

ENTERING TEMBISA



An oral and photographic exploration of the community

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- Extend the boundaries of freedom of information in South Africa;
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The
ATLANTIC
Philanthropies


**ROSA
LUXEMBURG
STIFTUNG**



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PROJECT BACKGROUND

Tembisa (derived from *Thembisa*, an isiZulu word meaning Promise or Hope), is a large township situated to the north of Kempton Park on the East Rand, Gauteng, South Africa. Purported to be the one of the largest townships in the Southern hemisphere, Tembisa has had its fair share of political turmoil, particularly from the 1980s to the early 1990s, as violence erupted in the lead up to the first democratic elections but little has been recorded about its history, particularly when compared with Soweto, the other large township in the Gauteng province.

In keeping with the South African History Archive's commitment to capturing lost or neglected histories, SAHA worked with three community interns from Tembisa in 2010 and 2011 to conduct oral history interviews with residents about the history of the community. Using images of the township in the 1980s taken by Gille de Vlieg, activist and Afrapix photographer, as a departure point, 27 interviews were conducted and transcribed, numerous scans of artefacts gathered in the course of this project, and a small exhibition and oral history competition with two high schools in Tembisa was hosted by Tembisa West Library to mark Heritage Day 2011. This report and the accompanying virtual exhibition draw on these interviews, archival research and photographs to tell a brief history of Tembisa.

INTRODUCTION

On 27 April 1994 the residents of Tembisa Township, in the East Rand, went to the polls to vote for the first time in the non-racial national elections like many other black people across the country. Like many black South Africans, their 'road to democracy' was long and difficult. But while the history of Tembisa in some senses reflects the broader struggle for liberation in South Africa, it arguably was unique in the role it played in the struggle for liberation. Under repressive times, the township had one of the strongest and most influential groups of Black Consciousness proponents who helped to revive and shape politics in the township in the 1970s. This was largely due to the political influence introduced by those removed from Alexandra Township to Tembisa, as was demonstrated when secondary school students took to the streets in solidarity with their counterparts in Soweto a day after the student uprising erupted in Soweto.

6 The township's singularity was further evident when the competing political ideologies such as that of the African National Congress' inclusive politics and that of the Pan Africanist Congress' exclusive politics emerged. Notwithstanding this, the political momentum in the residents' fight against the government-created structures like the councils was not disrupted. Instead, the residents of the township fought side-by-side to accomplish their demands. In the mid-1980s their relentless struggles forced the township's council to collapse. The residents, through the Tembisa Residents Association, took over the running of the township, fighting criminals and restoring law and order in the township. Despite the initial reluctance by women, particularly older women, to participate in the struggle for liberation, the township was able to form one of the strongest and most active women's organisations. This organization took up local civic grievances and opposed the council. But most importantly, this organization helped to politicize some of the conservative women in the township to join the struggle.

It is for these reasons, and many more not mentioned here, that it is imperative that the history of the townships should be documented. It is hoped that the history of Tembisa, as told by its residents in this booklet, will help to redress the pervasive neglect of the history of the township.

LOCATIONS BEFORE TEMBISA, PRE-1957

The existence of Tembisa¹ Township can be traced back to the locations established in the pre-1950s to accommodate the ever-increasing number of black people who were migrating from the rural areas to the Witwatersrand in search of employment. There are various factors that caused black people to drift to the urban areas, the main amongst these being the insufficient land allocated to black South Africans. The Land Act of 1913 allowed blacks to own about seven per cent of the land, and while the 1936 Land Act increased this to 13%, 87 % of the land remained in the control of white South Africans.

The severe droughts which began after 1927 and worsened between 1932 and 1934 also contributed to the rapid influx of blacks in the urban areas, particularly the Rand.² Some of these migrants settled in places like Dindela, Tikkieline, Phelindaba, and Modderfontein locations. Nomathemba Catherine Thulare recalls that her family moved from a rural area and stayed briefly with relatives in Alexandra Township. However due to overcrowding, her father found a stand and built the family a house in Dindela location. She explains:

I was born in the Free State ... on the whites' farms. Our father, Samuel, came here to look for work and then he returned to fetch us, the kids and wife, Emily. We came here together and lived in Alexandra Township ... There was a place in Edenvale or Dindela, which was called 'Stands'. [My parents] went there and looked for 'Stands'. When they arrived there they built a house, and that's where we grew up. We attended school there ... Even there it was shacks and not a place that was built with bricks. [It was] not a decent place...³

Dindela Location (also known as Edenvale Location) seems to have been established in 1938 after the Edenvale Village Council was able to raise a sub-economic loan of £30 000 to purchase the 110 acres of land for the purpose of a 'Native Location'.⁴ After battling with the problem of illegal squatting for three years since 1935, the council finally allowed "... the natives who are bona fide employed within the area of jurisdiction falling under the Edenvale Municipality to construct dwellings thereon".⁵



UNIE VAN SUID-AFRIKA.—UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.

DEPARTEMENT VAN NATURELLESAKE,
DEPARTMENT OF NATIVE AFFAIRS.

Cape Town.
27th March, 1939.

19

Edenvale Location.

Dear Senator Rheinallt Jones,

Referring further to your letter of the 11th ultimo in the above connection, I have made enquiries into the matter and have ascertained that this Department has supported the Village Council's proposal to raise a sub-economic loan of £30,000 as a charge against the Native Revenue Account for the purpose of carrying out a native housing scheme in the location.

In your letter you mention that you called at my Pretoria office several times in this connection, but could not get any definite information.

On this point I can only say that no one in either the Urban Areas or Lands Sections has any recollection of the said interviews.

Yours sincerely,

Senator the Honourable
J.D. Rheinallt Jones,

The Senate,

CAPE TOWN.

It was against this backdrop that more and more people built their houses and settled in Edenvale Location. Mr Mahunga, Matilda Vuyelwa Mabena's father, was one such person. Matilda Mabena remembers that her father lived with his parents in Alexandra before establishing himself in Dindela. She remarks:

After my father found a job in Edenvale, he bought himself a site in Edenvale and built his house. In Edenvale there were three different areas: there was a coloured area called New Stands. There, there were three-roomed houses. It was a big kitchen, combined with a dining room, then there were two bedrooms. The other area had bigger stands. People who bought those stands had big yards so they could have many tenants. The third area was a newly developed site, and that's where my father bought his stand. The yards were also bigger and people were building their own houses and rooms/shacks to rent out to tenants. So my father was one of the stand-owners⁶

Another group of black people settled in Tikkieline Location. Mr Buti David Mahlobo, who was born in 1932 in Bethlehem in the Orange Free State, explains that after moving from Bethlehem when he was still an infant, his family first settled in Alexandra Township with relatives. Again, because of insufficient living space in a four-roomed house and the need to own a house, Mahlobo's parents left Alexandra searching for better accommodation. For a brief moment they lived in Mooifontein, and finally moved to Tikkieline Location. Mahlobo recounts this process as follows:

I was born in Bethlehem in the Free State. But I don't know that area at all because my family moved when I was still a little baby. They moved to Alexandra Township. There I lived with my grandparents and their children: my parents and my uncles. My grandfather was renting a room in a four-roomed house owned by the stand-owner of the yard at 18th Avenue (I think there were about 12 families in that yard, sharing one tap of water and four bucket system toilets). It was not a big room ... My uncle found a house in Mooifontein, that's how we also moved in 1938. Mooifontein then was a plot. So when we arrived there we built a shack. We lived there until 1942 when we moved to Tikkieline. My mother, who was then working in Orange Grove as a domestic labourer, was employed by a white man who became the first mayor of Kempton Park, Mr MacNamara. The latter informed my mother that a new location was going to be established called Tikkieline. When we arrived at Tikkieline in 1942 there were no houses; we were allocated stands. Then my parents built their own house⁷

Similarly, Julius Lelaka's father, Phineas, who was born in Ga-Matlape in what is today Limpopo Province, arrived in the Rand to look for work and finally settled in Tikkieline. Phineas started working in Germiston. Julius Lelaka explains:

There was a compound there and he lived there ... By the time he thought of bringing his wife this side, he got a transfer to work in Elandsfontein and he lived in Tikkieline. It was closer to work for him ... But then, they moved to Dindela.⁸

At this stage Phelindaba Location, today Spartan in Kempton Park, was already established. This is where another group of black migrants found accommodation. Again, right of accommodation seems to have been tied to employment in the area of the jurisdiction of Kempton Park municipality. Thembi Makakase recalls that her mother had to move from Springs to Phelindaba in order to secure employment as a domestic worker so as to be able to live with her children. She takes up the story:

My mother used to work in the kitchens. That's how she managed to care for us. Well, after school we would go and fetch water. Taps were in the streets. You see, we moved from Springs and we came to Kempton Park. There was a location there called Phelindaba, in Isando. It was there in Phelindaba where I got my first child when I was 16 years old. When we left Springs I was 15⁹

For the white municipalities, these settlements were a cause of great consternation. First, they were difficult to control and overpopulated; and secondly, the white officials perceived them as a source of health hazard in the urban areas. It was for this reason that the Edenvale Village Council in 1939 was adamant that the removal of all the black people who were squatting in the location was imperative.

Cowly, the Town Clerk argued:

“Shortly after my Council purchased the present Location Site, a number of natives without any authority squatted on the Location and built thereon small unhealthy iron and wood huts”.¹⁰

EDENVALE VILLAGE COUNCIL/DORPSRAAD

ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO
BE ADDRESSED TO THE
TOWN CLERK

ALLE BRIEWE MOET
AAN DIE STADSKLERK
GERIG WORD

3 OCT 1941

Telephone } 25
Telefoon }
P.O. Box } 25
Postbus }

MUNICIPAL OFFICES,
EDENVALE.

1st October, 1941.

Senator R. Jones,
P.O. Box 97,
JOHANNESBURG.

Dear Sir,

RE: NATIVE LOCATION.

With reference to your telephonic communication with me in regard to certain natives who have been given notice to quit the Location, I beg to advise as follows:-

My Council purchased a certain 110 acres for the purpose of a Native Location in 1938. My Council proposed to obtain a Sub-economic Housing Loan for the purpose of constructing dwellings thereon for the Natives. However in view of the International situation, my Council has decided to drop the proposed scheme for the meantime and to allow natives who are bone fide employed within the area of jurisdiction falling under the Edenvale Municipality to construct dwellings thereon.

-2-

Shortly after my Council purchased the present Location Site, a number of natives without any authority squatted on the Location and built thereon small unhealthy iron and wood huts. Some two years back in view of the unhealthy condition prevailing, my Council gave all these natives notice to quit. However in view of a request from Mr Jenner, the Native Commissioner for Germiston, my Council withdrew these notices and allowed the natives to remain thereon temporarily until such time as they could make other arrangements. These natives have however made no effort to remove from the Location, but instead many others have taken up residence there.

At present there are approximately 150 families squatting on the Location, more than 50 per cent of whom are either employed in Germiston or Johannesburg or are unemployed. In view of this my Council has given all natives who are not employed in Edenvale up to the 30th of November to quit the Location.

You will appreciate the difficulty of my Council. The size of the Location grounds is not unlimited, moreover there are numerous natives employed in Edenvale, who are living within the boundaries of the Township, and my Council is anxious to get these natives removed to the location. Should my Council allow any number of natives employed in other Municipal Areas, or un-employed to remain on the present Location site, it would not be long before the present location site is crowded out. Moreover the present

Another worrying factor the white authorities managing these locations was the increased number of gangs in these areas.

John Mlahlelo Tshabalala, who fled from Alexandra Township after stabbing a rival and settled in Dindela in 1960, recalls that when he arrived he immediately joined the Deadline Gang. According to him, some of the gangs in the location included the Vultures, Bhasoba (meaning 'Be careful' in IsiZulu), Seven, and Sika Bopha (meaning 'Cut and Mend' in IsiZulu)¹¹

12 It was against this background that, upon assuming power in 1948 on the apartheid ticket, the National Party government passed the Group Areas Act of 1950, which was designed to allocate separate residential areas to Africans, Coloureds, Indians and Whites. It forbade all non-whites to reside in areas designated for whites only. To enforce this law, the government established model townships and forcibly removed black people residing in 'white' areas and settled them in these townships. Tembisa was one such township.

-3-

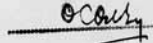
conditions prevailing in the Location are intolerable. The majority of natives who have been given notice are the type who make no effort to obtain work and^{are} therefore the undesirable type of native. As regards the remainder my Councils sees no reason why they should undertake the responsibility of other Municipalities in housing natives that are employed in these Municipalities' areas of jurisdiction.

I feel sure that you will appreciate that my Council is by no means unreasonable. I may moreover add that all these natives have been notified that should they obtain employment in Edenvale before the 30th November they would be entitled to remain on the Location site.

I trust that the matter is now clear and fully understood by you.

Yours faithfully,

EDENVALE VILLAGE COUNCIL.
DORPSRAAD.


Town Clerk.
Stadsclerk.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TEMBISA TOWNSHIP

Tembisa was established on a farm originally owned by Mr. J.H.M. Meyer and Mrs M.W.Z. van Wyk. After negotiations between the purchasing committee [and the owners] ... the land was purchased at R3, 52 per hectare with funding from the National Housing Commission and government loans.¹²

To implement its separate development policy, the government began to remove black people from the 'white' areas to Tembisa. Mrs Thulare, whose family lived in Dindela, remembers that they were forcibly removed to make way for an industrial area:

There was a time when they told [our parents] that they have to move, because the place that they were in was supposed to be used for industries. That's when they built this place called Tembisa. They moved us in that manner because they were not begging us and they didn't care whether you have fixed your house or not ... You were supposed to move and take all your belongings. They didn't care if they broke them or what. The only thing that mattered is that you have moved to where they thought you were supposed to be. Tembisa started in sections ...¹³

Simon Ramogale, who was from Pietersburg and occasionally stayed with his uncle in Olifantsfontein during school holidays, explains the meaning behind the names of each section:

I was born in Pietersburg. I left Pietersburg when I was coming to a boarding school in Middelburg. But then my uncle was staying in Olifantsfontein. So by the time I was staying [with him, my friends and I] would go to where Tembisa is now. [There were] lots of fields. We used to go there and buy *mielies* [maize] for cooking.

There were farms there. That is why you could see in Tembisa [the sections] have those kind of farming names. You see where they call Sedibeng and Tsepo sections, that's where there were lots of wells for the boreholes for the farmers; you cross slightly up, they say [it is] Mashimong section. That's actually where the fields were.

