

# **Social history, public history and the politics of memory in re-making ‘Ndabeni’’s pasts**

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A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

**Masters of Arts in Public and Visual History**

Keywords: District Six, Forced removals, Heritage, Land Claims, Memory, Ndabeni, Popular history, Public history, Social history, Uitvlugt.

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Sipokazi Sambumbu, declare that

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is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

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**Sipokazi Sambumbu**

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**Date**



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This project would not have been a success without my supervisor Professor Ciraj Rassool, who has been a consistent mentor to me since 2007. I would like to thank him for his patience, guidance and kind support.

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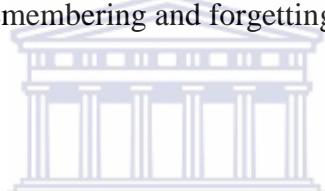
In a special way, I thank my husband Ngqabutho Madida for his loving support and encouragement, which never stopped even when he was abroad. I thank the rest of my family for their understanding when I could not be in regular contact with them for extended periods due to this project.

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## INTRODUCTION

### SOCIAL HISTORY, PUBLIC HISTORY AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY IN RE-MAKING ‘NDABENI’S PASTS

It has been over a century since African<sup>1</sup> people were forcibly removed by official decree in 1901, from the Cape Town dockland barracks and District Six, to Uitvlugt, a farm where a location of corrugated iron ‘huts’ had just been constructed. This occurrence followed an outbreak of a bubonic plague in Cape Town in 1901, which became predominant among the Africans who worked at the docks, and who were in direct and constant contact with the main carriers of the disease, i.e., the rats coming out of ships from Europe. The outbreak resulted in African being stigmatised as diseased, and being banished to the outskirts of the city.<sup>2</sup> Since then, knowledge about this historical occurrence has been continuously produced, presented and communicated in many ways. It has featured in many representations through memory, heritage and history.

In 1902, the new residents of Uitvlugt gave the location the name kwa-Ndabeni. Ndabeni was a nickname that the residents had given to Walter Stanford who had chaired the commission that recommended for the establishment of the location in 1901. The prefix kwa- was added to the name so that it meant in Xhosa language, the place of Ndabeni. In that way, the residents, who at that time did not consider the

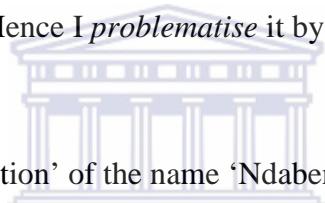
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<sup>1</sup> I use the term ‘African’ here to refer to people of the black racial category, people with African origins, such as the Nguni, Sotho, Tswana, Pedi, Venda, Shangaan and Tsonga.

<sup>2</sup> See, Swanson W.M, ‘The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909’, in *Journal of African History*, XVIII, No. 3, (1977).

location as a potential place of their permanent abode, named it in a way that disassociated them from the place.<sup>3</sup>

However, as knowledge about the location and its people became produced in various sites and in various contexts, the location acquired an invented name ‘Ndabeni’. It was the name ‘Ndabeni’ not kwa-Ndabeni that was incorporated into the Locations Bill, used in official correspondences and documented in state records. In this mini thesis, kwa-Ndabeni and ‘Ndabeni’ are different from each as representations of the place that once was Uitvlugt. I regard the name ‘Ndabeni’, which began appearing in state official records and reports as early as 1901, as an invention and as a construction of state policy and historiography. Hence I *problematised* it by writing it with inverted commas.



I also associate the ‘resurrection’ of the name ‘Ndabeni’ from the archives with the emergence of the social history in the 1970s. It is the social histories of the 1970 and the 1980, that failed to *problematis*e the name ‘Ndabeni’, and that affirmed it instead, thus granted it further authority. Consequently, the name was adopted in subsequent projects and employed in the constructions of popular and public histories that emerged in the 1980s and 90s. The location residents, who had named the location kwa-Ndabeni, also tended to adopt the name ‘Ndabeni’ when constructing knowledge that was to be verified against ‘official’ records. However, in their most nostalgic moments -such as during construction of memories for heritage production-, the name kwa-Ndabeni always resurfaced. The association between their nostalgia and the name kwa-Ndabeni also became more evident when they expressed themselves in Xhosa language.

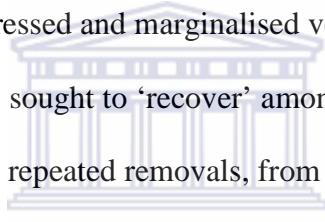
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<sup>3</sup> See, Saunders C, ‘Segregation in Cape Town: The Creation of Ndabeni’, *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol.1, (1978), p 56.

In this work I therefore use kwa-Ndabeni to refer to the physical location that existed until 1936, and to refer to that which the former residents and their descendants refer to. I use ‘Ndabeni’ to refer to the invented location, that which appears in written records and that which social historians have constructed as an embodiment of pain, suffering and struggle. I also use kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ to refer to the location as it could have meant any of the two names in a particular text. I also use ‘Ndabeni’ to refer to the location as it could have been used in the particular text referred.

Since 1901, kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ marked pages of state administration records such as Population Registers, Natives Registers, Departmental Reports, Commission Reports, Census Reports and Police and Court Records. It has also featured in newspapers such as the *Cape Times* and the *Cape Argus*. It has also been the subject of articles that covered forced removals, health issues, protests, marches, boycotts, and particular lawsuits. As early as the 1930s, knowledge production about homogenised groups such as the displaced and the dispossessed began introducing significant dynamics to South African historiography. It introduced knowledge about that which had in the past been suppressed or relegated; knowledge about the oppressed masses, especially knowledge about the workers and the working class movement. Such dynamics were to later provide valuable knowledge for worker education and training, political debates and mass mobilization for the liberation struggle. They were to raise awareness about places such as kwa-Ndabeni, its social conditions, its working class struggles, and its resistance movement. Such was the kind of popular historical knowledge which was to become highly valued and sought after in the 1970s and 1980s.

At the same time, the late 1970s and the early 1980s period, which coincided with the growth of resistance movement, saw another shift in South African historiography. The shift brought about the emergence of social histories that sought to challenge the hegemonic approaches to the past. Becoming the means to ‘*write your own history*’,<sup>4</sup> the focus of social histories was more on the people from within the dominated classes. Many ‘ordinary’ people, as well as those who were associated with political and working class movements contributed to the production of histories about themselves and about their movements. Many academic social historians located in institutions of higher learning, also took it upon themselves to produce ‘new’ histories that sought to recover the previously suppressed and marginalised voices. In the same vein, a few Cape Town social historians sought to ‘recover’ among others, voices of the African workers, who had ‘suffered’ repeated removals, from District Six to kwa-Ndabeni / ‘Ndabeni’, and from kwa-Ndabeni / ‘Ndabeni’ to Langa.<sup>5</sup>



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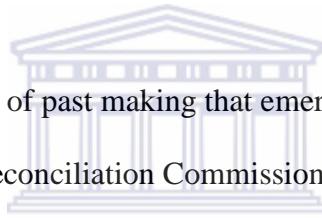
In addition to that, the birth of democracy in South Africa in 1994 also created a positive atmosphere; spaces and opportunities through knowledge could be constructed and represented within public spaces such as museums, public galleries, tourist sites and

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<sup>4</sup> See Witz L; *Write Your Own History*, (Johannesburg: Sached / Ravan, 1988).

<sup>5</sup> For essays and articles about the forced removals from District Six, see, Jeppe S and C Soudien, (eds.), *The Struggle for District Six, Past and Present*, (Cape Town: Buchu Books, 1990). For the social history about the experiences of African people who were removed to kwa-Ndabeni, see, Saunders C, ‘Segregation in Cape Town: The Creation of Ndabeni’, *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol.1, (1978), and Barnett N, ‘Ndabeni 1901-1910: Towards a Social History. The first Ten Years of Cape Town’s First Official Location’, Honours Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1985). About the histories of the African workers who suffered forced removals in Cape Town, see, Wilson M and A Mafeje, *Langa: A study of social groups in an African Township*, (Cape Town: O.U.P, 1963), Kondlo K.M, ‘The Culture and Religion of the People of Langa During the Period ca. 1938 to ca. 1958’, Honours Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1990), Musemwa M, ‘The Struggle for survival: The municipalisation of business enterprise in Langa Township and the African response, 1927-1948’, in Van Heyningen E (ed.), *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 7, (1994) , and Molapo Rachidi, ‘Sports, festivals and popular politics’, aspects of social and popular culture in Langa Township, 1945-70, Masters Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1994).

themed environments. For example, the story of forced removals from District Six to kwa-Ndabeni, whose social history had been widely produced in the 1970s and 1980s, continued to be produced in different forms at it was represented at the District Six Museum and Langa Museum.<sup>6</sup> Other public sites on which historical knowledge about kwa-Ndabeni was constructed and represented were the V&A Waterfront and the various sites that tourist visited in Langa, such the Guga S'thebe Arts and Cultural Centre. Thus, in the post-apartheid South Africa, public institutions had become spaces and sites of knowledge construction and past making. These did not only embrace, validate, and endorse popular and social histories; they further constructed public histories, while also providing space for the histories constructed to be developed.



Among numerous platforms of past making that emerged in South Africa soon after 1994, were the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings, and the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights (CRLR). While both commissions made use of archival sources, oral testimonies, popular and social histories and points of reference for both commissions, historical knowledge was further constructed, popularised and publicised at the sites of the commissions. As individual and collective experiences, memories, narratives and histories became tested against others at the sites of the commissions, certain historical knowledge about occurrences such as forced removals became relegated, while some became endorsed.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See, Rassool C and Prosalendis S (eds), *Recalling Community in Cape Town: Creating and Curating the District Six Museum*, (Cape Town: District Six Museum, 2001). See also, Dondolo L, 'The Construction of Public History and Tourist Destinations in Cape Town's Townships: A Study of routes, sites and heritage', Masters Mini-thesis, (University of the Western Cape, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> For more on the knowledge constructions through the TRC and CRLR, see, Kondlo K.M, 'Restitution, Reconciliation and the Reconstruction of Memory of the Past: South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights', Paper presented to the workshop on 'History, Truth and Reconciliation: Memory matters in Africa', Basel University, Switzerland, (14 October 2002), and Mesthrie, U D, "The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission on

Since the passing of the Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994, former residents or descendants of the former resident of places like District Six and kwa-Ndabeni mobilised each other to lodge a land claims. The processes involved mobilizing a claimant ‘communities’, lodging their land claims as a groups, having the ‘communities’ educated and advised about the legal processes of land restitution, and appointing committees and trusts to represent each ‘community’ to facilitate their land claims and to administer resources on behalf of the ‘communities’. These processes became major opportunities for construction of identities, while the public events which the ‘communities’ held also became sites and processes of production of memories and narratives.



Therefore, academic historical knowledge in the form of texts, popular histories in the form of booklets, magazines, newspapers, newsletters, television documentaries, radio programmes, films, fiction, as well as public knowledge in the form of museum exhibitions, public galleries, commemorations, monuments, statues, national symbols, naming processes, and ‘national’ debates, can all be summarised as sites through which knowledge about kwa-Ndabeni or about forced removals in general was produced.

For example, through many events that celebrated land restitution such as the one that the former residents of kwa-Ndabeni held at Wingfield in 2001, historical knowledge was constructed. At that very site, certain memories and narratives were produced, which were to inform the making of further histories and heritages. Thus, in the process

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Restitution of Land Rights: Some Comparative Thoughts”, Paper presented at the “The TRC: Commissioning the Past” conference, (University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 1999).

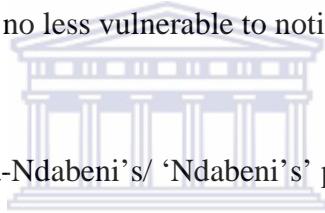
of constituting the democratic South African a unified, reconciled and developed ‘rainbow nation’, places, events, and identities of people such as the former residents of kwa-Ndabeni and their descendants became matters of ‘national’ attention, public interest, and public spectacle.

However, as much as kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ featured in popular, social and public histories over time, its representations varied with political and socio-economic conditions. Its historical constitution was marked by a series of subjective inclusions and exclusions, selective telling and silences. While social histories produced by Christopher Saunders and Naomi Barnett qualified ‘Ndabeni’ as a place unsuitable for human dwelling, in the land claims process, the former residents of kwa-Ndabeni presented nostalgic reminiscence of the place. This could be attributed to the complex politics of memory, as remembering, forgetting and telling were all culturally mediated. Colonial knowledge had deliberately suppressed voices, opinions and experiences of the African people, constructing a tainted public knowledge that perpetuated stereotypes and stigma about them. However, popularised histories of forced removals saw people asserting themselves in the knowledge sphere, and claiming their stake in the popular and public memory about the national struggle against apartheid.

Even so, social history - as supposed counter-knowledge about forced removals in Cape Town – did not contribute much in transcending the hegemonic methodologies that characterized colonial history. It used individual oral testimonies about the ‘past’ District Six and kwa-Ndabeni uncritically to represent a collective homogenous body of

African people with a collective experience and memory.<sup>8</sup> Restricted by ‘limited records’, social historians tended to rely uncritically on records that they were buried deep in the archives, and to certify those as ‘truths’ by validating them with oral testimonies, images and objects.<sup>9</sup> They employed a methodology of regarding images and *orality* as being subordinate to text, while at the same time regarding oral testimonies and images mined from the archives as real, authentic, true and unmediated.

This practice became unremitting, just as it further generated uncritical heritage representations and further stereotyping, subjugation and silencing of certain groups of people. In that way, social histories which became represented in public realms such as museums have proven to be no less vulnerable to notions of time and dominant politics.



This work is about how kwa-Ndabeni’s/ ‘Ndabeni’s’ past has been understood within four modes of historicising namely: popular history; social history; public history; and the politics of memory. Social historians who have sought to recover history of the ‘former oppressed’ from the margins have produced ‘Ndabeni’s’ history. Under the subject forced removals: ‘Ndabeni’ was ‘recovered’ and inserted into broader histories of national struggle, a past which presumably ‘deserved’ recognition as it had led South Africa to where it was after 1994. The history of kwa-Ndabeni was also framed in the worlds of heritage. It featured in heritage institutions such as the District Six Museum

<sup>8</sup> Many personal accounts on forced removals that have formed part of museum exhibitions, popular literature, songs, plays and films, have been presented to represent collective suffering, pain, anger, fears, ideas and ideals of groups of people rather than those of individuals.

<sup>9</sup> In the case of ‘Ndabeni’, the social history that has been written so far has been based on archived materials such as the Cape Parliamentary Papers, British parliamentary Papers, government publications and notices, and departmental and commission reports. See for example, Swanson M. W, ‘The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909’, in *Journal of African History*, XVIII, 3, (1977), Saunders C, ‘Segregation in Cape Town: The Creation of Ndabeni’, in *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 1, (1978) and Barnett N, ‘Ndabeni 1901-1910: Towards a social history, The first ten years of Cape Town’s first official location’, Honours Thesis, University of Cape Town, (1985).

and Langa Museum. Its story formed part of the narratives given during township tours, as well as of public exhibitions and displays. It shaped contexts of commemorations, memorials, public debates, meetings and public performances. Finally, kwa-Ndabeni ‘Ndabeni’ featured as in land claims as an embodiment of cases through which the politics of memory, contestations and emergence of alternative memories and narratives were to manifest.

This work performs an investigation into the way in which experiences, memories, narratives, histories and heritages have made the past, the present and possibly the future of kwa-Ndabeni. It seeks to trace the making of kwa-Ndabeni from the construction of popular historical knowledge and the emergence of social histories, up to the current public histories. The approach that this work employs is that of considering all forms in which knowledge about kwa-Ndabeni has been represented, as sites of knowledge production. It analyses histories and heritages presented in texts, images, films, songs, memorials and artefacts, in order to understand their contexts and meanings, and in order to track their changes, as contexts and meanings changed. This work studies the link between politics, public policies, public projects, occurrences, events, images, and the construction of kwa-Ndabeni’s past in the present. It also interrogates the socio-political contexts in which former residents of kwa-Ndabeni and their descendants asserted themselves to lodge a land claim in 1995, as well as to re-insert themselves into the urban landscape of Cape Town and into the land heritage of South Africa.

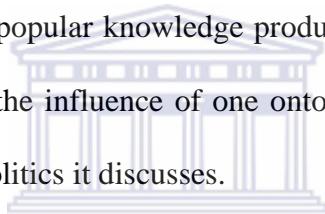
This work therefore uses a close study of kwa-Ndabeni to critique the making of the South African pasts in the present, as well as the role of memories in shaping history

and heritage perspectives. It engages the notions of power, memory, time and paradigm shifts, by examining the politics through which kwa-Ndabeni's pasts have become produced and represented through different genres and formats. This work is not aimed at doing any further recovery work, but at problematising the existing work in the form of history and heritage.

Chapter One traces the processes through which historical knowledge about kwa-Ndabeni has been produced, by looking at the transactions that have characterised academic social histories and popular histories. It evaluates the South African popular historiography of the early and late 1900s by examining its intonations and narratives, as well as the way it shaped local knowledge production processes. The chapter examines processes by which early political and labour activists like Sol Plaatjie, Eddie Roux, Solly Sachs and Alfred Mangena mediated knowledge about Africans and their working class struggles, and by which their works and ideas became popularised among the workers. It also examines the processes through which knowledge was produced and popularised through political bodies between the 1930s and 1950s.

From the late 1950s and the early 1960s to the late 1970s, most of South African history was produced outside the country due to a ban on political organisations. This chapter also traces those developments in the production of South African history, up to the emergence of social histories in the late 1970s. It evaluates the works that social historians such as Maynard Swanson, Christopher Saunders and Naomi Barnett produced about kwa-Ndabeni / 'Ndabeni'.

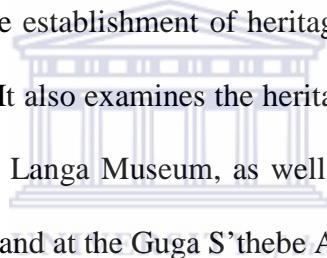
From the late 1970s, political activity and unrest in the country gradually rose, reaching its height in the late 1980s and early 1990s. During this period, alongside social histories, popular histories were produced. Chapter One also studies the emergence of History Workshops that was spearheaded by academic historians based in Johannesburg and Cape Town. It evaluates the processes through which social historical knowledge was been produced, while it was at the same time popularised in these history workshops. It examines the kind of knowledge that was produced, as well the effects and impacts that such knowledge was to have in the construction of memories and narratives about forced removals among the people of kwa-Ndabeni, and among other victims of forced removals in Cape Town. Finally, the chapter discussed the politics that have been involved in popular knowledge production, by studying its popular and social history foundations, the influence of one onto another, as well as the meanings that could be made of the politics it discusses.



Chapter Two evaluates knowledge that has been produced and presented, and that continues to be produced about kwa-Ndabeni in public spaces around Cape Town. Such knowledge can be found and can be engaged with in sites and street names, commemorations, memorials, monuments, statues, songs, and tourist attractions, public images and exhibitions on which it is engraved. The chapter also evaluates the naming of Langa as a township, the naming of its streets and sites, as well the meanings that could be constructed out of the names. It also evaluates some images and texts about kwa-Ndabeni, that are displayed at the V&A Waterfront, the old Breakwater Prison, now UCT Graduate Business School and Lodge, as well as the exhibitions of forced removals from District Six to kwa-Ndabeni, that are found at the District Six Museum.

The chapter examines the construction of each of these as well as the possible meanings that could be produced out of them by those who get to engage with them.

The chapter also discusses sites and processes of production of heritage about kwa-Ndabeni. It studies heritage as produced at the District Six Museum, by tracing mobilisations of communities around land claims, the involvement of Langa ‘community’ in such events, the insertion of kwa-Ndabeni in the *Digging Deeper* exhibition, as well as the objectives and meanings that the District Six Museum sought to derive and to construct through inserting kwa-Ndabeni in its representations. The chapter also studies heritage as produced in Langa, by examining the bodies and processes through which the establishment of heritage institutions and cultural centres in Langa was spearheaded. It also examines the heritage production processes that gave rise to the establishment of Langa Museum, as well as the heritage representations in and around Langa Museum and at the Guga S’thebe Arts and Cultural Centre.



The chapter also evaluates processes by which kwa-Ndabeni land has been constructed as heritage by other residents in Langa, by evaluating claims laid by the ‘Ndabeni land claimant community’ and the AmaHlubi Heritage Council. Finally, the chapter discusses the politics by which kwa-Ndabeni and Langa heritage have been produced, by studying processes involving meritizing and selecting knowledge. It also does that by examining the objectives for the selections made, as well as meanings that could emerge out of the representations.

Chapter Three expresses my thoughts on the post-apartheid land reform policies, land claiming processes, memory and identity making projects associated with land claims.

It examines the objectives, the principles and the standards that have motivated new processes of identity making in relation to land in the democratic South Africa. The chapter closely examines the foundations and subsequent constructions of an imagined ‘Ndabeni land claimant community’. It examines the principles that held this community as an imagined structure over the years, and that governed the character it assumed as it sought to claim its right to land. As a hypothesis, the chapter also sketches the processes and principles on which the imagination and the making of an identity of the ‘Ndabeni land claimant community’ could be founded.

Chapter Three also discusses the politics of memory and of oral histories, by examining the varying interests, memories and accounts that emerged from within the imagined ‘community’ of land claimants. It evaluates theories in relation to construction of memories and production of oral histories, and explores application of some of the theories to understand the developments around the ‘Ndabeni’ land claim. Finally, the chapter positions the status of the ‘Ndabeni’ land claim and land development within the broader national issues related to land disparities and restitution challenges. The chapter therefore ends the mini-thesis on a note that reflects on land issues that the country seems to battle to resolve, such as the issues epitomised by the ‘Ndabeni’ land claim.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **‘NDABENI’, THE SOCIAL HISTORIAN’S CRAFT AND THE POLITICS OF POPULAR HISTORY**

Processes by which historical knowledge is produced involve a series of transactions, all of which depend on the control by or the influence of historians (academic, popular, public) on what to make of the past in the present, as well as how to process it and present it for public engagement or consumption. Narratives become evaluated, selected and processed, a process which subsequently produces silences, controlled voices and controlled texts. In the same manner, Kwa-Ndabeni, a place whose forms, names and meanings have changed a number of times, has under the name ‘Ndabeni’ engaged a considerable part of Cape Town’s social and public historical knowledge. While it has featured in popular, social and public forms of historical knowledge, more ‘authoritative’ knowledge about the place has been attributed to the social historiography of the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. However, social histories of the late 1970s adopted the invented name ‘Ndabeni’ from archival records in the form of state registers, commission reports, ‘official’ correspondences, and newspapers, affirmed it, and gave it enough authority to represent kwa-Ndabeni.

#### **‘Ndabeni’ in early popular history**

Popular history in the context of this work refers to radical historical knowledge produced in a democratised way, packaged and presented to reach wider audiences in a

manner that seeks to inform, educate and popularize certain ideas among the ‘masses’.

There exists a considerable visibility of kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ in Cape Town popular themes produced between the 1930s and 1950s. In this period, the place kwa-Ndabeni drew attention of many labour and political activists, from within and without the location, that were to produce and popularise knowledge pertaining to social, economical and political conditions of the place and its dwellers.

From as early as the 1930s, a number of writers emerging predominantly from the spheres of political and labour activism, contributed knowledge to urban South African historiography, that was to draw attention to the conditions and struggles of African workers in urban spaces. They produced popular histories that were to accomplish a great deal in facilitating worker education and mobilisation, and in shaping local knowledge production processes and a number of resistance activities that were to follow. Reference can be made to the works of early political activists and trade unionists such as Sol Plaatjie, Albert Nzula, Solly Sachs, Bill Andrews, Clements Kadalie, Lionel Foreman, Albert Luthuli, Edward Roux, and Jack and Ray Simons.<sup>1</sup>

Having as central themes land loss, forced removal, migrant labour, racial segregation, living and working conditions, the works of these writers drew a lot of attention to racial inequality and the plight of workers in urban spaces. Circumstances such as those

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<sup>1</sup> Plaatjie was the first General Secretary of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), later renamed African National Congress (ANC). Nzula was the first General Secretary of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), later renamed South African Communist Party (SACP). Sachs was the General Secretary of Garment Workers Union (1927 to 1950). Andrews was a member of CPSA as well as Secretary of Trades and Labour Council. Kadalie was the President of Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU). Luthuli was the President General of the ANC. Roux and Jack and Ray Simons were members of the Unity Movement’s Teachers’ League.

of the people of kwa-Ndabeni featured in many ways in their writings, many of which were to inform popular histories of the entire twentieth century. Issues of displacement, landlessness, migration, worker abuse and exploitation in Southern Africa – all of which directly or indirectly defined the people of kwa-Ndabeni – were themes that have featured significantly in these works. In that way, primary knowledge and identities of people and places like kwa-Ndabeni was to be continuously constructed. For example, starting from Plaatjie’s account on the effects of the 1913 Native Land Act on Africans; through Nzula, Sachs and Foreman’s labour histories; numerous working class auto / biographies; as well as Roux’ and Simons’ worker education series, all these works could be read as illustrations of kwa-Ndabeni location and its people.<sup>2</sup> Although most of these writers wrote about their personal experiences, as leaders of political organisations and trade unions, they attempted to place themselves in the position of the ‘oppressed’. Also, as they emerged from and as they represented the masses, the kind of knowledge that these works produced was meant to counter the ‘formal’ supposedly hegemonic academic histories of the time, by presenting unconventional, rather suppressed stories.<sup>3</sup>

Between the 1930s and 1950s, these histories slowly became popularised through various forms of media, and became subjects of consumption, engagement and discussion by workers. The works of these authors began to be used, or to provide bases

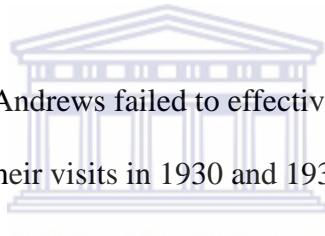
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<sup>2</sup> For the early writings on the histories of the ‘oppressed’, see for example, Plaatjie S, *Native Life in South Africa: Before and Since the European War and the Boer Rebellion*, (London, 1916); Nzula A et.al., *Forced Labour in Colonial Africa*: (Moscow, 1933); Sachs S, ‘Ten Years in Service of the Garment Workers’, in *Garment Worker / Klerewerker*, (November, 1936); Roux E, *Time Longer Than Rope*, (London, 1940); Sachs S, *Rebel Daughters*, (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1957); Luthuli A, *Let My People Go*, (London, 1962). Some of these works were re-published later in other parts of the world.

<sup>3</sup> Most of these writers were leaders or members of organisations that represented the ‘oppressed masses’ in South Africa. Also see, note 1.

for educational material for workers and the oppressed urban masses, and this early period has been marked as the beginning of popularisation of history in South Africa.<sup>4</sup>

Worker education through night schools, campaigns, as well as publications such as *Umsebenzi* of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), *Educational Journal*, *Trades and Labour Journal of South Africa*, and the popular education series of the South Institute for Race Relations, - in which Roux and the Simons contributed- gradually mobilised urban workers. They rose among workers, a strong worker awareness about poor working conditions, low wages, racial discrimination, inequality and injustice.<sup>5</sup> These issues were central to worker mobilisation, and their effective illumination and articulation bred effective resistance actions.



While Solly Sachs and Bill Andrews failed to effectively mobilise Cape Town workers in the clothing industry on their visits in 1930 and 1931 respectively, *Umsebenzi* played a vital role in motivating the few Cape Town workers that participated in the 1931 strike.<sup>6</sup> Although worker mobilisation proved to be slow paced in Cape Town compared to other parts of the country, disparities based on race and ethnicity were rife and construction of popular histories concerning such were on the increase among workers. By 1935, the dock workers in Cape Town had been ‘politicised’ to the extent of refusing to service Italian ships in solidarity with the oppressed workers in Italy and the

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<sup>4</sup> For more on the emergence and development of popular history in South Africa, see, Rousseau N, ‘Popular History in South Africa in the 1980s: The Politics of Production’, (University of the Western Cape, MA Thesis, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> See, Nicol M, “Joh’burg Hotheads” and the ‘Gullible Children of Cape Town’: The Transvaal Garment Workers’ Union’s Assault on Low Wages in the Cape Town Clothing Industry, 1930-1931’, in Bozzoli Belinda, (ed.), *Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987), pp 213-214. See also, Witz L, “Solly Sachs: Servant of the Workers”, Masters Thesis, (University of Witwatersrand, 1984).

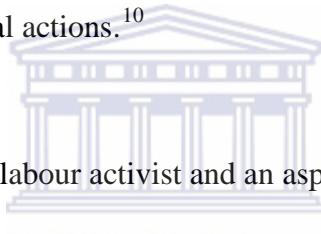
<sup>6</sup> For more on Solly Sachs, see, Witz L, “Solly Sachs: Servant of the Workers”, Masters Thesis, (University of Witwatersrand, 1984).

international Anti- Fascist movement.<sup>7</sup>

But, notwithstanding the fact that worker education and mobilisation had become more

structured and vastly popularised in the 1930s, such processes were not new among  
struggling workers in Cape Town, particularly among the people of Kwa-Ndabeni.

Alfred Mangena, a night school teacher and founder member of the South African  
Native National Congress (SANN), had since 1901 mobilised and led dockworkers  
and Kwa-Ndabeni residents through many resistance actions.<sup>8</sup> Under his leadership,  
these workers fought many struggles against ‘plague passes’<sup>9</sup>, low wages, poor working  
and living conditions, strict location rules and regulations, hikes in rent tariffs and train  
fares, as well as ‘unfair’ legal actions.<sup>10</sup>



Being a literate politician, a labour activist and an aspiring lawyer, and living among  
many illiterate and semi-literate Cape Town docklands and Kwa-Ndabeni residents,

Mangena was instrumental in facilitating construction of public knowledge about the  
conditions and struggles of Kwa-Ndabeni residents. He transferred his knowledge and  
perception of human rights and mass revolution to the people he led, while also

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<sup>7</sup> See, ‘The Heritage of Struggle’, in <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/congress/sactu/organsta02.html>

<sup>8</sup> In 1901, Alfred Mangena was appointed Senior Secretary or Chief Negotiator of the Table Bay Harbour Dockworkers, liaising between the workers and the Table Bay Harbour Board, before the workers were forcibly moved to the a new location, ‘Ndabeni’.

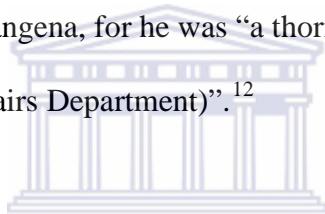
For more on other protests carried out by dock workers, see correspondences between the police and people like P. Songwevu, S. Sigmume, J. Mbangeni and A. Mangena, Nqute, Jack, Hana, Mteto / Mthetho, in Cape Archives, 1/CT 6/226, CA 1/CT 6/234, CA 1/CT 6/281, and CHB 262 and 268. See also, Bickford-Smith V, ‘Protest, organisation and ethnicity among Cape Town workers, 1891-1902’, in Van Heyningen E (ed.), *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol.7, (1994), pp 84-108.

<sup>9</sup> When a Bubonic Plaque broke in Cape Town at the beginning of 1901, African workers were required to be tested for the plaque and obtain ‘plague passes’ when they wanted to leave Cape Town. See, Bickford-Smith V, ‘Protest, organisation and ethnicity among Cape Town workers, 1891-1902’, in Van Heyningen E (ed.), *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 7, (1994), p 91.

<sup>10</sup> See, Bickford-Smith V, ‘Protest, organisation and ethnicity among Cape Town workers, 1891-1902’, in Van Heyningen E (ed.), *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 7, (1994), pp 85-108.

instigating the people to publicly articulate the meaning of their struggle and resistance actions. Being the *mobiliser*, leader, correspondent and mouthpiece of the African workers at both the docks and Kwa-Ndabeni, Mangena became an active constructor and mediator of knowledge about African workers in Cape Town.

Mangena also pioneered strategies of popularising historical knowledge and of politicising and mobilising workers through night schools or classes.<sup>11</sup> This strategy was to become popular among political organisations and trade unions for most of the twentieth century. For the popularity of Mangena's views and knowledge, Barnett perceives that from as early as 1902, new regulations were proposed to the government of the Cape, "to silence" Mangena, for he was "a thorn in the flesh of the SNA (Secretary to the Native Affairs Department)".<sup>12</sup>



Worth mentioning among the events which were to popularise Mangena and kwa-Ndabeni is a train boycott and a public demonstration of the 30 June 1902, a day which became known as Mangena Day. On this day hundreds of Africans, mainly kwa-Ndabeni residents, barricaded Maitland train station, in protest against train fare hikes and general living conditions at Kwa-Ndabeni. The event and its incidents claimed a considerable fraction of the Cape media, thus awarding kwa-Ndabeni some position in the local public and popular knowledge. Kwa-Ndabeni residents had "built a reputation for defending what they considered to be their inalienable rights". Such 'resistance identity' was to be carried over to Langa when these people were forcibly removed

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<sup>11</sup> For more on Alfred Mangena's activities, see, Echenberg J.M, *Plague ports: the global urban impact of bubonic plague, 1894-1901*, (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Barnett N, 'Ndabeni 1901-1910: Towards a social history, The first ten years of Cape Town's first official location', Honours Thesis, University of Cape Town, (1985), p 16.

from kwa-Ndabeni to Langa between 1927 and 1936.<sup>13</sup>

However, the popular knowledge that Mangena mediated concerning the conditions and struggles of the people of Kwa-Ndabeni in particular was not without counter-mediation and obstruction. ‘Official’ records in the form of commission reports, health survey reports, police and court records, etc, produced knowledge of a different tone from the one that depicted suffering due to poor living and working conditions.

