during the

massacre. Before they officially declared the strike on the 8th of August, representatives from Eastern, Western and Karee mines, all three of which constitute Lonmin, had a meeting on the 6th of August to establish an informal workers committee (Alexander, et al, 2012: 21). This committee would organise a mass meeting of all Lonmin RDOs on the 9th of August at the Wonderkop stadium.

Bhele noted that once the NUM had shot at them on the 11th of August, it was clear using union structures was no longer an option. Even though, he admitted that perhaps they had made a mistake and should have consulted the union first, as management pointed out to them, they had little faith in the NUM and when they approached them to speak to them about their plans to strike, the bullets they were met with was evidence enough. Therefore, they had already started reverting to old channels of organisation and elected a workers committee, which was chosen representatives who would speak to management and convey the workers discontent. Chingono (2013: 20), points to two prevalent narratives about the worker's committees' elected at Implats and Lonmin mines, the first is that the committees were independent and not aligned to any unions, this is evidenced by the fact that the men on the mountain were from "across the workforce and the community." The second, in Chingono's (2013: 20) "strong view" is that the committees were not independent at all and that "some workers claimed this was a well-planned move and premeditated by AMCU." However, the evidence shows that most men on the mountain were in fact NUM members at the time; secondly, AMCU repeatedly stated that they were not involved in the strike action. In addition, most people in Marikana said they had only thought about joining AMCU after the strike as a result of how the NUM had treated them. While it is unclear why this is such a strong view, it must also be considered with caution. It is often the case that people thinking and acting on their own outside of official structures and procedures are threatening to many people, specifically academics, who prefer to see the world through particular lens in which action only occurs within specific frameworks (in the case of labour, a Marxist framework). This sometimes does the work of discounting workers' agency and attributing their actions to a more palatable source, like trade unions.

The workers' committee therefore, must be seen as elected and constituted by the workers themselves. While some of the men on the mountain were from Lesotho and

Swaziland, the majority were from the Eastern Cape and the elected workers committee was almost entirely constituted of RDOs who came from Mpondoland (Reddy, 2013: 3)¹⁴. In the extensive interviews available in Peter Alexander *et al*'s *A View from the Mountain*, there is much evidence of the organising tools employed during the constitution of the worker committees along the lines of the old moral economy and by extension the pre-colonial cultural political tools used before and during the Mpondo revolts. In various interviews, people involved in the strike and those who were present on the mountain noted that,

The leaders were elected on the basis of their historical leadership in recreational spaces, the community and the workplace. Mambush, or 'the man in the green blanket', one of the leaders who was killed during the massacre, had obtained his nickname from a Sundowns' soccer player named 'Mambush Mudau'. He was chosen since he had organised soccer games and always resolved minor problems in the workplace. He was particularly well known for having a mild temperament and for his conflict-resolution skills both at the workplace and at his home in the Eastern Cape. (Alexander et al, 2012: 10)

In fact, in Chingono's own interviews, when speaking about the language they used during the strikes, the workers said they chose to use *fanakalo* (which is a truncated or mixture of language used by mine management to overcome language differences amongst workers, because they could not speak any African languages fluently). For the NUM officials (often more educated) the use of *fanakalo*, was racist and a marker of inferiority and poor education, but for the workers, who are mostly illiterate, "The committee used *fanakalo* because they are in touch with what's happening on the ground. Unlike NUM, they are in touch with reality. They know what is happening. The interim committee are people who are coming from within us...they are part of those doing the hard work...they know what is appropriate for the workers." This stress on electing people who were familiar with the workers and their way of doing

¹⁴ In fact, in one of my interviews with an anonymous member of the NUM, he blamed the massacre 'on counter-revolutionaries' who were trying to destroy the NUM and believed that the police were protecting themselves from the miners who had muti. When asked why, if the claims about muti being used to protect miners were true, were they killed by police, he replied, "Yes they died because that muti, is not strong. They use 9mm and not other guns, they use the short guns. I know muti because I come from there in the Eastern Cape. I know muti, these nyanga muti is coming coming from the Eastern Cape. Zabe Pondoland".

things, as well as the emphasis based on integrity and home –networks is extremely important in understanding how the subaltern sphere of politics functions at the mines. For one mineworker, “on the mountain, they had been eating together and making fire together, and it was like home” (Alexander et al, 2012: 33). Many said leaders were chosen because they had previously dealt with emergencies that occurred in their communities back home and took responsibility for things like informing family members of the death of mineworkers, ensuring that the body goes home and is transported to the funeral as well as collecting donations for the family of the deceased (Alexander, et al, 2012: 22).