Then you go to Sethokga section. You see, Sethokga means lots of forests. [In] Moriting section, there were shades [because of the many trees there]. We could sit under the tress. That's where all these names come from.¹⁴

To lure people to Tembisa, the government built a handful of beautiful and attractive houses that could be seen by people travelling in train that passed next to Tembisa. Timothy Mabena believes this was to create an impression that all the houses in the township were as attractive as those houses. Recalling this ploy, Mr Julius Lelaka remarks:

You see, my father wanted a bigger house. You see, when you are at Oakmoor Station the first line of houses it were the five-roomed houses and very nice houses. The thing is, those five-roomed houses were meant for people in a train passing Tembisa that they should think that people who were living there were living a nice life¹⁵

Although there seems to have been disparities in housing in Tembisa, for some of the residents of the old locations the removals were a welcome relief, because of the hardships they experienced living in these locations. Rosina Marakalala, who was born at Ga-Mapila (Limpopo Province) in 1933, and had arrived in Johannesburg in 1956, remembers that when she arrived in the Rand she initially lived with her husband in Primrose, Germiston, where he was working.



1964
February

1	2	3	4	5
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	



After her husband found another job in Edenvale they moved to Dindela Location. She was disgruntled by the living conditions at Dindela Location. In her own words:

And from there [Germiston] I went to Edenvale. But I didn't stay for a long time. I stayed for about two years. [Life there] was painful, because sometimes in the street you would see water flowing. Toilets that we had were bucket system. When they came to take them they would just empty them there in front [of us] ... Life was not good. And the *boers* were harassing us looking for *pomets* (residential permits) at night ... It were shacks and we were renting there. And then they moved us from there ... with trucks and [they] brought us here in Tembisa. And when we got here it was also shacks, but then they built us four roomed houses¹⁶

Some of the residents were removed from Alexandra Township, north of Johannesburg. The government had intended to convert the township into a hostel complex comprised of residents working in the northern suburbs. Some of those removed were settled in parts of Soweto, and others were brought to Tembisa. Lazarus Mawela, whose family was amongst the first to be removed from Alexandra to Tembisa, remembers that his father, who was a member of the South African Police, preferred Tembisa to Soweto because Soweto had a negative reputation as a crime-infested area. He remarks:

...before we were moved to Tembisa, my parents were allocated a house in Meadowlands, Soweto. But my dad, who was a policeman, felt that he doesn't want to go to Soweto because of the situation in the township. During those days you would read in the second page of *The World* and it would say 'at least 21 people were killed this weekend'. It was very rough. So he said 'I'm not going there'¹⁷.

For the Mawela family, moving to Tembisa also provided them with a sense of ownership and belonging. Lazarus Mawela explains:

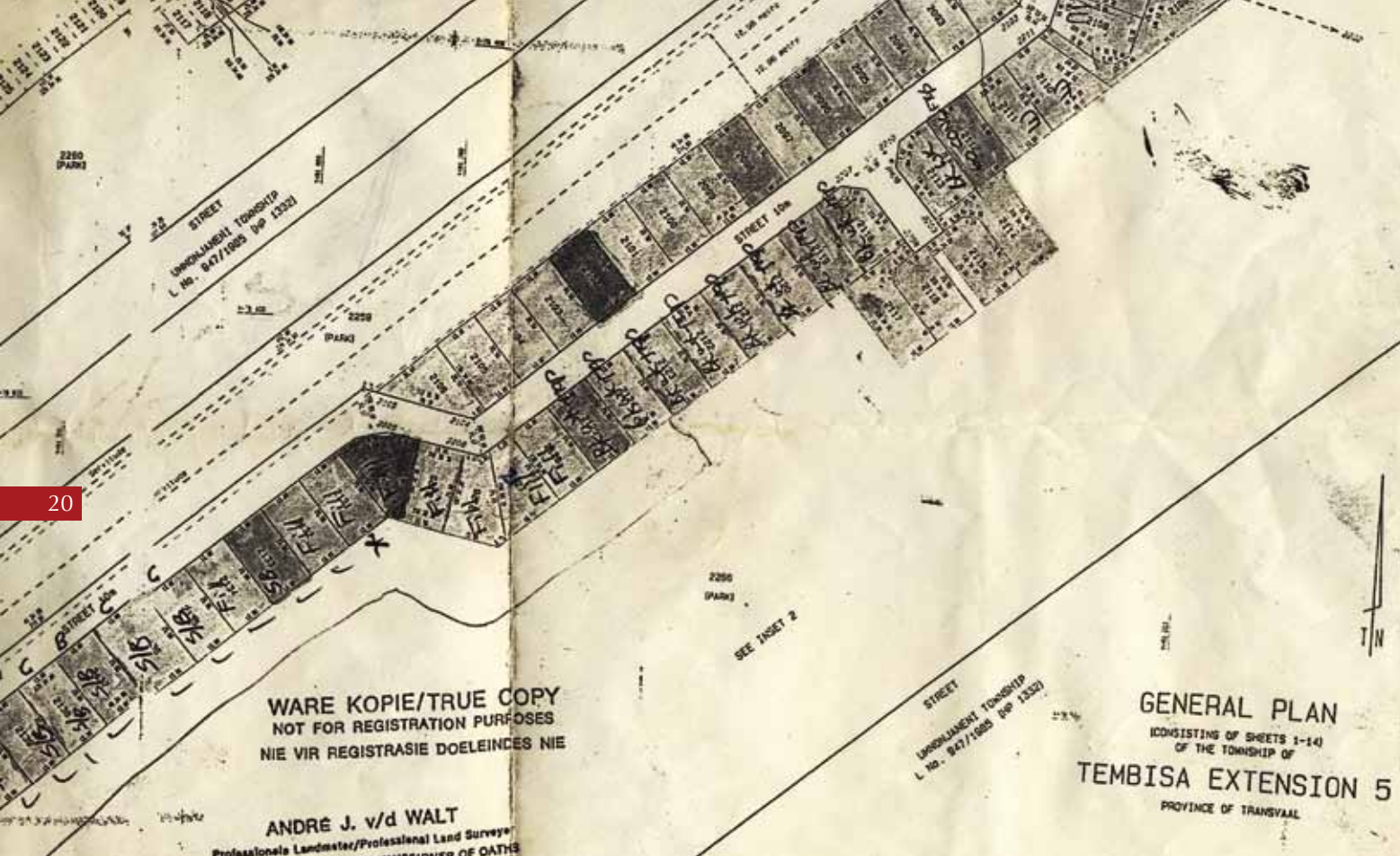
I was born in Alexandra Township in 1957. We lived at Fifth Avenue, next to the men's hostel. We were then moved to Tembisa in October 1969. The government provided transport - you know, those GG (General Government) trucks. You had to make sure that you've packed your belongings in boxes the night before. In the morning when the trucks arrive they just load your stuff, furniture. When we arrived in Tembisa we were placed in Kgatlamping section. It was a good thing because now you could have your own garden instruments - spade, rake - and even your own territory. You could start planting lawn and trees. These were some of the things we would not have in Alexandra¹⁸

At this stage the National Party was concerned with limiting the influx of black people in the urban areas (they had to remain in the reserves which were later turned into bantustans/homelands) and to break the unity amongst the blacks demonstrated during the Defiance Campaign in 1952. It therefore ruled that the new townships should be divided according ethnic lines. For example, AmaZulu were to be allocated their own section, so were AmaXhosa, and Bapedi, and Batswana, and Basotho.

The Germiston City Council, which was responsible for the administration of Tembisa Township, implemented the government's policy of ethnic division with vigour by settling people in Tembisa on ethnic lines. Mrs Thulare remembers:

We were divided according to our racial [sic] groups ... You see, Caleni was a place for the Zulu-speaking people and the Xhosa's. And then there is Xubeni and that was a place for Tsonga people. And then Sedibeng, that was for the Sothos¹⁹





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 NIE VIR REGISTRASIE DOELEINDES NIE

ANDRÉ J. v/d WALT
 Professionele Landmeter/Professional Land Surveyor
 KOMMISSARIS VAN EDE/COMMISSIONER OF OATHS
 PRL (S.A.)

GENERAL PLAN
 CONSISTING OF SHEETS 1-14
 OF THE TOWNSHIP OF
TEMBISA EXTENSION 5
 PROVINCE OF TRANSVAAL

-  BROWN:
-  BLACK.
-  THUNDER BLUE
-  TERRA-COTTA.

NOTES
 1 ALL DISTANCES ARE 0.50 METRES UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED
 2 REFERENCE MARKS ARE STAKED 2.00 METRES FROM THE
 CORNERS AND LOCATED ON THE STREET LINE.

Similarly, Mr David Malabela adds:

If you could look clearly, all the sections of Tembisa were divided according to the languages that people spoke. At Maokeng, Tshepo, Tsenolong, Makhulong, Sedibeng and Meriting were sections where all the Pedi-speaking people lived. And Mthambeka, Xubeni, Emfihlweni, Ndulwini and Khalambazo were the places where the Zulu-speaking people lived. The Tsonga-speaking residents were staying at Isithame²⁰

This policy caused tensions between the residents of Tembisa. Micheal Figo Madlala explains:

I remember I was very small, you know, if you were going to Jan Lubbe [stadium] – it was not Jan Lubbe at that time, it was Ground Number One - that's what we used to call it... If you were going there, passing through Mashemong [section] they would say, 'Here comes lekwapa' (i.e. a foreigner) and they would chase you. I used to study in the Shangaans' section, so when schools were closing they'd [chase] us ... And the same applies to a Sotho person who'd be found around there would be chased ... So it was like that. Whether people were consciously thinking about those things or not, but they were there. So that was the nature of how things used to be. When I grew up I witnessed some of those things²¹

In a similar vein, Malabela recalls:

They will tell you, 'We do this to you because you are not staying here. Next time you will learn to stay in your place'²²

Notwithstanding the crippling impact this policy had on the unity of blacks created over many years in the old locations, it however turned out to be a temporary inconvenience. Sports and schools' musical competitions brought together young people from different ethnic backgrounds. Timothy Mabena explains:

Although schools were divided on ethnic bases, but sports brought students together. As students we knew who in the whole of Tembisa schools was the best in athletics – who could outrun all the students in different schools. Similarly, when it came to music we knew which school was the best. There were school choir competitions from lower to higher primaries. The best school would win a trophy. So, when we arrived at high school we already knew each other. Besides inside the township we belonged to various soccer teams. These soccer teams were divided by sections. [But] some of the teams had people from different ethnic backgrounds. It was for that reason that some of the residents of the township were able to speak different languages.²³



THE QUIESCENT AND PROSPEROUS TIMES – 1960S

After the Sharpeville massacre on 21 March 1960, the government declared a state of emergency which resulted in mass arrests. On 8 April it banned the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). A significant number of political activists were either imprisoned or forced into exile, or compelled to operate underground.

In 1964 the leadership of the ANC and high command of the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), was sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island. It was against this background that foreign investment began to flood into the country, increasing the country's economic growth and raising people's employment opportunities. Some of the residents of Tembisa found employment in the recently established industrial areas in the jurisdictions of Edenvale and Kempton Park. Pauline Masombuka recalls:

I worked for PVM for five years. Then I quit. Then I worked for a dry-clean [sic]. I quit again and worked for Simba. I then went back to PVM in 1971²⁴

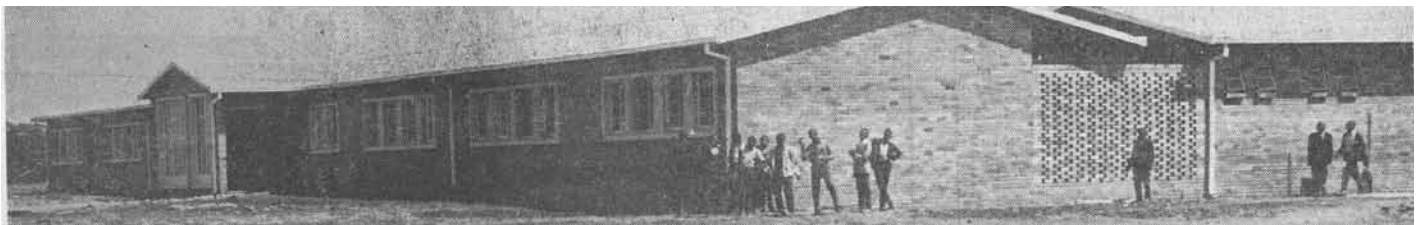
Similarly, Mr David Mofokeng, who was originally from the Orange Free State, demonstrates how simple it was to find work during this period:

I dropped out of school in the middle of Standard 10 and that's when I came to Gauteng, in 1967. I worked at Primrose at a garage, servicing cars. Andries Kunene is the one who found me work at that garage. He just told me that he quit his job at the garage, because he had found a better paying job. But he took me to replace him. I worked there for a short period and then after some few months Kunene called me again to come and work with him²⁵





Tembisa African township, the first regional African township in the country, serves seven cities and towns and has a population of more than 80,000. It is expected this figure will grow to 130,000 in about three years.



80,000-STRONG TEMBISA THRIVING

From Our East Rand Bureau

LESS THAN 12 YEARS AGO 3,000 morgen of bare veld lay somewhere between Pretoria and Germiston. Today it is a thriving township of more than 80,000 people with a rail link that cost R8,500,000, 17 schools, 22 churches, a post office with its own telephone exchange, and an impressive police station which cost R184,000.

There are 10 soccer fields, about a dozen other sports fields, three creches and 27 shops. Nine different points supply beer. The communal hall seats 600 people at a time.

This is Tembisa, "The Place of Promise," the first regional African township in the country. It will eventually house about 130,000 people by which time the Provincial Hospital now going up will be complete and the two existing clinics will have increased to four.

The whole of Alexandra Township will have been resettled at Tembisa in about three years.

"By that time there will have to be about 8,000 new houses here, so we have no time just now for frills," said Germiston's Director of Bantu Affairs, Mr. F. W. C. Buitendag. He is confident that the programme will go according to plan.

The majority of Tembisa's houses belong to their occupiers and all are economic. The township provides no municipal revenue and receives no subsidy.

It serves Germiston, Kempton Park, Edenvale, Bedford View, Verwoerdburg, Modderfontein and the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board.

Germiston City Council is the controlling authority.

Mr. Buitendag, who has been in African administration for more than 40 years, believes the principle of regional townships with centralized transport, municipal services and other facilities, is a good one.