Alternative knowledge repeated Africans as lazy and unwilling labourers, who could only wait for the government to devise means to save them from their situation, as they could not help themselves. According to the South African Natives Affairs Commission report of October 1903, Africans, with their laziness, loafing, filthy habits and substance abuse, were becoming a nuisance at the location. By August 1906, the ‘shameful’ state of the location had become an issue raised in the Legislative Council and highly publicised by the local media.

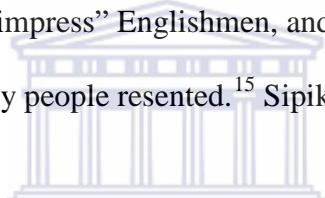
Part of this knowledge was mediated by some ‘concerned’ Kwa-Ndabeni residents and ‘would-be’ leaders emerging from the ‘moral’ side of the ‘community’. These mainly clergy and bourgeois such as Reverend Elijah Mdolomba, Reverend D. Tywakadi, Reverend Madliwa, Evangelist Ebenezer Makhubalo and William Sipika, also led many agitations and delegations which informed the state of the poor living conditions at Kwa-Ndabeni. Their views, which they expressed through delegations and

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<sup>13</sup> See, Musemwa M, ‘The Struggle for survival: The municipalisation of business enterprise in Langa Township and the African response, 1927-1948’, in Van Heyningen E (ed.), *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 7, 1994, p137.

correspondences sent to various government departments, began to feature in ‘official’ reports and records, and to be represented as valid knowledge about the location.

However, due to their main concern about what they expressed as a decline in morals and a rise in crime within the community, these informants often proposed solutions more ‘liberal’ compared to the ‘radical’ views Mangena held. While Mangena had been against a native location in the first place, people like Mdolomba and Sipika wished that the location would be a model and a credit to the government. They even approved a specimen cottage which the government erected at Kwa-Ndabeni to house ‘better-class’ natives.<sup>14</sup> Both Mdolomba and Sipika believed that once civilised and educated, Africans could “favourably impress” Englishmen, and were also in favour of the Native Advisory Board, which many people resented.<sup>15</sup> Sipika also became a Native headman later on.



Popular knowledge about the struggles and resistance of the African people in Cape Town continued to be constructed even when Africans were removed from Kwa-Ndabeni to Langa in the late 1920s. In Langa, further resistance against high rent rates, beer brewing regulations, and against legislations such as Pass laws, Native Service Contract, Masters and Servants Act, and the Native Laws Amendments, endured throughout the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>16</sup> During this time, a number of bodies such as Langa Advisory Board, Langa Branch of the National Liberation League (NLL), Langa

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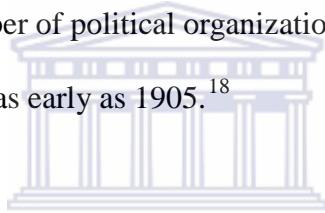
<sup>14</sup> See, Barnett N, ‘Ndabeni 1901-1910: Towards a social history, The first ten years of Cape Town’s first official location’, Honours Thesis, University of Cape Town, (1985), p 85.

<sup>15</sup> Barnett N, ‘Ndabeni 1901-1910: Towards a social history, The first ten years of Cape Town’s first official location’, Honours Thesis, University of Cape Town, (1985), p 97, paraphrased.

<sup>16</sup> Pass Laws required workers to carry documents that indicated their places of origin, residence and employment particulars, also putting Africans under curfew regulations. Under the Masters and Servants Act a ‘servant’ could be fined or imprisoned for absenteeism, disobedience, neglect, etc.

Vigilance Association, Bantu Commercial Union, All Africa Convention, Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) and the ANC, were formed. These steered resistance actions and knowledge and identity constructions among the people.<sup>17</sup> The political organisations among these bodies were particularly the main structures through which histories were produced and disseminated among the masses.

Furthermore, popular histories produced within and without kwa-Ndabeni and Langa in the 1930s to the 1950s, can be granted credit in shaping subsequent resistance activities that were to characterise the entire working class movement in Cape Town. The 1930s to the 1950s was a period of intensified political classes, debates, public meetings and rallies, facilitated by a number of political organizations and trade unions that had existed in Cape Town from as early as 1905.<sup>18</sup>



The 1940s in particular was an era during which, due to a wartime rise in commodity prices and increased competition in urban spaces, pressure was mounting on political movements to address many working class grievances. Potent efforts by the movements were soon to be demonstrated as resistance campaigns against discriminatory laws and policies mounted. In 1940 for example, political mass mobilisation and worker solidarity was displayed in mass actions and public demonstrations against the proposed clearance of District as a slum. Organisations and unions that were involved included

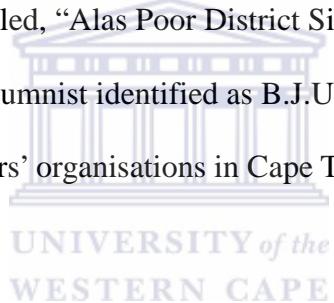
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<sup>17</sup> For more on the role played by each of the organisations, see, Musemwa Muchaparara, ‘The Struggle for survival: The municipalisation of business enterprise in Langa Township and the African response, 1927-1948’, in Van Heyningen E (ed.), *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 7, (1994), pp 133-161.

<sup>18</sup> These included African People’s Organization (APO), African National Congress (ANC), Communist Party, Industrial and Commercial Workers’ Union (ICU), the New Era fellowship, the National Liberation League, the Non-European United Front, the Non-European Unity Movement, the Train Apartheid Resistance Committee, and the South African Coloured Peoples’ Organization, the United Democratic Front, the Pan Africanist Movement of Azania and the Anti-CAD Movement.

the Chemical and Allied Workers' Union, the Sweet Workers' Union and the Tin Workers' Union, the General Workers' Union, the Domestic Workers' Union, the Office Cleaners' Union, the Communist Party of South Africa, the Non-European United Front (NEUF), and the People's Club.<sup>19</sup>

Fear of segregation was among popular sentiments shared by the masses at that time, sentiments which began to feature in popular local literature and media. While the subject of experiences of forced removals from District Six claimed some fraction in local novels, poetry and drama, local newspapers also constantly featured a series of articles, on which people publicly declared their aversion of the government's actions. For example, an article entitled, "Alas Poor District Six" was featured by the *Sun*, 27 April 1940, in which the columnist identified as B.J.U declared District Six a "workers' district", praising the workers' organisations in Cape Town for having the guts to voice that out.<sup>20</sup>



When the National Party took the reins of power in 1948, popular historical knowledge that had taken root since the early twentieth century continued to manifest in actions of resistance to new racial discriminatory legislations. For example, the working classes in Cape Town demonstrated increased solidarity and strength as they resisted the implementation of the Group Areas Act (GAA) of 1950 and the Bantu Education Act (BEA) of 1953. Both these Acts were set to achieve permanent separate and unequal 'development' between races, whereby the white race was positioned to benefit the

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<sup>19</sup> See, Barnett N, 'The Planned Destruction of District Six in 1940', in Van Heyningen E (ed.), *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 7, (1994), pp 162-183.

<sup>20</sup> Cited by Barnett N, 'The Planned Destruction of District Six in 1940', in Van Heyningen E (ed.), *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 7, (1994), pp 177-178.

most in the resources of the country. Among the most notable resistance to the BEA in the entire country was resistance to the establishment of school boards, launched by teachers and residents in Langa Township.<sup>21</sup> Many teachers and residents who were prominent in fighting the system were members of the Unity Movement, The Cape African Teachers Union (CATU) and the ANC, who had been ‘politically educated’ through dissemination of popular histories. It was through such instruments that popular histories were promulgated with success at least to the end of the 1950s.

The late 1950s and the early 1960s brought about a different scenario to the progress of historical knowledge production in South Africa. As the apartheid government set-out to put to an end resistance actions against its policies, production of ‘unofficial’ and ‘alternative’ histories was to be gravely affected. At the beginning of the 1960s, many political organisations were banned; political leaders, activists and collaborators were incarcerated or exiled, thus silencing alternative and popular voices. The period was marked by a great lull in production of popular historical knowledge inside the country, a period overtly defined by Rousseau as the “apparent silence of the 1960s”.<sup>22</sup>

The circumstance became however periodically punctuated by some gradually emerging liberal and radical historical academic scholarship. Many activists either exiled or operating ‘underground’ from within the country, continued to produce

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<sup>21</sup> Attempts to establish school committees in Cape Town, and in Langa in particular, were unsuccessful for two consecutive years, 1955 and 1956 due to parents’ resistance, For more, see, Hyslop J, ‘School Boards, School Committees and Educational Politics: Aspects of the Failure of Bantu Education as a Hegemonic Strategy, 1955-1976’, in Bonner P, et al (eds.), *Holding Their Ground: Class, Locality and Culture in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1989), pp 205-207.

<sup>22</sup> Rousseau N, ‘Popular History in South Africa in the 1980s: The Politics of Production’, Masters Thesis, (University of the Western Cape, 1994), p 22.

popular histories, many of which were published outside the country.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, a range of Africanists and radical intellectuals and academics inside and outside the country also continued to produce histories that sought to confront the supposedly subjective ‘master narratives’ in ‘official’ history.<sup>24</sup> Popular knowledge produced clandestinely continued to permeate the working class circles, while radical and liberally coined historical knowledge widely sponsored by international human rights bodies was even instructed at universities. Therefore, despite being banned, materials that were to rouse critical debate about issues of racial inequalities in South Africa continued to be smuggled into the country for circulation among the liberation movement.

Furthermore, the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement in the early 1960s made possible some continuity in the popular knowledge production, as well as a sprout of a new vibrant youth and trade union movement, which became prominent in the 1970s. It is through this movement that university based academic historians and intellectuals were to play a central role in the production of emerging ‘alternative’ histories known

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<sup>23</sup> For example, Edward Roux’s *Time Longer Than Rope*, first published in 1940 and re-published in USA in 1964; Jack and Ray Simons’ *Class and Colour in South Africa*, published in England in 1968; L. Kuper’s, *An African Bourgeoisie: Race, Class and Politics in South Africa*, published in New Haven in 1965; P. Walshe’s *The Rise of the African Nationalism: the African National Congress, 1912-1952* and Nelson Mandela’s *No Easy Walk To Freedom*, published in London in 1970 and in 1973 respectively. These materials together with other materials on related topics gathered from other parts of the world, would be smuggled into the country, reproduced and disseminated among the mass movement.

<sup>24</sup> For example, A Hepple’s, *Poverty Wages*, Y. Glass’s *Black Industrial Worker* and M Horrell, *A Decade of Bantu Education*, all published in Johannesburg in 1959, 1960, and 1964 respectively; S Van der Horst’s *African workers in town: a study of labour in Cape Town*, published in Cape Town in 1964; L. Kuper’s, *Passive Resistance in South Africa* and S Van der Horst’s, *Native Labour in South Africa*, both published in London in 1956 and 1971 respectively; E. Feit’s, *African Opposition in South Africa*, and G. Gerhart’s, *Black Power in South Africa since 1945*, both published in Stanford in 1967; and M. W Swanson’s, ‘The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909’ in *Journal of African History*, XVIII, No.3, published in New York in 1977.

as social histories, and in re-awakening production of popular histories.<sup>25</sup>

The knowledge production process that I have outlined above was however not as linear, continuous and problem -free as it may appear. As much as popular histories were used as tools of mobilisation - thus presenting the struggle as a continuous African tradition and identity -, it is imperative to guard against admitting without question the supposedly continuous pattern that popular histories have presented of the struggle.<sup>26</sup> As a matter of fact divergences and inconsistencies in popular knowledge production have occurred across regions and localities, due to differing patterns and personal experiences of human rights abuses and violations.

In Cape Town for instance, working class mobilisation had since the 1890s been conducted around colour, ethnicity, skills and literacy levels. In Bickford-Smith's outline of the coming into being of Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, Bricklayers' Society and Union, Tailors' Union, Typographical Union in Cape Town, race, ethnicity and level of skills and specialisation are at the centre of worker mobilisation.<sup>27</sup> Ray Adler also spells it out in his critique of certain policies of the Garment Workers Union under Solly Sachs that non-European members had been for a

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<sup>25</sup> Rousseau N, 'Popular History in South Africa in the 1980s: The Politics of Production', Master's Thesis, (University of the Western Cape, 1994), asserts that until the mid 1980s, these collaborative efforts by activists and academics tended to be located in historically white and liberal universities or independent resource / research or service structures. This she establishes as she examines knowledge production by the University of Witwatersrand and the University of Cape Town History Workshops.

<sup>26</sup> For more on a critique of histories of resistance, see, Rousseau N, 'Popular History in South Africa in the 1980s: The Politics of Production', Masters Thesis, (University of the Western Cape, 1994), pp 32-44.

<sup>27</sup> See, Bickford-Smith V, 'Protest, organisation and ethnicity among Cape Town workers, 1891-1902', in Van Heyningen E (ed.), *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 7, (1994), pp 85-108.

long time regarded and treated as inferior to Europeans members.<sup>28</sup> “Coloured workers were segregated into a ‘Number Two’ branch, with separate, and inferior offices, and with no representation on the Central Executive Committee”.<sup>29</sup>

Whether one was of European origin, a Yiddish-speaking Jew, a Polish speaking Jew, a Muslim or Malay mattered significantly, as each groups were considered different from the other in terms of their lifestyles, the kinds of jobs they were willing to settle for, as well as their bargaining approaches. Classification systems such as these were to put Africans living in places like kwa-Ndabeni at the lowest rung of the ladder, as they were widely considered the least skilled, least ‘civilised’ and least ‘proletarianised’ of the urban workers.



Moreover, as result of a weakened sense of community and ethnic rifts caused by segregation, displacement and racial and ethnic partisan policies that have dominated the twentieth century, there was for a while, an absence of formal political forces and unions in some localities. Cleavages along race, ethnicity, creed, gender, age, status, regional, local and other lines, have manifested in variations in patterns and levels of agency in local knowledge production. For example, quite a lot can be gathered in the form of articles, essays, novels, short stories, poems, letters etc, about the working classes in places like District Six, than about places like kwa-Ndabeni. Furthermore, workers in professional industries such as education and nursing, as well as those affiliated to churches and formal recreational bodies, have produced more knowledge

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<sup>28</sup> For more see, Adler R, ‘The Garment Workers’, in *Liberation*, (Johannesburg, September, 1957), pp 24-26.

<sup>29</sup> Adler R, ‘The Garment Workers’, in *Liberation*, (Johannesburg, September, 1957), p 25.

than the rest. This became the case even at kwa-Ndabeni. Names and identities that became prominent in popular histories of the workers' struggles were those of learned men like Alfred Mangena, of the clergy like Reverend Mdolomba, and of businessmen like William Sipika. Identities of many workers who might have played significant roles in the workers' movement remained suppressed.

This assertion seeks to dispel the notions of 'centrality of resistance', 'celebratory tendencies' and the 'triumphalist' approach' that early popular histories may have adopted in their presentation of mobilisation successes.<sup>30</sup> As Rousseau argues of the construction of African nationalism, a singular and continuous working class identity and resistance tradition is an unreal phenomenon that can only be imagined.<sup>31</sup> When imagined to exist, it constructs the working class movement as a united body with a timeless continuous tradition. It also breeds triumphalism and hagiography, which manifest in exaggerated exaltation and popularisation of certain places, events and 'heroes' as having played roles so central in the entire movement. In the actual fact deep divisions, discontinuities, confrontations and silences along the lines of class, gender, location, etc, have always existed within the working class movement.

As such, at popular histories of the workers' struggles in kwa-Ndabeni were mainly centred around men as leaders of delegations, protests, marches and boycotts, even though women had as early as 1902 formed a large part of the workers force. Even the men who became prominent leaders in popular were to be exalted as leaders and heroes

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<sup>30</sup> Phrases adopted from Rousseau's critique of popular history methodologies. See, Rousseau N, 'Popular History in South Africa in the 1980s: The Politics of Production', Master's Thesis, (University of the Western Cape, 1994), p 32.

<sup>31</sup> Rousseau N, 'Popular History in South Africa in the 1980s: The Politics of Production', Master's Thesis, (University of the Western Cape, 1994), pp 32-46.

of the workers' struggles like Alfred Mangena, William Sipika, Reverend Mdolomba, were of a higher ranking in terms of education, social affiliations and social status.<sup>32</sup> Alfred Mangena, although a dock worker, had a formal education in Natal before moving to Cape Town. While working as a dock worker, he continued to study privately towards a law degree, which he went to complete in England. William Sipika had begun as a dock worker but turned himself into a businessman, leasing out property and vending wood and coal. Reverend Mdolomba had acquired formal missionary education, was an ordained minister Wesleyan Methodist Church and lived in a mission house.

While leaders and activities of organisations like the All People's Organisation (APO) became popular around 1905, popular histories of Cape Town still featured leaders from kwa-Ndabeni who remained prominent during the entire early 1900s. In 1908 and 1909, popular knowledge was produced about a community of informed and articulate leaders from kwa-Ndabeni, which was vocal and influential concerning the Legislative Council Elections as well as the proposed constitution for the Union of South Africa.<sup>33</sup> Those included William Sipika, Evangelist Ebenezer Makubalo and Reverend Tywakadi, would still be a nominal representation of many man and women whose deeds remained unrecognised by popular histories.

In spite of the above rationalization, knowledge which was to insert Africans in the

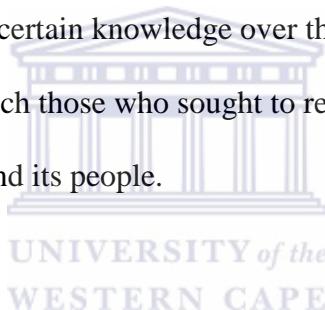
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<sup>32</sup> See, Barnett N, 'Ndabeni 1901-1910: Towards a Social History The first ten years of Cape Town's first official location ', Honours Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1996).

<sup>33</sup> Such knowledge was to later inform social histories of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. See, Saunders C, 'Segregation in Cape Town: The Creation of Ndabeni', in *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 1, (1978) and Barnett N, 'Ndabeni 1901-1910: Towards a Social History The first ten years of Cape Town's first official location ', Honours Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1996).

Western Cape urban space had been produced. An identity of a people who were to expand and occupy vast amounts of arid land, stream banks and ridges, in semi-formal and informal settlements of the Cape Flats, had been constructed. However, the rising militancy of the mid-1990s was to challenge this knowledge as one that had not done enough justice to the ‘true’ plight and the ‘true’ struggle of the African people in urban spaces. Efforts of those who ran the last mile in the struggle ‘race’ that had begun about a century ago, were to be prioritised in most cases of knowledge production.

However, when social histories began to emerge, attempts to construct kwa-Ndabeni took up new forms. Social histories began to appear as possible solutions to the problem of prioritization of certain knowledge over the other. Their methods appeared to be springboards from which those who sought to represent the ‘true’ nature and ‘identity’ of kwa-Ndabeni and its people.



### **‘Ndabeni’, a social historian’s craft**

Social history here refers to historical knowledge produced in a manner that seeks to recover supposedly marginalised, suppressed and silenced stories and voices, that fills ‘gaps’ in history, and that recognizes and employs new research methods to challenge, counter and offset hegemonic knowledge. Akin to popular history as it may seem, the disjuncture between the two lies mostly in their research and presentation methodologies, and more especially in the authority they confer upon their products.

Social history method has tended to adopt a realist approach to history production and

an emphasis on truth and evidence. Aspects of popular culture such as verbal and visual communications, which popular history thrive on, have been regarded as playing a role secondary, subordinate and supporting to ‘formal’ and academically produced texts.

Understandings of South Africa’s past produced from the vantage point of social history began to emerge in the late 1970s but only became firmly established in the 1980s.

Identifying gaps and to reverse the silencing of certain voices in history, social historians set out to fill those gaps and to *de-silence* certain narratives by producing histories ‘from below’, from the point of view of the ‘under-classes’, and to ‘give voice’ to the ‘voiceless’. Since the 1970s, liberal and revisionist work that was to shape the social histories of the 1980s, went through processes of evolution as new ways of approaching the pre-colonial and colonial pasts were being developed.<sup>34</sup> There were a number of academic historians mainly based in universities around the country, who responding to 1970s and the 1980s fertile political ground for confrontation of hegemonic historical knowledge, began to produce ‘alternative’ histories. For that purpose, the historians who were to acquire the social historians title, came together in the late 1970s, to establish ongoing history workshops, with oral history and memory projects - mainly based at the University of Witwatersrand and the University of Cape Town.

Identifying gaps and silences in history, and attributing those to disparities evident in the 1970s and 80s, social historians undertook researches about numerous social issues,

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<sup>34</sup> For example, Saunders explores Africanist, imperialist, structuralist and materialist approaches, through which liberal and revisionist historians had depicted pre-colonial and colonial African societies in the 1960s and 1970s. See, Saunders C, *The Making of the South African Past*, (Cape Town: David Phillips Publishers, 1988), Chapter 17.

among which was suppression and marginalisation of Africans. These issues had been diagnosed by early liberal and radical scholars, and some scholars had since the late 1960s sought to insert African voices into histories racial segregation and forced removals.

However, many efforts to see to full materialisation of these attempts became more evident though the social historical works of the 1970s and the 1980s. For example, seeking to recover in particular the voice of Africans in Cape Town, in 1976, Christopher Saunders and Shirley Judges wrote an article entitled “The Beginnings of an African Community in Cape Town”, on which they traced the coming into being of an African population in Cape Town, with much emphasis on immigration. For the knowledge they produced, the two had been informed by the report on the census of 1875, on which they relied much for migration figures, which they reproduced with less analysis.<sup>35</sup> The study tended to ignore evidence of existence of Africans in Cape Town before Frontier Wars.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the study failed to discuss in detail the position of the non-Xhosa speaking Africans like Sotho and Zulu, whom the census report had constructed as the ‘other’ in Cape Town. This manifested itself in a grave error of reducing the entire body of Africans in Cape Town into Xhosa speakers from the Eastern Cape, who lacked formal education and skills. Such grave error was to keep re-surfacing in subsequent social histories meant to represent locations such as kwa-Ndabeni.

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<sup>35</sup> See, Saunders C and Judges S, ‘The Beginnings of an African Community in Cape Town’, *South African Outlook*, (August 1976).

<sup>36</sup> Frontier Wars refers to the nine colonial wars of dispossession that were fought in the Eastern Cape between 1779 and 1878.

Even though Judges later employed a more overt approach in her study of Africans in Cape Town in the 1830s, she still failed to link the social condition under which the Africans lived with racial segregation policies.<sup>37</sup> Instead, Judges tended to discuss social conditions along the lines of education, training, skills and lifestyles, an approach which was later to be adopted by many social historians writing about ‘Ndabeni’. The African population in Cape Town, and later that of kwa-Ndabeni in particular, were again to be constructed as a homogenous group of uneducated, unskilled, poor and suffering Xhosa speakers from the Eastern Cape. Such social history approaches were to provide foundations and points of reference for more social histories that were to adopt a pseudonym ‘Ndabeni’ as a device to depict a certain place of common suffering and painful experiences.



However, from a more analytic angle Maynard Swanson, a Miami based social historian and a scholar of urban history, in 1977 wrote a ‘pioneering’ seminal paper on Africans and the origins of kwa-Ndabeni entitled “The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909”.<sup>38</sup> In the article he outlined a logic towards urban segregation, which he termed the “sanitation syndrome”, as the first authoritative step the Cape government took to segregate Africans. He examined the relationship between the outbreak of a bubonic plague in Cape Town and the ejection of Africans from the city to “native locations” on the city “outskirts”. Swanson directly linked the ‘sanitary obsession’ among urban whites, the ‘public fears of the plague’, the association of Africans with the disease, and the public scorn of

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<sup>37</sup> Judges S, ‘Poverty, Living Conditions and Social Relations, Aspects of Life in Cape Town in the 1830s’, Masters Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1977).

<sup>38</sup> Swanson M.W, ‘The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909’, in *Journal of African History*, XVIII, 3, (1977), pp 387-410.

Africans, with political and economic motive.

The sanitation syndrome was a force in its own but it also provided a rationale for economic jealousy – the unemployment fears of white artisans and the trading rivalry of white shopkeepers – as well as the political fear of electoral ‘swamping’ when white Natal moved towards self-government in 1893.<sup>39</sup>

Swanson’s views were more radical compared to the relatively generalised consideration of segregation which had been expressed by many historians before him. The prevailing views on racial issues and segregation were those held by liberal revisionists, who tended to avoid discussing the link between racial segregation and the capitalist system. Although Swanson could not separate political motives from the economic ones, his approach managed to brand racist the political system that declared Africans a health hazard before ejecting them out of the city. Moreover, Swanson was unwilling to adopt the more radical views that nationalists like Jack and Ray Simons had previously expressed, that race was the tool for economic expansion and a basic causes of conflict in South Africa.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, in his construction of the identity of the African people he wrote about was under researched, Swanson understood the people who had become victims of forced removals in Cape Town, as merely those who had migrated from the Eastern Cape to the Cape Town in the 1830s due to frontier wars and poverty. Swanson made no attempts to *de-homogenise* these people by considering for example the slave trade that had brought Africans to Cape Town, as well as migrations from other parts of the

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<sup>39</sup> Swanson M.W, ‘Bubonic plague and the urban native policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-09’, in Beinart W and Dubow S, (eds.), *Segregation and Apartheid in the Twentieth-Century South Africa*, (London, Routledge, 1995, p 28.

<sup>40</sup> Simons Jack and Ray, *Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1950*, (Penguin: England,1969) . See also Saunders Christopher, *The Making of the South African Past: Major Historians on Race and Class*, (Cape Town: David Phillips Publishers, 1988), pp 177-185.

country. Even so, Swanson had constructed an identity of a people, as well as characteristics of a location which was to be known as kwa-Ndabeni or ‘Ndabeni’. Both the location and the identity of its residents had been products of the forced removals driven by the “sanitation syndrome”. Swanson had launched forced removals, and in particular those experienced by the people of kwa-Ndabeni, as a subject of particular interest not only to him, but to many social historians who were to follow suit.<sup>41</sup>

Following Swanson’s work was a piece of work that was to give particular attention to producing of ‘Ndabeni’s’ knowledge and identity. It was a seminal paper entitled ‘Segregation in Cape Town: The Creation of Ndabeni’, that Christopher Saunders wrote in 1978. This work provided an outline of a forced removal of African people from within and around the city of Cape Town to Uitvlugt, as well an outline of the subsequent abusive treatment they were to endure at the hands of the state. The study was the first to thoroughly depict the structure of the location, the nature of its people, poor living conditions and the state regulations that kept the location and its residents under control. As much as part of what Saunders wrote in 1978 had been informed by the knowledge he had previously constructed with Judges and by Swanson’s urban historical writings, he made substantial use of archival records such as the Native Affairs records, parliamentary papers, government gazettes, correspondences, court registers and newspapers, to recover and to construct knowledge.

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<sup>41</sup> See, Swanson M. W, ‘Urban Origins of Separate Development’, in *Race*, X, (1968), Swanson M. W, ‘Reflections on the urban History of South Africa’, in H.L Watts (ed.), *Focus on Cities*, (Durban, 1970), Swanson M.W, ‘The Durban System: Roots of Urban Apartheid in Colonial Natal’, in *African Studies*, XXV, 3, and 4, (1976), and Swanson M. W, ‘The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909’, in *Journal of African History*, XVIII, 3, (1977).

As more social histories were produced on African people in urban spaces throughout the country, what was notable in the social historiography of the late 1970s and the 1980s was lack of departure from the central themes of the earlier popular histories. While variations in confrontational approaches did exist, these appeared to be largely dependent on whether the authors approached the issues from liberal or radical angles. Dominant among the themes were migration from rural to urban areas, racism, racial segregation in urban areas, discriminatory state policies, labour issues, poor living conditions in hostels, townships and informal settlements, political and labour organisations, the liberation movement and resistance.<sup>42</sup>

Dominance of these popular and social history themes was quite evident in Saunders' work too. He constructed the identity of these particular Africans around the notions of victimhood of land loss, which presumably led to migration to the cities, only to be met by crude racism, which causes more strife and struggle. In Saunders' works, these particular people took up an identity of "the Mfengu from the Eastern Cape", who had come to Cape Town in search of employment, but also willing to settle as some came with wives and families"<sup>43</sup> In many social and nationalist histories, the Mfengu often bear a victim identity associated with dispossession occurring during the the *Mfecane* wars in Zululand, displacement, suffering and showing up in the Eastern Cape, begging for land and even food.<sup>44</sup>

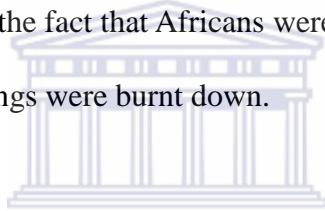
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<sup>42</sup> These labour issues according to Saunders included poor working conditions, low wages, unfair labour practices by employers such as sudden dismissals, exploitation and abuse of workers by employers, trade unionism, protests, and industrial actions.

<sup>43</sup> Saunders also bases this finding on the census of 1875, and on the article he wrote with Judges. See, Saunders C, 'Segregation in Cape Town: The Creation of Ndabeni', in *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 1, (1978), p 43.

<sup>44</sup> The *Mfecane*, also known in Sotho as *Difaqane*, is used to refer to political disruptions and population migrations which occurred in Southern Africa between the 1820s and 1830s, causing a number of people

Saunders also related the government's racial segregation policies to some pressure exerted on the government by racists, who had hysterical fears that Africans were the carriers as well as the spreaders of the disease. He even asserted: "had there been no plague, there is little doubt that a location would still have been established".<sup>45</sup> Their forced removal, he adds, had been predestined, even though fewer deaths due to the disease had occurred among Africans than among whites. To Saunders, little concern was even given to the fact that prevalence of the plague was three times higher in some coloured residences compared to African residences. In fact, what was to be a sign of concern was a mere fumigation of some infected coloured residences, a manifestation of ethnic inequality – given the fact that Africans were forced to evacuate the premises, while many of their belongings were burnt down.



Like, Swanson, Saunders therefore linked the forced removal of Africans from Cape Town to 'Ndabeni' in 1901, with the breakout of a bubonic plague as well as negative racial and ethnic attitudes towards Africans. With his main focus on revealing the 'appalling' living and working conditions which the people of kwa-Ndabeni / 'Ndabeni' experienced, Saunders's work also revealed how the conditions in the village were to signify an accommodation designed for 'hordes of -uncivilised, barbarous, raw, crude natives - poured (or swarming) into Cape Town', 'a savage people', 'an invasion', 'an

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from the north-eastern parts, to migrate to the south-eastern parts of the cape, now known as the Eastern Cape. However, the assertions that Mfecane/ Difaqane actually occurred in the way stated above have been challenged. See for example, Cobbing J R D and J B Wright, *Rethinking the Mfecane*, (Cape Town: Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1989), Wright J, 'Political Mythology and the Making of Natal's Mfecane', in *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2, (1989), pp 272-291, and Hamilton C, *The Mfecane aftermath: reconstructive debates in Southern African history*, (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1995).

<sup>45</sup> Saunders C, 'Segregation in Cape Town: The Creation of Ndabeni', in *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 1, (1978), p 48.

alien presence’, ‘a problem’, ‘a danger to public health’, ‘a nuisance’, ‘contributors to crime’...and yet ‘poor wretches’, who are still ‘necessary for work’, as Africans were labelled.<sup>46</sup> Such was the kind of knowledge that was to place kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ within the histories of racial segregation, poor living and working conditions, low wages, exploitation, abuse, and working class struggles.

Considered a “pioneering work” in terms of giving a specific focus on ‘Ndabeni’, its conception, its ‘life history’, and its future, the kind of social history approaches such as that of Saunders were soon to be accorded authority in as far as the subject kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ was concerned. Attributable to ‘recovery’ by social histories, the place was soon to be awarded a special significance of being the product of the first forced removal, as well as an archetype of all forced removals in the Cape Town urban region. This kind of knowledge, which in many ways became the ‘official’ history of kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’, summarised a narratives and histories of loss, suffering and the struggles for survival.

Thus, the story of kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ in many ways, provided a point of reference for the study of subsequent forced removals in the region, as well as study of lives in ‘labour reserves’ that had been constructed near most urban centres in the nineteenth and twentieth century.<sup>47</sup> And, social historical knowledge became the official archive of

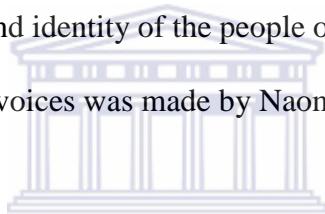
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<sup>46</sup> Saunders C, ‘Segregation in Cape Town: The Creation of Ndabeni’, in *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 1, (1978), p 44-49. Paraphrased and emphasis added.