In his research in Mpondoland in the Eastern Cape, Micah Reddy (2013: 31), recounts attending the funeral of Alton Joja, the traditional healer who allegedly gave muti to the men on the mountain and who was murdered in his home in Bizana, Mpondoland in March 2013 just before he was due to testify at the Farlam Commission (Sosibo, 2013b). The funeral was nationally documented and hundreds of people attended with the costs of the funeral borne by the migrant labourers. The men Reddy (2013: 31) accompanied claimed to have contributed R12 500 collected from their shaft alone. Reddy (2013: 31) notes that

“This sort of communal consumption has interesting parallels with beer drinking rituals among Gcaleka people of the Eastern Cape. McAllister has observed that these symbolic affairs play a crucial role in the process of labour migration. During these occasions, with their strong religious overtones and constant references to appeasing the ancestors, the migrant is reminded of his duties as a responsible man”

A further key responsibility of the worker committee (which was reconstituted a few times after people left, were intimidated, or murdered), was the ability of the elected representative to maintain peace and order and a commitment to the kind of leadership founded on the principles of negotiation and ‘keeping one’s cool’ (see Alexander et al, 2012: 2; 10; 11; 22; 104; 131). There are clear links here to the way in which chiefs chose their counsel in the 1800 – 1900s, to how mountain committees functioned during the Mpondo revolts and later how *mineworkers in the ethnically segregated hostels elected izibonga or room officials*. Furthermore, the stress on the

ability to maintain peace and order is consistent with Mbeki's stress on the ethical morality of mountain committees and their insistence on as little violence as possible (Drew, 2011: 79).

While the committees elected representatives of a certain caliber, the RDOs decided that they would approach management all together on the 11th of August to avoid intimidation and to protect each other and when it came time for negotiation, the elected officials would speak, since, as one person said, "We can all sing, but we can't all speak at once" (Alexander et al, 2012: 1). The representatives could also be rotated at any point, depending on their "negotiating capability and who they were speaking to" (Alexander, et al, 2012: 2).

The commitment to this style of engagement that prefaced the need for a flexible politics of inclusion and dynamism is reminiscent of the old moral economy rooted in a subaltern sphere of politics that allows for an open dialectic of experience where, people 'make the road by walking it'. The appearance of the *five madoda* (literally five men) at the mountain in Wonderkop is testament to this principle. While one person said that it was the police who asked for five elected representatives, the same person also remarks, "You see my brother, the *five madoda*, the word used by the police, they said they wanted the *five madoda*, that is the language they used. And that is the language we use in the mines (Alexander et al, 2012: 104). The *five madoda* were elected from the already existing committee, and could be rotated at any time, they were the negotiators and on the 14th of August they requested the employers come to the mountain to speak to them, but if necessary they would go to them (Alexander, et al, 2012: 31), this was never fulfilled¹⁵.

The mountain however, remained a [gendered] space for equality, negotiation, and consensus. Chingono (2013: 27) makes the point that the move to the koppie, in itself signaled a community in crisis, and all the men from the community, regardless of whether you were a mineworker or not were required to be there to show their solidarity. The outrage the men on the mountain expressed, when NUM National Chairperson, Senzeni Zokwana arrived in a police hippo and refused to get off and

¹⁵ The practice of rotational leadership during negotiation, as well as the stress on accountability and honour is also evident in urban struggles in South Africa, notably *Abahlali base Mjondolo* in Durban.

address the crowd, as an equal is reminiscent of the disgust people associated with Botha Sigcau in the helicopter during the Mpondo Revolts refusing to speak to the people to whom he was supposed to be accountable. The Hill committees, like the worker committee in Marikana and in earlier years on the gold mines, did not elect leaders but rather messengers and organisers, so they could avoid replicating the hierarchical structures of the chiefs (Wylie, 2011:203). The respect workers had for the *five madoda*, their counsel and elected representatives, is marked by workers kneeling 20metres in front of police vehicles as the five men went forward to negotiate on behalf of everyone, this has become a hallmark feature of the Marikana strikes.