Because work was in abundance, black people were obliged to find employment. Unemployment and idleness could lead to arrest. Malabela recalls:

We were living a difficult life, because the boers did not want to see anyone not doing anything during the day. They were going around, looking for people who were staying at home and not doing anything. If you can't find work, you must keep on hunting for it until you find it. People were given Special [permit] that indicated that you were looking for work. And if you found it, your employer would sign it so that the police could see that you were working²⁶

The first two stores in Tembisa were established during this period, and they were both situated in Caleni section. Timothy Mabena remembers:

When we arrived there was a businessman, who had moved from Edenvale, his name was Mr Thabethe. His first store was in Caleni section. This section was built next to the railway station called Oakmoor. Thabethe's store was called Verwoerd Huis. The second store was called Hlanganani and it belonged to Mr Nhlapo, still at Caleni. Part of Mr Nhlapo's store was used as a post office. That's where we collected our letters²⁷



ENTERTAINMENT – LATE 1950S TO THE 1960S

In between settling down in the new township and eking out a living, the residents of Tembisa found ways of entertaining themselves. Football, *stokvef*²⁸ and church services thrived.

Mr David Masina, who was born on a farm on the outskirts of Standerton, in the then Eastern Transvaal (today Mpumalanga Province) but had moved with his family to Benoni, in the East Rand, remembers that he used to visit Tembisa to play football. He explains:

In 1957 I came to visit on weekends while I was at school, because I was playing soccer this side. I was playing for a team from the airport called 'Sky Master'. And there was 'Consolation'. Teams were [named] after the company the players worked for. We were playing in a ground. It was easy to start up a ground. If it's Saturday and we wanted to play, they would tell you that you are going to open a ground, so you must come with a shovel. Then we would collect sticks and put them around and then it's a ground. And then we would pour white ash in the field²⁹

Timothy Mabena remembers that after church service on Sunday, he would request money from his parents to go to the stadium to watch football:

After church and lunch we boys would request our parents to give us money to pay entrance fee at the stadium to watch soccer (also known as football)³⁰

Football was a popular sport in the township to the extent that Lazarus Mawela's father when he arrived in Tembisa he established a football team. Lazarus Mawela recalls:

My dad bought football kit and formed a team, because he felt it would keep us busy. 'If boys are loitering they could get into mischief', he would say. So my home became a club house. My friends like Greg Malebo and I played football until we were promoted to the first division. Our team was called United Brothers³¹





Other popular sports were baseball, tennis and basketball for female enthusiasts³². *Dinaka* (cultural dance by BaPedi) was another form of entertainment which took place on Sunday.

Timothy Mabena remembers:

After church in the afternoon at about 2 o'clock we would gather at an open space where usually people played baseball, also known as cheap site trading stop, and watch as different groups compete. This was next to Tembisa Station³³

At this stage *stokvel* became another form of entertainment, as well as a money making scheme. Julius Lelaka, who was a regular patron in some of the *stokvels* in the township, remembers:

Stokvels on weekends. You entered with six beers. If a person had a *stokvel* you go there to support. It was the way to entertain yourself. There was music - Mbaqanga, Johnny Sticks' and John Coltrane's jazz. You saved money for alcohol and a plate of food later. For the first table, each comes with six beers. The person who's in charge would pop out a case of beers and a 'straight' on top of the alcohol that you brought. And when other people come and find that you are the first table they join in on your alcohol until the first table was finished. Then the second table follows. Maybe it's four beers each. There was this one that I liked. It was for people like Mr Mogungu. It was for people who had money. Those people would take a coffee table and put it close to the entrance. That coffee table they called it 'minus one'. It had all kinds of alcohol, wine, whisky, beer. Then you drink as much as you liked, because they knew that you won't last. After a short period of time you are out. They had cars. If you were drunk they would take you home³⁴

Church also played a pivotal role in people's lives at this stage. Timothy Mabena, whose father was a church minister and had his own church, the Ethiopian Catholic Church, remembers that Sundays were special days. In his words:

These were independent churches. Sunday was the most outstanding day for many people in the township, because you were served delicious food: chicken and rice, laced with beetroot. Finally, there was dessert: custard and jelly. On Sunday we wore the best clothes³⁵

THE REVIVAL OF BLACK POLITICS IN TEMBISA

The Black Consciousness Movement and student uprisings, 1970s

Towards the end of the 1960s many black students at tertiary level were disenchanted with the predominantly-white led National Union of South African Students' (NUSAS) leadership - one of the few remaining vehicles for multi-racial political activity.³⁶ They felt that the latter, and the white members of NUSAS in general, paid lip-service to the total destruction of the Apartheid government; but they, nevertheless, were content with the status quo because they benefited from it. The situation reached a boiling point in 1967 at the NUSAS conference held at Rhodes University, Grahamstown. The NUSAS' conference organizers failed to secure accommodation for their black members in the same venue as the white and Indian members of NUSAS at the University. Instead, the black members of NUSAS were accommodated in a church outside the whites' only designated area.³⁷

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Although it was not NUSAS's fault that the University followed the government's discriminatory policy to the letter, Biko and his peers felt betrayed by NUSAS leadership. It was against this background that SASO was formed in 1969, and formally launched in 1970 at the University of the North (or Turfloop University), where Biko was elected its first president. The Biko's SASO popularized the Black Consciousness (BC) philosophy. In December 1971 Biko described the BC philosophy as follows "... Black Consciousness in essence ... seeks to demonstrate the lie that black is an aberration from the 'normal' which is white".³⁸ The objective of the BC philosophy was clearly to instill pride in black people. It was for this reason that SASO developed the slogan 'I'm black and I'm proud'. The BC philosophy, however, did not remain at the tertiary institutions but spread to the townships. In 1972 the Black People's Convention (BPC) was established to cater for the township-based adherents of the BC philosophy who were not at tertiary institutions.

Mongezi Maphuthi, who had recently moved to Tembisa, remembers that in the early 1970s Black Consciousness (BC) ideas were already being disseminated in the township.

According to him:

People like Mthuli Shezi, Thami Mnyele, Mxolosi Moyo, and James Moleya ... were exponents of the the BC ideas. Shezi even wrote a play called Ashanti. He was killed at the Germiston train station by boers who pushed him in front of a moving train³⁹

Similarly, Greg Malebo recalls:

We had Ralph Mothiba who was in the Black People's Convention. He really played a role in shaping our political thinking in that during the history lesson in particular we'd talk about Kwame Nkrumah, African Unity, Patrice Lumumba. He'd talk about all those things⁴⁰

However, it was Thamsanqa 'Thami' Harry Mnyele more than his colleagues who seemed to have made a lasting impact on many young people in Tembisa in the early 1970s. Mnyele was born in Alexandra Township in 1948. While living in Alexandra, he joined Molefe Pheto's Mehloti Black Theatre.⁴¹ This theatre group included personalities such as Wally Serote and Michael "Baba" Jordan. Jordan claims that the group's main objective was to conscientise black people to fight for their rights. It underscored this goal by refusing to perform in white suburbs and preferred to perform in townships⁴²



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Permitted to be in the Bantu Affairs Administration Board

randgebied te wees kragtens artikel 10 (1) (a) (b) of
East Rand Area in terms of section 10 (1) (a) (b) of

van Wet Nr. 25 van 1945.
of Act No. 25 of 1945.

Datum: 20/11/45
Date: 20/11/45
Arbeidsbeampte
Labour Officer KEMPTON PARK

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Mnyeले's political understanding developed during this stage. Jaki Seroke, who lived in Alexandra with Mnyeले, remembers that Mnyeले and some of his contemporaries like Wally Serote used to engage in serious discussions about the position of a black person in the racist South Africa. Seroke elaborates:

Thami Mnyeले, when he lived in Alexandra Township, liked jazz and used to discuss the plight of the black man. Mnyeले and others like Wally Serote used to talk about this issue and sometimes even make a joke about it, but in a way that they were articulating their views. I mean, they were educated people compared to some of the workers who were employed in the factories. They had matric; some even had degrees. I know one of the guys worked in Germiston at the Pass Office as a clerk. I think he had a B.A. degree in Public Administration. But they were frustrated. And they would say, in spite of their education, they still didn't enjoy a good life, because they couldn't get a house. I can still remember that they would laugh at this guy who worked at the Pass Office and say that even with his degree he was pushed from pillar to post by Afrikaners who were not so well educated⁴³

Mnyeale was also an artistic painter. He exhibited some of his work in different townships across the Rand.⁴⁴ When the Mnyeale family relocated to Tembisa, Thami became instrumental in mobilizing young people and conscientizing them. Timothy and Matilda Mabena were some of the young people recruited by Thami and his fellow BC adherents. Matilda Mabena explains how they were drawn closer to Thami's political network:

There was a group of people who were from Alexandra who were staying in Difateng section. They approached a few students and informed them that they wanted to form a social club. This is where we were taught how to play chess. We would read and practice drama. They also taught us to play tennis. I can still remember Thami Mnyeale used to play tennis. They then introduced us to jazz and artists like Abdullah Ibrahim, Duke Ellington, Hugh Masekela, Herbie Hancock. Some of them had already completed their matric level and others were teachers. We realised later that some of them were involved in Black Consciousness Movement. Thami Mnyeale, James Moleya, Ralph Mothiba, Obed Raphalla, Mazizi Mbuqe, and Mike Mthembu were some of the people who opened our eyes. Brian Mazibuko was also recruited into politics during this period. And he developed quickly. In 1976 he was the leader during the student uprisings⁴⁵

Timothy Mabena, adds:

We would meet in different houses. Mostly we would meet at Thami Mnyeale's place. Sometimes we would stay overnight. At this stage Thami was working as an artist [for the South African Committee for Higher Education]. We would sit there and listen to political debates. For example, they would ask why black people were supposed to carry passes and yet whites did not. They discussed the forced removals. Why black people attended schools which were of lesser standard to white schools in town? Those discussions made us aware that whites and blacks were living under different conditions⁴⁶

Lazarus Mawela, who was introduced to Mnyele by James Moleya in 1976, remembers that he encouraged them to read and to debate issues. Mawela explains:

Mnyele demanded that people should read. He'd give you a book and say, "Next week you must come and tell us about this book." Then we would have a debate about the book⁴⁷

Young people who had been in contact with activists like Mnyele, Moleya and others gradually took the BC philosophy seriously to the extent that they started discouraging black females from using skin lotions to lighten their skin. They targeted them in shebeens. Gregory Malebo recalls:

As members of the BPC we saw our role as conscientising people. Generally we would talk to them about their blackness; being proud of their blackness. We were discouraging ladies who were using skin lotions like *Ambie*. The idea was to try and instill a sense of pride in them. We realized that the effect of apartheid was not just chaining people physically but mentally as well. Our intention was to psychologically free people. In most cases we would use shebeens like John Moleya's and Mary's, because that's where we would find many people. We would receive heroes' status when we arrived in shebeens. You see, we were reading then and so we were able to express ourselves well in English. People appreciated that⁴⁸

BC's influence filled students with a sense of pride about who they were:

We were not as naïve as the authorities would have loved to think. You know there were songs like '*tswang-tswang le bone ngwana o tshwana le lekhalath*' [Meaning 'all come out and see our child looks like a coloured' in Sesotho]. You see, we did ask ourselves, 'Why do we think to be Coloured is more important than what we are?' How can you desire to be someone you are not?' So we could really put things into perspective⁴⁹





At a later stage the BC's influence was to encourage secondary and high schools students to resist the government's decision to impose Afrikaans as a medium of instruction on them.

The National Party government, through the Department of Bantu Education, has as far back as 1955 promulgated a policy to have black students at secondary school level use English and Afrikaans as the media of instruction (students at lower and higher primaries were allowed to use their mother tongue). However, it failed to implement this policy because "... of the shortage of teachers who were proficient in both languages".⁵⁰ Seventeen years later the government, again, attempted to implement this policy. Black schools, from Standard Four (today's Grade Six) onwards, were given two options: to teach all examined subjects in English or Afrikaans or to teach both on a 50-50 basis.⁵¹ Despite appeals and protests from black teachers' unions, in 1973 the Bantu Education Department (BED) officials opted for the 50-50 basis policy. In 1974 the Acting Secretary of BED sent a circular to regional directors and inspectors, asserting that the 50-50 use of both official language of instruction in secondary class would be maintained.⁵²

Michael Figo Madlala recalls the difficulty they experienced learning in Afrikaans:

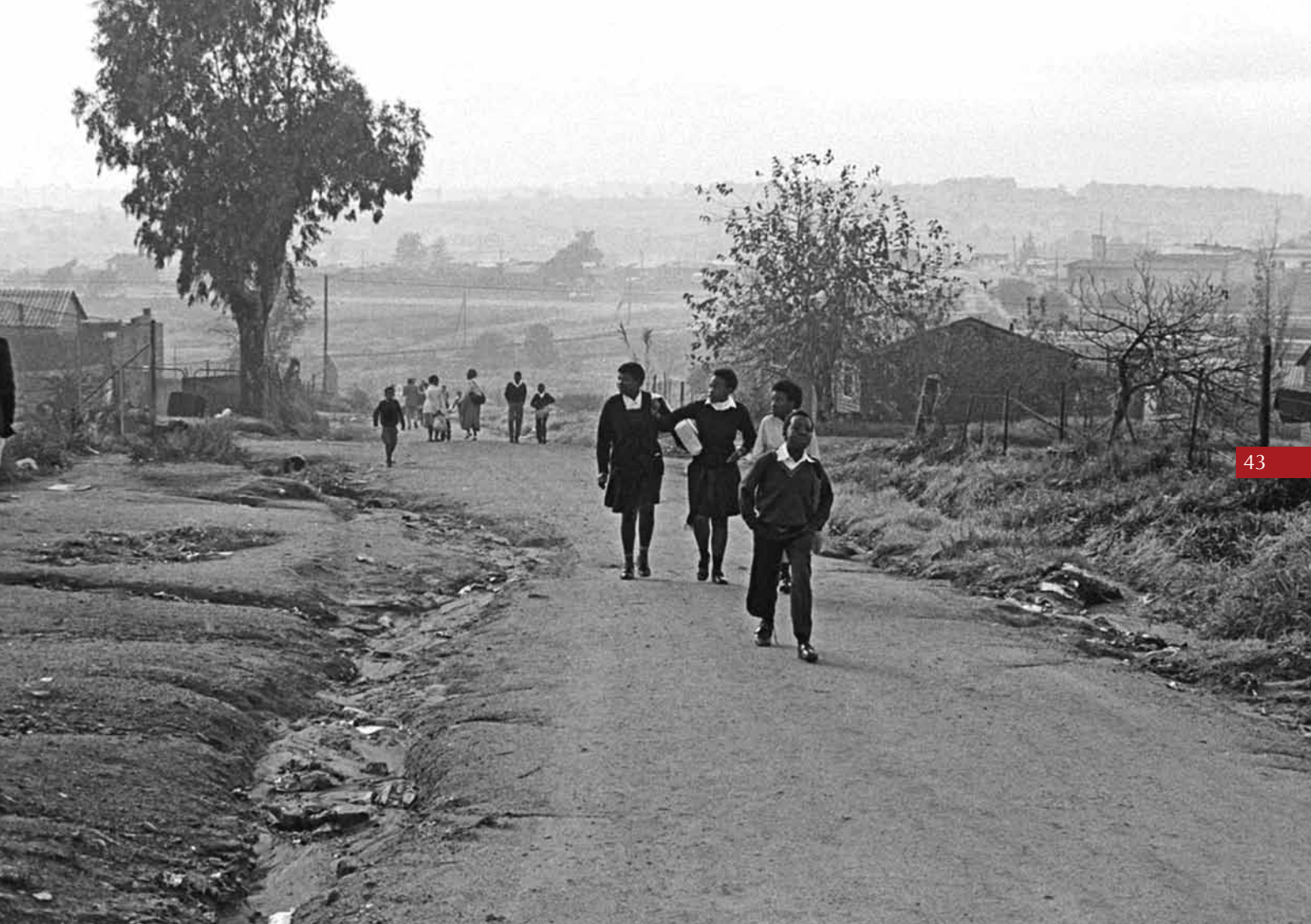
In Tembisa, students' concern over the use of Afrikaans began in 1973. In 1973 I was at Tembisa High doing my Form 1. My subjects were Maths, Arithmetic, History, and Geography, and Health Studies, and Agriculture, and Languages: Isizulu, English and Afrikaans. Other than the Afrikaans language, the other subject which we were taught in Afrikaans was Agriculture, *Die Landbou*. Teacher Molala taught us this subject. The first day in class he asked us '*Wat is die grond?*' (What is the soil?) How do you explain what soil is in Afrikaans? And communication was difficult because we had to respond in Afrikaans. [Someone] said '*Die grond is bietjie things*' (Soil is very small things). We could not explain, '*Wat is die grond?*' Then he read it out for us in the book what soil is in Afrikaans. But still we could not understand what that was⁵³