<sup>47</sup> Subsequent histories in which the Ndabeni whose identity was constructed by earlier social historians was a source of reference include, Phillips H, ‘Black October: Cape Town and the Spanish Influenza of 1918’, in *Studies* 1, (1979); Van Heyningen E, ‘Cape Town and the Plague of 1901’, in *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 4, (1981); Bozzoli B (ed.), *Labour, Townships and Protests*, (Johannesburg, 1979); Van Heyningen E, ‘The Social Evil in the Cape Colony 1868-1902: Prostitution and the Contagious Diseases Acts’, in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, (1989); Van Heyningen E, ‘Public

the subject of forced removals, particularly in relation to kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’. It gained authority for it was considered to have gone beyond the ‘colonial records’ in the archives, by acknowledging oral histories, life histories, experiences and physical remains.

However, the work gave very little attention to the meanings that the people were to make of the space they had named kwa-Ndabeni, as well as their ways of life between 1902 and 1927, before they were forcibly removed again. For that reason, the voice of Africans was barely recovered even when they were at least given a face by the resistance activities that Saunders explored under the ‘resistance’ topic. That was to be the case of the knowledge and identity of the people of kwa-Ndabeni, until another attempt at recovery of their voices was made by Naomi Barnett in 1985.<sup>48</sup>



Acknowledging Saunders’ work on this “Cape Town’s first official location for Africans” as a “pioneering article”, Barnett adopted an add-on approach, which was also not good enough to awaken voices that had thus far only heard in times of resistance. Barnett’s work was therefore another affirmation of the approach that Saunders, Judges and Swanson had been used to construct ‘Ndabeni’ earlier, that of seeking to recover the voices of Africans by giving an account of their deeds and supposed experiences. Barnett seemed to have relied more on archival evidence in the form of the state records and the press, and by referring less to other forms of historical

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Health and Society in Cape Town, 1880-1910’, PhD Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1989).

<sup>48</sup> Barnett N, ‘Ndabeni 1901-1910: Towards a Social History The first ten years of Cape Town’s first official location’, Honours Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1985).

research like oral history.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, she could not ‘recover’ anything more than the names of Africans, and the events, which Saunders had already identified.

With that kind of approach, African voices remain suppressed still, as the historian remained the narrator and interpreter of events, thus mediating and even obscuring the very subject whose break-through is being sought. Barnett also did not depart from these themes in her thesis in 1985; she only augmented upon giving voice to the residents by highlighting a number of their public struggles, which earlier writings on the subject may not have given enough attention.<sup>50</sup>

In Saunders’ and Barnett’s work on ‘Ndabeni’, although newspapers and documents produced by officials such as reports and registers were often referred to or even cited, the voices of Africans in these documents remained buried. Even though Africans were reported to have corresponded with the officials in writing and to have confronted them through delegations and marches, what the Africans articulated in all the occasions was not reflected upon. Africans remained buried under a full exercise of power, as officials whose distinct names and deeds were mentioned, gave orders, decided, moved people, charged, arrested, released, issued summons and notices, constructed and destroyed sites. In the midst of all these, Africans were constructed as mainly voiceless, anonymous, indistinct and unorganised.

Nonetheless, Barnett’s work was to be the last academic social historical piece to give

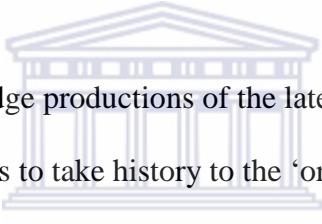
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<sup>49</sup> See the “Notes on Sources”, in Barnett N, ‘Ndabeni 1901-1910: Towards a Social History The first ten years of Cape Town’s first official location’, Honours Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1985), back page.

<sup>50</sup> See, Barnett N, ‘Ndabeni 1901-1910: Towards a Social History The first ten years of Cape Town’s first official location’, Honours Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1996).

specific attention to kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’. Another writing that was to study kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ became the research reports and mini-theses that two anthropology graduate students from the University of Cape Town: Helena Broadbridge and Jenni Gordon produced in 1997. The main focus of their work was the ‘Ndabeni land claim’, on which they merely reported on the unfolding of the events without providing any analysis or discussion of the historical and heritage knowledge they presented. Other historical pieces were to be focused not on kwa-Ndabeni but on Langa. This included works by Kondlo, Molapo and Msemwa.<sup>51</sup>

### **‘Ndabeni’: social history and popularisation**



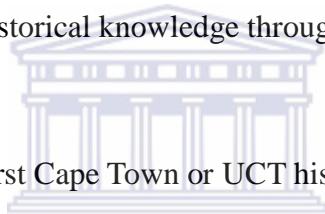
Many social history knowledge productions of the late 1970s and the 1980s were coupled with further attempts to take history to the ‘ordinary people’ it pertained to, i.e. to audiences wider than academics, intellectuals and students. As ‘counter hegemonic’ efforts were made to produce histories of the ‘under-classes’, further efforts were made to ensure that the masses partook in producing, presenting and consuming such histories. At the same time, the 1980s presented a growing demand for worker education through popular historical knowledge. Histories had to be packaged and presented in ways that ensured that not only wider audiences could access them, but that they could be understood by the least literate among the masses. This called for collaboration between academic historians, political and labour activists, and local

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<sup>51</sup> See, Wilson M and A Mafeje, *Langa: A study of social groups in an African Township*, (Cape Town: O.U.P, 1963), Kondlo K.M, ‘The Culture and Religion of the People of Langa During the Period ca. 1938 to ca. 1958’, Honours Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1990), Musemwa M, ‘The Struggle for survival: The municipalisation of business enterprise in Langa Township and the African response, 1927-1948’, in Van Heyningen E (ed.), *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 7, (1994) , and Molapo Rachidi, ‘Sports, festivals and popular politics’, aspects of social and popular culture in Langa Township, 1945-70, Masters Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1994).

teachers and other professionals, intellectuals, and artists.

The 1980s in South Africa was particularly a period when the political struggle against apartheid was at its height, with a growing mass movement emerging to confront the apartheid regime publicly. Mass mobilisation by the liberation movement involved education of the masses, which demanded production of a range of materials for reading, training, discussions and debates.<sup>52</sup> Hence, political organisations, academic historians, scholars, novelists, playwrights, poets and members of the public from various walks of life, began to construct popular historical knowledge and to present it in various textual and visual forms.<sup>53</sup> A wide range of audiences with varying literacy levels could easily access historical knowledge through popular culture.



For example, in 1978, the first Cape Town or UCT history workshop was held at the University of Cape Town (UCT), which had both 'more formal' academic sessions and 'less formal' popular history sessions. During the academic sessions, social historical knowledge was produced and circulated, as papers with their innovative research methods were presented and discussed. The academic sessions produced volumes of texts, while the popularisation sessions produced and presented historical knowledge through music performances, dances, plays, films, videos, exhibitions and posters. The first products of the academic sessions in Cape Town to feature 'Ndabeni' in a series of

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<sup>52</sup> See, Rousseau Nicky, 'Popular History in South Africa in the 1980s: The Politics of Production', Masters thesis, (University of Western Cape, 1994), and also Coombes A, *History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), Introduction.

<sup>53</sup> These included illustrated and translated booklets, newspapers, magazines, self help workbooks and comic books published and distributed by among workers by non-profit organisations and trade unions. See Bozzoli B (ed.), *Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives*, (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1987), p46.

*Studies in the History of Cape Town*, in the article entitled ‘Segregation in Cape Town: The Creation of Ndabeni’, which Christopher Saunders had written in 1978.

The aspirations of the 1978 first Cape Town History Workshop -steered by social historians – were to “write the history of all the city’s people, including that of ‘ordinary’ men and women”.<sup>54</sup> ‘Ndabeni’ therefore was among other places through which these aspirations were fulfilled as the article by Saunders presented the residents of kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ as ordinary men and women deserved to be recognised for among other things, the resilience they had. This was evidently a wider goal among social historians throughout the country for around the same time, the History Workshop was in a similar manner and purpose, founded at the University of Witwatersrand in 1977.<sup>55</sup> It also sought to “pursue lines of research with a vital connection to lives of the poor, dispossessed or marginalised, as well as to uncover the history of the person in the street, of whatever race, gender, creed or origin and offer new historical explanations”.<sup>56</sup> A feature of ‘Ndabeni’ therefore became an aspiration of not only social historians in Cape Town but also of those in other parts of the country like Johannesburg.

In what appeared to be a concomitant production of social and popular histories, many of history workshops held in Johannesburg and Cape Town, had both ‘formal’ academic sessions and Popular History or Open Days. The latter, popular among workers,

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<sup>54</sup> Saunders C, ‘Cameos and Class: Cape Town’s Past Uncovered’, in *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 6, (1988), p1.

<sup>55</sup> The launch of these workshops was largely influenced by the History Workshops founded in the United Kingdom in the 1960s.

<sup>56</sup> See, Bozzoli B (ed.), *Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987), preface, paraphrased.

students, teachers, intellectuals, activists, pupils and general public, were characterised by mounting of films, slide shows, plays, musical performances as well as distribution of pamphlets, booklets, comics, newsletters and magazines. Prominent of among those was the *Learn and Teach* magazine and *The Struggle for the Land*.<sup>57</sup> ‘Ordinary people’ were trained to write their own histories, and teachers were challenged to be subversive in dealing with hegemonic knowledge found in school textbooks. As a result, teachers subscribing to the ethos of social history began to organise and to facilitate their own History Workshops.

In Cape Town, the developing social and popular historiography had since the 1960s also seen efforts by a number liberal and radical academic historians and activists producing and circulating knowledge that was to inform political mass mobilisation activities. Activities like those gave birth to committees and trusts such as the District Six Defence Committee of 1966, which carried on to facilitate further knowledge construction and mass mobilisation. As the processes would recur, members of these committees often collaborated with academic historians to write histories about their communities and their struggles. Just on forced removal as a single subject, there were numerous history articles, essays, novels, poems and auto/ biographies that the ‘ordinary people’ scattered in the Cape Flats began to produce.<sup>58</sup>

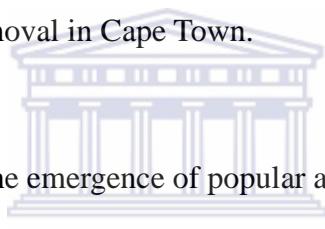
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<sup>57</sup> *Learn and Teach* launched in 1978 by the Johannesburg based Learn and Teach Literacy Project, was aimed at instilling language skills and history knowledge through life stories of ‘ordinary people’. *The Struggle for Land* produced by the Cape Town based teachers, students and academics of the Economic Research Group was distributed among high school learners.

For more, see, Callinicos L, “The ‘People’s Past’: Towards Transforming the Present”, in Bozzoli B (ed.), *Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives*, (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1987).

<sup>58</sup> Although these works were produced as popular histories, academics often assisted in the publishing of them.

In 1981, Cape Town based academics and labour activists formed the Labour History Group, which by 1987 had produced and sold 40 000 copies of illustrated popular history booklets.<sup>59</sup> Another example was a collaboration of various parties to produce a seminal book entitled *The Struggle for District Six: Past and Present*, published in 1990. This book consisted of contributions by committee members, academic historians from the University of Cape Town, research fellows, teachers, political activists and artists. This included members of the Hands-Off District Six Committee which had begun in the 1980s. Also, before and after District Six was demolished, many novels, poems, photographs, exhibitions, demonstrations, plays, and films such as *District Six: An End of Era*, and *Last Supper at Horstley Street* contributed in popularising historical knowledge about forced removal in Cape Town.



A number of themes since the emergence of popular and social urban historiography in South Africa saw kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’, or stories related to it, constantly featuring in historical knowledge that was circulated in both academic and working class circles. In the 1980s, a particular interest which emerged in the 1980s, and which led to construction of more knowledge about kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ was given to hostels, townships, informal settlements and farms. Moreover, as forced removal and loss of land rights became major subjects of popular and social histories, Kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ was to also keep resurfacing in social historical knowledge right through the 1990s. For that matter, forced removal was one of the subjects to which the people across class and ethnic boundaries, who dwelt in townships, informal settlements and farms across South Africa could relate to and could be mobilized around was forced

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<sup>59</sup> Bozzoli B (ed), *Class, Community and Conflict: South African Perspectives*, (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1987), p 46.

removals. Therefore, if any social historical knowledge was to be produced about the conditions of the ‘ordinary people’, forced removals, which in many ways required a mention of kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’, was to be among popular subjects.

### **‘Ndabeni’ and the politics of popular history**

In the processes of rather collaborative production of academic social and popular histories of racial segregation, forced removal, land loss, resistance and the struggle, some tensions between social and popular histories have occurred. There has been some tendency to accord social history some authoritative and agency status superior to that of the popularised, ‘less formal’ knowledge. With its much quest for ‘truth’ and ‘evidence’, the research conducted by academic social historians has in many instances been regarded as a superior resource for popular histories, thus rendering academics experts in the practise of historical knowledge production. The research standards prescribed by academic knowledge, which include emphasis on evidence, have been constantly employed to verify certain materials, oral testimonies, photographs, artefacts and other objects, which are gathered or presented as ‘evidence’. Many overbearing social historians have taken upon themselves responsibility of validating even the historical knowledge that gets transmitted through popular media. They usually do that by testing popular knowledge against some archival ‘evidence’, which they extract from archival sources.

For example, in 1987 the Cape Town History Project produced a popular video about ‘Ndabeni’ that emphasized the way historians conduct archival and oral history

research.<sup>60</sup> The video was produced out of the information ‘mined’ by a group of social historians from the Cape Archives, the South African Library and from museums and public galleries photographic collections around Cape Town. The storyline was structured to connect the sanitation syndrome and racial attitudes that many white Capetonians had in 1901, with the economic and political pressures of the time, as well as with the ultimate forced removal of Africans from the city. Such structure appeared to be perfectly patterned according to the assertions that social histories had made on the subject prior 1987.

The film also highlighted resistance actions by the residents of kwa-Ndabeni/‘Ndabeni’, which Saunders and Barnett had ‘recovered’ and given accounts of in 1978 and 1985 respectively. Among those the film selected the defiance meetings that Alfred Mangena had addressed on the slopes of Table Mountain to resist forced removals in 1901, as well as the big protest of 30 June 1902 known as the Mangena Day.<sup>61</sup> Like the social histories on ‘Ndabeni’, the film’s selection of images, video clips and oral accounts focused on accentuating poor living conditions and lack of concern and positive action by the government. It therefore became another affirmation of ‘Ndabeni’ as produced earlier on by social historians. African voices remained suppressed still, only to be given a break-through by ‘victim’ and ‘resistance’ narratives.

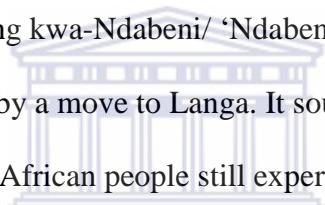
There are quite a good number of projects that have emanated from the social histories

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<sup>60</sup> The film *Ndabeni: The First Forced Removal*, Cape Town History Project, Teaching Methods Unit, (University of Cape Town, 1987) was researched, scripted and produced by Vivian Bickford-Smith, Elizabeth van Heyningen, and Howard Phillips.

<sup>61</sup> On 30 June 1902, a day which became known as the Mangena Day, kwa-Ndabeni residents led by Alfred Mangena protested against among other things train fare hikes, by refusing to buy train tickets and barricading trains, leaving the station in a bad state and with one official injured. Saunders had cited this in 1978, but Barnett discussed his events was mention

on ‘Ndabeni’ or on forced removals in Cape Town. In the 1980s, the Social Work Department of the University of the Western Cape also embarked on research projects on topics ranging between migrant labour, forced removals and urban living and working conditions.<sup>62</sup> Concerning kwa-Ndabeni and Langa, the researchers gathered testimonies from the former residents of kwa-Ndabeni and residents of Langa. They also studied and utilised interview transcripts from the oral history research that the UCT based Cape Town History Research Project had conducted in the early 1980s. Out of these histories, a team including Neil Henderson and Sabata Sesui produced a play entitled “Uzinile: Are you settled?”, played by a group of theatre performers. Like other social history and social science researches and pieces of work before it, the play was also focused on depicting kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ as a place of suffering, which was not to be relieved even by a move to Langa. It sought to illuminate the state of ‘unsettledness’ which many African people still experience in Cape Town in the 1980s.



Numerous efforts have been made to produce histories of the African people in Cape Town, but in the lot that has been written about them, the African people have not been allotted space and opportunity to be vocal enough to construct their identities. Many identities of African people that can be read through social histories are those that knowledge producers have been conferred upon the people. In these works, the subjects have not been given voice for their identities to come out; instead, the writers have tended to speak more on their behalf.

If there is one critique suitable for social history, it is that it has confirmed identities of

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<sup>62</sup> Personal communication with Neil Henderson, Department of Social Work, University of the Western Cape, 3 March 2010.

the past by recognising with little no question some racial, ethnic and class categories in which people had been placed in the past. In its reference to blacks, coloureds, Indians, Zulu, Afrikaner, and many other identities, social history has in many instances failed to *problematis*e these categories in ways that could prove artificiality and permeability of boundaries in relation to human beings and their identities. At the same time, many social histories have failed to confront stereotypes in ways that discourage reproduction of such stereotypes in history.

For example, by extending the application of the notions of race and racial attitudes associated with public health legislations, to explain the removal of Africans from Cape Town in 1901, social history has inversely reconstructed these racial attitudes by confirming them and by appropriating the notions to represent certain groups or individuals.<sup>63</sup> Many stereotypes are never constructed to incite the reader to challenge or at least to realise that the use of such stereotypes was and continues to be unacceptable to some. For example, putting the term *native* inside inverted commas, while one still uses does not do much to avert use of the term in ways that reproduce this stereotypical categorisation.

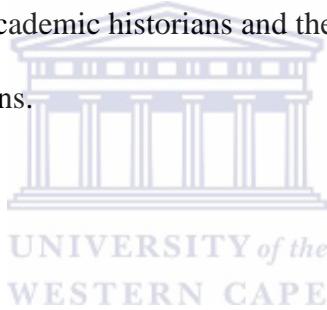
Although numerous social history texts have been written highlighting the stigmatisation of Africans as barbaric and uncivilised, the stigma still does not escape Africans, instead the stigma becomes carried through into further subjugation of Africans by the very readers. Filth and unhygienic habits have continued to define Africans even in social historical works that purport to ‘recover people from the

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<sup>63</sup> Van Heyningen uses this argument to refer to certain attitudes towards Indians and Chinese. See, Van Heyningen E, ‘Cape Town and the Plague’, in *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 4, (1979), p 8.

margins' and to 'give them voice'. Many 'success stories about 'barefoot herd boys growing up to become future presidents', that appear to be unproblematic and acceptable, have within them covertly shaped identities of African filth and unhygienic habits. They have done this; first by accepting that African would be indeed filthy or lazy somehow; then by justifying that which they have accepted, thus admitting to or accepting certain stereotypes.

Nonetheless, histories continue to be made in Cape Town. If social history has not done enough, one can still look further in other modes of historical knowledge production such as public histories. In the next chapter I examine what comes out when public places are utilised by both academic historians and the people at sites of knowledge construction and contestations.



## CHAPTER TWO

### ‘NDABENI’ AND HERITAGE

At the onset of the South African democracy in 1994, a number of opportunities availed themselves for various communities throughout the country to construct their heritages in the ways they saw fit. Providing a basis for these opportunities was the idea of a heritage that had been lost under apartheid and racism. In 1999, the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) No. 25, which promoted among other things cultural heritages of local communities, and which provided a framework for the protection, preservation and conservation of such, was passed.



The NHRA was understood as a replacement for a number of hegemonic heritage laws of the past.<sup>1</sup> It embraced an ideal of freedom under which tangible and intangible heritages, such as land, traditions and customs, would be promoted. It also provided for painful experiences and memories to be recognised and represented through material and symbolic restitution. This Act, especially when seen alongside the TRC and the Land Commission, was seen as offering assistance particularly to the victims of forced removals, who aspired to re-construct and preserve sensual and emotional connections to places and sites of their previous lives for posterity. When public experimentation and exploration of the provisions of the NHRA took action soon after its adoption, South Africa began to experience some transformation in its public history, especially in relation to community-based and local heritage projects.

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<sup>1</sup> The NHRA repealed Acts like the National Monuments Act 28 of 1969 and introduced institutions like the South African Heritage Resources Agency, which replaced the National Monuments Council in 2000.

Public history here is employed to refer to knowledge about the past produced at present in the public arena. Such knowledge becomes produced, interpreted, adapted, transmitted and made available for public engagement, through public spaces and institutions such as museums, galleries, streets, monuments, memorials, tourist spaces, themed environments, archives, venues of public gatherings, and media institutions. In these spaces historical knowledge is packaged in textual, audio, visual and physical forms which are meant to captivate senses, imaginations, emotions and feelings of the members of the public who interact with the space.

At the break of the new dispensation, many new heritage projects, both large and small took ground, taking possession of memories of the past, and placing them in the realm of the symbolic. Memories of past events, especially those associated with injustice such as battles of dispossession, massacres, incarcerations, murders and forced removals were represented through museum exhibitions, memorials, monuments, plaques and statues. Memories of forced removals in particular gave rise to institutions like Cato Manor Heritage Centre in Durban, the District Six Museum in Cape Town, Sophiatown Museum in Johannesburg and South End Museum in Port Elizabeth. Through these institutions, continuously constructed social and popular histories of forced removals took shape of public knowledge by becoming major sources of reference for memory and heritage projects.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See for example the case of District Six in Rassool C and Prosalendis S, (eds.), *Recalling Community in Cape Town: Creating and Curating the District Six Museum*, (Cape Town: District Six Museum, 2001), and Adams Z, ‘Memory, Imagination and Removal: Remembering and Forgetting District Six’, (University of Western Cape, November 2002). About Cato Manor Heritage Centre, see <http://www.durban-history.co.za/index.php?option=com>. About South End Museum, see <http://www.southendmuseum.co.za> and about Sophiatown Museum, see <http://www.joburg.org.za/content/view/2179/168/>

Simultaneously, some representations based on hegemonic forms of knowledge construction began to make way for representations based on knowledge that recognized the supposedly remarkable contribution of the ‘ordinary’ people, as ‘recovered’ by social histories. For instance, dominant in public political discourse of the episode was a call for museums that were still ‘caught up in the past’ to transform and shift from their ethnographic categorisations and representations of certain groups of people.<sup>3</sup>

In the processes involving production of this new public knowledge, the previously undermined and relegated forms of knowledge construction, presentation and communication such as oral traditions, arts and imagery, were given recognition. Public spaces therefore began to utilize these forms to produce knowledge to engage the public in ways that allowed continuous development and exchange of knowledge from various sources. As Tom Griffiths puts it, [in these ‘re-defined’ public spaces] even ‘unofficial’ sources of knowledge would be privileged and constantly employed.<sup>4</sup> The former ‘hidden pasts’ had been uncovered and had begun to dwell in ‘thresholds, gateways and public spectacle’, categorically imposed and prescribed as a form of public education, discipline and control.<sup>5</sup>

In Cape Town, the unfolding of these processes can be understood through a study of the coming into being of District Six Museum. This is a clear example of a community

<sup>3</sup> President Nelson Mandela, in his address at the opening of Robben Island Museum on 24 September 1997, categorically voiced this out, sounding a call to museums such as the South African Museum, to reconsider their representations and transform. See, Rantao J, ‘Museums Must Rewrite History, Says Mandela’, *Cape Argus*, (25 September 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Griffiths T, ‘Social History and Deep Time’, in *Going Public: Public History Review*, Vol. 8, (2000), paraphrased.

<sup>5</sup> See, Rassool C, Witz L and Minkley G, ‘Thresholds, Gateways and Spectacles: Journeying through South African hidden pasts and histories in the last decade of the twentieth century”, Paper presented at Conference on the Future of the Past, (University of Western Cape, 10-12 July 1996)

heritage project through which members have continuously re-shaped their history, based on their ever-changing present and anticipated future, while at the same time continuously producing ways to represent that to the public. These actions have been combined with determined efforts to re-claim the space where District Six used to stand and to resurrect the community that once was District Six. The availability of District Six Museum building, and the site on which District Six once stood, made it possible for memories of the old District Six to be produced and represented in a central public space.

However in the case of kwa-Ndabeni, where no buildings and no vacant site were left behind, heritage projects took a different shape. Kwa-Ndabeni came to be memorialised as ‘Ndabeni’, and its memories became produced and represented as inserts in different public spaces in Cape Town. Although there has been a deliberate silencing of African working class culture in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Cape Town, a parenthetical mention of African workers who may have lived at kwa-Ndabeni is made in museums and through images around the city. ‘Ndabeni’ has been invented as a device to tell stories of other places.

### **‘Ndabeni’ in Cape Town’s public history**

Since social historians had ‘recovered’ kwa-Ndabeni (as ‘Ndabeni’) and inserted it into the history of Cape Town, the ‘Ndabeni package’ produced became a source of construction of subsequent public histories and heritage concerning Africans in Cape Town. The post-1994 era saw ‘Ndabeni’ featuring significantly in Cape Town public histories, particularly those centred on the racial oppression and the struggle for

liberation. ‘Ndabeni’ has become a major point of reference for public knowledge constructed about racial discrimination, forced removals, worker exploitation, as well as political and labour mobilisation in urban spaces. Such knowledge has been produced, presented, interpreted and engaged through place and street names, museum exhibitions, arts and crafts, public events and township tours.

### 1. ‘Ndabeni’, an indelible mark through names

Cape Town is dotted with African names that mark various sites, roads and streets found in areas occupied predominantly by Africans. Although the African name ‘Ndabeni’ still exists to mark an area used predominantly by white people within the urban landscape of Cape Town, the marking of sites and roads in a predominantly white area is conducted and experienced by those who have little or no knowledge of kwa-Ndabeni.

The name ‘Ndabeni’ strikingly remains as identifier of an industrial site locked between Maitland, Pinelands and Mowbray, which buries kwa-Ndabeni under it.<sup>6</sup> Uitvlugt, which gave way to the construction of kwa-Ndabeni, ceased to exist as a farm or forest reserve, while kwa-Ndabeni was also totally obliterated in 1936.

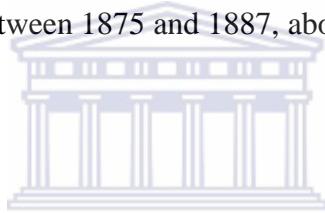
Nevertheless, both names - Uitvlugt and kwa-Ndabeni - survived and still remain as strong signals of sites in Cape Town. There is Uitvlugt Road and Ndabeni Road that link the Ndabeni industrial site and its surroundings with other neighbouring places like Pinelands and Maitland. Engraved in road signs and boards around Cape Town, these

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<sup>6</sup> The permit system under the Group Areas Act of 1950, made Pinelands and Mowbray white group areas by refusing other groups permits to buy land or houses in these suburbs. See, Mesthrie U, ‘No place in the world to go to – control by permit: The first phase of the Group Areas Act in Cape Town in the 1950s’, in van Heyningen E (ed), *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 7, (1994). Although the Act has since been repealed, these places remain occupied by predominantly white and middle class people.

names continuously inform public knowledge and entrench in the history of Cape Town knowledge about a certain place and a certain people.

Besides, it is apparent that the former residents of kwa-Ndabeni, who moved to reside in Langa, metaphorically carried kwa-Ndabeni over to Langa. Processes involving the naming of the sites and the streets of Langa Township, provided opportunities for certain knowledge about kwa-Ndabeni to be added and impressed upon Cape Town's public history. Langa Township is believed to have been named after Chief Langalibalele I, by the former residents of kwa-Ndabeni who were moved to reside in Langa Township.<sup>7</sup> Chief Langalibale I of the *AmaHlubi* was held under house arrest in Uitvlugt for twelve years between 1875 and 1887, about fifteen years before the place became kwa-Ndabeni.<sup>8</sup>



Furthermore, the name Ndabeni was carried over to Langa to be used to name a road, Ndabeni Road, which is believed to be the first street in Langa Location.<sup>9</sup> There are other old streets in Langa such as Rubusana Avenue, Mdolomba Avenue, Mqhayi Street, Jabavu Street, Sandile Avenue, Sigmawu Avenue, Mosheshi Street and Makana Square, which give an impression of recognition of African leaders, intellectuals and political leaders who had directly or indirectly influenced or led the people of kwa-Ndabeni and Langa through their struggles.

<sup>7</sup> There are two popular views about how Langa acquired the name. One is that the name Langa was chosen for its Xhosa meaning, 'the sun', which was associated with bringing light and shine to the lives of the African people. Another view seeks to carry the legacy of the *amaHlubi* chief to the two locations, kwa-Ndabeni and Langa through the name Langalibalele (Langa in short). Here I adopt the second view as it is the one upheld in the histories and heritage presently produced and represented in Langa.

<sup>8</sup> Chief Langalibalele I was charged for leading a revolt against the British colonial government in Natal in 1873. In 1874 he was transferred to Cape Town to be incarcerated on Robben Island, where he spent a year. From Robben Island he was held under house arrest in Uitvlugt until 1887. In 1887, he was transferred to Natal, Zwartkops near Pietermaritzburg, where he died, still under house arrest in 1889.

<sup>9</sup> This is an assertion made by Luvuyo Dondolo in Dondolo L, 'The Construction of Public History and Tourist Destinations in Cape Town's Townships: A Study of routes, sites and heritage', Masters Mini-thesis, (University of the Western Cape, 2002), p 89.

Reverend Walter Benson Rubusana, born in 1858 and died in 1936, was an ordained minister of the Congregational Church, an intellectual, a Xhosa book author, a political leader and a founder member of the SANNC, who also represented Africans in the Cape Provincial Council representing Africans.<sup>10</sup> Reverend Elijah Mdolomba was also an ordained minister of the Wesleyan Church at kwa-Ndabeni, a renowned sportsman and a political activist, who was once a General Secretary of the ANC.<sup>11</sup> Samuel Edward Krune Mqhayi, born in 1875 and died in 1945, was a Xhosa intellectual, a traditionalist and a writer. John Tengo Jabavu, born in 1859 and died in 1921, was also a Xhosa intellectual, a political activist, as well as a founder and editor of the newspaper *Imvo ZabaNtsundu*. Makana or Makhanda, also known as Nxele, was a Xhosa prophet who led the Xhosa against the British at the Battle of Grahamstown in 1819. He was afterwards incarcerated on Robben Island and is believed to have drowned trying to escape in 1820.<sup>12</sup> The Xhosa and BaSotho kings Sigmawu, Sandile and Moshoeshoe, and their successors and descendants who took up their names, are recognised by many as leaders who, over centuries, fought against colonialism in defence of their land and their subjects.

Recognition of all the leaders mentioned above could have been through memories and narratives constructed by those from kwa-Ndabeni, who would have experienced the

<sup>10</sup> Rubusana authored a book *Zemk'inkomo Magwalandini* which radically publicised the effects of colonisation on Africans. For more see, Jordan P, 'Zemk'inkomo Magwalandini: The life and times of W.B Rubusana (1858-1936)', in <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/people/rubusana.html>

<sup>11</sup> See, Odendaal A, *The Story of an African Game: Black Cricketers and the Unmasking of one of Cricket's greatest myths, South Africa, 1850-2003*, (Claremont: David Philip, 2003), pp 64-65, and Echenberg J.M, *Plague ports: the global urban impact of bubonic plague, 1894-1901*, (New York: New York University Press, 2006), pp 294-295.

<sup>12</sup> Makana's name was in 1997 proposed to be used to name Robben Island Museum. For the debates concerning the name 'Makana Island', see <http://www.iol.co.za/html/news/reflections/page2.php>. The Robben Island political prisoners had also named their football League formed in 1966, the Makana Football Association.

nineteenth and early twentieth century political events such as wars of dispossession.

The events through which these leaders could have displayed their potency included wars or dispossession, starvation, migration to the cities, the early working class struggles and the formation of political organisations in the early 1900s. Honouring these leaders through their names was one of the first steps towards production and insertion of African popular histories and heritage into the landscape of Cape Town.

Furthermore, there are street names in Langa which appear to have been constructed around histories and heritages produced through cultural celebrations and commemorations. The foundations of these can also be traced from kwa-Ndabeni although they became “revived with potency in Langa in 1933”.<sup>13</sup> Such names include Mosheshi (Moshoeshoe) Street and Mendi Avenue, which appear to correspond with Moshoeshoe/Moshesh Celebrations and Mendi Memorial Day. The Moshoeshoe celebrations remembered the incorporation of Basutholand into the British Empire on 12 March 1868.<sup>14</sup> They also honoured the reign and legacy of BaSotho King Moshoeshe, while also providing an opportunity for the BaSotho who resided at kwa-Ndabeni and in Langa to publicly construct and celebrate their culture and heritage. The Mendi Memorial Day commemorated the tragic sinking of the British war ship *The Mendi* on 21 February 1917 during the First World War, killing 600 African soldiers,

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<sup>13</sup> A former resident of kwa-Ndabeni remembers how as a young girl she would be dressed up in Xhosa cultural attire to attend certain ‘traditional’ ceremonies such as bride welcoming and weddings. Interview with Doris Zimemo-Ngobeni, 19 October 2008. For more on the cultural events which took place in Langa , see also, Dondolo L, ‘The Construction of Public History and Tourist Destinations in Cape Town’s Townships: A Study of routes, sites and heritage’, Masters Mini-thesis, (University of the Western Cape, 2002). See also, Kondlo K. M, ‘The Culture and Religion of the People of Langa During the Period ca. 1938 to ca. 1958’, Honours Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> See, Kondlo K. M, ‘The Culture and Religion of the People of Langa During the Period ca. 1938 to ca. 1958’, Honours Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1990).

some of who had been recruited from kwa-Ndabeni.<sup>15</sup> These, together with the other street names found in Langa, reflect an intention to preserve heritages constructed around leaders and particular events, which had been upheld by kwa-Ndabeni residents.