The emblematic image of Mgcineni ‘Mambush’ Noki, standing above thousands of seated men with a raised fist above his signature green-blanket clad shoulders and a stick in his other hand, minutes before he spoke to police, demonstrates not only the reverence people had for him, but also the faith that, through days of counsel together, he would carry their demands to police and their employers so they could finally leave the mountain. Minutes after he spoke to police however he was killed in a shower of bullets that marked the beginning of the massacre. At the one-year commemoration held at the mountain this year, journalists Luke Sinwell and Simphiwe Mbatha (2013) recount how,

At about 3pm on 15 August 2013, 30 workers crouched down as if they were again under attack by the police. This time, however, they were not – and instead of carrying the machetes and spears that they gathered after being shot at last year by their own union, NUM, they now carried small sticks as symbols of their defence and resistance. The workers were attempting to connect to the spirit of the men who died on the mountain. At the centre of the workers' reflection was a man who has since become an icon of the struggle in Marikana and also a working class hero: Mgcineni Noki, 'The Man in the Green Blanket,' or 'Mambush' – as the workers affectionately call him.

The appearance of the *five madoda* at Impala Platinum mines in neighbouring Rustenburg, during a six-week strike in 2012, shows obvious links to other spaces of action. The worker’s committee at Implats was part of a broad strike that quickly led

to the demise of the NUM at the mines. Here too, people had elected representatives to negotiate on behalf of them outside of union structures and the reverence workers showed for the *five madoda* at Marikana was clearly neither unique nor isolated. Journalist Kwanele Sosibo (2012) describes his own experience at the strikes: “The machismo with which the committee carries itself can be seen, for instance, in how workers caution me to approach it with respect as I head in the wrong direction in the vicinity of Number Eight hostel, where AMCU's southern branch office is situated”. It was the Implats strikes in February 2012, which was organised through independent worker committees led by the RDOs and the *five madoda* and not the unions, which started the action on the platinum belt. The news spread to Lonmin through home-networks, which people still sustained and it was these home-networks which brought the news of the fall of the NUM. A striking resonance with the way in which peasant insurgents called for corrupt chiefs huts to be burnt down during the Mpondo Revolts is visible also in the songs used by mineworkers at Implats. “*Watsh' umuzi ka Zokwana* ([NUM president Senzeni] Zokwana's house is burning)” is an example of a refrain used to denote the continued downward slide of the NUM at the mine” (Sosibo, 2013).

In fact, it was also in the homes of community members and others that the strikers at Marikana, like the Mpondo rebels, sought refuge and shelter. Bhele described how many of them fled the mountain on the day of the massacre and ran into the community, seeking protection. Women in the community cared for their wounds when they were too scared to go to the hospital for fear of being arrested as many others had been. In another interview with the *Daily Maverick*, Bhele recounts going to the shop after the massacre to buy some groceries and “The owner offered him the items for free, as he has been doing for affected miners throughout the strike. Dlunga refused, saying the Somali had a business to run, and paid for the bread, tea and eggs. Yet Dlunga was, as he put it, “Broke, broke, overbroke” (Marinovich, 2012). Yet, there are many instances where shop-owners gave food to mineworkers for free, during and after the strikes, and some traders and men who were not employed by Lonmin went to the mountain in solidarity with the strikers. One such person recalls, “All the men from the community were required to be at the mountain as a show of support. Every morning they would blow a whistle across the entire neighbourhood calling all men to be at the koppie. We had no choice we had to be there. They argued

that everything in this community is about mining so everyone has to support the strike and will benefit in some way..." (Chingono, 2013: 27).

The shared struggle and the shared grief that followed is part of the complex cultural and political milieu of the Marikana strikes and massacre. It has clear links to ongoing struggles for land, access to the city and the right to live with dignity in urban social movements in South Africa and the rest of the world. This is only part of an attempt to make sense of the events that took place before, and after, the Marikana massacre and to show the continuation of a people's politics rooted in the struggle of the everyday. What is certain, like Mbeki (1964:126) wrote in the early '60s is that the revolts were the local praxis of larger political implications. Alain Badiou (2012: 80) provides an important articulation of locality and the space in which politics takes place when he writes:

Courage is the name of something that cannot be reduced to either law or desire. It is the name of subjectivity irreducible to the dialectics of law and desire in its ordinary form. Now, today, the place of political action – not that of political theory, political conceptions or representations, but political action as such – is precisely something irreducible to either law or desire, which creates the place, the local place, for something like the generic will.