Afrikaans was not only perceived as a difficult language to learn, but was also understood by students as a language of the oppressor. Greg Malebo remembers:

I [was] doing Form 1 in 1974 ... You know, because Afrikaans was seen as an oppressive language ... many people hated Afrikaans. In fact, the majority of people in our class did not really want Afrikaans. The argument was that what [were] we going to do with Afrikaans? It was not an international language. We were unhappy⁵⁴

Students began to display their dissatisfaction as early as February 1976. Students at Thomas Mofolo Secondary School in Soweto clashed with their principal over the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction.⁵⁵ In May Form Two (today's Grade 9) students at Phefeni Junior Secondary School in Soweto boycotted classes.⁵⁶ On June 13 students in Soweto, comprising members of the South African Student Movement (SASM), a secondary and high school student organization, met to discuss the issue of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in black schools and to formulate ways in which other schools could support schools like Thomas Mofolo and Phefeni Junior Secondary. It was in this meeting that Tsietsi Don Mashinini is said to have suggested a mass demonstration on 16 June 1976



by all black schools in the township.⁵⁷ On 16 June thousands of students from different schools marched in the streets of Soweto, carrying placards denouncing Afrikaans. The police responded with brutal force, shooting and killing 13 year old Hector Pieterse. The student uprising spread to other areas. In Tembisa, students took to the streets in solidarity with students in Soweto on 17 June.

Michael Figo Madlala recalls:

[On the 16th] we finished the day normally. It was on the 17th the headlines were in the newspapers 'There's a march that had taken place in Soweto'. That was when in the morning at the assembly there was a feeling [that] something was going to happen. And very quickly the word was going around. We were then [directed] to a classroom where we then discussed as students the situation as it was happening in Soweto. Of course, there were a number of [politically conscious students] who were involved. You could sense from the way in which they were participating. One of these people who were in the leadership was Absalom Mazibuko. [In] that meeting we resolved that we [were] also going to march. And we said our march would go to Boitumelong Senior Secondary School because they were also affected by Afrikaans.⁵⁸

Just like in Soweto, police responded with force. Madlala, adds:

We had already moved from Tembisa High. We were close to Boitumelong. We were somewhere in Mashimong [section] when we were disrupted. The police tear-gassed us and unleashed dogs on us. Students started running helter -skelter. [We] ran into a toilet. We got into a toilet - I'm sure we were about 15, if not 20, in one toilet. It was easy to go in but when we had to get out we couldn't because we were pressing the door out⁵⁹



In the end, a number of students were arrested. Madlala continues:

I think around the 21st we were then arrested. We were meant to have a meeting at school and the police encircled us. About 300 of us were arrested. And some [were discharged], then 105 of us were charged with public violence, alternatively arson. Our cases were then divided into three. Some were charged with three public violence; some with two public violence; and others [were charged] with only arson. If you were charged with public violence they would always put an alternative [charge of] arson⁶⁰

Madlala and Brian Mbulelo Mazibuko were charged with sabotage and sentenced to five years on Robben Island. The two were to play a leading role in the formation of political structures in Tembisa in the 1980s. In 1976 some of the students from Tembisa fled into exile to join the ANC. Andrew and Thabo Mapheto, sons to Reverend Phenias Mapheto were amongst those who left the country.⁶¹

Less than a month (on 5 July) after students erupted against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, the BED Minister, M.C. Botha, publicly announced the department's decision to rescind the policy of 50-50 basis media of instruction.

DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETING POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES, POST-1976

On 19 October 1977 the government banned all the BC-aligned structures and newspapers opposing it like *The World*.⁶² Furthermore, it arrested political activists and journalists. In Tembisa, James Moleya was one of the activists who were arrested. It was against this backdrop that members of the BC began to debate whether the time had not come for them to turn to the armed struggle. Although a few activists from Tembisa were able to flee the country into exile, the majority remained in the country and focused their efforts on political mobilization.⁶³

Just like in the 1960s after the banning of black political organizations, the government's offensive against the BC movement had managed to instill fear in many people. It was for this reason that Jaki Seroke, who later joined the PAC, established a reading club to continue mobilizing people. Seroke recalls:

In 1978 and 1979 we had *Babupi* (The Creators, in SeSotho) reading club. We were using it as a front to mobilize, because we felt that we needed to mobilize people and conscientise them. We would give them books. I was already writing for newspapers like *The Voice*, and also writing poetry to mobilize. We used to go to the Germiston train station ... to give people material. We were together with Thlaki Lekganyane, Mogale ... There were many of us⁶⁴

Two particular publications sharpened the ideological divisions in Tembisa. First, it was the booklet that Jaki Seroke distributed amongst members of his reading group. This booklet was very critical of the ANC leadership. Greg Malebo remembers:

In 1979, Jaki Seroke came with a book called *Naledi* or something. It was a PAC book. It really lambasted Oliver Tambo and we were drawn to it and we discussed it. [It argued] 'Look, Oliver Tambo is globetrotting, he's not doing anything. Why is he not in Zambia?' Because we had influence in Tembisa we were now recruiting for the PAC. We would have a supply from Jaki [Seroke]⁶⁵



The Freedom Charter

adopted at the Congress of the People on 29 June 1955

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Clearly the message in the booklet implied that Tambo had forsaken the struggle and was enjoying himself travelling around the world. This view was summarily quashed after another publication was distributed in the township to explain the reason for Tambo's world-wide travels. Lazarus Mawela recalls:

After the banning of the BC-aligned formations and the newspapers, the arrest of people like James Moleya and the death of Biko, people started debating the issue of armed struggle. Some were saying we need to fight. It was at this stage that ideological differences surfaced. The ANC and PAC (Willie Modupo, Bra David Makgaga and Jaki Seroke followed the PAC). Mnyele had links with the ANC. I was given a book titled *The ANC Speaks* by Matthew Moomakwe. But at this stage we could no longer meet freely because of the security police's focus on some of our members. The book outlined the Morogoro conference and the four pillars of struggle by the ANC⁶⁶

However, it was the contentious debate around the Freedom Charter that sharpened the ideological divisions more. Seroke had come across a copy of the Freedom Charter, which was banned at the time, and distributed copies of it to the members of his reading group. He recalls:

...at this stage there were great debates around the position of the ANC: what does the ANC stand for? And I came across the ANC's Freedom Charter and I tried to use that as part of our discussion of the ANC with my colleagues and friends. These were the young guys in Tembisa who were in the Black Consciousness that I was trying to recruit. The idea was to ask the question, 'Do we go with it?' and what was the Freedom Charter all about? I rewrote the Freedom Charter – word for word, and then made copies for others to read and understand. Somehow news got to the security police that there were copies of the Freedom Charter doing rounds and I was responsible⁶⁷

Greg Malebo, who received a copy and was involved in the discussions about the objectives of the Freedom Charter, remembers that they rejected it. In his words:

We were lambasting the Freedom Charter like you won't believe. We were young and thought it was a waste of time. The question of international mobilization, we didn't care about that.⁶⁸

Malebo's position on the Freedom Charter was finally altered by Steve Bopape, the owner of 'Steve's Place', a shebeen in Tembisa. Malebo and the other members of his reading club had become regular patrons at the shebeen.

Malebo recalls that Bopape would listen to them arguing about the Freedom Charter, particularly the preamble 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it'. Those who opposed the Freedom Charter contended that South Africa cannot belong to all who live in it but instead should belong to Africans. Malebo takes up the story:

Steve came up and [told] us the importance of the charter. [He] would in a subtle fashion ma[ke] us aware of seeing the importance of the role played by the ANC. I must be honest those discussions shaped my political thinking until today in terms of the organization that I had to follow⁶⁹

The reading group was split into those who supported the ideals of the ANC and those of the PAC. Mawela and Malebo, for example, aligned themselves with the ANC, and Seroke, Thlaki Lekganyane, Willie Modupi and David Makgaga with the PAC. Because the ANC and PAC were still banned organizations, those who supported their ideas and politics could not come out and declare their support for them publicly. They continued to be active in the BC movement.

Amidst the contestations and debates, two national political organizations were formed in 1979: the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) and the Congress of South African Students (Cosas). From the outset Cosas adopted the Freedom Charter as its guiding document. As part of the BC movement, Alex Segale, Greg Malebo and Lazarus Mawela represented Tembisa as delegates at the launching of AZAPO in Hammanskraal, part of the Bophuthatswana Bantustan (today North West Province). After the launching conference, they returned home and helped establish the branch of AZAPO in Tembisa. This branch was launched in 1980 at the Lutheran Church in Thiteng section.⁷⁰ Members of AZAPO with ANC leanings not long after left AZAPO. Greg Malebo claims that this was after they had received instructions from members of the ANC in exile. He remarks:

Alex Segale and Lazarus [Mawela] were recruited into the underground structures of the ANC and they informed us that the instruction from exile was that we should not be part of AZAPO, but become involved in civic organization.⁷¹





Already in the period 1978-79 the ANC had an MK base in Botswana. The Botswana Senior Organ (SO), which brought together the most senior political and military leaders, was led by Henry Makgothi, who was succeeded by Lambert Moloji. Other leading figures in this SO during this period included Billy Masethla, Wally Serote and Thabang Makwetla.⁷² In 1980, some of the expelled members of AZAPO were visiting Botswana to discuss and receive instructions from the members of the ANC in exile. Mawela recalls:

So after a while we took a decision to go and speak to Mnyeale in Gaborone, Botswana. Alex Segale, whose younger sister later got married to Mnyeale, was the first to go there. Segale returned and briefed us; then a few of us went to talk to him. It was myself, Segale and Thabiso Radebe (but he was very young then). We did not all go at once. We went there individually and per an invitation by Mnyeale. I first went to meet him in 1980. We were instructed to prepare for the formation of a ... [United Front]. Besides that he wanted to know if I was organizing the workers where I was working. He would also give me ANC's publication and pamphlets to distribute in Tembisa. I joined the Chemical Industrial Workers Union⁷³

Similarly, Seroke, who was also once a member of AZAPO in Tembisa, began connecting with the PAC in Lesotho. Seroke remembers that it was after he had been arrested and charged for being in possession of a banned publication that he traveled to Lesotho to meet with the leadership of the PAC there:

Many members of the ANC felt that because I had been arrested for being in possession of the Freedom Charter, I was one of them, or I should join them. So, I felt that in order not to be misunderstood I should meet with the PAC. I went to Lesotho where I met with Sabelo Phama for the first time in Sidzamba's office. Sidzamba said, 'We're going to give you a task and Sabelo would come and talk to you about it'. Sabelo, who requested that I refer to him as 'Victor' – his code name in exile – put me through the basics of underground work – for example, how a cell system operates and what does it mean to operate underground. The idea was that we would form an underground network of cells inside South Africa⁷⁴

These initial links with the ANC and PAC in exile laid the foundation for underground operations in the 1980s.

TEMBISA TOWNSHIP IN THE 1980S

Civic Structures

The 1976 student uprisings, which started in Soweto but soon spread to many other townships across the country, *inter alia*, aroused “the anger related to deep-rooted grievances over housing, transport, influx control, liquor, crime, corruption, and complete denial of meaningful political rights” for black people. This forced the government to introduce reforms, particularly in relation to black local government.⁷⁵ In 1977 the government initiated the Community Councils and in 1982 upgraded them to Town Councils, under the Black Local Authorities Act.⁷⁶ The government vested limited powers on these councils but without financial muscle. Therefore, to raise revenue for purposes of developing the townships, the councils increased rent and service charges. This caused the residents in different townships, including Tembisa, to establish civic structures to resist the rent and service charge increases, as Gregory Malebo explains:

In 1979 or 1980 thereabout – we formed the Tembisa Civic Association with Goba Ndlovu. And Goba Ndlovu was the chairperson. We had a very big meeting in some church at Ndulwini to resist rent increase. In that meeting Lazarus Mawela was present. Alex Segale was there. And Thlaki Lekganyane was there, and became a member of the association⁷⁷

Despite taking up the issue of rent and service charges, the Tembisa Civic Association (TCA) was from the outset plagued by tensions caused by differences in tactical and strategic approaches. Goba Ndlovu’s faction within the association was not amenable to a militant approach whilst others within the TCA favoured this approach.