The incarnation of kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ in street names around Cape Town can be seen as a testimony that the times and the lives of kwa-Ndabeni symbolically live on and remain entrenched in the public histories of Cape Town, which also continue to be produced as paradigms shift. In this particular case, the political shift brought about by the birth of democracy in 1994, produced conscious decisions to have these names kept despite the countrywide contestations over heritage produced through names.<sup>16</sup> This could be interpreted as a unanimous consent to the significance of lived experiences and memories of kwa-Ndabeni. However, this explanation could be an over-simplification of street naming processes, since such matters tend to be entangled within debates around national political agendas and dominant ideologies. I discuss this in detail as I examine the politics of heritage representation later this chapter.

## 2. ‘Ndabeni’ in public images

In Cape Town, knowledge about kwa-Ndabeni and the African people who could have resided at kwa-Ndabeni, is also made and transmitted through public visual representations exhibited in certain public spaces. These usually take the form of enlarged photographic images and paintings of African labourers, especially dock labourers in Cape Town in the 1890s and early 1900s. In most representations and

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., See also Field S, ‘Sites of memory in Langa’, in Field S, Meyer R and Swanson F, (eds.), *Imagining the City: Memories and cultures in Cape Town*, (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007). Mendi Square in Langa is also named after this tragic incident.

<sup>16</sup> The post-apartheid era has been characterised by heated contestations around de-naming and re-naming of certain spaces of public interest like cities, towns, locations, sites and streets.

paintings, Africans are ineptly placed or juxtaposed with the city space, under state control and surveillance. Such imagery can be found in museums, public galleries and themed environments like the Victoria & Alfred (V&A) Waterfront.

The V&A Waterfront is one among many public spaces in Cape Town, in which continuous production of historical knowledge was facilitated by story boards that presented abridged versions of selected histories of Cape Town in images and texts. The story boards, which bore images, captions and some text explaining the images and their historical context, were produced by an audio-visual display team which included some Cape Town historians. The team's task was among other things geared towards “ensuring that the urban fabric had an image in keeping with the historic and cultural fabric of the Waterfront”<sup>17</sup> The entire project and its final installation incited debates among public historians and some concerned members of the public, concerning the selection processes through which histories to be represented in tourism environments such as the V&A Waterfront, would be selected. However, although contestable, such representations did provide the space for certain knowledge about kwa-Ndabeni to be engaged with by those who visited the space. Kwa-Ndabeni was represented by two out of eight story boards placed in different positions at the V&A Waterfront.

Testifying to the point I make here is board number 23, situated on the north side of the outdoor amphitheatre, attached to the railings overlooking the harbour, but facing the Wharf Shopping Mall. The board entitled “The South African War 1899-1902”, has five images, varying in sizes, all appropriated to relate to events that took place in Cape

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<sup>17</sup> Victoria and Alfred Waterfront Company, *Development Framework Report III*, (Cape Town, 1989), p 10, cited in Worden N, ‘Contesting heritage in a South African city: Cape Town’, in Shaw B and Jones R (eds.), *Contesting Heritage*, (1997). See also Worden N, ‘Unwrapping History at the Cape Town Waterfront’, in *The Public Historian*, 16, 2, pp 33-50.

Town between 1899 and 1902. Among these are two images on which Africans feature, placed on the top right and the bottom right of the board. One is captioned “Rat Catcher’s Cottage” and the other, “The Removal of Africans to Ndabeni in February 1901”.

The enlarged photograph captioned “The Removal of Africans to Ndabeni in February 1901”, represents a group of African people, men, women and children “being marched” by soldiers out of Cape Town, many carrying luggage with their hands or on their heads.<sup>18</sup> It also includes uniformed white men or soldiers marching alongside the crowd, with long guns resting on their shoulders. All “marchers” appear to be absorbed in the marching, looking ahead, while only one uniformed man and one African woman, who carries a baby on her back, have their faces to the camera, while still striding forward. The woman’s facial expression, eyes and posture may be interpreted to depict terror or panic, while the uniformed man’s eyes, facial expression and posture may be interpreted to depict confidence and pride. Amidst the marching crowd is a horse-drawn cart with some indistinct number of people in it. Overlooking the street on the roadside, is a tall building whose top section fills up the photograph, with white people standing on the balcony, appearing to be watching the march below them.

Despite the possible inaccuracy in the date on the caption, it can be assumed that the photograph represents the eviction of Africans from the docks to Uitvlugt, most of which took place in March 1901 and not in February as the caption indicates.<sup>19</sup> Also,

<sup>18</sup> The biggest image in the board in the one captioned ‘The arrival of Lord Kitchener’, followed by the one entitled ‘The removal of Africans to Ndabeni February 1901’. The rest of the images are of the same size.

<sup>19</sup> The Gazette to enforce the removal of Africans from Cape Town was only issued in March 1901, and subsequent removals documented in the *Cape Times* took place between the 12th and the 15th of March 1901. The first documented removal therefore took place on 12 March 1901. For more see, Pause M,

although it can be interpreted differently, the image manages to represent the processes and experiences of forced removals, thus giving an indication of subsequent struggles for survival around the city in which these people were unwelcome. The main purpose of the photographer at that particular time could have been to capture the moment for record or news production purposes.

There are also social, economic and political factors, conditions and circumstances that could have informed the photographer's positioning of the camera while taking the photograph. However, from the frozen moment produced by the photograph, subsequent narratives and further stories of forced removals can be constructed. At the time of the production of the story board for the V&A Waterfront, the appropriation of this photograph has been mediated by a number of factors, such as the cultural politics of the day. For example, even though both Africans and white people appear in the photograph, knowledge producers chose to use it to represent Africans instead of white people. As a result those who encounter the photograph in the way it has been appropriated could either produce the same meanings made by the text that accompanies it, or could use it to construct further narratives. At the same time, some people can challenge its appropriation and aspire to use it differently. Nonetheless, at the site of this photograph, historical and heritage knowledge about kwa-Ndabeni continues to be made, for as long as photograph- as the representation-, still exists.

The photograph of the Rat Catcher's Cottage encompasses a number of objects which include: a small house with a sign "Ziahs-Halaal Take Aways" above its front entrance,

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'Forced Removal, District Six: based on an article published in Cape Times', (31/10/99), produced for the District Six Museum.

with a paved yard, a long bench placed in front of the small house, two men and a woman sitting on the bench, a caravan attached to the house, another bigger house behind, a street, a stop sign, a streetlight pole, one man standing in front of the small house, and the Table Mountain in the background.<sup>20</sup> Although the environment depicts a seemingly non-African residential area, possibly white— given the period the photograph represents, all people in the photograph seem to be Africans. The area in the photograph could represent a white residential area situated close to the city, in the slopes of Table Mountain, if we move from a late 20<sup>th</sup> century understanding of race and urban geography.

The apparel of the Africans in the photograph especially that of the men, appears to indicate that they may be labourers. Given as well the period which the photograph is used to represent in the story board, their presence in the area can be explained in terms of providing labour and services, apart from which they do not fit in the area. After their ejection from the city, for Africans to be depicted in the spacious residential spaces of Cape Town as in the photograph, only meant they were labourers. Africans who worked in the city commuted between the city and the docks, District Six or the ‘native reserve’, in this case kwa-Ndabeni. That being the case, the image therefore becomes a representation of working class struggles as well as the relationship African workers had with the space of their subsistence. The photograph therefore becomes another site

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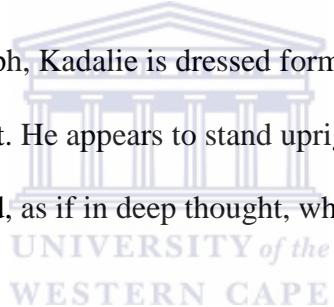
<sup>20</sup> Two man and a woman, sit casually on the bench in front of the front house facing the camera but appearing not to be directly looking at it. Another man, also African wearing a ‘hard labour work-suit’ stands facing the front entrance of the small house with his back turned against the camera and leaning to his left to look over to the back of the small house as if checking something. His left foot is placed firm on the ground while the heel of his right foot is lifted to allow the leaning to the left. While the small house and the area in front of it occupy a large part of the photograph, the table mountain in the background, with its ‘cloth’ clearly visible and the mountain slope, fill up the rest of the photograph.

of knowledge construction. It locates and dislocates the Africans who resided in the docklands, District Six or kwa-Ndabeni in and out of the city space that was to welcome and reject them periodically.

The image found in the next board number 24 presents a rather different circumstance from the ones outlined above.<sup>21</sup> In the board, the image captioned “Clements Kadalie”, the largest of three images, is the only image in the board that represents an African. It appropriates the photograph of Clements Kadalie within the text that reads:

In 1919, Cape Town dockworkers led by Clements Kadalie founded the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU), In the 1920s the ICU with about 200 000 members was the largest labour organisation in South Africa.

In this half-length photograph, Kadalie is dressed formally in an arrow shirt, a bow tie and a double-breasted jacket. He appears to stand upright in a confident posture, fixing his eyes to his left, far ahead, as if in deep thought, while the fingers of his right hand touch his neck.



As the text accompanying the photograph alludes, it is a fact that some residents of kwa-Ndabeni joined the ICU as early as 1919. It is also possible that the Cape dockworkers that joined the ICU in 1919 were residents of kwa-Ndabeni.<sup>22</sup> Although many of the dockworkers that Kadalie led in 1919 had been based in Durban, a large component of them was based in Cape Town, and could have been residents of kwa-Ndabeni. However, except for Clements Kadalie who is identified as a founder and a

<sup>21</sup> Board number 24 is situated just about eight meters from board 23 described above. It is also attached to the railings overlooking the harbour and it faces the Wharf Shopping Mall.

<sup>22</sup> For more about the Cape dockworkers and the ICU in 1919, see, Bradford H, *The Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of South Africa in the countryside, 1924-1930*, (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 1985), and Meyers J, ‘The Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of South Africa (1919-circa1934): The Rise and Fall of a Great Movement, in *Labour Education*, Vol. 76, (1989), pp 31-37.

leader, the identities of the African dockworkers represented in this particular image and text, as well as in the other boards, remain hidden. Nevertheless, through images, their lives have been, and continue to be imaginatively constructed and suggested.

Another meaning that could possibly be made at the sites of the boards and images of the V&A Waterfront is construction of an African as the ‘other’ in the city space. The storyboards and the images also appear to have been produced to embody ‘African-ness’, and to juxtapose that which depicts African with that which does not. Therefore, beyond face value through which ‘African characteristics’ can possibly be read, an embodiment of ‘other-ness’ can also be read through the juxtaposition of ‘the other’ with the space in the images. Through the images, binaries such as: Africans among whites, the ‘removed’ among the ‘removers’, the ‘temporary sojourners’ among the ‘fixed structures’, provide for a possible construction of the ‘other’. The meaning made and described above is but one among many possible meanings and interpretations that could be made through images at the V&A Waterfront. Therefore, the images of Africans at the V&A Waterfront continue to be not only sources and transmitters of knowledge, but also sites, modes and instruments of constant knowledge production.

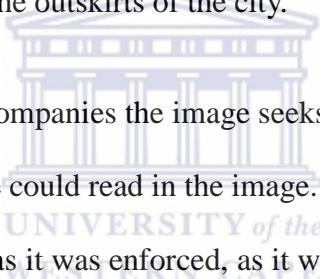
Similar images coupled with a short “history of ‘Ndabeni” have also been exhibited at the District Six Museum. In the *Digging Deeper* exhibition of the District Six Museum, ‘Ndabeni’ is represented in four panels mounted in the Memorial Hall, under the title “The Story of Horstley Street”.<sup>23</sup> The representation also consists of images, captions and texts. There is an image of kwa-Ndabeni, as well as a range of images of buildings

<sup>23</sup> For more on the *Digging Deeper* exhibition, see Julius C, ‘Oral history in the exhibitionary strategy of the District Six Museum, Cape Town’, Masters Thesis, (University of the Western Cape, 2007), and Julius C, “Digging [D]eeper than the eye approves”: Oral histories and their use in the Digging Deeper exhibition of the District Six Museum”, in *Kronos: Southern African Histories*, 34, (November 2008).

on Horstley Street which could have been sites of forced removal in 1901, images of the demolition of the buildings after 1966, and images of excavations to ‘recover’ the remains of Horstley Street in 1994.

The image made to represent kwa-Ndabeni, depicts lean-to huts and a woman and children, who appear to be residents of the location. The image is accompanied with a text, part of which reads:

The Ndabeni location was enclosed by a barbed wire fence and consisted of large corrugated iron huts and smaller iron shacks....Despite court appeals, petitions, rent boycotts and delegations to the Cape British authorities, legal protests against the removal proved unsuccessful and the reluctant settlement of Ndabeni took place to make way for the development of an industrial site. Ndabeni residents were forcibly removed for the second time to Langa, a location situated on the outskirts of the city.



In this case, the text that accompanies the image seeks to represent more about kwa-Ndabeni than one could read in the image. It represents the forced removal as a proposal, as it was resisted, as it was enforced, as it was experienced, as well as the nature of the location, which was the product of forced removal. This becomes another site in which knowledge about the natures and identities of both the state and the subjects of the state, becomes constructed.

Another public space with images that subtly represent the people of kwa-Ndabeni in images is the gallery of the old Breakwater Prison, now the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business and Breakwater Lodge. The institution exhibits in its maze of alleys a number of enlarged and framed photographs, paintings and maps. The Breakwater prison on which segregation on the basis of race was practised, held many Africans convicted of crimes within and outside Cape Town from the 1870s, until it was

closed down in 1905.<sup>24</sup> There are a few paintings exhibited that depict African convicts at work, supervised by “a coloured guard”, as one of the captions states. However, most striking are the images of the Cape Town Harbour in 1902 mounted on the passages leading to the north and south turrets. One of the images depicts a pier with the background of Table Mountain. Except for the pier, there are no objects, nor people objects in the image. The other one depicts African men working with logs on boat building projects at the Waterfront. Again, the first image could be read as a representation of the harbour as it is, and as it should be without Africans, while it depicts ‘work’ as the reason for the presence of the African men in the space.

Another public space that represents kwa-Ndabeni in images accompanied by texts is Eziko Restaurant and Catering School in Langa Township. Inside the dining hall the restaurant has a large panel entitled ‘Ndabeni and Langa’ mounted on the wall. The largest image in the panel is a photograph of kwa-Ndabeni, which like the photograph exhibited at the District Six Museum, depicts an array of huts. The second one represents three corrugated iron huts around which about twenty people, who appear to be engrossed in their businesses. The last image represents a congested interior of a room in which one man appears to be cooking on a brazier, while two boys are around him, one seated and eating, while the stands facing the man.

Narratives of congestion and poor living conditions have been central in popular and social histories of townships and informal settlements. At the site of these images, similar narratives could be reproduced or affirmed. At the same time, given the popular and social histories of kwa-Ndabeni, one could easily read the situation represented by

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<sup>24</sup> For more, see Deacon H, ‘History of the Breakwater Prison, 1859-1905’, Honours Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1989).

the images as utter poor living conditions. However, alternative knowledge could be made from the images too. The exterior environment represented especially by the first image appears tidy, fairly spacious and orderly than what history has made of kwa-Ndabeni. This therefore challenges the tendency of subordinating images to text, or of reading images against the backdrop of histories, which tend to be accorded a status higher than that of images. Images can on their own challenge histories. They can, on their own, command space and devices through which independent or alternative knowledge becomes produced.

Therefore, images about kwa-Ndabeni that are found in public spaces in Cape Town, have not only inserted the location and its people into broader histories, or validated existing histories, they have and continue to make memories, narratives, histories and heritages, at the sites of their representations. Knowledge made at such representations however is never fixed, but shifts in accordance with certain factors and representations politics, affecting those who produce representations and those who get to engage with the representations at a later stage. I discuss in detail the processes and politics involved in that at later stage in this chapter.

### 3. ‘Ndabeni’ in township tourism

In the midst of many public spaces through which public histories have been made in Cape Town, there are tourist routes and tourists attractions, which have also become sites of public knowledge making about kwa-Ndabeni. The main tourist route through which this has materialised begins in Cape Town, ventures into the townships situated at the periphery and at the outskirts of the city, and stops at various sites in various

townships, until it finally returns to the city. In Cape Town, there are various independent tour operators that take scores of tourists to the townships on a daily basis.<sup>25</sup> One of the common starting points in Cape Town is the District Six Museum, from which a symbolic simulation of forced removals sets the tourists on a ‘pilgrimage’ to the outskirts of the city, the townships. In these tours, kwa-Ndabeni, referred to by many tour guides and tourists as ‘Ndabeni’, is again deployed as a device in narrating the story of forced removals in Cape Town, a narrative which becomes merged into Langa as the tour group reaches Langa.

In many township tours that begin at District Six Museum, kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ becomes used as the beginning of the history of African townships in Cape Town, and is used to explain the coming into existence of many townships and informal settlements in the Cape Flats.<sup>26</sup> Having come into existence as a result of racial segregation and forced removals, kwa-Ndabeni, is also used to explain the coming into existence of the uninhabitable ‘labour reserves’ which African people were restricted to by legislation designed along racial lines. The history about eviction of Africans to the outskirts of Cape Town effectively explains not only the separation in space, but the disparities that remain evident between the city and the townships. Thus, social and popular histories about kwa-Ndabeni, re-figured as ‘Ndabeni’ in most heritage and tourism projects and

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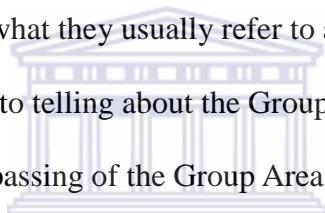
<sup>25</sup> For more on Cape Town Township Tours, see Dondolo L, ‘The Construction of Public History and Tourist Destinations in Cape Town’s Townships: A Study of routes, sites and heritage’, Masters Mini-thesis, (University of the Western Cape, 2002). See also Witz L, ‘Museums on Cape Town’s township tours’, in Murray N et al, *Desire Lines: Space, memory and identity in the post-apartheid city*, (London: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> Township Tours are autonomously operated tours that seek to provide people who do not reside in townships with an experience of everyday life in a township. The tour experience mainly centres on group visits to pre-selected sites meant to portray ‘realities’ of life in a South African township. The history of these tours varies as some may be associated with the apartheid tourist gaze of the 1950s and 90s, while some may be associated with the construction of national reconciliation strategies of the 1990s and 2000s.

Cape Flats refers to the lowlands situated in the outskirts of the Cape Town city bowl, where most townships and informal settlements are situated.

programmes, become points of reference. They shape not only the public history of Langa Township, which in many ways replaced kwa-Ndabeni, but the public histories of other townships in Cape Town.

The District Six Museum uses the former residents of District Six as tour guides and to narrate their life stories to tourists and researchers, but it also allows its space to be utilised on a daily basis by many tour guides representing various tour operating companies. The museum often has little control over how these independent tour guides shape their narratives, but most of them remarkably follow a trend of beginning by narrating the first forced removals from District Six to kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’.<sup>27</sup> Many also briefly describe what they usually refer to as “terrible” living conditions at the location, before shifting to telling about the Group Areas Act and the forced removals that followed the passing of the Group Areas Act in 1950.



A mention of the African former residents of District Six is usually made again when the group moves to the huge photographic representation of the 1960s demolition of District Six plastered on the wall on the far right side of the main hall. This is because next to the plastered wall is *Nomvuyo’s Room*, a reconstruction by Nomvuyo Ngcelwane of the room she and her African family occupied in District Six before they were removed to Nyanga West or Gugulethu in 1963.<sup>28</sup> Like the storyboards next to the

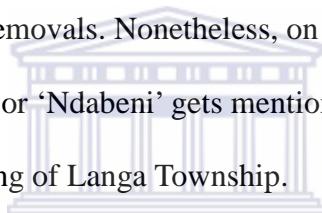
<sup>27</sup>I observed this when I spent hours sitting near the main entrance of District Six Museum, where tour groups stand around story boards, as tour guides narrate stories by going through or referring to the illustrations on the storyboards. I listened to presentations by different tour guides, one after another.

<sup>28</sup>See, Julius C, “Digging [D]eeper than the eye approves”: Oral histories and their use in the Digging Deeper exhibition of the District Six Museum’, in *Kronos: Southern African Histories*, 34, (November 2008), p 109.

Nomvuyo and her family had been targeted because they were Africans, thus removed leaving their ‘Coloured friends’ behind. See, Ngcelwane M, *Sala Kahle District Six: An African Woman’s Perspective*, (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 1998), Chapter 10.

entrance, *Nomvuyo's Room* becomes another object that evokes constant reference to the forced removals experienced by Africans in particular.

However, guides never lead tourists to the Memorial Hall situated at the far back of the museum, where they would possibly learn ‘more’ about the forced removals of 1901, through the four panels on Horstley Street. Instead, tourists are allowed a few minutes ranging from fifteen to thirty, to go through the entire museum exhibitions at the bottom and top floors, a time which also includes a refreshment break. When the tour moves to the vacant District Six site outside the museum buildings, the narratives are usually focused more on the removals and demolitions of the 1960s and 1970s. The narratives rarely go back to the 1901 removals. Nonetheless, on the way from the District Six site and to Langa, kwa-Ndabeni or ‘Ndabeni’ gets mentioned again to lay foundations to the story of the coming into being of Langa Township.

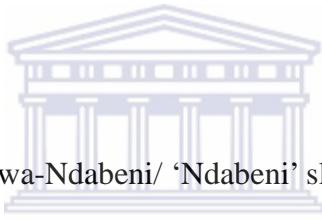


In Langa, tourism sites are usually pointed at or visited according to their order of location as the tour bus negotiates its way up the N2, exiting into Bunga Avenue and turning into Washington Street to stop at Guga S’thebe Arts and Cultural Centre or near the Langa Pass Office and Court.<sup>29</sup> From there, depending on the tour package, walking or driving tours venture into Mendi Avenue, Moshoeshoe Street and Nolwana Way, passing by or stopping at the Police Station, the library, schools, taverns or *sheebens*, the open meat markets, craft markets, Ndaba - the Traditional Healer, Desmond - the artist, hostels, the new flats, middle-class houses, the Eziko Restaurant and Catering Training School and Tsoga Environmental Resource Centre.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Guga S’thebe Arts and Cultural Centre and Langa Pass office and Court are both situated on Washington Street near the Langa Police Station.

<sup>30</sup> See, Dondolo L, ‘The Construction of Public History and Tourist Destinations in Cape Town’s Townships: A Study of routes, sites and heritage’, Masters Mini-thesis, (University of the Western Cape,

Another site that gets pointed at but rarely visited is the initiation site, which is the open space enclosed between the N2, Bunga Avenue and the Twin Towers of the Athlone Power Station<sup>31</sup> The significance of this site is that it is used every school holiday as the space where surgeries, camping and ceremonies for the rite of passage of teenage Xhosa boys take place. During school holidays it is usually dotted with beehive structures covered in canvass or plastic sheets, which provide temporary accommodation for the initiates for the entire period of their initiation. Passing by the site, tourists are usually told that such activity was not performed at kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ because people preferred to send their boys to the countryside where it would be done the ‘proper traditional’ way.



While the narratives about kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ slowly subside as the tour approaches Langa, and as Langa becomes the dominant subject, there are tour guides in certain sites, who, as if guided by some script, insist on starting every account from kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’. At Guga St’thebe Arts and Cultural Centre and Langa Pass Office and Court, tour guides usually begin the stories of the sites by tracing the people of Langa from kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’. Zamile Makupula, a tour guide at Guga S’thebe Arts and Cultural Centre, is of a third generation in a family which was forcibly removed from District Six to Nyanga West now called Gugulethu in 1963.<sup>32</sup> He attests to insisting on informing tourists that Africans in Cape Town suffered repeated

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2002), Chapter 2 and 3. See also Field S, ‘Sites of memory in Langa’, in Field S, Meyer R and Swanson F, (eds.), *Imagining the City: Memories and cultures in Cape Town*, (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007). Dondolo and Field identify other sites of heritage and tourism significance as Sobukhwe Square, the Market Hall, the space in front of Wesley Methodist Church on Washington Street where celebrations and commemorations were held in the past, the Police Station, the former holding cells now Shell mini fuel station, and the former migrant hostels and barracks.

<sup>31</sup> The Twin Towers, which are due for demolition on 21 August 2010, have for many years stood as great landmarks alongside the N2, the Jan Smuts Drive and near the precinct of Langa Township. <http://www.pinelandsdirectory.co.za/council.php>

<sup>32</sup> Interview at Guga S’thebe on 12 March 2010.

removals, from District Six to kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’, and from kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ to Langa; or from District Six to Gugulethu and other places. When his tour begins at District Six, Makupula testifies that his emotions always come to play when he stands at the site where his home was, evoking him to begin talking about kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ and Gugulethu.<sup>33</sup>

## **‘Ndabeni’ in heritage**

### **1. ‘Ndabeni’s’ heritage as produced in the District Six Museum**

Having been accorded by social history the eminence of providing the first forced removal experience in Cape Town, kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ also features in public history and heritage projects of Cape Town, as an embodiment of memories of loss and suffering. Configured in many public spaces as ‘Ndabeni’, the location is the archetypical product of the history of forced removals, and it has also featured in many heritage projects that have produced knowledge of dispossession and forced removals for public consumption. Heritage projects centred on the memory of forced removals from District Six have also drawn a lot from social history about ‘Ndabeni’. Such heritage projects emerged as products of numerous public meetings, campaigns and conferences that took place towards and after the birth of South African democracy in 1994.

The District Six Museum was established in 1994 with a dedication to “re-calling” former residents of District Six from all parts of Cape Town to actively represent their

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<sup>33</sup> Zamile’s home was at No. 45 De Villiers Street in District Six. This was confirmed by his grandfather Ernest Mbhele Makupula, interview at No. 74 NY 11 Gugulethu, 12 March 2010.

forced removal experiences. As the exhibitions began to be dominated by voices of coloured people, the museum began to create an impression of a coloured people's museum. Since the District Six Museum was opened, it occurred over time that the museum began to seek ways to establish a non-racial image that would accurately represent the old District Six before demolition. The museum's representations had to testify to the co-existence of people of different races and ethnic groups that occurred in the old District Six. The fact that in the old District Six, Africans had lived alongside coloureds, Indians, Malays, white, and many other identity groups, had to manifest itself in the museum's main exhibitions.

One of the exhibitions that began to represent 'diversity' in District Six was the *Digging Deeper Exhibition* which was opened in 2000. The exhibition dedicated four distinct panels to telling the story of Horstley Street, its construction, occupation and its destruction in a way that incorporated 'Ndabeni in every phase of its existence. It asserted that many African dockworkers who were forcibly removed to 'Ndabeni' in 1901, as well as people who were forcibly removed to Gugulethu in the 1960s, had been residents of Horstley Street. Although not 'digging deeper' enough as Dondolo argues, the panels also briefly outlined the situation in 'Ndabeni', as it even almost alluded to resistance actions taken by the Africans prior the move to 'Ndabeni' and during their stay in 'Ndabeni'.<sup>34</sup>

To explain the objectives of District Six Museum further in relation to 'Ndabeni's and/or Langa, when the museum was opened in 1994, its initial focus was meant to be

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<sup>34</sup> Dondolo L, 'The Construction of Public History and Tourist Destinations in Cape Town's Townships: A Study of routes, sites and heritage', Masters Mini-thesis, (University of the Western Cape, 2002), p 54, argues that the museum has not dug deeper enough as it still suppresses aspects of the District Six past such as the popular culture of the working class and the pigmentation hierarchies that existed.

wider than merely telling the story of the past District Six. It emerged at its very inception as “a project about the histories of District Six, forced removals and the retrieval of memory as a resource of solidarity and reclamation” and at another level, “a project about different genres of knowledge production”.<sup>35</sup> It became a “potent symbol for inserting a history of forced removal in the narrative of post-apartheid history”.<sup>36</sup> Rassool even asserts that the mission of the District Six Museum was “to mobilize the masses of ex-residents and their descendants into a movement of land restitution, community development, and political consciousness...”<sup>37</sup> Through the museum, the story of District Six became understood as “not just about District Six, [but] ...as a symbol of wider issues of civil justice and a unique instance of “multicultural” living”.<sup>38</sup>



Given the above, the construction of public history about District Six, as well as of memories of forced removals and identities of those affected, could not be fully accomplished without featuring kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ and its people. Hence, the former residents of kwa-Ndabeni and their descendants were constantly part of public events related to land, restitution and history such as briefings, workshops, conferences, hearings and celebrations that were held in District Six.

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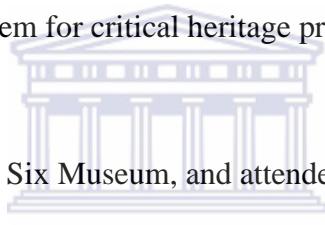
<sup>35</sup> Rassool C, ‘The Rise of Heritage and the Reconstruction of History in South Africa’, in *Kronos*, No 26, (August 2000).

<sup>36</sup> See Baduza U, ‘Memory and documentation in exhibition-making: a case study of the Protea Village exhibition, A History of Paradise 1829-2002’, (University of the Western Cape, November 2007), p 6.

<sup>37</sup> Rassool C, ‘Community Museums, Memory Politics and Social Transformation in South Africa: Histories, Possibilities and Limits’, in I Karp et al, *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures / Global Transformations*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p 294.

<sup>38</sup> Prosalendis S, Marot J, Soudien C and Nagia A, ‘Punctuations: periodic impressions of a museum’, in Rassool C and Prosalendis S (eds), *Recalling Community in Cape Town: Creating and Curating the District Six Museum*, (Cape Town: District Six Museum, 2001) p 20. Also see Rassool C, ‘Community Museums, Memory Politics and Social Transformation in South Africa: Histories, Possibilities and Limits’, in I Karp et al (eds.), *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures / Global Transformations*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). See also District Six Museum, *District Six: A National Heritage Site, Draft on Conservation Management Plan* prepared for SAHRA Council, July 2006, pp 11-12.

Among such events was the “Hands on District Six Conference: Landscapes of Postcolonial Memorialisation” held in 2005 at the Cape Town International Conference Centre (CTICC), Langa, Manenberg, Protea Village and District Six.<sup>39</sup> Langa was an appropriate venue for it was the ‘final’ location to which those who were forcibly removed from District Six in 1901 were banished. Thus, Langa located the people whom the people of District Six had lost physical contact which for over a hundred years. During the sessions held in Langa, the former residents of kwa-Ndabeni had an opportunity to re-construct and share their forced removal experiences with other victims of forced removals coming from other parts of the country. The conference sessions also helped to shape the perspectives of participants on heritage production processes, thus equipping them for critical heritage practices.



Other events held at District Six Museum, and attended by former residents of kwa-Ndabeni included workshops and legal forums which provided advice on land restitution processes. Other workshops on heritage production and memory projects were more practical in terms of imparting knowledge about heritage conservation, preservation, interpretation and presentation. All these events played a significant role in shaping memories and identities of the entire ‘forced removal community’ in Cape Town and in other parts of the country. Thus, kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ – used one again as – a perfect embodiment of products of forced removals, provided a point to which production of histories and heritages of similar precedents could refer.

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<sup>39</sup> See, *Report on the Hands on District Six: Landscapes of Postcolonial Memorialisation Conference - 25-28 May 2005, District Six Museum*

## 2. 'Kwa-Ndabeni's' heritage as produced in Langa

As much as kwa-Ndabeni/ 'Ndabeni' features in many public spaces in Cape Town, museum representations have been the most manifest and the most detailed in producing and presenting the histories and heritages of kwa-Ndabeni. In Langa, processes of constructing heritage in ways that include kwa-Ndabeni appear to have begun with the occupation of Langa by former residents of kwa-Ndabeni. This is evident in the way sites and streets were named in Langa. However, there are popular narratives that began to take shape with the emergence of the National Heritage Resources Act in 1999. The residents of Langa, like many other imagined communities throughout the country and in the province, began to be actively involved in knowledge construction processes that would portray them as a body unified for the cause of the development of Langa and for the resurrection of the old kwa-Ndabeni. The City of Cape Town and the South African Heritage Resources Agency also launched projects that would become springboards for such ideals.