We know that the strikers at Marikana were not led by Marxist theory or a socialist ideal but the massacre did spark countrywide protest immediately, it also inspired people who have been struggling for access to land to name a land occupation in the Western Cape and two in Kwa Zulu Natal after Marikana, in both cases Mpondo people were prominent organisers. These acts of defiance form part of a larger on-going resistance to the corruption, greed, and nationalist politics of the ANC-led government. Within this resistance we find at every level the everyday politics of race, class, gender, dignity and respect which coalesce around life on the mines in South Africa.

It is because of the history of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa that Fanon's (1976: 39) warning, "Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched every time we have to do with the colonial problem. Everything up to and including the very

nature of pre-capitalist society, so well explained by Marx, must be thought out again” becomes even more apparent. We must thus begin to re-think the frameworks used to speak about the massacre which do not deal with the points of connection between community politics and workers’ organisation and the political tools workers employ that do not find their articulation through class analysis. The subaltern sphere of politics which has persisted outside of the current state’s elite nationalist project calls for an openness to the way in which people actually organise and how conceptions and praxis of democracy within this sphere shape how people relate to formal structures like unions, the government and Lonmin.

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to do several things. Firstly, it has highlighted how Marikana was received in the elite public sphere in South Africa, and how colonial discourse on ethnicity and culture came to characterise the strikes. Rather than a conversation with workers about the political organisation of the strikes, many chose rather to speak to ‘official voices’ or to draw their own conclusions. Workers, it seemed, were only engaged to explain what were imagined to be the ‘cultural peculiarities’ of the strikes.

Secondly, it has shown how often narrow and reductionist Marxist and liberal frameworks create linear trajectories of development and struggle and that these theories are often the base from which most elite nationalist historiography is written in way which disciplines other subaltern narratives of resistance through these frameworks. It then showed how several narratives of experience have been silenced in elite nationalist historiography in South Africa.

The erasure of the history of the Mpondo Revolts is an example of how the rural sphere has been ignored and anthropologised as a set of quiescent, ‘backward,’ or ‘traditional’ spaces where people are represented as bearers of culture and ethnicity in a rainbow nation society. In these accounts, ethnicity and culture are not profoundly linked to the political or to political praxis that, sometimes, functions differently from western/liberal conceptions of electoral elite democracy. By exploring the history of the Mpondo revolts, and the pre-colonial political organisation of Mpondo society, it is possible to locate a subaltern sphere of politics, which still functions, apart from the ‘official domain’ of politics in the elite public sphere in South Africa. The exploration of recent historiography on the Mpondo Revolts not only revealed the presence of a subaltern sphere of politics, but also that of a silenced sphere of women’s political actions and resistance. If subaltern studies was highlighting an absence of the subaltern from history, this has been a parallel attempt to show how women remain stuck in the kind of domesticity which consistently renders them outside of the realm of the political, even when, at times of insurrection, subaltern men briefly appear politically active, women are often relegated to the margins. It becomes clearer as one reads the history of the Mpondo revolts, that women’s resistance, of which little is

known and documented, functioned to strengthen and sustain the revolts and the subaltern sphere of politics in Mpondoland.

It then becomes possible to link the use of this mode of subaltern politics to worker organisation on the mines during the 1948 – 1984 period when there were no unions on the mines. Workers on the South African mines therefore, without trade union bargaining structures used other modes of politics to negotiate with management on the mines, what Dunbar Moodie, following E.P Thompson calls, The Moral Economy of the mines. This moral economy functioned well into the 1980s, even after the arrival of the NUM, which had to reckon with the old structures of bargaining in order to organise workers into the new union. After the NUM revolutionised the mines in the late 1980s, during the post-apartheid era, the NUM under its umbrella organisation COSATU has become increasingly distant from its constituency. When workers at Lonmin felt that they could no longer trust the NUM to represent them or to take their concerns seriously, they returned to other modes of political organisation.