Goba Ndlovu was an elderly person and naturally we would get impatient with the manner in which he wanted things done. As young people we wanted to go on marches. We wanted resistance. Goba Ndlovu did not want to follow that line. Goba Ndlovu was from the Non-European Unity Movement and this movement was a talk-shop really. We wanted action; something Goba did not want. We were planning a stayaway. Tembisa was in a terrible state. [We wanted] the bucket system to be done away with; the rent increase, the state of roads and [we wanted] the building of another high school. Then it was Boitumelong and Tembisa





High. We were using all that to mobilize. But Goba held the [TCA], and wanted us to distance ourselves from Cosas and to us Cosas was our formation⁷⁸

The situation reached a boiling point when the ANC-aligned members of the TCA pushed for the association to be affiliated in the United Democratic Front (UDF), a multi-racial front launched in August 1983 to oppose the government's Tri-cameral Parliamentary system which excluded blacks.⁷⁹ Just like Cosas, the UDF had also adopted the Freedom Charter as its guiding document. For many, this signaled its close alliance with the ANC. Moreover, some of its leading members like Albertina Sisulu and Archie Gumede had been members of the ANC since the 1950s. David Masina, who was a member of the TCA, explains the reason for the differences within the TCA:

Yes, we were starting to organise. We started in the TCA ... We were fighting for the leadership. Some were saying 'No, we are supposed to be autonomous and not affiliate to any other thing (i.e. formation).' But we knew the ANC's background and we wanted to put it under the ANC. We were in the TCA, but part of the ANC in Botswana. ... We didn't tell them that we are the ANC. We say, 'Let's adopt the ANC's strategy and use the Freedom Charter ... [the other faction argued], 'No, no we don't want to see those things'. Now we have cliques within the TCA. There was Goba [Ndlovu] ... [and his] gang who said 'No, you see these people are coming with things we don't want. We just want to be TCA'⁸⁰

The younger and more militant members of the TCA ignored Goba's vision for the TCA and called community meetings and invited leading figures within the UDF to come and address the community. Greg Malebo recalls:

We invited Terror Lekota to come and address the TCA meeting and we did not inform Ndlovu. We were dishonest to Ndlovu, because we told him that we wanted to call a community meeting so that we could discuss the problems the community was facing in the township. Ndlovu agreed. We did not tell him that we had invited Terror Lekota and Popo Molefe to address the meeting. He did not attend the meeting, but some of his 'people' came. After the meeting, Ndlovu called us, Lazarus Mawela and myself, to a kind of a disciplinary sitting. I think it was during this period that after assessing the situation we concluded that there

was no way that the TCA was going to be part of the UDF and we wanted it to affiliate in the UDF. We started recruiting trade union members to become part of the civic we were planning to establish⁸¹

Timothy Mabena, who was part of the defecting faction, remembers that he was tasked with the responsibility of recruiting members for the Tembisa Residents Association (TRA):

It was clear that the people who were leading the TCA were not on the side of the ANC. Paul Maseko, who was the chairman of Tembisa Cosatu Local, and myself were given a task to recruit members for the civic association we were planning to establish. We recruited many shop stewards. We were given directives that we should establish a civic association that would deal with civic matters (or bread and butter issues), like rent, electricity, bucket system and sewerage. Maseko and I were told to form sectional committees. All the 52 sections were supposed to have a committee, which would then constitute the TRA. To beef up our man power we recruited other comrades like Ali Tleane and started working with them. Maseko became the president, Tleane the deputy president, and I was the secretary of the TRA. Our educational officer was Amon Msane. Lazarus Mawela, Greg Malebo were also in the executive of the TRA. It was during the TRA's tenure that we established the street committees. During this period in Tembisa there was no crime⁸²

Similarly, Mncedisi Prince Sibanyoni adds:

The TRA was formed. And it was brought to the agenda that the TCA betrays people. The TRA enjoy[ed] a lot of support here in Tembisa. I remember when rallies were called and the stadium would be full ... Then activities pursued by the TRA did not only centre around the council issues; [it also dealt with] other issues that affected people. Issues of crime we'd engage. The leadership of the TRA then were people like Ali Tleane, Jappie Mokwevho, Timothy Mabena, Paul Maseko and Greg Malebo⁸³





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RELEASE
OUR
YOUTH
LEADERS

KING'S PALACE

It was during the TRA's tenure that many of the Tembisa Town Councillors, including Mayor Lucas Mothiba, resigned from the Council. In 1986 Mothiba, who had been the Mayor for seven years resigned, claiming "... many black people had lost faith in black local authorities because the structures were not of their making".⁸⁴

Observing the heightened political resistance in the township which forced the Tembisa Town Council collapse, in an effort to restore order, in May 1986 the national government sent in the South African Defence Force (SADF) to Tembisa. The SADF manned roadblocks, stopped and searched driving into Tembisa.⁸⁵ On 12 June it declared a state of emergency. Political activists were detained *en masse* across the country; others were forced to either flee the country into exile or to operate underground. In Tembisa some of the leading activists were detained. Greg Malebo remembers: "During the state of emergency in 1986 I was detained and spent two years in Modderbee Prison." Timothy Mabena concurs and adds⁸⁶

From 1986 until 1989 many of the activists Tembisa were detained during the State of Emergency. My wife and I were detained on the same day in 1986 at 2 o'clock in the morning. Matilda spent a day in detention and I was sent to Modderbee Prison⁸⁷



SECONDARY AND HIGH SCHOOLS STUDENT POLITICS

At the height of resistance in the mid-1980s secondary and high school students were at the forefront of the struggle, initially, against the education authorities, and finally, the apartheid regime in general. In the first three years of its foundation, Cosas did not focus on student-based issues; instead mainly became involved in national politics. This resulted in the detention of almost the entire leadership of Cosas. Its first president Ephraim Mogale was subsequently charged with furthering the aims of the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP).⁸⁸ From 1983, as school boycotts became increasingly common, Cosas re-orientated its strategy towards education-based issues.⁸⁹



In 1984 Cosas tabled five key demands that were later taken up by secondary and high school students in different areas. It demanded the Student Representative Councils (SRCs) replace the prefect system, the removal of the age limit rule, an end to corporal punishment, that teachers stop sexually harassing female students, and that the police and South African Defence Force (SADF) be withdrawn from schools and townships.⁹⁰ It was against this background that high and secondary schools students began to mobilize in different townships across the country.

Students at Tembisa formed branches of Cosas to take up some of the key demands tabled by Cosas national. This was after they had been influenced and guided by Michael Figo Madlala and Brian Mazibuko, who had been incarcerated on Robben Island for five years since 1977.⁹¹



However, it was the branch of Cosas at Jiyane Secondary School which influenced student politics in the township. Greg Thulare and Debra Marakalala remember this branch's role as follows:

People would meet then and make sure that from those plenary sessions we go out and implemented the [resolutions]. Because of the energy and accessibility of youth ... Jiyane Secondary School was ideal because of the situation there. The level of discipline in Jiyane and the other general problems which were there: corporal punishment. It was a perfect breeding ground to start to mobilize students, get them into formations, identify comrades ... Hence our association with Thabiso [Radebe] and the others. One could communicate with them, and bring them into this formation. You see, one's life was influenced a great deal to say if you are not in the student movement you have to be in other formations – one or another. And that took a turn to say wherever you go you had to mobilize students. In the end we formed Cosas. And Cosas in Jiyane influenced the formation of Cosas in the other two high schools, Boitumelong and Tembisa High. Because of concentration and the level of mobilization at Jiyane we were able to move things faster and speedily⁹²



UDF NEWS
Member of the Transition Movement



**APARTHEID ELECTIONS
WE DON'T VOTE!**



UDF NEWS





Mncedisi Prince Sibanyoni concurs:

Dr. Semetse, Kabelo and many others like Mthofu Khumalo were the people who were pushing the struggle. We attended at Tembisa High School, even though they were ahead of us by a grade. I went to a meeting near Oakmoor Station at Xubeni. There is a hall there where they conducted their meetings. I got there and guys were appointed to various leadership positions from different schools. Then came elections for the Cosas Tembisa High branch, I got myself a position on the top five as an organiser. The first thing we wanted in our school was the introduction of the student representative council and the end of corporal punishment⁹³

When both the schools' management and the Department of Education (DET) refused to give in to the demands by Cosas, students in Tembisa called for a class boycott. *The Sowetan* reported that in July 1984 about 7 000 pupils (students) boycotted classes because of the refusal by school's authorities, among other things, to introduce SRCs to replace the prefect system.⁹⁴

The boycott continued indefinitely and in the following year the DET suspended five schools in Tembisa. These were Jiyane, Thuto-Ke-Matla Junior Secondary, Boitumelong Senior Secondary, Tembisa High and Masisebenze Secondary.⁹⁵ In addition, the state responded with force, detaining student leaders.

Greg Thulare, a student at Jiyane and an organizer for Cosas in Tembisa, was one of those detained. His bail application was denied after a security policeman argued at the Kempton Park magistrate's court that Greg planned to leave the country if he was granted bail.⁹⁶ In April 1985 Greg Thulare's home was petrol bombed. This was clearly a way of intimidating his family, probably to force him to relinquish his participation in student politics. On 25 August 1985, the government banned Cosas.

At this stage youth congresses had been formed in townships across the country to cater for young workers and non-school going young people in the townships. For Charles Carter, the decision to form youth congresses was, inter alia, “made [by Cosas] in response to allegations by the Minister of Law and Order, Louis le Grange, that non-students were directing the activities of the school-based organization”.⁹⁷ In Tembisa, young people formed Tembisa Youth Congress (Teyco), a predecessor of Moya Youth Movement. Members of Teyco were plagued by similar state repression. Teyco’s President Sam Semetse, Philemon Nzimande, Teyco’s secretary general, and Debra Marakalala and Godfrey Qwabe were detained.⁹⁸ Constant police harassment and the possibility of detention forced some of the student and youth activists to flee the country into exile. Their escape was in most cases facilitated by the underground operatives, one of whom was Sello Serote.

Recalling how he helped Leeuw and Elsie to flee into exile, Serote had this to say:

I took Leeuw out of the country after they had attacked their targets. After they had parted ways with Gezani – Gezani had crossed into Botswana – Leeuw came to me with his girlfriend, Elsie. I asked him if he had informed her about our plan and he affirmed. I transported them. When she saw the fence that they were supposed to cross into Botswana, she clung on to me, begging me to return home with her. I said ‘Are you crazy? You’re not going back home. You have to jump this fence’. They finally jumped the fence at Makgobistad, near Mafikeng⁹⁹



**FORWARD
WITH SRCs**



UNDERGROUND OPERATIVES

The proscription of the ANC and PAC severely restricted their direct operations and influence inside the country. The exiled leadership of both organizations introduced new strategies and tactics to carry forward the struggle for liberation. Amongst these underground operations and activists became important part of the machinery to fight the apartheid regime. In the 1980s the ANC (and to a lesser extent the PAC) had underground activists operating inside the country. These played an important role in politicizing young people, identifying others for military training in exile.

Recalling how he was drawn into underground structures of the ANC, Serote explained:

One day I had a dream and in my dream I was looking for my friends, but they were not there ... It hit me that because they are not here then I'm skipping the country. I told Wally's [Serote] younger brother, Thabo, because he was going into exile. He told Wally and Wally said they must call me and I must stop dreaming about these things. I must join them in Botswana. I think it was 1980. I went there with Thabo because he knew how to get there. Wally had some people from the ANC and he called me and we talked. He said 'Look, your dream and when I interpret it is that you really want to fight'. I said, 'Yes, I do want to fight. And he said, 'Go back home and form a unit and we will keep on communicating about the developments'. But then he informed me how to form a unit and how many people could form a unit. I came back and I asked Thabo [Serote], 'Where do we start?'. Thabo suggested that the two of us should start the unit. Then later he said I should bring in another person. We gave each other MK (Umkhonto we Sizwe) names. Mine was Baktu George. I've forgotten his. Gezani [Ndhlovu] was one of the guys I trained. His sister, too. I got Greg Thulare but I could not pull him in into the unit, because he was already a known figure. We are (sic) operating with people who underst[ood] the political situation. They underst[ood] the aims of the underground movement. They underst[ood] the four pillars of the struggle, and that was because I took them to [Thabang] Makwetla and they trained them over the weekend and he told them that now they are (sic) members of MK. We were beginning to be a solid unit. I'm commanding it. There were five of us. It was me, my wife, Francina, and other three persons, Guy, Thabo, Steven. Oh, and another guy called David Letselebe¹⁰⁰

Serote also formed other units which specialized in propaganda, intelligence, and military attacks on properties owned by people perceived to be collaborating with the government like the councillors. Describing the underground units' operations, Sello Serote remarked:

We are operating with the people who understand the political situation, they understand the aims of the underground movement, they understand the four pillars of the struggle and that was because I took them to Makwetla and they trained them over the weekend and he told them that now they are members of MK ... We were beginning to be a solid unity. I'm commanding it. There were five of us. It was me, my wife, Francina, and Guy , Thabo, Steven, and David Letselebe. Each one had a unit. David was sharing the propaganda [unit]. Guy was someone who liked guns. And Steven was in intelligence. My wife was in communication. They were commanding [these] units. And I'm overall. The one responsible for intelligence would form a sub-unit of intelligence. All the other units formed their sub-units, except for communication because it was said it was too sensitive. Francina had to work alone. Guy was responsible for the unit dealing with guns ... I don't know if you've heard that here in Tembisa there was a Transvaal Suicide Squad. It belonged to Guy's unit. I was reporting direct to Thabang Makwetla¹⁰¹

In the mid-1980s, a substantial number of young activists left South Africa to join MK. After undergoing military training some of them were infiltrated back into the country to carry out military operations. It was at this stage that houses belonging to the government-created councillors and police in the township were attacked with hand-grenades. The first hand-grenade was detonated at the house of a security policeman. Not long after that the house of the Deputy Mayor of Tembisa, Mr Herbert Majokoana, was attacked with a hand-grenade.¹⁰²

Similarly, the PAC was recruiting young people in Tembisa to join the PAC's military wing, the Azania Peoples' Army (APLA). Jaki Seroke, who was in charge of the PAC Transvaal, recalls that his underground unit, based in Tembisa, recruited a number of young people to leave the country into exile where they would receive military training. He explains:

Personally, I was in charge of a unit. From 1984 we started recruiting youth. Every year we would "pave" routes out of the country to countries like Lesotho. We would say, for instance, take a kombi load of 15 guys four times a year to Lesotho¹⁰³



DA



Comrade George Nyanga, one of the Apla and PAC martyrs, died in action, in Mafikeng, on the 25 June, 1990. He was born on the 20 August, 1968, in Olifantsfontein, Transvaal. He joined Apla on the 23 September, 1988, and immediately underwent military training. At home he was an Azanyu organiser in the Tembisa branch. He was a dedicated, modest, honest and devoted freedom fighter. PAC will always remember him.