One of the major projects to be facilitated by the City of Cape Town was the establishment of Guga S'thebe Arts and Cultural Centre, followed by the Langa Museum Project. The Guga S'thebe Arts and Cultural Centre, whose construction stretched from 1998 to 1999 was officially opened on 20 September 2000.<sup>40</sup> It had many purposes ranging from tourism; crafts production, marketing and vending; information

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<sup>40</sup> This is a multi-purpose complex that houses an information centre, a crafts gallery, an amphitheatre, a multimedia centre, a ceramics workshop, a theatre, a boardroom and offices. The name Guga S'thebe is drawn from a Xhosa idiom that praises strength, reliability and 'wisdom' of an old family food serving platter, an analogy referring to Langa Township and the rich 'culture', traditions and customs of its people.

services; arts and cultural production, performances and theatre; and skill training and development. Although the centre was established to serve the community's needs for sustainable economic development through arts and culture, it soon took up certain heritage production roles. As tour guides at the centre transmitted narratives about the past, the link between the centre, the museum next door, and the pillars along Washington street, soon presented a potential for development of a heritage square on Washington Street.

In 2000, Luvuyo Dondolo, an intern at the centre, together with his team held interviews with Langa residents, both young and old, after which they mounted an exhibition entitled *Langa Histories*, at Guga S'thebe Arts and Culture Centre.<sup>41</sup>

Although "internal frictions were to hamper progress at the centre for a while", Guga S'thebe was soon to attract national and international interest and tourism not only to itself but to Langa Township.<sup>42</sup> For instance, in the same year of the opening of Guga S'thebe, the City of Cape Town Heritage Resources Project undertook a study to investigate in Langa sites, events and processes that could be of local, national and international interest. The main aim of the study was to identify sites and events that could be incorporated into the tourism package that was being created through Guga S'thebe.

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<sup>41</sup> Luvuyo Dondolo was at the time a Post Graduate Diploma student in Museum and Heritage Studies at the University of the Western Cape. The interviews were done under the Langa Oral History Project mentioned above, while the exhibition was part of the Cape Town One City Festival. For more, see Dondolo L, 'The Construction of Public History and Tourist Destinations in Cape Town's Townships: A Study of routes, sites and heritage', Masters Mini-thesis, (University of the Western Cape, 2002).

<sup>42</sup> Dondolo L, 'The Construction of Public History and Tourist Destinations in Cape Town's Townships: A Study of routes, sites and heritage', Masters Mini-thesis, (University of the Western Cape, 2002), p 100.

Following that, in 2000, the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA), a body responsible for identification, recording and managing nationally recognised heritage resources, also began to facilitate heritage production in Langa. On 20 April 2001, SAHRA held a conference entitled *Celebrating Township Heritage to create Unity in Diversity* at both Guga S'thebe and old Langa Pass Office and Court Complex. The conference discussions produced consideration of the Pass Office and Court compound for development as a museum. The conference also viewed and discussed *Langa Histories* exhibition at Guga S'thebe, artefacts found at the old Pass Office and Court Complex, as well as the potential tourism sites and routes within the township.

In the same year 2001, SAHRA also commissioned Phaphamani Heritage Research Consultants to embark upon the identification of Langa heritage sites.<sup>43</sup> These two projects led to the formation of Langa Heritage Reference Group, as well as the formal launch of Langa Heritage Foundation in 2003. The formation of these was also facilitated by officials from the Development Facilitation Unit and Heritage Resources Section of the Cape Town City Council (CCC), who withdrew as soon as the Foundation was established.<sup>44</sup> While the Reference Group was mainly composed of community leaders and senior residents including the former residents of kwa-Ndabeni, the Foundation mostly comprised Langa residents and local councillors, and was overseen by municipal officials.<sup>45</sup>

The main role of the Reference Group was to facilitate identification of heritage resources and to work towards the establishment of the Langa Heritage Foundation,

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<sup>43</sup> See SAHRA Annual Report, 2001.

<sup>44</sup> Field S, ‘Sites of memory in Langa’, in Field S, Meyer R and Swanson F, (eds.), *Imagining the City: Memories and cultures in Cape Town*, (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007).

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Phyllis Fuku, 24 September 2009.

which was meant to be a formally constituted and fairly representative structure. The Reference Group however, soon lost its popularity as it began to receive opposition from the younger Langa residents, for promoting ‘old’ kwa-Ndabeni histories at the expense of Langa contemporary and struggle histories.<sup>46</sup> Tensions about ‘whose histories’ were to be told also began to trigger political debates concerning approaches in which the struggle narratives of the ANC and the PAC would be represented in Langa heritage.

One of the sites in which these tensions were to manifest themselves was the old Pass Office and Court Complex, a site in which the control of Africans entering and leaving Cape Town was administered, through identity documents and permits in the past.<sup>47</sup> This site had been identified during the study conducted by SAHRA and the City of Cape Town Heritage Resources Project in 2000, and was agreed upon by both the Reference Group and the Foundation. It was an obvious choice for site of memory, for “evoke[d] painful memories,[and] experiences of subjugation and resistance” of the earlier generation of Langa, especially of former migrants.<sup>48</sup> In 2004, the site was renovated and officially opened as Langa Museum. The main exhibition at its opening comprised storyboards, with photographs and excerpts from the oral history interviews,

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Phyllis Fuku, 24 September 2009.

<sup>47</sup> The site was where the infamous *dompass* or passbook was issued, which Africans permitted to be in Cape Town were required to carry all the time. Other sites identified included the Initiation Site, Caledon Square, Mendi Square and Sobukhwe Square, where clashes between the police and the anti-apartheid marches occurred, the Market Hall in Brenton Street, which was a famous place of entertainment in Langa. For more see, Field S, ‘Sites of memory in Langa’, in Field S, Meyer R and Swanson F, (eds.), *Imagining the City: Memories and cultures in Cape Town*, (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2007).

<sup>48</sup> See Field S, ‘Imagining Communities: Memory, Loss and Resilience in Post-Apartheid Cape Town’, in Hamilton P and Shope L, *Oral History and Public Memories*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), pp 107-124.

some artefacts mainly from the old Pass Office and Court Complex, as well as other a some community stories.<sup>49</sup>

Next to Langa Museum, three concrete pillars covered with colourful ceramic mosaics, which were an installation by local artists, were also incorporated into the Langa Museum exhibitions. The artworks represented the multi-era histories from the time of kwa-Ndabeni to the more recent times of Langa. One pillar represented the sinking of the *Mendi*, which occurred in 1917, during the time of kwa-Ndabeni, but only to be commemorated annually in Langa. The rest of the pillars represented the hostel life, the student marches and boycotts of 1976, and Langa's cultural life. In December of the same year in which Langa Museum was opened, Langa Township became one of the eight sites that SAHRA approved as Grade 1 National Heritage Resources.<sup>50</sup> In 2005, the museum exhibitions extended to showing a documentary entitled *We are all History: Stories from Langa*, researched and produced by Centre for Popular Memory based at the University of Cape Town. The documentary was based on videotaped oral history interviews with Langa residents, which Langa Museum had conducted with the assistance of the Centre for Popular Memory.<sup>51</sup>

In 2006, SAHRA held a workshop in Langa for the Langa Heritage Foundation and the residents, to empower them to value, protect, conserve, and manage their cultural and natural heritage inscribed in graves, and grave related material.<sup>52</sup> At that stage, many

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<sup>49</sup> See, Field S, 'Imagining Communities: Memory, Loss and Resilience in Post-Apartheid Cape Town', in Hamilton P and Shopes L, *Oral History and Public Memories*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), p 122.

<sup>50</sup> See, *SAHRA Annual Report*, 2006, <http://www.sahra.org.za/SAHRA%20Annual%20Report%202005.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> For this Langa Oral History Project, Sean Field interviewed a number of Langa Residents, while Kwandiwe Kondlo interviewed a number of former kwa-Ndabeni residents.

<sup>52</sup> See SAHRA Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2005, paraphrased.

former residents of kwa-Ndabeni had become discouraged by what they saw as the underrating of their past.<sup>53</sup> According to them, while Langa graveyard was on the verge of being recognized as a heritage site, “nothing” was being done about the graves of those who died at kwa-Ndabeni and were buried in Maitland. At the same time, there was a feeling that the representations inside Langa museum, on the concrete pillars on the streets, at Guga S’thebe and in the tourist packages, had by 2006 become more about ‘Langa before, during and after apartheid’ and less about kwa-Ndabeni. On the other hand, some resident of Langa still believed that not enough was being done to represent the “contemporary histories” of Langa.<sup>54</sup>

Moreover, since the former residents of kwa-Ndabeni (or their descendants) had been awarded land in Wingfield in 2001, some of them lost interest in Langa histories and heritage projects, with the hope that they would soon produce their own elsewhere. At the same time, some tensions developed between them and Langa resident over issues of development and service delivery. While some Langa residents were frustrated with the slow construction of houses for those who were in waiting, they resented the ‘Ndabeni’ land claimants for the 54.8 hectares of land they had received. At the same while, when the ‘Ndabeni; land claimants were frustrated with the slow or lack of progress in the development of their land, they resented the “new comers”, commonly referred to as *mogoes*,<sup>55</sup> who were receiving houses or flats in Langa, which they thought was undeserved, given their short stay in Cape Town. Frustrations such as these happened to be common among the victims of forced removals in Cape Town, as they

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Phyllis Fuku, 24 September 2009.

<sup>54</sup> See, the speech by Sikhumbuzo Ngubo, in *Report on the Hands on District Six: Landscapes of Postcolonial Memorialisation Conference - 25-28 May 2005*, (District Six Museum)

<sup>55</sup> An Afrikaans slang word loosely translated as stupid or dumb.

would be raised time and again in land restitution meetings, workshops and conferences, many of which were held at the District Six Museum.<sup>56</sup>

Nonetheless, a session of the “Hands on District Six Conference: Landscapes of Postcolonial Memorialisation”, held in Langa in 2005, became to some extent instrumental in discussing useful heritage strategies concerning the tensions that were arising. Certain members of the Langa Heritage Foundation and ‘Ndabeni’ land claimants who spoke at the conference, raised their concerns and views about heritage representations at the Langa Museum and in general.<sup>57</sup> One of the recommendations was that the Langa Museum should involve all its stake holders and interests groups, and collect more artefacts to widen the scope of representations through its exhibitions.<sup>58</sup> At the end, the conference appeared to have provided an opportunity for an open discussion of such issues, as well as for the conference to assist the Langa Heritage Foundation with constructive strategies.

One would have expected to see such strategies put into use after the conference, but it occurred that collecting more artefacts for the museum in order to broaden the scope of representations, proved to be a challenge. The museum had not yet developed its collections, conservation and management policies and plans, as well as its security to the success of the exercise. Since 2007, the operations at the Langa Museum began to decline until the museum finally shut its doors from access by the public in 2008.

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<sup>56</sup> Interview with Phyllis Fuku, 24 September 2009. Phyllis gave an example of a meeting she attended in the District Six Museum, in which many residents of Gugulethu, who had been forcibly removed from District Six, complained that they were being overtaken by “new comers” in Gugulethu in terms of the development, due to the slow progress which characterised the District Six land claim at the time of their complaint.

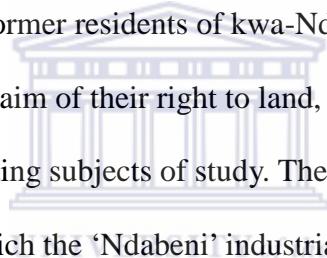
<sup>57</sup>The speakers representing Langa included Skhumbuzo Ngubo, Fezeka Matiyase, and Phyllis Fuku.

<sup>58</sup> See, *Report on the Hands on District Six: Landscapes of Postcolonial Memorialisation Conference - 25-28 May 2005*, District Six Museum.

Among many things that the museum hoped to have achieved as in May 2010 its closure drew towards an end, was increased access and participation by its community members, a wide range of representations, increased visitor experience, and maximum security of its collections.<sup>59</sup>

### 3. ‘Ndabeni’s’ land heritage

Processes through which the former residents of kwa-Ndabeni constructed their heritage around the land cannot be summarised into any particular event, as many different events, experiences and narratives about land have always characterised these people. However, it was when the former residents of kwa-Ndabeni and their descendants began to formally lodge a claim of their right to land, that these people made histories that were to become interesting subjects of study. The land right that these people claimed was the land on which the ‘Ndabeni’ industrial site stood.



When these people became compensated with two pieces of land situated at Wingfield, which they had themselves identified, they readily celebrated.<sup>60</sup> Since these people converged to lodge a land claim in 1995, the ‘Ndabeni’ land claimant ‘community’<sup>61</sup>, as they identified themselves and as they were referred to during the process, began to publicly construct memories around their land. For the purposes of the land claim, the former residents of kwa-Ndabeni and their descendants felt it necessary to imagine themselves as a ‘community’, which took shape as other ‘communities’ associated with

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<sup>59</sup> A personal conversation with Andile Dyasi, the Manager and Director of Guga S’thebe and Langa Museum Complex, 05 May, 2010.

<sup>60</sup> The kwa-Ndabeni land claimants chose Wingfield because it was close to their old kwa-Ndabeni Land and because it was a prime site viable for both commercial purposes and also suitable for upmarket residential purposes. Interview with Phyllis Fuku, 24 September 2009.

<sup>61</sup> I again insert inverted commas to emphasize the name invention in the name ‘Ndabeni’.

forced removals and land claims in other parts of the country. The ‘Ndabeni’ land claimant ‘community’ had a purpose and had, like other claimant communities such as that of Protea Village, “to cohere in order to legitimize the land claim”<sup>62</sup> For that matter, as the Land Restitution Act No. 22 of 1994 also stipulated, a claiming ‘community’ had to form an organization, a committee, or representatives to speak on its behalf.<sup>63</sup>

As ‘communities’ in and around Cape Town mobilised themselves to lodge land claims, and as the events concerning land restitution unfolded, use of public histories and oral histories as mobilizing tools became evident. Many processes become enmeshed in issues of political administration of the province and service delivery, as certain cases became used as political lobbying tools in the contest between the ANC and the Democratic Alliance (DA). In 1996 the so called ‘Ndabeni’ land claimants for instance used their case to protest against Cape Town’s bid to host 2005 Olympic Games.

According to them, the bid was just another means by the white people led by the DA to undermine their birth right to land, for the mere pleasure of watching games and reaping financial benefit.<sup>64</sup>

As it was ten years later, the DA had since taking over the administration of the Cape Town city in 2006, begun to question land restitution processes that have been embarked upon by the ANC in the past.<sup>65</sup> This again contributed to causing land narratives of kwa-Ndabeni to be shaped around political issues. Under the ANC administration, the ‘Ndabeni’ Land Claimants had an office which they rented from the

<sup>62</sup> Baduza U, ‘Memory and documentation in exhibition-making: a case study of the Protea Village exhibition, A History of Paradise 1829-2002’, (University of the Western Cape, November 2007), p 44.

<sup>63</sup> *Restitution of Land Rights Act, No. 22 of 1994*, in <http://www.info.gov.za/act/1994/a22-94.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Patrick Mbulelo Skenjana, on 15 March 2010.

<sup>65</sup> For more, see *Cape Times*, (29 July 2008 and 16 October 2008), and *Cape Argus*, (04 January 2008).

money allocated for administration when the land was handed over to their trust in 2001. Between 2001 and 2009, many trustees were ousted before their terms came to an end. This was due accusations ranging from mismanagement of funds, corruption, fraud, conspiracies to inefficiency.<sup>66</sup> Resources such as the ‘Ndabeni’ Communal Property Trust office and the vehicle were lost in the process of changing trusts, until many land claimants lost access to information about the developments around their claim. The year 2006 proved to be the worst for ‘Ndabeni’ land claimants as criminal allegations about certain trustees led to the disbanding of the trust, only to be replaced by a crisis committee.<sup>67</sup>

When the Democratic Alliance (DA) took control of the city in 2006, and when little or no progress was seen in the development of the ‘Ndabeni’ Community Property Trust land, some land claimants began to associate that with the political changes in the administration of Cape Town. They began accusing the DA of racist intentions to sabotage the project, as well accusing the trustees of collaborating with the DA. Even the white accountants administering the ‘Ndabeni’ Community Property Trust funds, were accused of siding with or using the trustees to enrich themselves.<sup>68</sup>

Asserting themselves as ANC members and significant contributors to land struggles in the country, some disgruntled ‘Ndabeni’ Land Claimants, with the support of local civic organisations, also began to lodge complaints with the Land Commission. Although a Crisis Committee was set in 2006, it was soon ousted before the end of 2007 as some of its members became accused of seeking to highjack the process to benefit of people

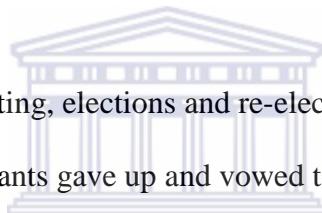
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<sup>66</sup> I discuss the Ndabeni Communal Property Trust in more detail in Chapter Three.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Zambia Tokolo, 1 April 2010.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Doris Zimemo-Ngobeni, 1 April 2010.

who had no ‘valid’ claims to kwa-Ndabeni.<sup>69</sup> It also occurred that some former trustees, who were second generation former residents of kwa-Ndabeni needed to be replaced with ‘young blood’. The older generation had done its part in terms of the construction of memories in relation to kwa-Ndabeni land heritage. It was time for the younger generation, who presumably had good vision on sustainable land development to chart the way forward. The longing for recognition of a certain piece of land as a heritage resource for Ndabeni Land Claimants had been realised, through the land award in 2001, but the resourcefulness of the land was yet unseen. The ‘Ndabeni’ land claimants had for over eight years failed to realise the land allocated to them as a valuable heritage resource, and to utilise it to their benefit.



In the midst of all the infighting, elections and re-elections of Ndabeni Community Property Trusts, some claimants gave up and vowed to rather not attend meetings than be used by certain groups with hidden motives.<sup>70</sup> Some only began to regain hope in 2009 when Judge Fikile Bam of the Land Claims Court issued an order for new trustees to be elected, and personally availing himself to oversee the process in a meeting held at Langa on 9 May 2009.<sup>71</sup> It was only with the new trust, the new advisers, the new proposals for development, and the pronouncement of the final ‘verified’ list, that many claimants could once again realise the land at Wingfield, as their heritage resource.<sup>72</sup>

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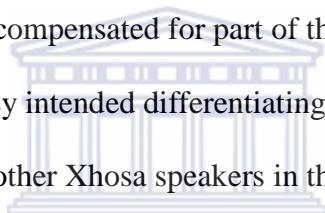
<sup>69</sup> Interview with Zambia Tokolo, 1 April 2010.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Doris Zimemo-Ngobeni, 1 April 2010. Also, when I attempted to interview an elderly Mrs Siyaka on 06 April 2010, she asked me to leave her house as soon as I mentioned the name kwa-Ndabeni. She immediately assumed that I was involved in the land claim, telling me that “we” can misuse the land and money as “we” pleased; she had given up on it and did not care.

<sup>71</sup> See, *Gauteng News Flash*, 5 May 2009,  
<http://www.gautenglaw.co.za/documents/Document.cfm?docID=73>

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Zambia Tokolo, 1 April 2010. The Commission for the Restitution of Rights claimed to have for the past few years been performing verification of the list of 587 names of Ndabeni land claimants. Interview with Ronald Buthelezi, 12 November 2009. See also, *Cape Times*, 16 October 2008.

On the other hand, the *amaHlubi* people in the Western Cape - who trace their descent from the northern parts of Zululand, (before they migrated to Natal, to the Eastern Cape and later to the Western Cape 1800s and 1900s), also regarded kwa-Ndabeni as their source of existence in the province. Their Chief (known to them as King) Mthethwa Langalibalele I, had been incarcerated on Robben Island, and then released to live under house arrest for twelve years in Uitvlugt farm, which later became kwa-Ndabeni.<sup>73</sup> The *amaHlubi* regarded Uitvlugt or kwa-Ndabeni as their heritage, for the land was where their king had been allocated to reside with his wives and counsellors. Their claim also included the land which the farm called Oude Molen once covered. It was always unlikely that the claim would be considered; given the fact that the Ndabeni land claimants had already been compensated for part of the land they claimed. It is also unclear at this stage how they intended differentiating themselves from the Ndabeni land claimants, or from the other Xhosa speakers in the Western Cape.



Nonetheless, the *Amahlubi* Heritage Council, which was officially launched on 24 September 2009, began asserting itself to produce heritage of the people of kwa-Ndabeni and Langa. According to the council, Langa Township was meant to resurrect the ‘lost’ Uitvlugt or kwa-Ndabeni, hence it was named after Langalibalele.<sup>74</sup> However, the shortening of the name to Langa meant further loss of heritage.<sup>75</sup> The council therefore vowed to do away with the name Langa for Langa Township, and to ‘restore’ the name Langalibalele. By 2009, the influence of the *amaHlubi* Heritage Council was,

<sup>73</sup> Langalibalele I was imprisoned for defying the British colonial officials in Natal in 1874. For more, see Guy J, *The Heretic: A Study of the Life of John William Colenso, 1814-1883*, (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983, and Guy J, *The View Across the River: Harriete Colenso and the Zulu Struggle against Imperialism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002).

<sup>74</sup> A speech by Mr V Sibanya, at the Launch of the *amaHlubi* Heritage Council, Langa Township, 24 September 2009.

<sup>75</sup> A speech by P Sithole, at the Launch of the *amaHlubi* Heritage Council, Langa Township, 24 September 2009.

with regards to the boys' initiation that are usually takes place over school holidays in Langa Township, already felt. They headed a group of 'Concerned Men' who sought to institute 'proper' systems to restore the tradition to the way the *amaHlubi* had always held.

### **'Ndabeni' and the politics of heritage production**

There are so many things that could be remembered, *narrativised*, celebrated, commemorated, memorialised, monumentalised, restored, preserved and conserved for posterity about kwa-Ndabeni. The name 'Ndabeni', which was to become a heritage resource, had either been given in honour of William Stanford, the Resident Magistrate or used to refer to the conversational outlook of the 'community'.<sup>76</sup> The location was the first and probably the only one of its kind in Cape Town and in the rest of the country. It was used as a pilot project for many repressive methods to follow, while its residents also pioneered many resistance campaigns to follow, through retaliation.

From a social point of view, its acclaimed 'unity in diversity', spiritual character and recreational activities like sports, music and social clubs can be celebrated.<sup>77</sup> From an economic point of view, its industry and entrepreneurial character could be celebrated, together with the businessmen it produced, like William Tshefu, William Sipika, Tolton

<sup>76</sup> Christopher Saunders suggests that the name honoured Stanford while many former residents I interviewed say that it was just a Xhosa name referring to a place where there is always a lot of friendly conversation, discussion and engagement. See, Saunders C, 'Segregation in Cape Town: The Creation of Ndabeni', in *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 1, (1978), p 157-158.

<sup>77</sup> Kwa-Ndabeni had more than five churches, more than five sporting codes, and even more recreational clubs and music bands. There was Wesleyan Methodist Church, Salvation Army, African Methodist Church, Anglican Church, Presbyterian Church, Congregational Church, Ethiopian Church, AME Church and Seventh-day Adventist Church or Sgxabhayi. There was also soccer, cricket, rugby, netball, tennis, Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, Brownies, Sunbeams, Pathfinders, Zenzele clubs, Women's Manyano, bioscopes, etc.

Mguda, Rev. V. S. Tshayi, Arthur Tsewu, Sobantu Pamla, D. B Pukwana, Alfred Nkula, Jack Mati, Soga Mqikela and James Mabula.<sup>78</sup> On the political side, activities like marches, boycotts, protests, court cases and delegations, could be celebrated together with leaders and heroes like Alfred Mangena, Arthur Radas, Rev. Elijah Mdolonba, Rev. Ebenezer Makubalo, Rev. Madhliwa, Rev. D Tywakadi, Rev. V. S. Tshayi, William Sipika, William Tshefu and Daniel Mqhina.

However, kwa-Ndabeni had since its complete obliteration lost its ‘would-be public heritage space’ significance to the existing Langa Township, which has been constantly presented in public knowledge as a remnant of kwa-Ndabeni. Therefore, if relic was to be produced to represent the history of the ‘lost’ kwa-Ndabeni for public consumption and for posterity purposes, it was only logical that Langa Township became that relic as a public space. Besides, no one had so far seen it fit to construct a heritage representation of kwa-Ndabeni at the industrial site where it was. Therefore Langa Township continued to hold the onus of providing space for representation of kwa-Ndabeni or of at least featuring it in its own heritage production.

The former residents of kwa-Ndabeni, their descendants, and the rest of the residents of Langa Township have a common meeting point which is Langa Township. They also happen to have together made certain ‘collective’ or ‘shared’ experiences, memories, and narratives about themselves. Given that, it would seem that ‘fusing’ the two spaces: Langa and kwa-Ndabeni for the purposes of heritage production would not pose a challenge. However, that has in relation to land and development depended on people’s

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<sup>78</sup> Other people were employed as domestic workers, house-keepers, dock workers, clerks, teachers, lawyers, policemen, builders, etc. See, Barnett N, ‘Ndabeni 1901-1910: Towards a Social History: The first Ten Years of Cape Town’s First Official Location’, Honours Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1985), p 60.

perspectives about themselves and each other, people circumstances especially in relation to the material possessions that people have aspired for, in this case land and houses.

In Langa, there are many sites and events that could unite both the former resident of kwa-Ndabeni and the rest of the residents of Langa in history and heritage. For instance, Langa Wesleyan Methodist Church situated opposite the Police Station on Washington Street, had been the first church to be built in Langa, and had its first congregation predominantly composed of kwa-Ndabeni residents and former residents. Langa High School is another site whose history and heritage could be produced to unite all residents of Langa. The school's establishment was facilitated by an interdenominational committee formed in 1936, the year of the final demolition of kwa-Ndabeni. According to Nazeema Mohammed, "all members of the committee [which established Langa high School had] been actively involved in the primary education of African children, first at Ndabeni and then at Langa".<sup>79</sup>

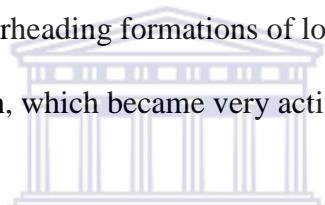
Narratives of the struggles for human rights, as well 'cultures' of political and labour activism could also be forged to merge at some point among the residents of Langa. Many former residents of kwa-Ndabeni had at some points in their lives been actively involved in struggles for human rights, just like many among the rest of the residents in Langa have. While resistance actions that had been conceived at the docks and at kwa-Ndabeni have not yet received recognition through heritage representations in Langa,

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<sup>79</sup> Mohamed N, 'Langa High School: The Struggle for Existence, The First Twenty Years in the History of Langa High School', Honours Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1989), p 53. The members of the committee were Rev. Father Bull, Rev. Father Savage, Rev. A Wells, Rev. Mvambo, Rev. Oliphant, Mr Rogers, Mr Malangabi and Mr W. G Mears.

the former resident of kwaNdabeni might have had longer involvement in the ‘struggle’ than those new generation.

For example, compared to the ‘younger generation’ born in Langa, the former kwa-Ndabeni residents had for more than two decades been politicised at in the docks or kwa-Ndabeni through direct or indirect involvement in political organisations. Those would include the African People’s Organisation (APO), the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) (which later became the African National Congress), the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), which later became the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU). Many became active in spearheading formations of local organisations in Langa like the Langa Vigilance Association, which became very active in beer brewing battles with the municipal officials.



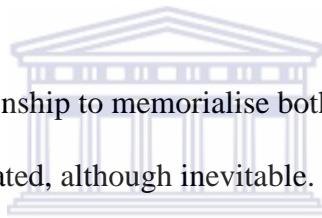
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In fact, according to Musemwa, the political influence of kwa-Ndabeni began to be felt in Langa from as early as 1927, when a group of minister of religion called the ‘Ndabeni’ African Ministers became instrumental in influencing the City Council to impose strict beer brewing regulations on Langa, thus keeping Langa ‘dry’ and ‘beer free’ for a while.<sup>80</sup> Politicisation of Langa appears to have escalated after the final closure and demolition of kwa-Ndabeni, and like it was at kwa-Ndabeni, political activities characterised by resistance, became the order of the day in Langa.

Looking back at the struggles that were fought at kwa-Ndabeni and in Langa in the first half of the twentieth century, and under the apartheid governments, the reasons why

<sup>80</sup> See, Musemwa M, ‘The Struggle for survival: The municipalisation of business enterprise in Langa township and the African response 1927-1948’, in Van Heyningen E, (ed.), *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, (Cape Town: UCT Press (Pty) Ltd, 1994), p 137.

kwa-Ndabeni and Langa have become known as hubs of political activity and liberation struggles, are apparent. In the same way as popular histories about kwa-Ndabeni was popularised, Langa also became a major subject of popular histories, especially since the anti-pass demonstrations of 1960. Popular narratives of events such as the march that Philip Kgosana led in March 1960, as well as a number of student boycotts that took place in Langa in 1976, have also been widely popularised within the liberation movement, and in academic and in public histories. However, while both Langa and Kwa-Ndabeni have been popularised as symbols of racial segregation, oppression and resistance, Langa's sites, objects and people, have been prioritised at the expense of those of kwa-Ndabeni in heritage.



Therefore, using Langa Township to memorialise both Langa and kwa-Ndabeni has proven to be rather complicated, although inevitable. The history of Langa Township has been over many years and through various media constructed to be multi-layered, while the history of kwa-Ndabeni has in many ways been constructed to appear as a mere speck within the history of Langa Township. In popular, social and public histories throughout the country, far more has been produced about Langa than about kwa-Ndabeni. Written history in particular, has not done much in carrying over narratives and life stories of kwa-Ndabeni onto Langa. In fact, social history about the mythical 'Ndabeni' bears no life stories. Kwa-Ndabeni's subjects have throughout historical writings remained voiceless and nameless. Even when recovery of those voices has been sought, those few individuals identified as leaders of protests, episodic delegates, convicts or plaintiffs, have been denied lives and social connections.

It is apparent therefore that heritage production in Langa had been based on popular and

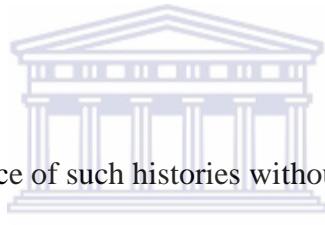
academic historical knowledge rather than exploring other methods of knowledge production such as oral and archaeological research. Therefore, as heritage in Langa has been produced along the historical knowledge at disposal, focus has appeared to be on events and episodes that histories managed to capture, hence heritage has also been based on episodes such as the '*dompass era*', the '1960s anti-pass campaigns', 'the 1976 student boycotts'.

Nonetheless, although episodic in character, there Langa Reference Group and the Heritage Forum did attempt to merge narratives about both kwa-Ndabeni and Langa at certain cohering of meeting points. For example, representation of the events such of the 1950s and the 1960s appeared to provide space for many Langa residents to produce and share memories. As many contestations concerning heritage representations have surfaced, it appeared that the Heritage Forum has become more and more bent on constructing and representing events, episode and narratives that cohered, rather than producing representations to running parallel to each other where points do not meet. This is what appears to have caused more problems as more contestations surfaced instead.

As it has occurred in many heritage projects around the country, basing heritage production on principles of 'reconciliation' and 'unity in diversity' and seeking to bend narratives to merge, has tended to produce narratives told against the backdrop of dominant ones. As it has been a common trend throughout the country, episodes found in the history of kwa-Ndabeni have been merged with those found in the history of Langa. The re-telling of such histories has occurred against the backdrop of narratives that resonate within the country. Histories of both spaces have for purposes of heritage

production been made to merge at certain points, to produce linear and coherent narratives of a people who have been racially segregated, and who have had similar experiences of living under certain similar conditions.

Sites and events like the Pass Office and Court and Langa massacres have been used to represent the commonalities between the struggles and resistance actions, all produced to cohere with the national struggle narratives. It is mostly through popular histories together with the backdrop of the national liberation struggle that kwa-Ndabeni / Langa heritage has been constructed. Reference has also been made to social histories which have constructed both Langa and kwa-Ndabeni as embodiments of suffering, resilience and triumph.

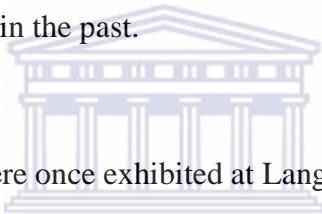


Heritage based on an embrace of such histories without *problematising* them has tended to produce romantic notions of ‘lost havens’ of the pre-racial segregation era, embellished narratives of loss and suffering, as well as hagiographical attitudes towards struggle leaders and heroes. Signs of the *romanticisations* have also become evident in the heritage produced in Langa. The images that formed part of the main exhibition of Langa Museum in 2005, represented romantic memories constructed around cultural celebrations like Mfengu, Ntsikana and Moshoshoe celebration.<sup>81</sup> These events are still remembered with pride and admiration despite the fact that Langa Vigilance Association put them to an end for fear of development of *ethnicism* and ‘tribalism’.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>81</sup> In the past, the The Ntsikana Celebrations held every 14th of March, celebrated the life of Ntsikana ka Gabha, a Xhosa prophet who lived circa 1780 and 1820, and who had categorically warned the Xhosa against yielding to colonisation. The Fingo Celebrations held every 14<sup>th</sup> of May, were aimed at instilling pride in being Mfengu<sup>81</sup>. They celebrated the emancipation of the Mfengu from the Xhosa, which they supposedly obtained through allegiance and diplomatic ties with the British during the colonial wars of dispossession in the Eastern Cape.