The presence of other forms of democratic praxis during the strikes at Lonmin, Marikana, which are not captured by reductive Marxist or liberal frameworks of analysis points to the continuation of a subaltern sphere of politics. Although these forms have evolved and changed over the years, there is a common thread that continues to link migrant workers in Marikana to their home-base in the Eastern Cape.

What has been explored in the thesis is an alternative narrative, which broadens our understanding of why and how workers acted when they felt they were being treated unjustly by the NUM and Lonmin. It is not suggesting that class analysis is not useful in explaining the strikes but that, in its reductionist form, it has serious limitations, especially when it comes to race, gender, ethnicity, and community. It has shown how culture cannot be mobilised purely to explain away ‘peculiarities’ about the strikes that cannot be explained by modernist theory. It has been shown that in fact culture is central to understanding the political praxis of people and how they access universal ideas of dignity, recognition, and respect. This political praxis is a challenge to the narrow conceptualisation of the modern, and it provides a way in which to open up a

discussion of what counts as political modernity in South African post-apartheid society.

It argues also, that most labour and nationalist historiography has been silent on the political contributions of women because of how reductive modes of Marxist and liberal analysis frame struggles through disciplined notions of work and resistance. Rather than objectifying workers as representative of a homogenous and universal class of people devoid of context, the thesis has linked ‘the worker’ to the community from which s/he comes and community specific struggles, which are supported and sustained, often, by the parallel struggles of women in the community.

Chingono (2013: 30) has outlined that the social distance between people living in Nkaneng and union shaft stewards is compounded because most of the striking workers came from the shack settlements and had to face the harsh realities of living in a space without land, housing or access to services, while NUM branch committee members lived in family units or in Rustenburg, Skoomplaas or Mooinooi (nearby suburban places).

Many of the RDOs who started the strike came from outside of the local community, most from Mpondoland, and therefore live in Nkaneng in harsh conditions. This means that their struggles are fundamentally linked to the poor conditions that they are forced to live in, and the militancy and determination of many came from a refusal to live without dignity. This is a struggle that is not similarly faced by union representatives, who are usually paid more, or employees who are from the area and have access to land, housing, and government services. For many workers on strike, a living wage didn’t merely signify more money but also an all-round better standard of living, which would also translate to improving the conditions of the community where they live. These sentiments are strengthened by the women’s movement that began to mobilise around the same community-specific issues, which differentiated Nkaneng from other communities living around the mines.

The women who started *Sikhala Sonke*, during the time of the strikes made their presence in the felt in the popular and elite public spheres. In many ways, they shattered the conception of the mines as a masculine and male-populated space as

well as stereotypical beliefs of women on the mines only being there because they are involved in sex-work or beer brewing. Their political interventions in the public sphere meant that they could no longer be ignored or left out of political life on the mines. It was their marches and actions, which drew public attention to police brutality and the harsh conditions in which people in Nkaneng have to live. The strikes on the koppie could no longer be divorced from the struggles for dignity in the workplace and the community, and these two spheres of political action made that abundantly clear.

We know that the strikers at Marikana were not planning a countrywide insurrection against capital, but that the massacre, which sparked countrywide protest immediately after formed part of a larger on-going resistance to the corrupt, greed, and nationalist politics of the ANC-led government. Marikana moved people who were frustrated and relegated to the margins of civil society, to take the center.

Micheal Neocosmos (2012:531) uses the term ‘displacement’, from which we can begin to think about politics beyond ‘social location,’ or ‘state-subjectivities.’ Here an emancipatory project arises from a movement ‘out of place,’ in which those who are allocated a place, in which they are not supposed to think, do. It has long been the practice of Marxist historians to construct histories through the created categories of class and social location to capital, by disciplining history through rigid notions of time and linear development and leaving out a myriad of other human experiences and relations to an everyday lived reality. This thesis has shown how this everyday lived reality has informed the struggles of mineworkers and their families and that it is this experience, and a fidelity to a localised conception of democratic praxis that moved strikers to the koppie in the days before the massacre. While many have and will continue to argue that the cultural aspects of the strikes were peculiarities that ‘do not fit’ with the challenge mineworkers, as the working class, were posing to capital during the Marikana strikes, this has been an attempt to tell a different story founded in culture, society, politics and what Aimé Césaire called, “A humanism made to the measure of the world” (Césaire, 1972: 22).

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