One of the young people to leave the country in 1986 to join APLA in exile is Ezekiel “Dondo” Dithebe. After relinquishing his membership in AZAPO, Dithebe joined the Azanian National Youth Unity (AZANYU), the PAC’s youth wing inside South Africa. Remembering how he left the country, Dithebe remarks:

‘I think Baker Phasha left a month before us. When we left, we were offered a lift by Thlaki Lekganyane to Joburg. In Joburg, we met other people, and one of them was Yster. The latter took us to Lesotho via Sebokeng. We used taxis belonging to the Majakathata Taxi Association. Yster briefed the driver that we didn’t have passports, so he should drop us off at Mohokari (Caledon) River. We were told that we should go a place where there was a low level crossing of water. When we get there we should be able to cross to Lesotho¹⁰⁴

Perhaps the most distinguished APLA cadre to come out of Tembisa was George Nyanga. [He] was born on 20 August 1967 in Olifantsfontein. He was the fourth child of the eighth children. He started his primary schooling at Tlamatlama Lower Primary in 1977 and went to Tshepisa Higher Primary in 1981 where he passed his Standard six. Thereafter he went to Malebo High School in Pietersburg where he did Form Two and Three. In 1987 he returned to Tembisa to do his Form Four at Thuto Ke Matla High School. And in 1988 he went to do his Form Five at

Bokamoso High School. It was at Bokamoso that he became a leading member of the SRC and an organizer. During this period he was already involved in AZANYU Tembisa branch as an organizer.

In September 1988 he left the country to join the PAC External Mission. He underwent military training in West Africa and became one of the leading members of APLA Political Commissariat. Nyanga was killed in action on 18 June 1990 in Mafikeng. According to reports, he died in a battle between the Bophuthatswana Defence Force Patrol and the APLA cadres at Ramatlabama, 35 kilometres from Mafikeng.¹⁰⁵

Ezekiel Dondo Dithebe, who, together with a fellow APLA cadre, had been infiltrated into South Africa in 1990 to carry out military actions in Mafikeng, recalls that George Nyanga and Oupa Sekoboto were supposed to join his unit when he met his death:

The people who were going to join us were comrade George Nyanga and Oupa Sekoboto. But unfortunately ... there was mis-communication. Some times it happens that you miss each other because of mis-communication ... You see, when cars approach at night we had to run into the bush to hide. Some times you end up running away from the car that had come to fetch you. So, these guys crossed successfully [and] arrived at night. The following day while waiting at the taxi rank they had a problem. They were confronted by the SADF and the Bophuthatswana soldiers. There was an attack and counter-attack that resulted in Oupa Sekoboto from Sebokeng getting arrested. And George Nyanga died in that operation¹⁰⁶

Not all young people who, after being recruited into the underground operations, left the country. Some operated underground within the country. Mncedisi Sibanyoni's story illustrates this point:

I was recruited to be an ANC's operative underground. I don't remember exactly which year was it, but it was still in the '80s. I participated and trained as an underground of Umkhonto we Sizwe. I've executed some certain tasks ... I used to be around Tembisa, around Johannesburg, and somewhere in Kwazulu-Natal¹⁰⁷

WOMEN AND THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION

The struggle for liberation in South Africa was fought in all fronts and many and various people were involved. Amongst these were women and whites, particularly those who were members of organizations affiliated to the non-racial UDF. Black women were largely drawn to the struggle because of the civic grievances in their townships, and later, their children's involvement. Thandi Swakamisa remembers:

We called a rent boycott. We decided not to pay rent. We wanted the municipality to come and discuss with us on the ground and tell us why they were increasing the rent. We communicated by calling meetings, even though, as time went by, police cracked down on these meetings. You see, you'd find that when we wanted to hold a meeting at a certain place we'd find police occupying that area. So we couldn't hold them.

But then an M-Plan – Mandela Plan - was developed. That's when we formed street committees, because we couldn't hold mass meetings. ... Within the street committees an overall committee would be formed. All the information would have to go through the overall committee. The latter would pass the information to the street committees about what was to be done. Then the street committees would pass the information to the people in the street.

In 1985 ... if you had a radio you'd listen to Radio Freedom at night around 10 o'clock. So, [Oliver] Tambo would speak and say what should be done. And the following morning we would all, as committees, get that information. Well, then we were meeting in Johannesburg and we would strategize. This happened until I was identified to be in the Federation of the Transvaal Women (FEDTRAW). We had an office there at ... what's this street's name? Von Wielig and Commissioner¹⁰⁸

VUKANI

MAKHOSIKAZI

WOMEN ON THE MARCH



FROM...

...1954

TEMBISA WOMEN'S GROUP

TSOGANG

BASADI



Some of the women in Tembisa became involved in recruiting and organizing other women. Rosina Marakalala explains:

I was involved leading meetings at Mkhathini at night. You'd find us wearing dustcoats and we would be carrying bibles. When the police come we would open our bibles, and when they leave we start again. There were many of us. Some have passed on. One of them lives in Birchleigh, Mrs Radebe, Thami Mnye's mother, Mrs Hleza. They used to call us communists but we did not care. I remember we were starting an organization, FEDTRAW¹⁰⁹

Other women were recruited by female activists who had direct links with the ANC in exile. The latter used simple methods to draw women into politics by involving them in projects the women could associate with. Matilda Mabena's story illustrates this:

At that time I was not active in politics. I was a nurse at Baragwanath Hospital. But then I was recruited by a friend, Frieda Shaba, and started getting involved. And then we started building the ANCWL ... No, we did not call it the ANCWL because the ANC was banned then. We called it Women's Group.

Then most women were not interested in politics. They were interested in other things. So we would organize them and call them to a meeting to inform them about the things that might interest them. There was a person from exile, a cadre that was working underground. This cadre had a skill in making candles. So we would say to these women 'You are all aware that many of us are unemployed and we need to supplement our husbands with many things. So you are invited to a meeting where there would be someone showing us how to make candles'. They would have an interest and attend our meetings. When that person was busy showing them how to make candles we would indirectly talk politics.

The next time they come we would discuss health issues. We would sometimes get a doctor to inform them about the importance of doing pap smear and on. We also discussed gardening and sewing. But gradually we were also introducing them to political issues.

The first one and which was a huge problem in Tembisa was the bucket system. We would say 'Look, when these men who remove the nightsoil they sometimes spill the buckets in the yard and we women are the ones who are supposed to clean. So really this is not healthy'.

There were also councillors then like Mr [Lucas] Mothiba. So in one of our meetings we ... decided that we have had enough of the bucket system. Our children were getting sick because of this system. We mobilized the women and agreed that on such a date we would take all the full buckets with nightsoil and we were going to empty them at Mothiba's store.

We argued that we were supporting Mothiba's store and he was now rich because of our support. He lived in a house with electricity and a sewerage system. Women supported us. Our march to Mothiba's store was led by the late comrade Zodwa Mofokeng. When we arrived there Zodwa addressed us. When the police came they found that we had already spilled the buckets in front of Mothiba's store. After some time the police became aware of those leading the Women's Group and they started harassing and detaining us¹¹⁰



GILLE DE Vlieg

Whites, particularly women, participated in the struggle for liberation. And their involvement in some cases led to them to interact with activists living in townships. Gille de Vlieg's story illustrates this point. It was during the height of student riots in Tembisa in 1983 that Gille de Vlieg first made contact with Greg Thulare, a member of Cosas in Tembisa. Gille arrived in Durban from England in February 1944, and moved to Johannesburg in 1973. In 1982 she joined Black Sash as a volunteer and one of her responsibilities was to work with communities which were threatened with removal to the homelands. It was at this stage that she developed an interest in photography, eventually joining Afrapix, and took photographs of the political and social landscapes of South Africa.

According to De Vlieg, they first met at Khotso House when Greg and some of his comrades had come for a meeting at the UDF office in Khotso House. De Vlieg recalls:

We were sitting around just talking when I heard these voices. You walked into Khotso House from the street and over the reception area was a dome and underneath a big tapestry on the wall, which was a South African Council of Churches wall hanging which had 'Khotso, Peace – Uxolo' sewn onto it. It was a lovely place to have photographs because you couldn't miss them - you walked in and there they were. And there were these three young men who I later learnt were from Tembisa ... the UDF offices were upstairs, and they had been to a Cosas meeting, and had come down and were looking at the photographs. So I went to them and I said to them, 'Do you know what you're looking at?' I started describing the photographs to them (which were of the removal and destruction of Pageview) and why we felt it was important to have them up. Then I gave them programmes¹¹¹



TOWN COUNCIL **TEMBISA** STADSRAAD

Vergunning word verleen aan: *G. R. de Vries*
Permission is granted to :

Aantal persone in voertuig :
Number of persons in vehicle:

In Verteenwoordiger van : *Anglo American*
Representing :

Om Tembisa binne te gaan en in Tembisa te vertoef
(onderhewig aan alle wette en regulasies rakende
Tembisa), met die doel om

To enter Tembisa (Subject to all laws and
regulations relating to Tembisa) for the purpose
of

Archives Photography

Geldig *till* 31/12/85
Valid for

Motorregistrasie/Registration: *G.M.F. 227 T*

Ure : *09:00 - 12:00*
Hours:

[Signature]
TOWNSHIP MANAGER/DORPSBESTUURDER

This was the beginning of a political (and sometimes social) relationship between Gille and, first, with the members of Cosas, and later the community of Tembisa. Greg Thulare, after meeting with Gille several times in town, finally began to trust her. Before he could invite her to Tembisa, Greg tested her and, in doing so, introduced her to the politics of the ANC. Gille recalls that he came with a banned tape recording of the ANC. She remembers:

He brought me this tape which was Oliver Tambo's address to the ANC from exile. So he said to me 'can't we go somewhere I want you to listen to this'. So we went to this place on a high hill (Munro Drive) with a view of the northern suburbs. So we went there and pulled off on the side of the road and Greg slept and I listened to Oliver Tambo..... Then shortly after that he asked me to come with him to Tembisa and that's when I first went in.¹¹²

But Gille as a white person could not enter Tembisa without permission from the council. South African laws prohibited any white person from entering a black township without permission, except for the security and administrative personnel. Gille fabricated lies that she was working for Anglo American as a photographer in order to be granted permission to enter Tembisa.

In Tembisa, she met members of Cosas like Tshepo Mphuti, Reuben Mahlagare, and others who were close to Greg. Trust developed between them and Gille. When, for example, police were looking for the Cosas activists, they would hide at Gille's house in the safe northern suburbs. Gille recalls one time when they slept at her place and she woke up in the middle of the night and found them discussing a book they were reading.

They all used to sleep in the lounge. And then one night I woke up at about three o'clock in the morning ... there was a little narrow passage where you go through to the lounge and I heard all these voices in the lounge. And I went through and I quietly opened the door - and they were sitting round in a circle with a book and they were sitting and discussing this book. I said, 'What are you doing?' And they said, 'Oh, we just discussing', obviously some 'subversive' book. This made a huge impression on me. I thought this was amazing because here are these guys; they're all school children basically and yet this was so important to them that they were sitting and having this discussion at three o'clock in the morning¹¹³

Gille's photographs were varied. She did not only take photographs of political struggles but she also focused on social and everyday life in the township. She explains:

Well sometimes, you see, I was also interested in people's lives. So sometimes it wasn't like highly political photographs. They were photographs of women hanging up washing in the back yards and that type of thing; a woman washing a floor¹¹⁴

Her presence in the township was noticeable and this brought her into contact with other people outside the Cosas circle. She befriended mothers of the young people who were involved in the struggle. She used social gatherings at her home to bring these women together and to know each other. For some it was through these social gatherings that they began to appreciate the role played by their children in the struggle. Nomathemba Thulare, recalls:

Gille helped. And that was what made us to meet, because as a parent she was able to bring us together and organise parties. She would bake cakes, buy cold drinks and braai meat. And we would meet there. We would eat and talk. It would be fun¹¹⁵

Gille also assisted these mothers to visit their detained children in prison and to facilitate communication between the parents and the children in detention or in exile. Some of the activists did not understand Gille's role in the township and they would want to confront her. But other activists were protective of her. Timothy Mabena remembers a time when some of the activists questioned Gille's presence in the township:

As these developments were taking place, Gille de Vlieg was in our midst, asking us questions and so on. At some stage some of the comrades began to ask what was Gille doing in the township, because she's white and we were fighting against whites. We in the leadership said 'No, she's fine. She's one of the Democrats, who were sympathetic to our cause'¹¹⁶



POLITICAL FUNERALS

As political resistance heightened in the mid-1980s, the government, through its police and military personnel, responded with brutal force, killing activists. Funerals of victims of political unrests became a rallying point for mass mobilization.

According to Lazarus Mawela:

“Political funerals of activists had an impact in mobilizing the community and brought unity amongst the activists and the community”.¹¹⁷

To demonstrate their resolve, he continues, they would sing the following song:

Siyabolalwa (We're being killed, in IsiZulu) and we don't know why. But we will go on and fight for our liberation. *Noma basibolala siya phambili* (Even if they kill us, we're marching forward, in IsiZulu)¹¹⁸

Mawela remembers that political funerals attracted members of the community. To support this point, he recalled Flint Mazibuko's funeral:

One of the funerals was that of Flint Mazibuko. You know, the funeral grew bigger as the procession move[d] along the streets of the township, carrying the coffin. The crowds got bigger. People came out of their houses and join[ed] the funeral procession. And by the time [we] reached the stadium, [we] realized that the attendance was bigger than when we started¹¹⁹





TEMBISA TOWNSHIP, POST-1990

On 2 February 1990, President F.W. de Klerk announced in Cape Town the lifting of the banning orders against the ANC, PAC and other political movements. Political prisoners were released, including Nelson Mandela. And those who had fled into exile were permitted to return. Political movements like the ANC and PAC re-established themselves legally by forming branches in all areas across the country. A branch was formed in Tembisa and it was chaired by Andrew Mapheto. Negotiations between the government and the ANC started.