<sup>82</sup> The Langa Vigilance Committee also known as Iliso Lomzi wakwaLanga, was a civic organisation formed in 1930. For more on Langa Vigilance Association, See Bundy C, ‘Survival and Resistance: Township Organizations and Non-violent Direct Action in Twentieth Century South Africa’, in Adler G

Nonetheless, the culture of holding public heritage and cultural events, which began to fade in Langa in the 1950s, became resurrected the post-apartheid times, this time under the pretense of authority accorded and baptized by the government.<sup>83</sup> On 24<sup>th</sup> of September, the national heritage day, people in Langa still dress up in ‘traditional’ attire according to the different ‘ethnicities’ they identify with, and converge, usually at the Langa Civic Hall or Phandulwazi Hall, where each ‘ethnic group’ showcases its ‘culture’. Although this is coated as ‘unity in diversity’, many regard the displays as the resurgence of the parades by Xhosa ‘sub-ethnicities’, like the Mfengu and the Ngqika or Rharhabe, which took place in the past.



Furthermore, images that were once exhibited at Langa Museum, images like that of men congested in a communal kitchen at a hostel in Langa, and that of a crowd facing a police truck at Sobukhwe Square, and another of a passbook photo being taken at Langa Pass Office, are usually used without being *problematised*. When these are used, questions about the contexts on which they were produced, as well as purposes for their production, are never raised. It is usually assumed that they can become unproblematic representations of the African people’s struggle in the past.

Also, political activities such as the 1960 and 1976 anti-pass campaigns, boycotts and marches are also narrated with a certain heroism centred on those who led and those

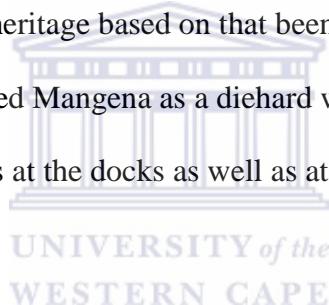
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and Steinberg J, (eds.), *From Comrade to Citizens: The South African Civics Movement and the Transition to Democracy*, (New York: St Martin Press, 2000), pp 47-49. Between 1927 and 1930, beer brewing and liquor trade were prohibited in Langa, but in 1930, the ban was lifted, and in 1945 the municipal beer halls were built. Following that liquor trade was restricted and only beer halls were recognised as legal liquor dens.

<sup>83</sup> Dondolo L, ‘The Construction of Public History and Tourist Destinations in Cape Town’s Townships: A Study of routes, sites and heritage’, Masters Mini-thesis, (University of the Western Cape, 2002).

who died in the processes, while at the same time promoting certain political organisations.<sup>84</sup> This has resulted in a number of counter-representations which are often represented through public events held especially on days like the Human Rights Day the, Freedom Day, the Youth Day, and the Heritage Day which are celebrated annually on 21 March, 27 April, 16 June and 24 September respectively.

Social history also appears to have made a major contribution on the way in which heritage about kwa-Ndabeni has been produced in the past, as well as the way in which is it could still be produced on the future. Social history on kwa-Ndabeni has been fraught with selective exaltation of certain people, places, events, periods and narratives over others, and so has the heritage based on that been. For example, even though social history has constructed Alfred Mangena as a diehard who led many campaigns, protests, marches and demonstrations at the docks as well as at kwa-Ndabeni, heritage has not credited him for that.<sup>85</sup>



Social history has overseen Mangena's gradual transformation from a mere night school teacher and secretary for the dockworkers, to a workers' leader and a proletarian, who aspired to obtain an international law degree. For his activist side, Barnett defines him as a "thorn in the flesh of the SNA (Secretary to the Native Affairs Department)", for whom new regulations were proposed to silence.<sup>86</sup> The meetings Mangena called at the

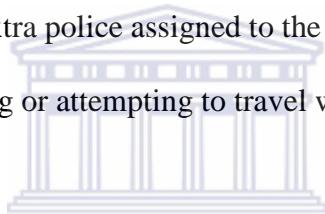
<sup>84</sup> There has been contention between the ANC and the PAC about the ownership of the anti-pass campaign idea, and between the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) and the ANC around membership of the youth that led the 1976 boycotts, as well as ownership of initiatives to politicise that youth.

<sup>85</sup> For more on Alfred Mangena, see Barnett N, 'Ndabeni 1901-1910: Towards a Social History. The first Ten Years of Cape Town's First Official Location', Honours Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1985), p 16 and pp 97-98. See also Bickford-Smith V, Van Heyningen E and Worden N, (eds.), *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century: an illustrated social history*, (Claremont: David Philip, 1999), pp 20-30, and Echenberg J.M, *Plague ports: the global urban impact of bubonic plague, 1894-1901*, (New York: New York University Press, 2006), pp 295-297.

<sup>86</sup> Barnett N, 'Towards a Social History: Ndabeni 1901-1910', Masters' Thesis, (University of Cape

slopes of Table Mountain in March 1901, in which he incited crowds of docklands and District Six residents to resist being moved to Uitvlugt are well documented in newspapers and social history.<sup>87</sup>

Also well documented is ‘Mangena Day’, the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 1902, on which hundreds of the people he had addressed at Wesleyan Methodist Church the previous day, demonstrated at the Maitland railway station, refusing to buy train tickets, and barricading the station and trains, injuring a constable. The statement “the natives have taken charge”, which was issued by the Assistant General Manager of railways, became newspaper headlines the next day. The event was followed by a new “Native Reserve Location Bill”, a hundred extra police assigned to the railways, as well as increased arrests for Africans travelling or attempting to travel without train tickets.



However, Mangena vanishes from the media as well as from social history, when he goes to further his law studies law in England. According to Echenberg, in Mangena’s absence, the authorities attempted to fill his space by recognising Rev. Elijah Mdolomba as the sole leader and representative of the residents of kwa-Ndabeni.<sup>88</sup> However, Echenberg and Barnett do not credit Mdolomba for his leadership venture. To Echenberg, knowing Mdolomba’s political ‘undernourishment’ compared to Mangena, the plan was to weaken the resistance of the people of Kwa-Ndabeni towards the authorities. At the same time, although Mdolomba’s leadership is also well

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Town, 1996), p 16.

<sup>87</sup> See, *Cape Times*, 13 March 1901 and 14 March 1901. Also see for example, Bickford-Smith V, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town: Group identity and social practice, 1875-1902*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp 183-184 & p 205, and Bickford –Smith V, Van Heyningen Elizabeth and Worden Nigel, (eds.), *Cape Town in the Twentieth Century: an illustrated social history*, (Claremont: David Philip, 1999), pp 20-21.

<sup>88</sup> Echenberg J.M, *Plague ports: the global urban impact of bubonic plague, 1894-1901*, (New York: New York University Press, 2006), p 297.

documented, social history has for some reason placed him at a position lower than that of Mangena.<sup>89</sup> What seemed to have discredited Mdolomba in history were the accusations he raised about Mangena's absence, alleging that Mangena had absconded with 150 pounds sterling collected from the people for a test case. The charge turned out to be false and Mdolomba appeared to have sought to denigrate Mangena.<sup>90</sup>

Social history has therefore constructed Mdolomba as a confrontational but immoral clergyman and leader who led many delegations fighting for the recognition and 'development' of 'natives' but in a direction opposite to that which Mangena led them.<sup>91</sup> He is described as someone who "appears to have been something of a 'Yes Man'", but he is also credited for having played a significant role of proposing the change of the name from Uitvlugt to 'Ndabeni'. Barnett paints him as a "mortal enemy of Alfred Mangena", who wrongfully accused Mangena of absconding with residents' money.<sup>92</sup> Barnett uses court records and recorded oral evidence to reveal claims that Mdolomba was a wicked man, a bachelor famous for greed. He and other clergymen such as Rev. William Sipika, who supported the ideology of 'a need for civilisation to produce better-class natives', are rendered inadequate leaders against the backdrop of national liberation struggle. The fact that they supported the Native Advisory Board which is known to have been despised by many liberation struggle leaders appears to further

<sup>89</sup> Mdolomba led many delegations that appeared before the City Council and municipal officials complaining about poor living conditions, housing issues, beer brewing and 'immorality' at kwa-Ndabeni. He also wrote and co-wrote a number of letters to the officials concerned in that regard. In 1907 and 1908, Mdolomba was also instrumental in convening mass meetings about the proposed parliamentary bills on franchise and representation and about the 1910 elections. See, Barnett N, 'Towards a Social History: Ndabeni 1901-1910', Masters Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1996), pp 60-109.

<sup>90</sup> Echenberg J. M, *Plague ports: the global urban impact of bubonic plague, 1894-1901*, (New York: New York University Press, 2006), p 297.

<sup>91</sup> See, Barnett N, 'Towards a Social History: Ndabeni 1901-1910', Masters Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1996), pp 97-98.

<sup>92</sup> Saunders C, 'Segregation in Cape Town: The Creation of Ndabeni', in *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 1, (1978), p 157-158.

discredit them.

It is interesting however to note that Rev. Elijah Mdolomba's name features in kwa-Ndabeni and Langa heritage, while Alfred Mangena's name does not. A former resident of kwa-Ndabeni who left kwa-Ndabeni for Langa at age twelve, does not know about Mangena but remembers Mdolomba very well.<sup>93</sup> In the early days of Langa, a street was named after Rev. Mdolomba and his name also appears in rolls of honour for his contributions to the establishment, building and development of Langa's prides and landmarks such as Langa High school.<sup>94</sup> Inspite the fact that Mangena returned in 1910 as the first African man to qualify as an attorney, returning to be once again actively involved in politics, and to become a founder member and a senior treasurer of the SANNC or ANC, heritage has not represented that.<sup>95</sup> Even through Echenberg has categorically alluded that "Mangena became one of South Africa's early political leaders, but Mdolomba's career was less successful", this part of history has been disregarded in heritage production.<sup>96</sup>

A former resident of kwa-Ndabeni 'remembers' that many people of kwa-Ndabeni were "much civilised" and that they "spoke English". Even her mother "spoke English and wore a brim hat".<sup>97</sup> This 'enlightenment' ideal, if it really was achieved, is what Rev. Mdolomba spent his energies fighting for at kwa-Ndabeni. In his representation of the people to the Commission which was set to investigate ways to improve the living

<sup>93</sup> Interview with Phyllis Fuku, 12 March 2010.

<sup>94</sup> Mohammed Nazeema, 'Langa High School: The Struggle for Existence, The First Twenty Years in the History of Langa High School', Honours Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1989).

<sup>95</sup> While still in England, Mangena petitioned to the British government in 1906 for the trialists of the Bambatha Rebellion. In 1909, he protested against the proposed Act of Union passed by British Parliament. Some of Mangena's political achievements have been documented in the annals of the ANC. See <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/congress/began.html>.

<sup>96</sup> Echenberg J.M, *Plague ports: the global urban impact of bubonic plague, 1894-1901*, (New York: New York University Press, 2006), p 297.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Phyllis Fuku, on 24 September 2009.

conditions at kwa-Ndabeni, Mdolomba was ever bent on explaining that Africans could ‘improve’, given a chance.<sup>98</sup> Hence, Mdolomba, together with William Sipika, proposed construction of houses for ‘better-class natives’. Phyllis Fuku also insists that her family’s house at kwa-Ndabeni was good standard compared to those of “poor” and “uncivilised” households at kwa-Ndabeni, and also compared to the ones they found in Langa. According to her, a move to Langa downgraded her family.

If this is the kind of identity that many kwa-Ndabeni former residents or their descendants subscribe to, then Mdolomba would certainly take precedence over leaders who stood for anything different. At the same time, it would be interesting to investigate if names like Mdolomba, that were probably honoured with little or no contest in the past, would remain fixed in peoples’ heritage consciousness as years go by. Even though the *amaHlubi* have raised contests over the name Langa rather than Langalibalele, no contestations have thus far been aired over Langa’s sites and streets which represent kwa-Ndabeni.

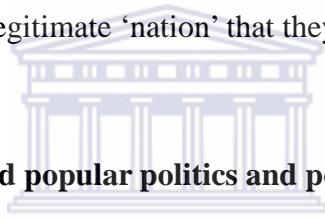
That could be attributed to three possibilities, either people have unanimously agreed to retain the names, probably as long as they were African names; or that processes of heritage enquiry, meriting and validation had not gone to the extent of questioning the past, probably as long as it relates to the struggle and resistance; or that heritage in Langa had so far been approached in terms of “...doing away with the things that segregate and cling on norms and values that bind...”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Barnett N, ‘Towards a Social History: Ndabeni 1901-1910’, Masters Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1996), pp 74-85.

<sup>99</sup> Statement by an unidentified conference attendee commenting on Langa heritage production processes. See; *Report on the “Hands On District Six Conference*, Langa Site, Discussion Session, 2005.

Considering heritage initiatives such as those claiming to be the *amaHlubi* people, Laurajane Smith argues that “heritage is a resource and a process of negotiation in the cultural politics of identity”.<sup>100</sup> The indication of an eagerness by the *AmaHlubi* to control expression of cultural identity of kwa-Ndabeni and Langa could emanate from existing struggles for economic resources, equity, and human rights. Heritage can be a political resource around which groups play out or negotiate struggles for political recognition and legitimacy. In this case, the *amaHlubi* people could be using heritage to underpin demands for state recognition as an independent kingdom, as well as to access control of land and other resources. If that be the case, their actions could be interpreted as efforts to redefine and renegotiate history and heritage in more useful ways, in order to assert themselves as the legitimate ‘nation’ that they claim to be.



### **‘Ndabeni’ in post-apartheid popular politics and political mobilisation**

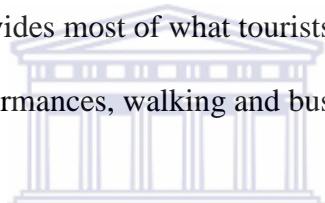
Heritage production processes in Langa have also, possibly in avoidance of contestations, tended to avoid life stories and events, and to prioritise cultural representations that have frozen cultures into timeless packages. The township has more arts, crafts and cultural centres and activities than for instance seminars and debate forums. Between 1985 and 1999, governments, non-governmental organisations and private donors have funded and facilitated construction, re-construction, renovation and maintenance of about ten centres including halls. These include Ulwazi Youth Centre, Phandulwazi Skills Training Centre, Guga S’thebe Arts and Cultural Centre, Tsoga Environmental Centre, Johnson Ngwevela Civic Centre, Love Life Youth Development Centre, Langa Indoor Sports Complex, and Langa Crafts Market. All these were

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<sup>100</sup> Smith L, “Empty Gestures? Heritage and the Politics of Recognition”, in Silverman H and Ruggles D.F (eds.), *Cultural Heritage and Human Rights*, (Spring 2007), Chapter 9.

constructed and established for the purposes of providing skills, training and entrepreneurial development opportunities for community members especially the youth. It was expected and in fact encouraged that those who utilised the centres would produce ‘cultural’ items or performances to generate income within the tourism industry.

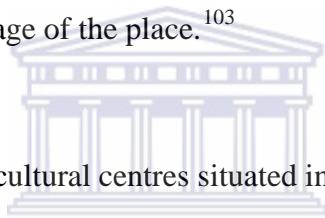
The Guga S’thebe Arts and Cultural Centre has since its official opening in 2000, been the most visited of the sites listed above. This is probably due to the fact that it is managed, funded and marketed by the City of Cape Town, and that it is one of the sites included in most packages of Township Tours in Cape Town. Another reason is that as a multi-purpose centre, it provides most of what tourists would be looking for. That includes live ‘cultural’ performances, walking and bus tours of the township, as well a wide range of crafts on sale.



In this site, droves of tourists are brought in on a daily basis by various township tour operators. Tourists are received by artists ready to perform for them at a fee, by welcoming smiles of men and women toiling on their pottery or metal work, as well as through marketing gestures of crafts vendors. While this may appear as an utter commercial tourism operation, the Langa Heritage Foundation regards Guga S’thebe as a vehicle of showcasing their tangible and intangible heritage. Tangible heritage in this case would refer to objects in the form of crafts and artworks on the walls, while intangible heritage would refer to cultural expressions through performances.

However, a stop at Guga S’thebe seems not to complete what the people of Langa want to present as their tangible and intangible heritage to the outsiders, as well as to

themselves. There are many other places visited by tourists in Langa, through which tourists get a taste of intangible heritage such as the spirit of *ubuntu* displayed in the warm welcome of visitors into people's private spaces.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, when tourists are presented with traditional sorghum home brewed beer known as *umqombothi* in local *sheebens*, or when they get to taste sheep head meat at the local open air meat market, or when they visit a local *sangoma*, all those are to them presented as examples of the local rich intangible heritage.<sup>102</sup> As tourists become transferred from Guga S'thebe and the sites surrounding it such as the old Pass Office and Court Complex, into the streets behind, and into the heart of the township, they are expected to marvel at the opportunity to get to the "backstage", where they can receive and even partake in the 'authentic' culture and heritage of the place.<sup>103</sup>



In the heritage and arts and cultural centres situated in Langa Township, as well as in the streets, hostels and people's houses, heritage can be understood as constructed in two different models. First is a top-down approach through which heritage is packaged in formal and institutionalised ways for public consumption. Second is a more informal sphere in which heritage can be understood in the language people use to make meaningful claims about their pasts. Such meanings subsequently embody material culture and practices such as performance and tourism.

With the first model, 'concerned' or delegated community members, heritage

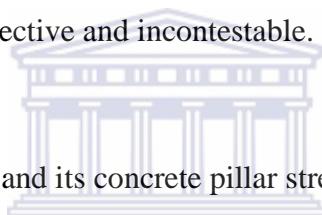
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<sup>101</sup> *Ubuntu* is a common term in South Africa used to refer to humanity, especially acts of kindness and sharing.

<sup>102</sup> *Shebeen* is a common South African term for a tavern or a beer hall, usually operating illegally or below standards and requirements stipulated for such business operations. *Sangoma* is also a common South African term for a traditional healer or herbalist.

<sup>103</sup> According to Dean MacCannell, realising the tourists' desire for authenticity and reality, the tourism industry has developed to construct backstage experiences for tourists. These are still not real but staged authenticity. For more see, MacCannell D, "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist settings", *American Journal of Sociology* LXXIX (3), p589-603.

practitioners and ‘experts’ in certain fields e.g. history, archaeology, produce or gather heritage resources, interpret them, package their research findings and views and present that for consumption and engagement by the public. The knowledge presented is usually a product of a series of validations and cross checking, usually presented in a convincing and palatable manner, thus allowing little or no constructive feedback rather than, “it’s amazing”, “it’s eye opening”, or “I didn’t know”. When publics are invited to participate at early stages of heritage production, the invitation is usually extended to those regarded as ‘community’; those who consider the subject in question part of their heritage. The sites therefore becomes a mediums through which ‘community’ members imagine collective membership, as well as where they begin to assume that their final heritage product will be collective and incontestable.



The case of Langa Museum and its concrete pillar street exhibition is typical of the model explained above. Not all the ‘would be’ stake holders were consulted when the heritage production processes began in 2000. Instead, SAHRA, the City of Cape Town, Langa Heritage Reference Group, Langa Heritage Foundation and academic ‘experts’ from local universities employed a top down approach. They commissioned oral history research, documentaries and films, artefact collection, renovations and professional conservation, expecting to achieve an incontestable and sustainable package.

Incontestability and sustainability was achieved only as far as tourists and conference delegates - who were awed by the exhibitions - were concerned. When other multiple publics including Langa residents got to engage with the collections and exhibitions, contestations arose to the point of closure of the Langa Museum in 2008.

On the other hand, performing individuals and groups formulate heritage identities and

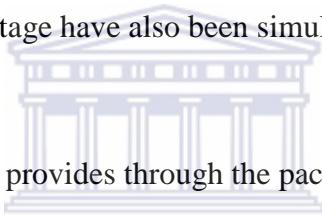
transmit those into representations. They also inscribe various meanings onto histories and heritage representations at their disposal and transmit their representations through performances. As they do that, there is usually no opportunity for contestation. Question and answer sessions usually become another opportunity for performers to confirm and reiterate their perspectives, than to open any room for revision of their packages.

Guga S'thebe, with its tourism component becomes an epitome of the model explained above. It is a site that employs material culture to explain the past to the public, which in turn assists in creating and shaping ‘community’ and individual identities. It is constructed as a site that transforms performances and artworks into meaningful experiences of identities and ‘cultures’, while not failing to represent contentious local politics through exhibitions and drama. For example, at Guga S'thebe, most dramatic performances that tourists get to see are based on township lifestyles, ‘cultures’, and local politics. Actors paint the socio-economic conditions of the characters they represent in ways that seek to clarify not only their circumstances but their religious and ‘ethnic’ identities and cultures.

Thus providing the ‘community’ with an opportunity to reclaim discourses of identity, culture and heritage, and awarding the ‘community’ agency, while increasing public support for political issues such as land claims. Guga S'thebe also provides a form of empowerment and an opportunity to reach international audiences, a symbolic value which has led to revitalisation of certain cultures and identities.

Nonetheless, processes at Guga S'thebe typify a tourism-based project of ‘culture’ and heritage employed mostly for economic gains. Many artists at Guga S'thebe testify to

assuming certain identities without any intention to promote them but to give tourists what they want to see and get paid for it. Tourists want what they do not have, or what is different from what they are used to, thus causing the gaze to be “constructed through difference”.<sup>104</sup> In this kind of business transaction, it appears that performers have no choice but to produce a ‘staged authenticity’, staged in the sense that, what actors represent, is not what the Langa ‘community’ lives.<sup>105</sup> It is important however, to note that in this case, tourism has not merely been a business, but has also as Rassool and Witz argue, involved the construction, packaging, transmission and consumption of images and representation of the entire society and its past.<sup>106</sup> In this case, history and heritage have been aligned with tourism, meaning that, as a tourist gaze has been constructed, history and heritage have also been simultaneously produced.



Township tourism therefore, provides through the packages and the gazes it constructs, space and opportunities through which public histories about kwa-Ndabeni are made.

For the lack of opportunities on which the original site of kwa-Ndabeni could be visited, Langa Township, with its many tourist attractions, many of which are sites of heritage production in Langa, is a site on which public history of kwa-Ndabeni is made. Even the temporary closure of Langa Museum, which is seen by many as the main heritage site, probably due to its conventional museum character of a secluded building, has not put history and heritage production on hold.

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<sup>104</sup> Urry J, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, (London: Sage, 1990), p 1.

<sup>105</sup> MacCannell D, ‘Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist settings’, *American Journal of Sociology* LXXIX (3), p589-603.

<sup>106</sup> See, Rassool C and Witz L, ‘South Africa: A World in One Country: Moments in International Tourist Encounters with Wildlife, the Primitive and the Modern’, in *Cahiers d’Etudes Africaines*, 143, XXXVI-3, (1996), p 335.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **‘NDABENI’, LAND CLAIMS AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY**

There exists a broadly undisputable relationship between shifts in political paradigms and the way people construct memories about their past. This reveals itself in even more explicit ways when the ‘past’, whose memory is to be constructed, comes from the time of a past regime, whose politics contrasts sharply with the ones at present. These conditions affect the way people choose to preserve, conserve and memorialise knowledge about their past.



The advent of democracy in South Africa has brought about so many changes in the way narratives about land are constructed. Discourses of the first term of a democratic government in particular, have been filled with appeals that South Africans learn find it in them to reconcile, even as they do not forget to remember the past. In a short space of about five years, the ‘nation’ had through various commissions, memory and heritage projects, hastily remembered, forgiven, reconciled, memorialised, closed many chapters of the past and ‘moved on’. In a situation like that, as people continued to lodge land claims or submit demands for land and/or houses to the government, the premise became that of having reconciled with the painful past, while continuing to remember.

Memories in relation to land were therefore constructed from that basis. There was no more lamentation about the past, as much as there was no space for seeking

vengeance. There was no concealment of the fact that in most cases land was lost by black people to white people under most discriminatory and humiliating circumstances. As a matter of fact, such knowledge has been highly popularised through various media, but still no action was to be taken other than that premised on reconciliation. Any thought of ‘Zimbabwean’ confrontational land reform methods, would probably be responded to with finger wagging and tongue-lashing, followed by a strong “don’t even think about it!” message. This then became the situation, despite the fact that the reality of racial inequality in land ownership was manifest in almost everything one could set their eyes on.

Instead the government, in an otherworldly stunt worthy of a movie, shielded the perpetrators ‘of the past’, while taking upon itself the heroic task of providing for the needy. By pledging to provide “direct financial and other support services” to ensure that all people had access to land, the government protected those who had accumulated land at the expense of others in the past.<sup>1</sup> The government took the responsibility of sourcing land for the needy to itself. It said “cast your eyes upon me, and *thou* shall not be disappointed”, and that in many ways informed processes of construction of memories around land.

In a fairytale world like that, it was unexpected, and even absent from discourse, that any individual or groups of people would rise up in vigour to confiscate or better forcibly ‘repossess’ land from white people. The farm attacks during the Mandela and the Mbeki eras were thus conveniently blamed on criminal activities associated with theft than on land issues. The expectation and assumption was that everybody had

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<sup>1</sup> See, *White Paper (Land Policy)*, on <http://www.ruraldevelopment.gov.za/white%20paper/white4.htm>

matured to a stage where they can remember their painful past at a glance, as they earnestly devoted their efforts to ‘moving on’. If anything was seen to be holding back this ideal process at snail’s pace it is said to be corruption and crime. This also explains why the xenophobic attacks of April 2008 and the violent service delivery protests since 2008, all being land issues, were again blamed on crime-rotten communities, inefficiency and corruption among government officials. Any looting during these attacks and demonstrations was enough to render them merely crime-driven.

A famous tale goes that a people once lived in vast amounts of lands, until they lost that to brutal new-comer forces, which turned them into slaves and labourers on their own land. They suffered for many years, while using every means to fight back, until they emerged bruised but victorious. This is oversimplification of the story of South Africa, but has been resonant within people’s spaces, and had supreme power to induce memories, senses, experiences, feelings, images, and sounds that lead people into action. This narrative of loss and restoration has incited among other things land claims. Former residents of kwa-Ndabeni, were among those who lodged a land claims soon after the birth of democracy in 1994 in South Africa. Like in the narrative above, these people had lost their land under discriminatory laws passed by discriminatory minority governments. Under the democratic government, these people deserved restoration. There were individuals, families and groups of people who happened to fit the description provided by the narrative of loss and suffering, and whom the claimants of kwa-Ndabeni land were to resemble.

In this chapter I express thoughts on the way the post-apartheid land reform policies and principles that have motivated new processes of identity making. I examine

mobilisation and constitution of ‘communities’ around land claims. I also discuss issues of group identity formations and memory constructions around land in the post-apartheid South Africa. Finally, I map out some events around the ‘Ndabeni’ Land claim to discuss complexities of forged ‘community or group identities and collective memory.

### **A place once called kwa-Ndabeni**

Kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’, as it has been referred to in many instances, an industrial site found about six kilometres out of the Cape Town City, and a place bordered by Maitland, Ysterplaat and Pinelands. Approximately 108 years ago, the land claimed by the former residents of kwa-Ndabeni, was a farm called Uitvlugt, which later became a village they inhabited. As the first and only legally recognised ‘native reserve’ in Cape Town at that time, practically, ‘all’ Africans that had migrated to Cape Town for any reason, lived there. On construction of a few of its structures in 1901, the new location immediately accommodated Africans who were forcibly ejected out of Cape Town docklands and District Six.

At first the location was to be understood as a quarantine zone, in which Africans who bore the stigma of being the ‘carriers and spreaders’ of bubonic plague, were to be ‘under observation’<sup>2</sup> It was established following among other things, pressure exerted on the government by those who could not stand living with African in the same space. The debates in parliament, the reports by the Stanford Commission, the

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<sup>2</sup> The first carriers of the disease in Cape Town were rats coming out of European ships. As the docks, where African docks workers lived, was generally infested with rats, a number of Africans became infected with the disease. However rats continued to spread it to the rest of the city, then later the carriers and spreaders were both rats and humans.

reports by the Department of Health, and the public commentary, all were to become catalysts for the coming into being of Kwa-Ndabeni. For example, a member of the public stated in 1899:

Can the Government not provide some location where the poor wretches can be housed comfortably in the huts to which they have been accustomed...? Surely the danger to the Public Health ought to be a sufficient reason for the Resident Magistrate's interference....The Harbour board also, in importing Kafirs for the Docks works, ought not to allow them to settle broad-cast all over the outskirts of the town, but they ought to provide certain places as Kafir locations convenient to the works.<sup>3</sup>

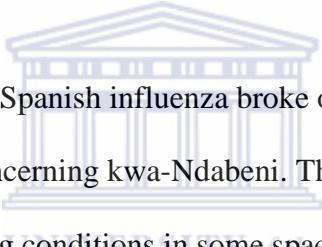
The places which these people had inhabited in Cape Town before the forced removal to kwa-Ndabeni, were to be left abandoned and their belongings burnt as a ‘safety precaution’ to prevent the spread of diseases. For some thirty or more years from 1901, kwa-Ndabeni, as its residents named it, was to become home to thousands of people, and its residents were to become a ‘community’. A space that had first posed as a temporary quarantine zone later became a semi-permanent residence, strictly regulated by the laws set by the state, and enforced by a resident magistrate.

Having found a new home, Kwa-Ndabeni was where these people began to settle down, to ‘resume’ their lives and work to recover the goods they had lost during the forced removal. Although the government provided basic services such as water and sanitation, provision of such services was never satisfactory according to the reminiscences of many.<sup>4</sup> People began to take responsibility for the space, as they

<sup>3</sup> A comment by the member of the public posted on *Cape Times*, (17 July 1899), cited from Saunders C , ‘Segregation in Cape Town: The Creation of Ndabeni’, *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol.1, (1978), p 44. For more on the debates leading to this particular forced removal see, Barnett N, ‘Towards a Social History: Ndabeni 1901-1910’, Honours Thesis, University of Cape Town, (1985).

<sup>4</sup> See, interviews conducted by Kwandiwe Kondlo for the Western Cape Oral History Project, UCT Manuscripts and Archives.

maintained, renovated and even extended the huts or houses allocated to them. They constructed schools, churches, sport grounds, and established organisations and recreational clubs. Kwa-Ndabeni was where they mourned and celebrated lives, where they held funerals, memorials, commemorations and celebratory activities like weddings. This is where they held events social such as weddings, concerts, dances and club parties. These events were to characterise African cultural life in Cape Town as it was carried over to other African locations.<sup>5</sup> Some people would be employed and some unemployed, but never for extended periods.<sup>6</sup> Amid such vitality, kwa-Ndabeni was nevertheless congested. Its population increase was rapid, especially as migration of African men, women and children to the cities was generally on the rise.



In 1918, another plague, the Spanish influenza broke out, which saw the resumption of parliamentary debates concerning kwa-Ndabeni. This time the subject was overcrowding and poor living conditions in some spaces around the city. Finding a solution in establishing a ‘native reserve’ in the outskirts of the city, in the mid-1920s, the government began constructing a township known today as Langa or kwa-Langa. Between 1927 and 1936, residents of kwa-Ndabeni again became subject to another forced removal, from kwa-Ndabeni to Langa. Struggling to retain their hold on the place, some residents confronted the state through court cases, while some simply chose to ignore all notices of eviction, rent tariff hikes, threats and raids by the police. At first, the individuals that appealed won their court cases,

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<sup>5</sup> Social events similar to those of kwa-Ndabeni are still popular in places like Langa. See, Kondlo K. M, ‘The Culture and Religion of the People of Langa During the Period ca. 1938 to ca. 1958’, Honours Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1990), and Molapo R, ‘Sports, festivals and popular politics’, aspects of social and popular culture in Langa Township, 1945-70, Masters Thesis, (University of Cape Town, 1994

<sup>6</sup> See, Interviews conducted by Kwandiwe Kondlo with the surviving former residents of ‘Ndabeni’, for the Western Cape Oral History Project, UCT Archives.

as the Natives Urban Areas Act of 1923 did not give the authorities any powers to evict them from a native reserve.<sup>7</sup> As a result, towards the end of 1930, a special Natives Urban Areas Amendment Act was passed to give the council authority to forcibly remove Africans.

Between 1935 and 1936, as the last kwa-Ndabeni evictions took place, the place was razed to the ground and the last structures that still stood were demolished. All signs of residence were totally obliterated, and that was the end of kwa-Ndabeni. The aftermath saw a birth of a new ‘Ndabeni’, an industrial site which was to bury the ruins of kwa-Ndabeni under it. ‘Ndabeni’ is the name that the industrial site continues to carry. It is also a name through which meanings and historical knowledge about the place that the industrial site replaced, continue to be made at the and beyond the site of its use. Those who came together in 1995 to claim their rights to the land covered by the ‘Ndabeni’ industrial site, also chose the name ‘Ndabeni’ to refer to both themselves and the land they claimed.<sup>8</sup>

### **Land claims in the post-apartheid South Africa**

At the dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994, it was reported that about 3.5 million black South Africans had at some point in their lives lost access to land, a situation which was the cause of poverty among millions.<sup>9</sup> The former residents of

<sup>7</sup> For more on the court cases see, Barnett N, (1985).

<sup>8</sup> These people called themselves the ‘Ndabeni’ ‘community’ or the ‘Ndabeni’ land claimants, and their trust, the ‘Ndabeni’ Communal Property Trust. It is only in 2007 that some documents began to feature names like Kwa-Ndabeni Community Trust. See, for example,  
[http://www.lawlibrary.co.za/notice/wordsanddeeds/2009/2009\\_06\\_04.htm](http://www.lawlibrary.co.za/notice/wordsanddeeds/2009/2009_06_04.htm)

<sup>9</sup> Walker C, *Land Marked: Land Claims & Land Restitution in South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Jacana Press, 2008), p 2.

kwa-Ndabeni, who mostly resided in Langa and in other places within and outside Cape Town, were one group among many that were assumed to fall into this category. As such, the South African democratic governments had since 1994 demonstrated determination to restoring land to those who had in the past been dispossessed of their land, to redistributing land to those who needed and wanted it, and to securing land rights for all. Upon the passing of the Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 of 1994 and the Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Act, No 3 of 1996, three programmes in realisation of this determination were implemented: Land Restitution; Land Redistribution; and Land Tenure Reform.<sup>10</sup>

Land Restitution was a rights and claims driven process aimed at redressing injustices caused to the victims of population relocation policies of the former white minority governments. The programme was meant to accommodate claims based on dispossessions that occurred on or after 1913, the year of the first Land Act in South Africa. This could happen in three ways: (a) if possible, the land previously lost could be restored i.e., returned to its previous owners, or (b) where land could not be restored, they could claim alternative land, or receive monetary compensation for their lost land and if they opted for it, or (c) they could be prioritised for land redistribution or housing development programmes available in their respective districts, regions or provinces.

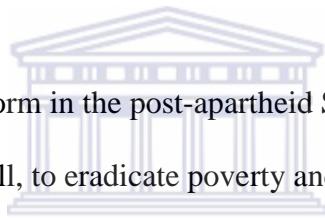
Land Redistribution was a non-claims driven process aimed at redressing injustices of the past land dispensation, by transferring land from those who had more while

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<sup>10</sup> See, *Restitution of Land Rights Act, No 22 of 1994*, in <http://www.info.gov.za/acts/1994/a22-94.pdf>, and *Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Act, No 3 of 1996*, in <http://www.info.gov.za/gazette/acts/1996/a3-96.htm>.

needing less, to those who had less while needing more. It sought “to provide the disadvantaged and the poor with access to land for residential and productive purposes. It was also meant to accommodate provide for victims of land dispossessions that took place before 1913. Its scope included the urban very poor, labour tenants, farm workers as well as new entrants into agriculture”.<sup>11</sup>

Land Tenure Reform was aimed at improving tenure security for all South Africans, and at achieving greater residential security and economic freedom for those who lived under tenure arrangements. It was aimed at protecting all freehold or communal tenure rights to land.



The broader aim of land reform in the post-apartheid South Africa therefore was to improve access to land for all, to eradicate poverty and to contribute to sustainable land use and economic development. It remains tempting to ascertain whether this ambition was in its entirety realised, but for the scope of this work, I limit my focus on the restitution programmes, particularly those of the urban spaces in the Western Cape.

Between December 1994 and May 2010, hundreds of restitution cases had been resolved to the satisfaction of a number of people and organisations, but thousands still remained pending, to the wrath of many. The ‘Ndabeni’ land claim was among those that had been partly resolved, to the dissatisfaction of many, as the material conditions of the claimants had not yet improved. For that, government strategies for land

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<sup>11</sup> Department of Land Affairs (DLA), White Paper, (1997a:9)

restitution were written off as as ambitious and unattainable or too modest and un-confrontational.

Firstly, the programme was suitably characterised as ambitious because, as the government committed itself to availing land, in most cases the land promised was unavailable. Almost every piece of land in urban areas was occupied, sold out or already earmarked for some residential or industrial development. Moreover, while the government sought to make land available by purchasing it from its ‘owners’, the budget it allocated to land restitution had in many instances failed to cover the exorbitant costs of urban land.

Secondly, the programme was characterised as modest for its lack of confrontation of those who benefited from expropriated land. Attempts to identify alternative land ‘elsewhere’, rather than bother the current owners, often met with unavailability of even the place called ‘elsewhere’ in urban spaces. As a result, claimants were requested to settle for monetary compensation or houses provided by the state’s housing schemes, options which often failed to elevate them from the abject state brought about by loss of land. Also, at the beginning of the implementation of the land reform programmes, the government provided no Post-Settlement Support Programmes to assist people in planning and implementation of development strategies for their land.<sup>12</sup>

Nonetheless, people demonstrated hope in the programme despite the negative elements that critics identified from the onset. Since the passing of the Restitution of Land Rights

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<sup>12</sup> See, Walker C, *Land Marked: Land Claims & Land Restitution in South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Jacana Press, 2008), pp 20-24.

Act in 1994, the land restitution process was characterised by research, verifications, court cases, and settlements of thousands of land claims lodged by individuals, families or groups of people called communities. Judging the success of the land restitution programme on an input-output basis, it is easy to say that there were problems, as thousands of claims could not be processed within the targeted timeframes. However, judging by the success of the claims that were successfully processed and settled, many claimants emerged victorious within the first five years of the implementation of the act.<sup>13</sup> Evidence of their satisfaction has been seen through highly publicised settlement or hand-over ceremonies and celebrations, often graced by the presence of Land Affairs Ministers and other government officials.

### **Imagining and constituting a ‘Ndabeni’ land claimant community: making and embracing identity**

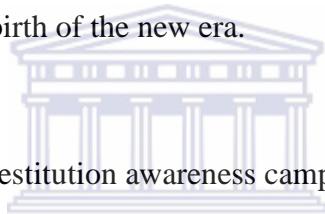


As provided by the ‘Land Act’, all people who lost their rights to land through racially discriminatory Acts that were passed on or after 19 June 1913, had a right to register their claim with the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights (CRLR). The CRLR required that claimants provide any form of proof that their land was lost through a racially based law and that they themselves were legitimate claimants. It is imperative to note at this point that potential land claimants got accorded some form of identity through the provisions of the Act and the requirements of the Commission.

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<sup>13</sup> See, *The Commission for Restitution of land Rights: Annual Report 2000/2003*.

By and large, the past racially discriminatory legislations in the post-apartheid South Africa had come to mean a series of laws that discriminated against black people in favour of white people. In the same vein, people whose land rights had been violated in such manner were understood to have suffered relentlessly, and were discontented with their present status. At the same time, they were presumed to have struggled for what was rightfully theirs, thus contributing to the broader national struggle against oppressive regimes. In that way, the identity that got accorded to potential claimants from the onset was shaped along the lines of being black, having suffered, living or having lived in poverty. The fact that many potential claimants were to have, to a large or lesser extent, resisted loss of land, also qualified them as resisters or even meaningful contributors to birth of the new era.



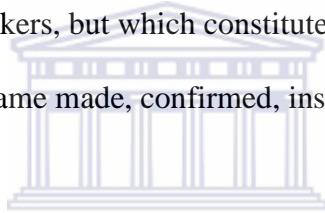
Also, the CRLR in its land restitution awareness campaigns and programmes aimed at educating the public about the claims processes repeatedly emphasized the importance of claiming as a community in cases of communal property.<sup>14</sup> Subsequently, groups of people constituted themselves as communities, presenting themselves as having homogenous bonds with shared identities and cultures. Public and private meetings and gatherings were convened, out of which ‘united’ constituencies, committees, forums, trusts, and boards, emerged. What has struck me with the group claims I have studied, is how the land claiming groups, as they constituted themselves as communities, shaped their identities according to racialised, often *ethnicised* patterns.<sup>15</sup> Many groups rose from the ranks of black

<sup>14</sup> According to the commission, the complexity with individual claims is that each claim has to be investigated separately, which requires more human resources and more time. See Mgoqi W, ‘Understand the Restitution Process’, in *The Commission News*, Vol. 1, No.1, (January 1999).

<sup>15</sup> Concepts drawn from an observation that the government have through its policies, sought “to *de-racialise* land by *racialising* land”. See, Ramutsindela M, *Unfrozen Ground: South Africa’s Contested*

people<sup>16</sup>, who according to them, suffered incomprehensively, but had never abandoned the struggle for their land.

As they claimed their rights to land, claimants primarily presented themselves as a unit fused in one voice, with a shared unwavering memory of its past, particularly that of the loss of land rights. In fact claims processes were usually coupled with identification and representational work, which ‘community’ representatives in the form of committees or task groups, usually performed to private and public onlookers. Vastly publicised, highly visual and loud public ‘community’ gatherings, mass demonstrations and protests became ‘identity parades’ which didn’t only send ‘validity’ messages to onlookers, but which constituted the group itself. It is in these processes that identities became made, confirmed, instilled and embraced.



As Richard Handler asserts, the “uttering of every statement about who we are, changes if only slightly, our relationship to ‘who we are’. Thus to talk about identity is to change or construct it...”<sup>17</sup> As a consequence, when the ‘Land Commission’ interacted with such groups, it constantly recognized them as communities, whether by their visible features, by the way they presented themselves, or just by mere assumption. For instance, the Commission categorically referred to a group of approximately 6000 claimants of Cato Manor<sup>18</sup> as a community, in the same way as

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*Spaces*, (England: Ashgate, 2001). This is however with the exception of District Six, whose cases demonstrated the coming together of multiple identities, such as Coloured, Indian, African, Malay and White.

<sup>16</sup> I use the term black in this context to refer to a presumed collective and people of African and Asian origins, including the so called Coloured people. This group is for purposes of redress, is collectively considered the most victims of racial abuses of the past.

<sup>17</sup> Handler R, ‘Is Identity a Useful Cross-Cultural Concept?’, in John R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p 30.

<sup>18</sup> Former residents of Cato Manor near Durban, people of different ethnicity, class, gender, age, who had lost their residency in Cato Manor for various reasons, and in different periods, lodged claims at different

it referred to 36 Steinhoff families (each probably represented by one member) as a community.<sup>19</sup>

In the same vein, the former residents of kwa-Ndabeni, or their descendants, most of who resided in Langa Township and in various other parts of the Cape Flats, came together after 1995 to lodge a group land claim with the Commission for Restitution of Land Rights (CRLR). This so called ‘Ndabeni’ community had been dispossessed of its right to land under Natives Urban Areas Act of 1923 and its 1930 Amendment. This racially discriminatory legislation empowered the Cape Town City Council of the time, to forcibly remove Africans from kwa-Ndabeni to Langa between 1927 and 1936.

While ‘Ndabeni’ had in social history been characterised as a place ‘unfit even for animal dwelling’, the claimants remembered it as having been a “neighbourhood and a community, [whose] memory lives on among those applying for [land] restitution”.<sup>20</sup>

Believing that they qualified for land restitution, approximately 1945 former residents of kwa-Ndabeni residing in Langa, Gugulethu, Khayelitsha, Belhar, Athlone, Mitchells Plain, Atlantis, Thornton, and in other provinces, ‘re-united’ to reclaim their lost land.

Politics of identity pertaining to the processes of achieving the homogenous stance which many claimant groups including ‘Ndabeni’ land claimants assumed, can be explained in various ways. I start off by aligning it with resonant narratives within

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times over a period of about four years. For more see, Walker C, *Land Marked: Land Claims & Land Restitution in South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Jacana Press, 2008), pp 145-173.

<sup>19</sup> The Steinhof families lost tenancy rights when they were removed from council cottages. In March 2007, 49% of them were allocated land in Gabriel Road, Plumstead while the rest opted for financial compensation.

<sup>20</sup> This is the image of Ndabeni that social historical writings such as those of Saunders and Barnett painted in 1978 and 1985. It is also the image which re-surfaced in the oral history interviews with the former residents of kwa-Ndabeni in around 1990. See, Interviews conducted by Kwandiwe Kondlo with the surviving former residents of Ndabeni, for the Western Cape Oral History Project, UCT Archives.

the country, which in relation to land tended to generalise and homogenise potential land reform beneficiaries. I argue that the way land claimants have tended to shape their identities, has not departed from the directions of dominant struggle narratives.

A strong resonance of a narrative of loss and restoration has existed among black South Africans, since the popular mobilisation and resistance to apartheid of the 1980s and early 1990s, through the ‘negotiated’ settlement of 1993-1994, through new heritage projects after 1994, up to the present day service delivery demonstrations. As the narratives of loss, pain, suffering, resistance, struggle, heroism, martyrdom, freedom, reconciliation, redress, restoration, etc, came to dominate oral, written and public histories, the same crept into individual and collective memories and identities. It became almost impossible for any land claimant to imagine themselves existing outside the broader identity that had been constructed of people who lost land in the past. Hence, I argue that identities and memories, particularly in relation to group land claims, became shaped along the lines of a “master narrative” of loss and restoration.<sup>21</sup>

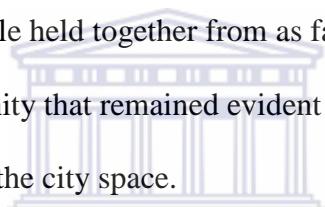
Considering them shaped along those lines, it becomes tempting to ascertain the strength of group bonds in cases of land claimants, as well as the extent to which those remain sustainable. To begin with, I believe that people imagined themselves as communities, and remained so, as long as they had hopes that in unity their material, spiritual and emotional aspirations could be realised. Groups are mere

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<sup>21</sup> This is a concept adopted from Walker’s argument concerning narratives that have shaped the post-apartheid ‘Land Restitution Act’. See Walker C, *Land Marked: Land Claims & Land Restitution in South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Jacana Press, 2008).

“symbolic processes that emerge and dissolve in particular contexts of action”.<sup>22</sup> In communities, people also looked for regeneration, and a space where their idealised nostalgic perspectives of their dear past could be entertained.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, when that which drew people into ‘communities’ began to dwindle, forged links also began to break off.

Most part of this logic has been central to the way former residents of District Six<sup>24</sup> and their descendants mobilised their ‘community’. Over and above the goal of getting their ‘beloved’ District Six back, these people over time expressed their longing to construct and preserve their memory. This became a ‘community’ of common-goal oriented people held together from as far back as the pre-demolition period, and who upheld a unity that remained evident in activities that successfully re-inserted District Six into the city space.



However, there were people who had initially identified with the District Six ‘community’, who later found no comfort in any association with activities of this ‘community’. For example, those who had been active around the land claim, and who waited for donkeys’ years for their houses to be constructed so they could return to District Six, remained despondent. They found no cheer in ‘community’ activities that were to be facilitated by the District Six Museum until a ‘community’ that they

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<sup>22</sup> Handler R, ‘Is Identity a Useful Cross-Cultural Concept?’, in John R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ( New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p 30.

<sup>23</sup> For more on this view, see, Defilippis J, ‘Paradoxes of Community building: community control in the global economy’, in *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. LIX, No. 2, (June 2008).

<sup>24</sup> A former cosmopolitan place forming part of Cape Town city, from which many black people had been forcibly removed since 1901.

would recognise, was reborn.<sup>25</sup> Along the same lines, the claimant ‘community’ of Protea Village has also aimed at carefully balancing the return of the people, the conservation of the ecology of the site, and equitable opportunities in the new city.<sup>26</sup> It appears to me that these were the people who understood that what each member would benefit from the new acquisition, was fundamental to the sustainability of their union as a ‘community’.

### **‘Ndabeni’, A forged unity tested**

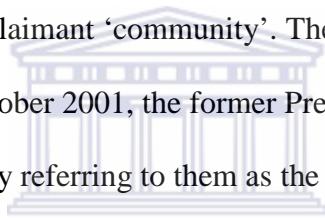
As much as the above outline highlights some identity issues in as far as land claims are concerned, limiting unity to benefits would be a dire oversimplification of the subject. There are memory issues to be considered, just as much as there are socio-economic and political factors at play. As much as the constitution of ‘Ndabeni’ land claimants ‘community’ has developed in a similar pattern as the examples cited above, focusing on it at this point might provide a way for examining some complexities of politics of identity. When the former residents of kwa-Ndabeni moved to Langa, they expressed a feeling of ‘loss of community’, but it occurred that the land claiming process, among other things provided an opportunity for them to re-call or re-constitute their ‘community’.

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<sup>25</sup> This view was raised by a ‘community’ member at a District Six ‘community’ meeting, held at Lydia Williams Centre, on 18 June 2007. I had attended the meeting on a capacity of being an intern at District Six Museum at that time. Personal notes.

<sup>26</sup> Protea Village is a place in the Bishopscourt and Kirstenbosch area of Cape Town, from which black people were forcibly removed, when it was declared a ‘white group area’ in 1961. About their aspirations, see, Baduza U, ‘Memory and documentation in exhibition-making: a case study of the Protea Village exhibition, A History of Paradise 1829-2002’, Masters Thesis, (University of the Western Cape, November 2007)

In 1995, following awareness campaigns by the CRLR, a list of about 1945 ‘Ndabeni’ land claimants, was backed up and validated by physically visible and active claimants. In their initial public gatherings, halls would be filled to their capacities. Attendance and presence would also be accompanied by street demonstrations, singing and chanting of slogans. Led by a “visionary”<sup>27</sup> committee, things were certainly promising, as the ‘community’ had constant contact with the officials from the Land Affairs offices and the Western Cape Chief Land Commissioner, Advocate Wallace Mgoqi. In instances where interests concurred, the ‘community’ collaborated with other claimant ‘communities’ in the Western Cape such as that of District Six. In so doing, they were gaining more prominence and recognition as a legitimate claimant ‘community’. Their public image was that of a unified force, thus, on 9 October 2001, the former Premier of the Western Cape Ebrahim Rasool, was already referring to them as the ‘Ndabeni’ ‘community’.<sup>28</sup>



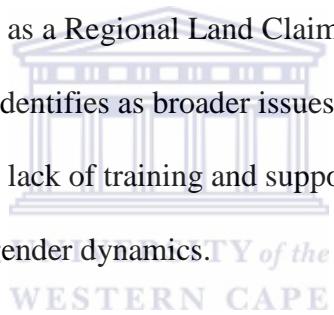
Towards the end of October 2001, the ‘Ndabeni’ land claimants claimed victory, as a settlement was reached which handed over to them 54.8 hectares of government-owned land situated at the Wingfield military base. As a requirement for the community to hold land as a unit, they had to establish a Communal Property Trust or Association, elected democratically, which they readily did. Out of 587 legitimate claimants, 408 wished to be resettled in a new ‘Ndabeni’ ‘community’, 105 opted for monetary compensation, while 74 wished to be made priority in an alternative housing development scheme.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> A description given by a claimant in an informal interview I had with him on 16 August 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Statement published on ANC Caucus: Western Cape Provincial Legislature. See, <https://www.anc.org/ancdocs/pr/2001/pr1009.html>

<sup>29</sup> See, Gordon J and Broadbridge H, *Report to the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights, Ndabeni*, Case WC 6/3/A/13/1/42, (March 1997).

Nonetheless, in the midst of complex ‘community’ dynamics, it so happened that conflicts of interest began to surface, as people’s individual interests began to dominate the collective ones. In as far as land claims are concerned, “community dynamics are usually quite complex, with counter claims and internal struggles which often erupt into serious, deeply debilitating conflicts, or are left to simmer in less dramatic but also destructive ways”.<sup>30</sup> Land claims, especially those involving communal property, are often fraught with conflicting interests and misunderstandings about modes of operation. There is often power struggles, greed, corruption, fraud, lack of respect and trust, poor communication and even conspiracies. Having served as a Regional Land Claims Commissioner for five years, Cherryl Walker also identifies as broader issues misunderstandings related to lack of policy and direction, lack of training and support for claimants, as well as low levels of sensitivity to gender dynamics.

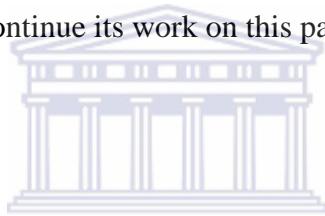


In the case of the ‘Ndabeni’ land claim, problems began to surface from as early as the formation of the Interim ‘Ndabeni’ Land Restitution Committee in 1996. As soon as the committee was formed, the composition of the committee began to be questioned by both the Commission and some concerned ‘Ndabeni’ land claimants. Most of the concern raised was of undemocratic procedures that had allegedly been followed in the setting up of the committee, which was deemed not to be representative of the entire ‘community’.

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<sup>30</sup> Walker C, ‘Land Reform and Gender in Post-Apartheid South Africa’, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), Discussion Paper No. 98, (October 1998).

There were also women who reported cases of abuse by the chairperson of the committee, who according to them, had a general low regard of women, an attitude he displayed by the way he spoke to them and the way he undermined their roles in the land claiming process.<sup>31</sup> It was clear that a set of legal and social standards, which determined the composition of the committee, how the ‘Ndabeni’ claimant ‘community’ was to behave and how it was to be represented, had not been considered. Many claimants began to register their concerns with the Commission, and to display publicly their dissatisfaction by not participating in meetings. As a result, the ‘Ndabeni’ land restitution process became frozen for some time in 1997. As the constitution, powers and authority of the committee were being challenged, the commission could not continue its work on this particular case until the issues had been resolved.



When most of the matter was finally resolved, with a more permanent and better representative structure in place, a land settlement with the government was reached in 2001, amid splendid celebrations by the claimant ‘community’. As the Communal Property Associations Act 28 of 1996 required, the land was handed over to the ‘Ndabeni’ Communal Property Trust that consisted of eleven elected trustees.<sup>32</sup> Since then, the ‘community’ began to split into opposing groups concerning the management of the land and other financial resources that the government had allocated to the trust. As discussed in Chapter Two, many attacks directed at the trust

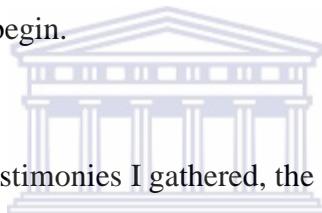
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<sup>31</sup> See, Gordon J, ‘Impotence and Omnipotence: Problematising the Articulation of Anthropological Perspectives Within the Land Restitution Process’, University of Cape Town: Masters Thesis, (1997).

<sup>32</sup> For more on legal requirements for communal property, see Claassens A and Cousins B, *Land, Power & Custom: Controversies generated by South Africa’s Communal Land Rights Act*, (Cape Town: Juta & Company Ltd, 2008).

concerned the salaries paid to the administrators, as well as the way the trust office and vehicle were managed.<sup>33</sup>

The first trust was ousted in 2004. Another trust was elected, which also disbanded in 2006. A Crisis Committee took over in 2006, but was also ousted in 2007. In 2007, 2008 and 2009, two trusts which were elected or appointed in separate meetings, and by separate groups operated parallel to each other. The situation was characterised by bad blood among the claimants, as well as furtive agreements and deals with certain individuals, firms and companies. At the same time, many land claimants remained uninformed about the developments, as they patiently waited for development of the land to begin.



According to a number of testimonies I gathered, the number of ‘community’ meetings declined and some people began to blame the government of Land Commission for lack of support.<sup>34</sup> It appeared that a few individuals within the trust, and some ‘new comers’ into the whole affair, had taken charge in ways directed at enriching themselves. Between 2003 and 2010, the media was bombarded with negative reports about the in-fighting, feuds, conspiracies, allegations, court applications and police investigations within the ‘Ndabeni’ land claimant ‘community’.<sup>35</sup> At one stage one trustee said about his / her colleagues when speaking to me:

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with Zambia Tokolo, 1 April 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Based on the interviews I had with individual trustees on different occasions between 01 July and 24 September 2009. Anonymity respected.

<sup>35</sup> See, *Cape Times*, 12 November 2007, 29 July 2008, 13 October 2008, 16 October 2008, *Cape Argus*, 3 March 2003, 25 September 1997, 04 January 2008, and *The Citizen*, 11 July 2006

...where did you hear about me...? Have you spoken to S...? Oh!...so you went to see B...that liar...? What did he say about me...? He's a big liar....Why is he not in contact with me anymore...? Next time you see him, ask him about me.... He knows me very well.... He respects me.... I told him his story perfectly.... You know...he used to come here to pick me up and we would attend meetings together... but not anymore.... I'm telling you...there is some sfiri-firi [mishmash] going on there...and I don't want to be involved anymore.... Starting from that chairperson... all of them...they are liars....<sup>36</sup>

Another trustee alleged that,

...there is a problem of greed in this thing...some people saw opportunities to get rich....But shame, they have no chance....You know, we've been watching them...they are stupid....They don't know we have a developer...and that guy deals only with us.... We hear there's someone from the trust who has made a deal with Old Mutual and he has been promised a commission of R2 million...yes...we were told by our developer....You know I'm happy because many people will be arrested soon....Even now...I'm on my way to see the chairperson...we are working on this thing together....Soon you'll be seeing development there...<sup>37</sup>



More allegations were also made in an interview with a third trustee:

...who else have you spoken to in the trust...? Oh!..yes we are together... and her too...? Ok.... You know there are people who have become dormant in the trust...all they do is tell lies about people....They are big liars themselves....If they think there are illegitimate claimants...who are they referring to...? Some complain about money...what money...? You know some people don't even know how these things work.... That R5 million was for us to begin the work....We pay lawyers...and all that...and we won't convene meetings for nothing....We want that land to be developed, that's it....And we have wonderful plans for that land....<sup>38</sup>

In the light of the above statements, it was apparent that camps had developed within and without the trust, and that certain individuals had become dominant over others, while others had either fought back in their own ways or retracted into cocoons. As a result, even as trust elections had been held under the supervision of the Independent

<sup>36</sup> Interview with a 'Ndabeni' Communal Property Trustee on 02 July 2009. Anonymity has been respected by the researcher.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with a 'Ndabeni' Communal Property Trustee on 10 July 2009. Anonymity has been respected by the researcher.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with a 'Ndabeni' Communal Property Trustee on 6 September 2009. Anonymity has been respected by the researcher.

Electoral Committee (IEC),<sup>39</sup> some elected members had not been recognised by others. There were also allegations that some people had falsely claimed trustee status and attempted to access trust funds, or even added illegitimate claimants to the list in return for money. At the same time, some trustees had since 2007 been under investigation for attempting to sell the trust land on a R600 million deal, without the knowledge of the rest of the trust, , the ‘community’, the Land Commission, the City of Cape Town and the government.<sup>40</sup>

It was clear that there were factors that caused certain individuals or sub-groups within a ‘community’, to dominate the ‘community’ to the extent of using a community structure for personal gain, owning it, opposing it, not acknowledging its authority, ignoring its actions or resisting against it. This confirms the argument I made earlier that people identify with ‘communities’ only for as long as there is still something to gain. The gain can be as meagre as a little recognition or acknowledgement, but it would be interesting to establish how long people would be willing to hang in there for what they aspire.

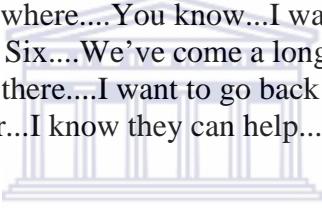
In spite of the chaotic and fractured ‘Ndabeni’ land claim situation, by 2009 there still existed a group of people known as the ‘Ndabeni’ land claimant community. People had not yet reached a stage where they would rather totally dissociate themselves from the ‘community’, because, the land which they had their eyes fixed on was available, only the last mile had to be run. People were not hoping on any

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<sup>39</sup> See for example, City of Cape Town Media Release, (24 October 2006), <https://www.web1.capetown.go.za/press/newspapers>

<sup>40</sup> *Cape Times*, (12 November 2007).

help to come from the government in the form of the Land Affairs Department.<sup>41</sup> To them, the government had done its part, but the people themselves had messed up. People did not express much hope in justice either, but many had expressed a need for intervention by ‘experts’. According to them, had they had access to workshops on Communal Land Administration or property economics, things would have been different. In another meeting held on 9 May 2009, the presence of Judge Fikile Bam, the Judge President of the Land Claims Court, was enough to re-assure many people that for that intervention, things were promising. To others, hope was placed on expertise but of a different kind:



...you know...the only thing I'm planning to do now is to go back to the people we worked with at District Six (Museum)....We had direction then....These new guys are taking us nowhere....You know...I was in the first committee...and we used to go to District Six....We've come a long way with this thing....Those professors who were there....I want to go back to those professors....I want to see Dr Neville Alexander...I know they can help....<sup>42</sup>

Such was the kind of hope that still sustains this ‘community’. At the same time, sustenance of this ‘community’ could not be oversimplified or reduced to land, for beyond land, their present circumstances, memory and heritage projects could still hold this ‘community’ together for longer. Among the ‘ordinary’ claimants that I interviewed between September 2008 and May 2010, many expressed some despair in the situation, but many were not ready to give up as yet. When I asked them about the reason for the hope they had, they reminded me that the land and the money were there. The only problem lied with a few individuals in the leadership, and that according to them was what needed to be dealt with.

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with Phyllis Fuku, 24 September 2009, and Doris Zimemo-Ngobeni, 27 September 2009.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Phyllis Fuku, 24 September 2009.

Therefore, given the contestations and the infighting that surfaced in ‘communities’ like that of the, ‘Ndabeni’ land claimants, homogenous as they might appear to be, such claimed ‘communities’ did not exist in the true sense but were imagined to exist. “In fact all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact are imagined”.<sup>43</sup> These imagined ‘communities’ were in essence congregations of individuals, who could never be truly bounded within distinct features. Claimant ‘communities’ tended to imagine themselves as bounded within common past experiences, present circumstances and future aspirations.

The assumption could be that the experiences of having ‘together’ inhabited a particular place, then ‘together’ experienced land dispossession, and consequently suffering together, necessarily rendered their history, heritage, identity and memory shared. As a matter of fact, that was not necessarily the case. The fact that their circumstances had never been on a balanced scale in the first place, meant that they would not have experienced incidents in the same manner, nor borne similar effects. Therefore, an instant forged homogeneity among people who had never been homogenous in the first place, and who have since being dispersed from a certain point to pursue various aspirations, was unattainable.

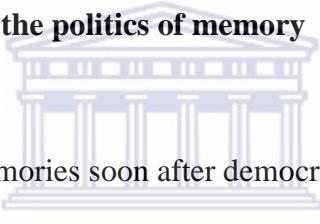
From this investigation into the constitution of land claimant ‘communities’, I conclude that these groups were fundamentally heterogeneous in nature and that they never really attained homogeneity. As such, unity among them could only be imagined to exist, while in the actual fact they were fraught with differences of opinion, even of the cause they were about. They nonetheless did manage to pull

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<sup>43</sup> See, Anderson B, *Imagined Communities*, (London: Verso, 1991), p6.

some ‘legitimacy’ pose, as they embarked on highly publicised actions like petitions, marches, picketing, demonstrations, through which they presented themselves as unified forces. As they devoted themselves to land claiming, verification, researching, interpretation and representation activities, their determination tended to win them confidence and support of the government and its ‘nation’. At the end of it all, they became epitomised as perfect examples of what the nation stood for. The ‘majority’ of the imagined South Africans were assumed to be epitomes of suffering and loss, an identity which they were expected to maintain even as paradigms shifted.

### **‘Ndabeni’ land claims and the politics of memory**



The construction of land memories soon after democratic era had begun in South Africa, was an exercise that did not simply involve ‘retrieving’ recollections of past events from a certain storage site. Since memory is not simply located in the mental, but is culturally produced, its production draws a great deal from circumstances at present, particularly the cultural politics in force. People’s positions in relation to power, as well as the sense of agency they have concerning their lives became major informers of memoires.

In this section I evaluate politics of memory pertaining to land claims in three ways; era, collective memory and public memory. I discuss all these simultaneously as it is pertinent to avoid creating any impression that one exists in isolation from others.

According to Frisch,

Memory is a deeply cultural artefact, manipulated in a host of direct and indirect ways, especially in an age of mass-mediation, to reproduce culturally appropriate attitudes and behaviours....[but] it is history, not memory that can provide the basis of shared re-imagination of how the past connects to the present, and the possibilities this vantage suggest for the future.<sup>44</sup>

Within the post-1994 South African socio-economic context and state of affairs, when individuals or groups were tasked with constructing memories of their relationship and struggles with and over land, a chain of substances drew together to shape those memories. Memories were usually shaped out of knowledge about certain past and present events and circumstances, constructed and generated by individuals or collectively by a group. Such knowledge could be generated through thoughts, emotions, feelings and senses, behind which is culture, as Seremetakis argues. According to Seremetakis, culture shapes the way people experience things, their perspectives, the meanings they confer to their experiences, as well as the narratives they construct about events and circumstances.<sup>45</sup> Thus, thoughts, emotions, feelings and senses are not neutral transmitters of knowledge and memories but are informed by culture.

Knowledge, which also plays a role in shaping memory, is never a fixed and constant supplier of ‘mnemonic devices’ on which memory can be constructed. It is constantly acquired, produced, interpreted, mediated and verified in various forms and through various ways, such as experiences, oral traditions, texts and visual imagery. At the same time it is a cultural product of collaboration between past

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<sup>44</sup> Frisch M, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and meaning of Oral History and Public History*, (Albany: State University on New York Press, 1990), Introduction.

<sup>45</sup> See, Seremetakis N. C, *The Senses Still. Perception and memory as material culture in modernity*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), pp 8-9.

experiences, responses to situations at present, and anticipations for the future.<sup>46</sup>

When knowledge informs memory, it therefore renders memory subject to a series of mediations, which take into consideration the past, the present and the future. Thus, as people choose to remember and to forget their relationship with and struggles over certain land which they lost in the past, their present circumstances and future objectives in relation to land ownership become central.