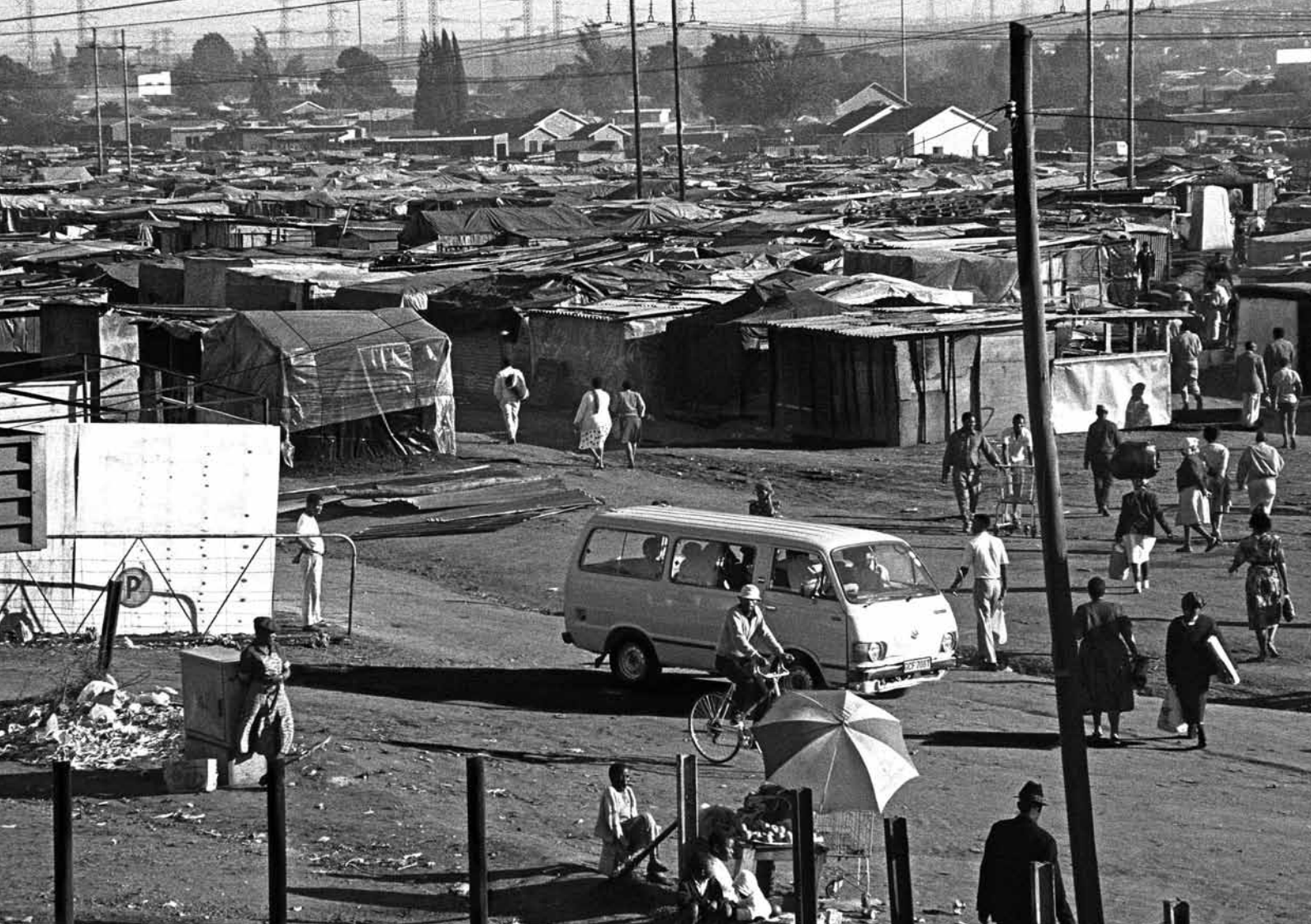
However, during this period in Tembisa developed another phenomenon: the escalation of informal settlements. This was due to lack of housing. In 1986 it was estimated that there were 10 000 people on the waiting list for housing.¹²⁰ Rebecca Fosi Sibanyoni, who settled in Winnie Mandela settlement, remembers:

I came to this section, Winnie Mandela, in 1992. There were trees and bushes only. There were no houses. We started by building shacks. And people started to come one-by-one until we became many. Many of them came from the different sections in Tembisa. There was a man who was staying in Hospital View. He was the one who gave us permission [to live here]. We were paying him R65 and he would give us a card showing that we have paid¹²¹

Similarly, in the period leading to the 1994 national elections, Tembisa was besieged by gangsterism. One of the most notorious gangs that emerged at this stage was the Toaster gang. This gang was led by one Yster and its base was Umthambeka (This Yster should not be confused with the one who assisted Dondo Dithebe to leave the country in 1986). The gang is reported to have been formed in late 1991. And between that period and mid-1992 the Toaster gang was alleged to have killed about 15 people in Umthambeka and raped schoolgirls, robbed people. The residents of Tembisa were terrified of the gang to the extent that even patrons of shebeens stopped going to shebeens. This was after the gang had entered one of the shebeens in the township and ordered women to undress and bath in a basin full of beer, and thereafter ordered men to drink the liquor from the basin.¹²²

The gang was later linked to the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and its base became Vusumuzi Hostel.¹²³ It terrorized the community and escaped back to the hostel. The reign of terror by the gang was brought to an end after its leader was murdered, but the damage wrought upon Tembisa by the gang lives on today, as was demonstrated by anonymous comments submitted to SAHA at the heritage day event in September 2011.

In 1994 the country held its first non-racial, non-sexist national elections and the ANC won. For many in the township, the 27 April was a historic and jubilant day. The Star reported that some of the residents flocked to the streets as early as 6am, singing and dancing as they approached the polling stations.¹²⁴ Linda Vilakazi, 62, said "I must vote for the first time to heal the wounds of apartheid".¹²⁵ And Mandla Mkhwanazi, 72, added "I am feeling very young once again and this vote is for my children".¹²⁶ Following the elections and the new government led by the ANC had assumed power, many of the activists who had led the struggle from the 1970s through to the 1990s were appointed into positions of authority in the new government.







END NOTES

¹Thembisa (Promise in IsiZulu), not Tembisa, is the correct spelling of this residential area

²Philip Bonner and Noor Nieftagodien, in their study of Alexandra Township, write that because of the drought many farmers abandoned their farms and those who remained laid off black labour tenants in their thousands. The latter sold up their cattle left the land and headed for small and large towns. P. Bonner and N. Nieftagodien *Alexandra: A History* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2008), p.25

³ Interview with Nomathemba Catherine Thulare, conducted by Tshepo Moloi and Gille de Vlieg, 20 December 2010

⁴Letter addressed to Senator J.D. Rheinallt-Jones by Mr D.L. Smit, official in the Department of Native Affairs', 27 March 1939. Archived at University of the Witwatersrand Historical and Literary Papers (hereafter, WHLP) in the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) Collection AD 843/RJ/B1.4 (Box 291)

⁵Letter addressed to Senator Jones by Mr Cowly, Town Clerk of Edenvale Village Council, 1 October 1941'. Archived at WHLP in the SAIRR Collection AD 843/RJ/Sb.3.37 (Box 291). Cowly claimed that in 1941 there were about 150 families squatting on the location

⁶Interview with Matilda and Timothy Mabena, conducted by Tshepo Moloi on 23 January 2011

⁷Interview with Buti David Mahlobo, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, 22 September 2005 [Tshepo Moloi private collection]

⁸Interview with Julius Lelaka, conducted by Tshepo Moloi and Nonhlanhla Ngwenya on 14 September 2010.

⁹Interview with Mrs Thembi Makase by Tshepo Moloi, Phomolong, 28 August 2004; Mike "Figo" Madlala's parents also worked around Kempton Park for years and lived in Phelindaba. Interview with Mike "Figo" Madlala by Tshepo Moloi, for the South African Democracy Education Trust (hereafter SADET) Oral History Project, Kempton Park, 7 September 2004

¹⁰'Letter addressed to Senator J.D. Rheinallt-Jones by Mr D.L. Smit, official in the Department of Native Affairs', 27 March 1939. Archived at University of the Witwatersrand Historical and Literary Papers (hereafter, WHLP) in the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) Collection AD 843/RJ/B1.4 (Box 291)

¹¹ Interview with John Tshabalala, conducted by Tshepo Moloi and Nonhlanhla Ngwenya, 26 November 2011

¹²Siyotula, N.G. 'The Tembisa Rent Boycott', Honours Dissertation, (Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand, 1989), pp.7-8; G. de Vlieg *Sash*, 31 May 1985

¹³Interview with Nomathemba Catherine Thulare, conducted by Tshepo Moloi and Gille de Vlieg, 20 December 2010

¹⁴Interview with Simon Ramogale, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, Johannesburg, 7 April; 18 August 2004; All the names referred to by Simon Ramogale have been translated from Sesotho to English

¹⁵Interview with Julius Lelaka, conducted by Tshepo Moloi and Nonhlanhla Ngwenya on 14 September 2010.

¹⁶Interview with Rosina Marakalala, conducted by Tshepo Moloi on 21 February 2011; A boer is a farmer. But in black townships, whites particularly officials and police of Afrikaner descent were referred to as boers; For a description of squalid living conditions in Dindela location, see Star, 24 April 1967.

¹⁷Interviews with Lazarus Mawela, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, 30 October 2011 and 14 December 2011

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Interview with Nomathemba Catherine Thulare, conducted by Tshepo Moloi and Gille de Vlieg, 20 December 2010

²⁰Interview with David Malabela, conducted by Mmatjatji Malabela on 10 October 2010

²¹Interview with Michael "Figo" Madlala by Tshepo Moloi, for SADET Oral History Project, Kempton Park, 7 September 2004

²²Interview with David Malabela, conducted by Mmatjatji Malabela on 10 October 2010

²³Interview with Matilda and Timothy Mabena, conducted by Tshepo Moloi on 23 January 2011

²⁴According to Jonathan Hyslop "the 1960s saw phenomenal increases in employment. In manufacturing, the number of employees of all races soared from 653 000 in 1960 to 1 069 000 in 1970". See Hyslop, J. 'Schools, Unemployment and Youth: Origins and Significance of Student and Youth Movements, 1976-1987', in Bill Nasson and John Samuel (eds.) *Education: From Poverty to Liberty*, (Cape Town and Johannesburg, David Philip, 1990), p.81

²⁵Gauteng was originally a name used to refer to Johannesburg. It should not be confused with today's Gauteng as a name for the province

²⁶Interview with David Malabela, conducted by Mmatjatji Malabela on 10 October 2010

- ²⁷Interview with Matilda and Timothy Mabena, conducted by Tshepo Moloi on 23 January 2011
- ²⁸A *stokvel* is a social club serving as a rotating credit union in South Africa where members contribute fixed sums of money to a central fund on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis. Each month a different member receives the money in the fund, which is collected during that period (<http://en.wikipedi.org/wiki/Stokvel>)
- ²⁹Interview with David Masina, conducted by Tshepo Moloi on 19 February 2011
- ³⁰Interview with Matilda and Timothy Mabena, conducted by Tshepo Moloi on 23 January 2011
- ³¹Interviews with Lazarus Mawela, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, 30 October 2011 and 14 December 2011
- ³²Interview with Matilda and Timothy Mabena, conducted by Tshepo Moloi on 23 January 2011
- ³³Ibid.
- ³⁴Interview with Julius Lelaka, conducted by Tshepo Moloi and Nonhlanhla Ngwenya on 10 May 2011; 'Straight' is a local language used in the townships to describe a litre bottle of whiskey or brandy
- ³⁵Interview with Matilda and Timothy Mabena, conducted by Tshepo Moloi on 23 January 2011
- ³⁶Lodge, T. *Black Politics Since 1945* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1983), p.322
- ³⁷Woods, D. *Biko* (England, Penguin Book, 1979), pp.164-5
- ³⁸Steve Biko, *I write what I like*, pp.52-7; Woods, D. *Biko* (New York, Penguin Books), p.175
- ³⁹Interview with Mongezi Maphuthi by Tshepo Moloi, for the SADET Oral History Project, Tembisa, 28 September 2004
- ⁴⁰Interview with Greg Malebo by Tshepo Moloi, for SADET Oral History Project, Hospital View, Tembisa, 14 October 2004
- ⁴¹*Thami Mnye and Medu: Art Ensemble Retrospective*, (eds.) Clive Kellner and Sergion-Albio Gonzalez (Johannesburg, Jacana, 2009)
- ⁴²Interview with Michael "baba" Jordan by Gift Poli and Ace Nyaleke, Kroonstad; also see M. Pheto *And Night Fell: Memoirs of a Political Prisoner in South Africa* (London, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1983)
- ⁴³Interview with Jaki Seroke, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, Cosmo City, Johannesburg, 11 November 2011 *Tshepo Moloi's private collection]
- ⁴⁴In 1977 Mnye, together with Fikile Magadlala and Ben Arnold organized the New Day exhibition that toured three venues in Soweto: Donaldson Orlando Community Centre, Dube YWCA and Ntokozweni Centre, and Regina Mundi. See *Thami Mnye and Medu*, p.14
- ⁴⁵Interview with Matilda and Timothy Mabena, conducted by Tshepo Moloi on 23 January 2011
- ⁴⁶Ibid.; also see *Thami Mnye and Medu*, p.14
- ⁴⁷Interviews with Lazarus Mawela, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, 30 October 2011 and 14 December 2011
- ⁴⁸Interview with Gregory Malebo by Tshepo Moloi, Hospital View, Tembisa, 20 October 2011; John Moleya was older brother to James Moleya, the BPC activist
- ⁴⁹Interview with Mr Teboho Tsenase by Tshepo Moloi, for the SADET Oral History Project, Tembisa High School, 10 September 2004
- ⁵⁰Brooks, A. and Brickhill, J. *Whirlwind before the storm: The origins and development of the uprising in Soweto and the rest of South Africa from June to December 1976* (London, International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1980), p.45
- ⁵¹Ibid.
- ⁵²Ibid., p.46
- ⁵³Interview with Mike "Figo" Madlala by Tshepo Moloi, for the SADET Oral History Project, Kempton Park, 7 September 2004
- ⁵⁴Interview with Gregory Malebo by Tshepo Moloi, for the SADET Oral History Project, Tembisa, 14 October 2004
- ⁵⁵Brooks and Brickhill, *Whirlwind*, p.49
- ⁵⁶Ndlovu, S.M. *The Soweto Uprisings: Counter-Memories of June 1976* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1998), p.7
- ⁵⁷Ndlovu, S.M. 'The Soweto Uprising', in SADET *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2* (1970–1980) (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2006), p. 339
- ⁵⁸Interview with Mike "Figo" Madlala by Tshepo Moloi, for the SADET Oral History Project, Kempton Park, 7 September 2004
- ⁵⁹Ibid.
- ⁶⁰Ibid.