Once constructed, memory still undergoes validation through cultural and political factors, societal norms, standards, beliefs and values, rendering it subject to contestations. Certain memories become rejected, relegated or modified while others acquire authority and become representatives of cultural perspectives of individuals or groups of people, in the form of collective memories. The process is therefore spherical and non-ending, just as cultural factors which govern it continue to shift. It continually generates further knowledge and memory construction, actions, narratives and representations, which are also never static.

Given the above account concerning land memories in relation to land, it is also imperative that one considers what would be generally referred to as individual and collective memories in relation to forced removals. The process of collectivising individual memories to make histories; or to contribute knowledge to heritage projects related to forced removals, is also intricate. The intricacy lies in the intangible nature of memories. Memories and the circumstances or conditions that shape it are not mutually exclusive. Unlike physical objects that can easily be

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<sup>46</sup> Seremetakis N. C, *The Senses Still. Perception and memory as material culture in modernity*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), p 9.

gathered for collective ownership, assembling individual memories would possibly involve manipulation of contexts, circumstances and conditions. Hence Coombes enquires of individual memories,

how do you adequately represent the complexities of lived personal experiences of forced removal, land loss and / or displacement, in ways in which such experiences can be made to serve as representative of a larger ideal entity of ‘a collective’ ‘national struggle’?<sup>47</sup>

Coombes’ question is based on a premise that there is something called a ‘personal lived experience’, or an individual memory, although she appears to doubt that such could possibly be collectivised.

On the other hand, Fabian argues that ‘individual memories’, all isolated from collective memories, are implausible or do not exist at all. According to him, “as a social practice, memory is a communicative practice, and all narrated memory [unlike cognitive] is in that sense collective”.<sup>48</sup> There is no way that memory of one social-being can exist in isolation from the social space and environment that he or she shares with other people. Even the language, on which memories are shaped, is shared. Therefore, to Fabian, collective memories exist but individual memories do not.

In the case of memories of the 1901 forced removals in Cape Town, I believe that Fabian’s argument makes more sense. The interconnection between what would be called individual memories and collective memories manifested in among others the way in which the ‘Ndabeni’ land claimants sought to forget and remember the past in relation to their land claim. As individuals came together in 1995 to lodge a claim, their

<sup>47</sup> Coombes A, *History After Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2004), introduction.

<sup>48</sup> Fabian J, *Memory Against Culture: Arguments and Reminders*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), p 93. Emphasis added.

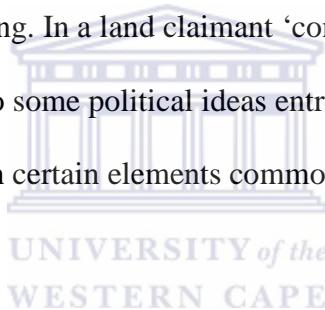
circumstances and social conditions at that time were different, just as they had always been different in the past. Some had houses in 1995 and others had none. Some lived relatively comfortably, while others did not. Some had personally experienced removals in the past, while some had not.

However, they together chose to assume an identity of victims of the atrocities of the past, who were in dire need of redress, in the form of land, houses or monetary compensation. It was apparent that memories of forced removals that individuals constructed in the past, in 1995 and afterwards, were not constructed in a vacuum or in isolation. They had been made in consideration of the meanings that others made of their experiences. Hence it became possible that circumstances, social conditions and contexts in which individuals found themselves in relation to land or accommodation, were manipulated to balance and to represent all. Therefore, Fabian's theory that individuals construct their memories by referring to those of others, used in this case it deciphers the intricacy foreseen by Coombes concerning collectivisation of memories.

Since 1994, South Africa became a land full of many public devices to shape memories. While memory projects, memorials, monuments and commemorations about the atrocities of the past became the order of the day after 1994, museums dedicated to representing forced removals also became opened. Thus considering land loss through forced removals in Cape Town, public memories became entrenched in scarred, bare-patched landscapes such as the District Six site. Even the crammed toxic environments such as the congested townships and informal settlements scattered all over the Cape Flats, could be understood as landscapes that represented public memories of forced removals and racial segregation. Memorials, monuments and other public activities

such as commemorations, naming ceremonies all around Cape Town, also became key shapers of collective memories in relation to land. Collective memories about land were also embodied in activities such as mobilisation of former residents of certain locations for land claim after 1994. Even service delivery protests that took place throughout the country became moments during which land memories and narratives were constructed.

Nonetheless, public memories promoted through museums, commemorations, monuments, memorials and events are not necessarily shared.<sup>49</sup> Memories represented by groups in public are not necessarily collective. They are usually representations of views of certain dominant individuals or groups of people, simply presented as all-encompassing. In a land claimant ‘community’ for instance, not everyone would subscribe to some political ideas entrenched in public representations, even though certain elements common to the collective still existed among the group.



Since memories are forged out of socially, culturally and politically mediated perspectives; experiences; and interpretations, factors such as transformation are bound to affect memories. Land memories constructed in the post-apartheid South Africa have become particularly interesting for their fluidity. As I have studied elements that make up land memories, I've learnt that certain dominant ideologies have become central to production of certain collective and public memories. As people construct their land memories, and as they mobilise around land claims, one of their major points of reference is popular knowledge. But what kind of knowledge

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<sup>49</sup> Fabian J, *Memory Against Culture: Arguments and Reminders*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), p 94.

was popularised in as far land was concerned? I argue that especially during first five years of the implementation of the Land Restitution Act, it was the kind of political knowledge, which discredited the regimes that dispossessed people of their land, and a political knowledge which credited and promoted the present regime.

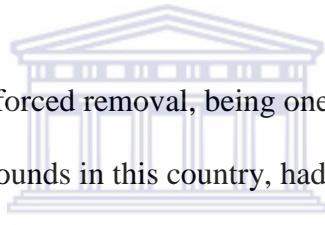
Such knowledge according to Raphael Samuel was constructed purposefully to leave the deepest impression on the minds of common people, so as to direct their thinking and feeling towards national commonality. For such, “written word was translated into imagery; or into comic strip versions of grand narrative”.<sup>50</sup> When used in these forms, it shaped among the people, common ways of perceiving, experiencing and interpreting. Such narrative became popularised through informal modes of knowledge production and presentation such as corridor conversations, children’s playgrounds, songs, local lore, place and street names, legends, posters, films, and documentaries. That in a way empowered ‘communities’ to find their own ways of confronting dominant narratives which appeared to them as oppressive, through use of their own methods or popular mediums of communication. The situation then becomes what Frisch describes as:

“...populist community empowerment through public history has now returned to communities, as the “new forms of public history have waged a kind of guerrilla war against [the] notion of professional scholarly authority: the promise of community history, of people’s video, of labor theatre, of many applications of oral history, has been empowerment-returning to particular communities , generating from within them authority to explore and interpret their own experience, experience traditionally invisible in formal history because of predictable assumptions about who and what matters, interpretations more actively ignored or resisted by academic scholarship by virtue of their political content and implications”<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Samuel R, *Theatres of Memory, Vol.1: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*, (New York: Verso, 1994), p 8.

<sup>51</sup> Frisch M, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and meaning of Oral History and Public History*, (Albany: State University on New York Press, 1990), Introduction.

Stories of forced removals in South Africa went through these popularising modes of knowledge production. There were countless auto/biographies, books, films, documentaries, pamphlets, booklets, comics, dramas etc, about forced removals that were produced and made easily accessible to the masses, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. District Six for instance was not only a space where popular struggle narratives were distilled, but it became a ‘theatre’ for representation of struggles pertaining to land loss.<sup>52</sup> As such, District Six remained a clear example of the use of personal experiences of a particular group of people, to epitomise loss, struggle, and restoration or return.



Furthermore, the subject of forced removal, being one of those subjects that cut across regional and ethnic bounds in this country, had become a perfect tool of mass mobilisation, for the liberation struggle and for ‘nation’ building in the democratic era. As a matter of fact, popular histories produced from as early as 1930s, about land dispossession and forced removals, laid grounds for the post-apartheid land reform policies<sup>53</sup>. In addition to that, narratives produced through the liberal and radical scholarship of the 1960s and 1970s, the social and popular histories of the 1970s and 1980s, and even the 1955 Congress of the People and the Freedom Charter of 1955, were among many mediums through which ideas about land reform were to be entrenched. Clause number four of the popular Freedom Charter, which states that

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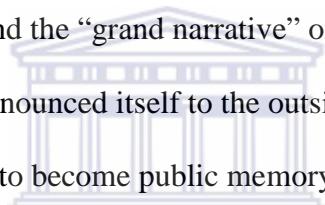
<sup>52</sup> See, Adams Z, ‘Memory, Imagination and Removal: Remembering and Forgetting District Six’, MA Thesis, (University of Western Cape, 2002).

<sup>53</sup> By this I refer to the works of activists like Sol Plaatje, Albert Luthuli, Jack and Ray Simons, Clements Kadalie, Eddie Roux, Bill Andrews etc.

“The land shall be shared among those who work it”, have since the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955, been memorialised through songs and poetry.<sup>54</sup>

As another example, a biography of the sharecropper Kas Maine written by Charles van Onselen, which became an eye openers to the plight of ‘ordinary’ sharecroppers in this country, and which may have influenced tenancy reform programmes.<sup>55</sup>

Stories about the ‘ordinary’, ‘oppressed’ and ‘marginalised’ were not only constructed but were also made popular through biographies such as this. Having been constructed to leave “deepest impressions in minds of ordinary people”, lived personal experiences about land have therefore become incorporated into the national political memory and the “grand narrative” of loss and restoration”. That kind of memory, having “announced itself to the outside, and having taken a position in the arena”, was therefore to become public memory.<sup>56</sup>



However, constructing memory to use by the ‘collective public’ renders it both usable and contestable. Hence Coombes dispels the notion of “official memory”, which is assumed to be dominant to the extent of being incontestable, or to the extent of simplifying things into “national pain” and “collective guilt”.<sup>57</sup> Although I argue that a “master narrative” of loss and restoration was dominant in present land memories, land claims have rendered the narrative both usable and contestable. On one hand it was usable for it gave numerous individuals and groups of former

<sup>54</sup> <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/charter.html>

<sup>55</sup> Van Onselen C, *The Seed in Mine: The Life of Kas Maine, a South African Sharecropper, 1894-1985*, (Oxford: James Curry, 1996).

<sup>56</sup> Fabian J, *Memory Against Culture: Arguments and Reminders*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), p 94.

<sup>57</sup> See, Coombes A, *History After Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2004), p 244, and Bandy J, ‘Managing the Other of Nature: Sustainability, Spectacle, and Global Regimes of Capital in Ecotourism’, *Public Culture*, Vol. 8, No 3, Spring 1996.

victims of land loss, confidence to assert themselves. Through it, they did not only attain land but they made sustainable use and development of it.

On the other hand, the Restitution of Land Rights Act has for its alignment with the “grand narrative” proved to be highly contestable and fraught with limitations. Part of those limitations was associated with the fact that many ‘communities’ did not perfectly fit the cut-and-dried specifications of the Act.<sup>58</sup> The case of Cato Manor was one among those that pointed to the limitations of the Act, for it did not provide for multiple claims, by groups with multiple identities, all referring to different periods as while claiming the same land.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, not all those who were forcibly removed from their lands in the past consider themselves as ‘victims’.

Some ‘communities’ such as that of Cremin in Kwa-Zulu Natal, actually see benefits in their forced removal, as according to some of them, the place would have been congested to an unbearable point were they not forcibly removed. Some see the loss of land at Cremin as having “a blessing in disguise”. It allowed opportunity for their land to develop and not deteriorate, a ‘blessing’ though which they found the land in good condition when they returned to it through restitutions.<sup>60</sup>

### **‘Ndabeni’: remembering and forgetting for land’s sake**

Studying the land claimant ‘community’ of ‘Ndabeni’, it has also occurred to me that where ‘communities’ have not perfectly fitted the “grand narratives”, they have

<sup>58</sup> For more, see Walker C, *Land Marked: Land Claims & Land Restitution in South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Jacana Press, 2008).

<sup>59</sup> For more on the case of Cato Manor, see, Walker C, *Land Marked: Land Claims & Land Restitution in South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Jacana Press, 2008, pp 145 –173.

<sup>60</sup> Walker C, *Land Marked: Land Claims & Land Restitution in South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Jacana Press, 2008), p 78.

manoeuvred their memories to fit. Although this argument is hypothetical, contradictions on the memories of kwa-Ndabeni / ‘Ndabeni’ give this impression. According to popular memory of land loss that resonated in the country, people ‘were supposed to have’ romantic reminiscences of the lost territory, its landscape, the sense of community, etc. Sometimes, to break the fairytale picture, people would include some few imperfections into a generally grand picture. However, in the case of kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’, memories and narratives that were at the beginning been contradictory, later converged into some collective.

In 1987, the Cape Town History Project and Popular Memory Group made a film about ‘Ndabeni’ entitled, *Ndabeni: First Forced Removal*, in which some former residents of kwa-Ndabeni who were featured, described the place and its condition. Dominant in its storyline was the ‘unbearable’ living conditions, which Africans had been subjected to by the white minority government, as well as the struggles they fought for their rights as a united front. Notably, these narratives were similar to those that were represented by Christopher Saunders and Naomi Barnett in the social historical knowledge they constructed about ‘Ndabeni’ in 1978 and 1985 respectively. The film popularised the idea that since Africans were seen as savage, uncivilised and contaminated, they were treated as less human. To support that, the former residents appearing in the film described ‘Ndabeni’ as having been “unfit even for animal dwelling”:

...The huts had no ‘proper floors, they were just pitched on the ground....The huts were extremely cold as the ground was often damp....Winters were terrible...The huts had small windows and no chimneys and yet we could

only cook on wood and coal fires. .. Rent tariffs were too high for the conditions".<sup>61</sup>

Nonetheless, in about 2000, Kwandiwe Kondlo conducted interviews among former ‘Ndabeni’ residents for the Western Cape Oral History Project. This time memories and narratives had changed considerably. Some of the interviewees were born in ‘Ndabeni’ in the first decade of the twentieth century, meaning that they might have lived under the “unbearable” conditions of old ‘Ndabeni’, for some time before the next forced removal to Langa took place. Dominant in their narratives was the “good time” they had at ‘Ndabeni’, and the end which was brought about by the move to Langa<sup>62</sup>:

Kwa-Ndabeni houses were warm...some had wooden floors and some had mud floors.... Kwa-Ndabeni was dry compared to this damp Langa....Food and clothing were very cheap...there was just plenty of food....There was order and no loitering like there is here in Langa....There were no buses, but train fares were cheap....There was cricket, rugby, tennis, music concerts, bioscope, Girl Guides, mother's unions, prayer groups....We carried no pass books there and we lived with coloureds...I had coloured friends and we attended church at District Six every Sunday...we never left that church, we kept going back there until we had our own church at kwa-Ndabeni...then we came to this Langa....<sup>63</sup>

When I conducted preliminary interviews for my research in 2008, I also gathered knowledge similar to the one presented above. People referred to the ‘Ndabeni’ land as theirs, despite the fact that they had been rent paying tenants on the land. Many explained what they were subjected to in terms of apartheid and its policies. Although apartheid was not yet a recognised policy in the 1920s and 1930s, people

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<sup>61</sup> A statement made by a former kwa-Ndabeni resident in the film, *Ndabeni: The First Forced Removal*, University of Cape Town African Studies Library, Film produced by V Bickford-Smith, E van Heyningen and H Phillips, Cape Town History Project, Teaching Methods Unit, (1987).

<sup>62</sup> See, interviews conducted by Kwandiwe Kondlo with the surviving former residents of ‘Ndabeni’, for the Western Cape Oral History Project, UCT Archives.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Phyllis Fuku on 19 October 2008.

used it and its concepts to construct their narrative. Some blamed things on racism and utter “Calvinism of white people”, who believed that they were superior and that the black race was inferior. Some told me that kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’ had become a black spot in a white area, and that they were not wanted anywhere near the city, but on the outskirts, as they were still needed for labour. In an interview I had with a former trustee recently, the lady did not mince her words as she angrily said:

*I hear that white people have written lies about Ndabeni, saying conditions were bad there. There is nothing like that....Unlike here in Langa...it was nice, warm and dry there....Our houses were warm because they were lined with wood inside, and had fire places, and we had those big coal stoves....We were a vibrant community, I'm telling you....Five churches, two schools, a hospital, a recreational hall, soccer field, rugby field, cricket pitch,...oh everything....There were no streets like here but it was nice and neat, I'm telling you... If you've also read what those white people have written, you mustn't believe those lies....*

It was evident in the post-apartheid narratives that people based their accounts on some historical knowledge which appeared to have provided them with language too. They referred to occurrences, policies and attitudes by popular political names, terms and phrases. Paradigm shifts had certainly had an effect on the way land loss has been remembered in South Africa. In the late 1970s and in the 1980s, even the most illiterate person in South African urban spaces, had been politicised enough to know that they were oppressed and that the oppressive policies were based on racist attitudes. However, at that stage, restitution for the land lost in the past might have been a possibility but it was not yet a definite case, or a matter of popular discourse. South Africa after 1994 was now a different era. Alternative memories were being constantly derived from popular histories, social histories and public histories consumed through significant changes in landscapes, media, materials, visual images, museums, celebrations, commemorations, memorials, monuments, themed

environments, etc. All those were at people's disposal, readily available and even promoted.

As such, 'Ndabeni' land claimants had also taken their embrace of public memory a step further, by seeking to entrench their memories on public spaces like other claimant 'communities' had done. 'Communities' like that of District Six, which had been constituted in a manner quite similar to that of kwa-Ndabeni/ 'Ndabeni', utilises public spaces like District Six Museum for further conduct further "research, representation and pedagogy".<sup>64</sup> For similar purposes, many 'Ndabeni' land claimants became instrumental in the formation of the Langa Reference Group, Langa Heritage Forum, the revival of the *AmaHlubi* chieftaincy, and the formation of the *AmaHlubi* Heritage Council, which was officially launched on 24 September 2009. Many also spearheaded the establishment of the tourist space for arts & crafts known as Guga S'thebe Cultural Centre and the revival of Langa Museum situated across Guga S'thebe Centre. All these initiatives had revolved around an urge to keep memories of the past alive, to educate young people about their heritage, to provide space for people to develop themselves and to showcase the vibrant culture of the 'community'.

Central to these heritage initiatives was an ethnic identity that linked the people of kwa-Ndabeni/ 'Ndabeni' and Langa to the *amaHlubi* chieftaincy, which according to them, was subjected to harsh treatment under the hands of the British in Natal. These people construct their migrant history through a story that: the *amaHlubi* people

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<sup>64</sup> Rassool C, 'Community Museums, Memory Politics, and Social Transformations in South Africa: Histories, Possibilities and Limits', in Karp I et al, (eds.), *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p 290.

migrated from the northern parts of the present Kwa-Zulu-Natal in the early 1800s, to the Natal Colony, and later to the Eastern and Western Cape.<sup>65</sup> According to them, they migrated to the Eastern Cape in search for land, and later to the Western Cape in search for land and employment opportunities. To this revived *amaHlubi* ‘nation’, the fact that their Great ‘King’ Langalibalele I was once in Uitvlugt, which later became kwa-Ndabeni/ ‘Ndabeni’, attested to the land being their rightful heritage.

This history is flawed and fraught with selective exclusions and inclusions.

Interestingly, although when they claim that Langalibalele was once on Robben Island, claiming Robben Island was not on their discourse. In this case, memory selectively informed history in the same way as history selectively informed memory.<sup>66</sup>



While I do not discuss history and heritage politics in this chapter, subjectivity of these people’s memories in relation to land, and the ways in which they construct their descent raised my interest. As they trace their ancestry, they associated loss of land with loss of chiefs. To these people, the capture and the banishment of Chief Langalibalele was the beginning of their land problems. Even when they secured land provided by the Xhosa and the British in the Eastern Cape, according to them, most of that was soon to be lost, as the Xhosa King Hintsa, who had allocated them some land, refused to recognise their chief, Bhungane. They therefore blame white colonialists for their circumstances of landlessness and lack of recognition of their

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<sup>65</sup> A lineage told by Mr P Sithole at the Launch of The *AmaHlubi* Heritage Council, Langa, 24 September 2009.

<sup>66</sup> Hamilton, argues that historical knowledge construction has since departed from the ancient idea that memory is a source of history. These two inform and shape each other. For more see, Hamilton Paula, ‘The knife Edge: Debates about Memory and History’ in Darian-Smith Kate and Hamilton Paula (eds.), *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p 11.

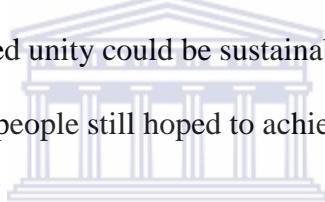
chieftaincy, kingdom or ‘nation’. On each of the two gatherings I have attended concerning the *AmaHlubi* heritage, they have repeatedly sung a Xhosa song

*Hoo nankuy’umlungu  
Asinankosi, asinasibonda  
Hoo imkil’inkosi yethu  
Asinamhlab’asinamakhaya*

Translated as:

*There goes a white man,  
He leaves us with no chief and no headman,  
Gone is our chief,  
We have no land and no homes*

Apparently, many members of the ‘Ndabeni’ ‘community’, irrespective of their identities, had a number of reasons to maintain their allegiance to the group. Also, the extent to which the forged unity could be sustainable seemed to depend on what each individual or group of people still hoped to achieve it they held on.



I have argued earlier on that people remain in ‘communities’ as long as their interests are still served. I have so far perceived some few trends of this assertion in post-settlement ‘communities’. Once ‘communities’ acquired land, many memory making and heritage projects that began during or after land claiming, have tended to struggle for sustenance and support from ‘community’ members. This however has depended on the manner of activities still in place. In the case of District Six for instance, having an established and functional museum, a valuable number of ‘community’ members became actively involved as trustees, managers, tour guides, curators, facilitators, educators, trainers, cleaners and care takers etc. Others, both young and old, continued to benefit and to contribute in skills development workshops and other capacity building activities.

In other post-settlement cases, ‘communities’ utilised their land resources to embark on commercial activities such as agriculture and eco-tourism. Initiatives like these often met with challenges pertaining to development of dominant capitalist interests, which eventually repelled many people from participating.

This resulted in a remainder of a few benefiting individuals still posing as a ‘community’, while others had since dissociated themselves. In cases where land was situated in parks or in environments categorised as protected areas, the government has constantly encouraged maximum utilisation of land for economic benefits, and effective nature, environment and cultural conservation. The practicality of this idea was however always subject of a complex discourse, as many conservation interests often conflicted with commercialisation ones. In such cases, interests of those who wished to generate income through farming, cutting and selling grass, and firewood, began to conflict with the interests of those who wished to generate income through tourism.

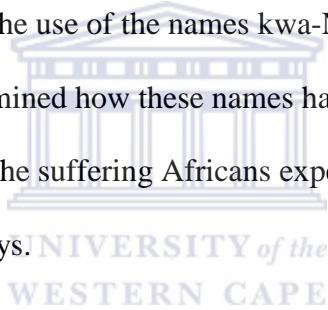
Also, such trends resulted in the development of a general view that the government land reform programmes were relatively an utter failure. As I have argued in this chapter, I believe that in the case of restitution of people’s rights to land, the government was successful in restoring the right to land of the people of kwa-Ndabeni. The government was successful in playing its role. The problem lay with the foundations of the narratives and memories, which made up the structure of the constituted ‘Ndabeni’ land claimant ‘community’. Since the ‘community’ had forged homogeneity, issues of memory, narratives and representations were to challenge the

very foundations of its forged homogeneity to a point where it began to fall apart. Such was to manifest in its lack of success in developing the land that was awarded to it in 2001.



## CONCLUSION

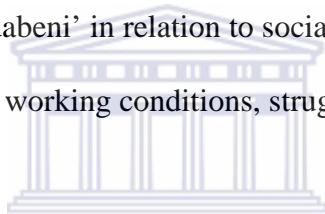
The aim of this study has been to investigate the processes of production of history and heritage in relation to kwa-Ndabeni, and to analyse presentation and representation of such in texts, narratives, exhibitions and films. To achieve that, this thesis has investigated processes through which knowledge about the Africans who experienced forced removals in Cape Town in 1901 has been continuously constructed. By studying varying contexts in which such knowledge has been produced, this thesis has also evaluated meaning constructions in relation to memories and circumstances shaping memories. By pointing out the use of the names kwa-Ndabeni and ‘Ndabeni’ in varying contexts, this study has examined how these names have been used as devices to construct knowledge about the suffering Africans experienced in Cape Town in the early 1900s in particular ways.



Chapter One has traced how ‘Ndabeni’ features in various forms of texts produced to represent forced removals and the struggles of African people in Cape Town, from the popular histories of the early 1900s to the late 1990s. It has evaluated the construction of identities of people such as those of kwa-Ndabeni have been constructed in popular historical writings and performances based on themes such as immigration, displacement, landlessness, migration, worker abuse and exploitation. This chapter has characterised kwa-Ndabeni as an embodiment of embodied of many themes around which popular histories were centred, thus placing the location within the context of the popular workers’ struggles of the time. Thus, it has sketched processes of politicisation

and mobilisation, as well as resistance activities of residents and workers at kwa-Ndabeni. The chapter has also outlined the development of a resistance spirit among the Africans in places like Langa Township, to which many former residents of kwa-Ndabeni moved.

Chapter One has also evaluated social historical knowledge of the 1970s and 1990s, that has been constructed to represent the location under the name ‘Ndabeni’. It has examined the way knowledge about the location has been ‘recovered’, constructed and re-constructed, in order to represent a place of imposed and unjust pain and suffering. The chapter has also evaluated various approaches that social historians employed as they sought to construct ‘Ndabeni’ in relation to social history themes such as racism, segregation, poor living and working conditions, struggle and resistance.

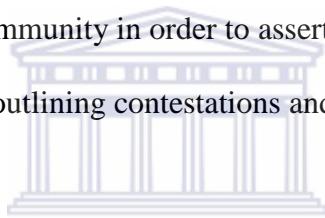


Chapter Two has examined how knowledge about kwa-Ndabeni has become produced and presented to visitors and tourists in Cape Town through public historical and heritage representations. The chapter has explored sites, roads, streets and public spaces such as the District Six Museum, Langa Museum, Guga S’thebe Arts and Cultural Centre, Eziko Restaurant and Catering School, Tsoga Environmental Centre and the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, on which the location is represented.

Chapter Two has also discussed the making of public histories and heritages in these spaces by exploring the politics of construction of memories and narratives, as well as complexities of such by exploring contestations and alternative representations. It has evaluated the role of commercial tourism in the construction of identities and memories,

by evaluating tourist gazes, narratives and testimonies presented to tourists about kwa-Ndabeni in Cape Town. The chapter has also discussed construction of memories, and identities, as well as employment of debates about traditions and cultures in issues of land, by highlighting ‘alternative’ heritage projects that groups such as the *AmaHlubi* Chiefdom have also embarked on.

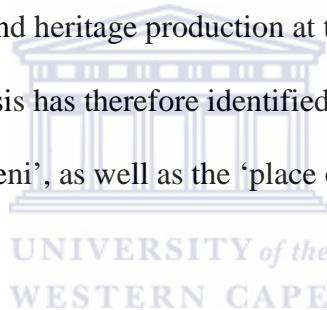
Chapter Three has studied the processes of construction of memories and identities in relation to the land claim lodged by the ‘Ndabeni’ land claimants in 1995. It has traced the processes through which these people have mobilised each other as well as in which they have constructed an identity of a community. The chapter has also examined features of this imagined community in order to assert its lack of homogeneity, which the chapter has exposed by outlining contestations and squabbles within the group.



Chapter Three has also discussed construction of memories in relation to forced removals and land loss, by evaluating the processes through which popular, social and public knowledge has shaped memories. However, the chapter has acknowledged that knowledge is never a supplier of fixed devices on which memory can be constructed, but it shifts too, hence memory also keeps shifting. It has also acknowledged varying opinions in relation to individual and collective memories by discussing relevance of different theories to the construction of memories about land and forced removals in Cape Town. The chapter has studied politics of memory by evaluating conflicting memories and contestation that have arisen among the ‘Ndabeni’ land claimants as well as between them and other residents of Langa Township. It has also *problematised* the oral accounts which various informants have given about kwa-Ndabeni, by treating

them as “sites of literary production, translation and performance that needed to be understood [in their contexts] and analysed”.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis has argued that although ‘Ndabeni’ or kwa-Ndabeni has continuously featured in popular, social and public histories, the knowledge produced by social historians have tended to acquire a status higher than that of other modes. The ‘pioneering’ pieces of work that social historians have since the 1970s produced on ‘Ndabeni’ have become authoritative knowledge and sources of reference for subsequent histories and heritage projects. As such, this thesis has also made reference to the ‘expert’ and ‘consultant’ roles that have been accorded to many social historians in projects such as history and heritage production at the District Six Museum and the V&A Waterfront.<sup>2</sup> This thesis has therefore identified social history as the major inventor of the name ‘Ndabeni’, as well as the ‘place of pain and suffering’ identity that the place acquired.



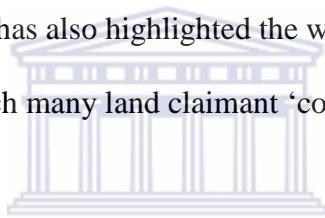
This thesis has also sought to reveal that public historical knowledge and heritage representations found in the landscape of Cape Town have tended to represent ‘Ndabeni’ as constructed by social historians. It is the name ‘Ndabeni’, not kwa-Ndabeni that has been used to name streets and roads. It is also the major social history themes like forced removals, segregation and resistance that ‘Ndabeni’ has been made to through exhibitions and images found at the District Six Museum, Langa Museum, Eziko Restaurant and Catering School and the V&A Waterfont. It is also the same

<sup>1</sup> Witz L and Rassool C, ‘Making Histories’, in *Kronos: Southern African Histories*, No. 34, (November 2008), p 7. Emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup> This refers to historians such as Bill Nasson and Crain Soudien at the District Six Museum, and Christopher Saunders and Nigel Worden at the V&A Waterfront.

themes that have informed and formed stories and narratives about kwa-Ndabeni in Township Tours. Had the social historians constructed ‘Ndabeni’ within other themes, it is apparent that public history and heritage would have been different too.

This thesis has argued that the post-1994 democratic era, as a political paradigm in South Africa, has also been a breeding space for construction of narratives that represent certain groups of people as victims of land dispossession and subsequent suffering. It has demonstrated that such narratives, as they became dominant among African people after 1994, became adopted and further developed by the ‘Ndabeni’ land claimants. Although the thesis has also identified limitations in the ‘narrative of land loss and restitution’, it has also highlighted the way in which it has indirectly set patterns and criteria on which many land claimant ‘communities’ were modelled.



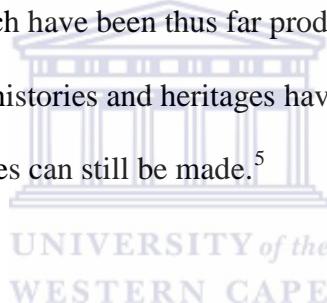
Knowledge about the Africans who were forcibly removed to the periphery of Cape Town city in 1901 has been produced, packaged, transmitted, interpreted, engaged, contested, adjusted and altered in a number of ways. The process has not ceased but continues to manifest in interesting developments. The name ‘Ndabeni’, as the land restitution case has been casually referred to, continues to make news headlines and to feature in government departments’ annual reports as a yet unfinished project.<sup>3</sup> Public knowledge that has been dominant about ‘Ndabeni’ lately has been concerning the power struggles, and feuds among the claimants. These appear to have impeded the development of the land in Wingfield, which was awarded to the

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<sup>3</sup> See, *The Citizen*, 5 May 2010

‘Ndabeni’ land claimants and registered under the ‘Ndabeni’ Community Property Trust in 2001.

It has not been the aim of this work to re-construct ‘Ndabeni’ or to recover kwa-Ndabeni, but to highlight issues and politics in the processes of knowledge production. Emphasis has therefore not been in filling any gaps on history but on *problematising* employment concepts such as memory, identity, culture, traditions in the making of histories and heritage. The attempt has been to illuminate history and heritage “frictions”<sup>4</sup>, reading in them that which is revealed and that which is concealed. The entire thesis has therefore achieved a purpose of declaring all histories and heritages, which have been thus far produced about ‘Ndabeni’ or kwa-Ndabeni, as sites on which histories and heritages have been made, and on which further histories and heritages can still be made.<sup>5</sup>



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<sup>4</sup> Concept adopted from Witz L and Rassool C, ‘Making Histories’, in *Kronos: Southern African Histories*, No. 34, (November 2008), p 13.

<sup>5</sup> This is the approach recommended by Witz and Rassool in, Witz L and Rassool C, ‘Making Histories’, in *Kronos: Southern African Histories*, No. 34, (November 2008).

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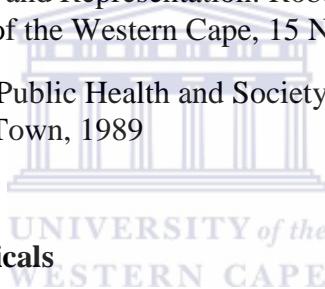
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