- ⁶¹Interview with the Reverend Phineas Mapheto by Tshepo Moloi, Lucky Zimba, Nonhlanhla Ngwenya and Mmatjatji Malabela, Birch Acres, 29 September 2010
- ⁶²The period post 16 June 1976 witnessed the government's direct attack on the members of the Black Consciousness Movement and the BC's structures. For example, on 12 September 1977 Steve Biko died after being severely tortured by the police. See Woods, D. *Biko* (England, Penguin Book, 1979)
- ⁶³Some of the activists who left the country at this stage included Tumi Seboni and George. See interview with Gregory Malebo, 20 October 2011
- ⁶⁴Interview with Jaki Seroke by Tshepo Moloi, for the SADET Oral History Project, Illovo, Johannesburg, 25 August 2004
- ⁶⁵Interview with Greg Malebo
- ⁶⁶Interviews with Lazarus Mawela, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, 30 October 2011 and 14 December 2011; the ANC's four pillars of struggle were the armed struggle, mass mobilization (inside the country), underground; and international solidarity. It was in terms of the latter that Tambo was globetrotting Interview with Sello Serote, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, 11 February 2011
- ⁶⁸Interview with Gregory Malebo by Tshepo Moloi, for the SADET Oral History Project, Tembisa, 14 October 2004
- ⁶⁹Ibid.
- ⁷⁰Interview with Frans Pale, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, Tembisa, 6 June 2004
- ⁷¹Interview with Gregory Malebo by Tshepo Moloi, Tembisa, 20 October 2011
- ⁷²Houston, G. 'The ANC's armed struggle in the 1980s', in SADET *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Vol.4 – Part 2* (Pretoria, Unisa Press, 2010). pp.1040-1
- ⁷³Interviews with Lazarus Mawela, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, 30 October 2011 and 14 December 2011; Thami Mnyele left South Africa in 1979 and in 1985 was murdered during the South African government's raid in Botswana. See *Gaborone Daily News, No.20, 21 January 1985*
- ⁷⁴Interview with Gregory Malebo by Tshepo Moloi, for the SADET Oral History Project, Tembisa, 14 October 2004
- ⁷⁵Brooks and Brickhill, *Whirlwind*, p.274
- ⁷⁶For a detailed account about the Community Council and Town Council, see for example, Seekings, J. 'Quiescence and the Transition to Confrontation: South African Townships, 1978-84', (Oxford University, D. Phil Thesis, 1990)
- ⁷⁷Interview with Gregory Malebo by Tshepo Moloi, for the SADET Oral History Project, Tembisa, 14 October 2004
- ⁷⁸Ibid.
- ⁷⁹For a detailed account about the history and role of the UDF, see Seekings, J. *The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa, 1983-1991* (Cape Town, David Philip, 2000)
- ⁸⁰Interview with David Masina, conducted by Tshepo Moloi on 19 February 2011 In 1980 David Masina, together with Sello Serote, visited the ANC in Botswana to meet with Wally Serote and others. See interview with Sello Serote
- ⁸¹Interview with Gregory Malebo, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, 20 October 2011
- ⁸²Interview with Matilda and Timothy Mabena, conducted by Tshepo Moloi on 23 January 2011
- ⁸³Interview with Mcendisisi (Prince) Sibanyoni by Tshepo Moloi and Nhlanhla Ngwenya, Tembisa, 3 November 2010
- ⁸⁴*The Star, 1 August 1986*
- ⁸⁵*Star Africa News, 15 May 1986; Star 31 Dec 1985*
- ⁸⁶Interview with Gregory Malebo, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, 20 October 2011
- ⁸⁷Interview with Matilda and Timothy Mabena, conducted by Tshepo Moloi on 23 January 2011; Timothy Mabena was released in 1989
- ⁸⁸Matona, T. 'Student Organisation and Political Resistance in South Africa: An Analysis of the Congress of South African Students, 1979-1985' (Cape Town, University of Cape Town, Honours Dissertation, 1992), p.4
- ⁸⁹Ibid, p.5; Seekings 'Quiescence', p.190
- ⁹⁰AG 2635 AZASO Collection: 'The Demands behind the boycotts', in *SASPU:FOCUS, Vol.3, No.2, November 1984* (University of the Witwatersrand Historical and Literary Papers), pp.11-15; also see AD 1790 'Cosas'

- ⁹¹Interview with Lazarus Mawela; interview with Greg Thulare and Debra Marakalala by Tshepo Moloi, for SADET Oral History Project, Midrand, 19 November 2004
- ⁹²Ibid.; In 1983 students at Jiyane Secondary went on a rampage after four pupils were temporary suspended when they refused to be punished. See *The Citizen*, 23 July 1983
- ⁹³Interview with Mncedisi (Prince) Sibanyoni by Nonhlanhla Ngwenya and Tshepo Moloi, Tembisa, 28 October 2010
- ⁹⁴*Sowetan*, 25 July 1984
- ⁹⁵*Sowetan*, 1 March 1985
- ⁹⁶*Rand Daily Mail*, 19 February 1985; *Star Saturday*, 2 March 1985
- ⁹⁷Carter, C. 'Comrades and Community Politics: The construction of Hegemony in Alexandra Township, South Africa, 1984-1987', Ph.D. Thesis, (Mansfield College, University of Oxford, 1991), p.96
- ⁹⁸The first president of TEYCO was Mongezi Maphuthi.
- ⁹⁹Interview with Sello Serote, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, 11 February 2011
- ¹⁰⁰Ibid.
- ¹⁰¹Ibid.
- ¹⁰²*Star*, 26 March 1985
- ¹⁰³Interview with Jaki Seroke by Tshepo Moloi, for the SADET Oral History Project, Illovo, Johannesburg, 25 August 2004
- ¹⁰⁴Interview with Ezekiel Dithebe, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, 31 October 2011
- ¹⁰⁵University of the Witwatersrand Library and Literary Papers. Abdul, S. Bemath Papers, File A2248 BEMATH (PAC), *Azania Combat: Official Organ of APLA*; George Nyanga's funeral obituary; also see interview with Ezekiel Dithebe, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, 31 October 2011.
- ¹⁰⁶Interview with Ezekiel Dithebe, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, 31 October 2011
- ¹⁰⁷Interview with Mncedisi (Prince) Sibanyoni, conducted by Nonhlanhla Ngwenya, 28 October 2010
- ¹⁰⁸Interview with Thandi Swakamisa by Tshepo Moloi, for SADET Oral History Project, 23 April 2004
- ¹⁰⁹Interview with Rosina Marakalala, conducted by Tshepo Moloi on 21 February 2011.
- ¹¹⁰Interview with Matilda and Timothy Mabena, conducted by Tshepo Moloi on 23 January 2011
- ¹¹¹Interview with Gille de Vlieg, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, 26 June 2011
- ¹¹²Ibid.
- ¹¹³Ibid.
- ¹¹⁴Ibid.
- ¹¹⁵Interview with Nomathemba Catherine Thulare, conducted by Tshepo Moloi and Gille de Vlieg, 20 December 2010
- ¹¹⁶Interview with Matilda and Timothy Mabena, conducted by Tshepo Moloi on 23 January 2011
- ¹¹⁷Interviews with Lazarus Mawela, conducted by Tshepo Moloi, 30 October 2011 and 14 December 2011
- ¹¹⁸Ibid.
- ¹¹⁹Ibid.
- ¹²⁰*Business Day*, 29 September 1986
- ¹²¹Interview with Rebecca Fosi Sibanyoni, conducted by Tshepo Moloi and Mmatjati Malabela, 29 November 2010
- ¹²²Interview with Elizabeth Mthembu, conducted by Mmatjati Malabela, 2 April 2011
- ¹²³*Sowetan*, 26 July 1992
- ¹²⁴*The Star*, 27 April 1994
- ¹²⁵Ibid.
- ¹²⁶Ibid.

APPENDIX A: List of interviews

All interviews undertaken in the course of the project are archived in SAHA collection AL3288 and can be accessed online at www.saha.org.za/tembisa

A1	De Vlieg, Gille	A16	Mawela, Lazarus
A2	Dithebe, Ezekiel	A17	Mhlongo, Philemon
A3	Kutumela, Martin	A18	Mofokeng, David
A4	Lelaka, Julius	A19	Mthembu, Elizabeth (two-part interview)
A5	Letswalo, Noki	A20	Nchabeleng, Frans (two-part interview)
A6	Luwambano, Mondoo	A21	Nchwe, Siskie
A7	Mabena, Mr and Mrs	A22	Ngoepe, Samuel
A8	Malabela, David	A23	Ngwane, Vusi
A9	Malebo, Gregory	A24	Serote, Sello
A10	Mapheto, Phineas (two-part interview)	A25	Tshabalala, John
A11	Marakalala, Rosina	A26	Shabangu, Darlingon
A12	Maseko, Petrus	A27	Sibanyoni, Rebecca (Fosi)
A13	Mashego, Kholofelo	A28	Sibanyoni, Loretta and Princess
A14	Masina, David	A29	Sibanyoni, Mncedisi (Prince) (two-part interview)
A15	Masombuka, Paulina	A30	Thulare, Nomathemba Catherine

APPENDIX B: The exhibition and oral history competition

The exhibition 'Entering Tembisa: an oral and photographic exploration' was hosted by the Tembisa West Library in September 2011. It brought together a diverse range of life stories of community members with rich historical images by Gille de Vlieg and artefacts from the archives to create an evocative telling of the previously neglected history in Tembisa.

The launch of the exhibition on 24 September was well attended, and the discussion lively, as community members spoke of their experiences of life in Tembisa, from the origins of the township, and the history of migration to the area, to their experiences as student activists in the 1980s in Tembisa, famous fallen comrades from Tembisa, including Thami Mnyele and Andrew Mapheto, and the role of the church in the struggle.

The 'Entering Tembisa' exhibition was also used as the setting for an oral history competition between history learners from two Tembisa high schools, Tembisa High School and Ingqayizivele High School, on 29 September 2011. The learners presented oral research they had been conducting in their communities in September, with the help of two community interns from SAHA. Topics included the formation of Tembisa, the school boycott of 1984, informal settlements in Tembisa, and the history of Tembisa High School.





Competition was fierce but in the end a team from Ingqayizivele, made up of learners Zenzi Mbele, Babzile Msusha, Koketso Mokgapa and Phapelo Ntsala, won the competition for their presentation on migration to Tembisa.

My Home Town

Tembisa, my hometown
 Aint no need to grow
 Come, come, see how we get down
 This is where I was born
 Where I was ~~born~~ raised, raised to mourn
 To jubilate the joy the sad
 That makes you say, we bad
 Like and other hood
 Always and forever misunderstood
 But, as time goes good
 Aint never been good

Poem by Sudan Gaddafi

Written 23 September 2011

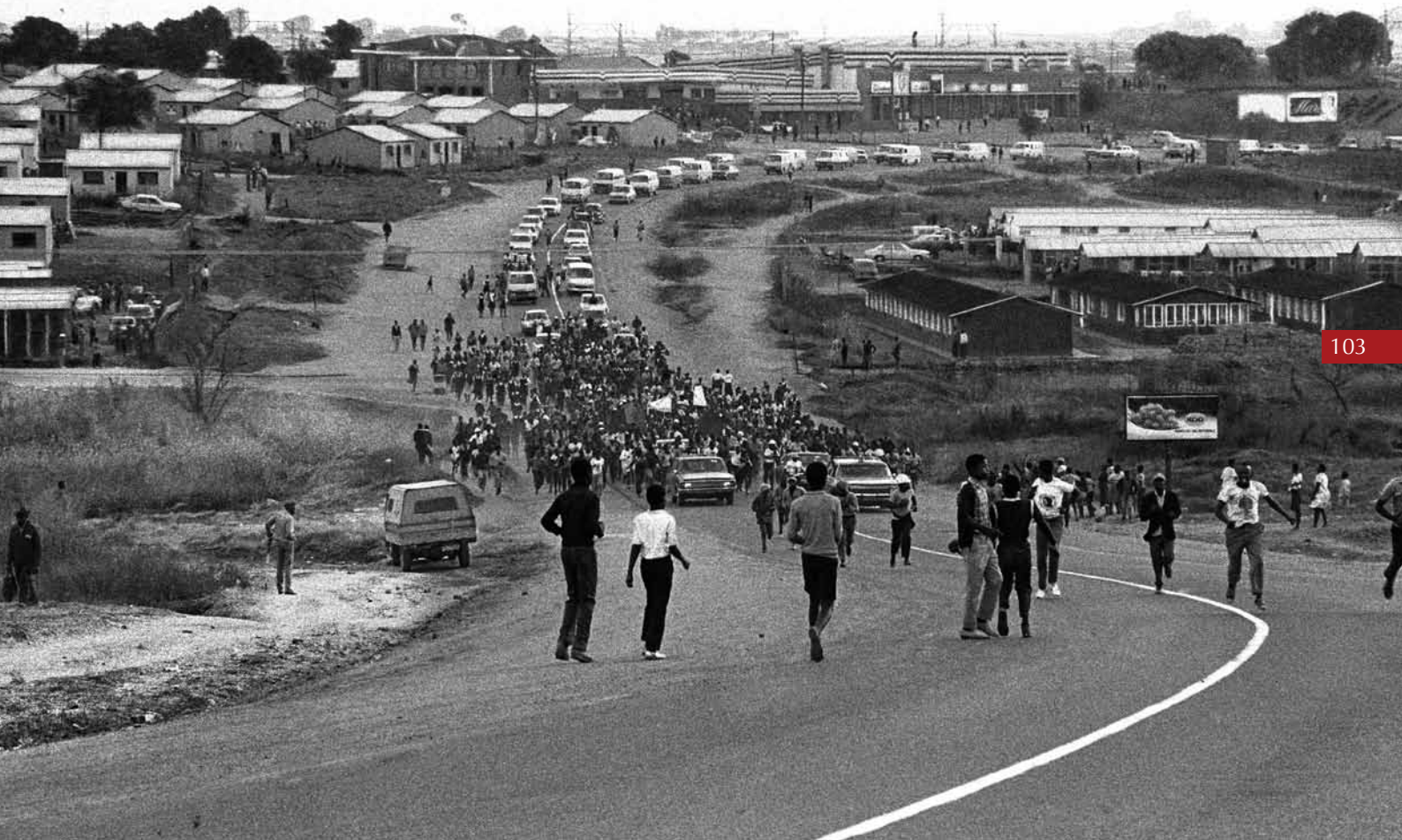


IMAGE CREDITS

Images courtesy of Gille de Vlieg

Front cover	Entering Tembisa, 1984
Page 3	Grandfather and grandson living on open land near Oakmoor station, Tembisa, Gauteng, 8 November 1989
Page 5	(<i>Right</i>) Burnt classroom in Tembisa, August 1984
Page 15	Photograph of Catherine Thulare, October 1984
Page 29	Shopkeeper in Tembisa, April 1985
Page 39	Comrades reading Mfuyaneni, January 1985
Page 48	Reading Freedom Charter, February 1985
Page 56	Mosiuoqa 'Terror' Lekota at a Women's Rally in Tembisa, August 1984
Page 64	(<i>Left</i>) Photograph of Debra Marakalala, November 1984
Page 73	Rob, Debra and Deefa Marakalala in Tembisa, December 1984
Page 77	Pamphlet from Gille de Vlieg's personal papers
Page 83	Gille de Vlieg and Greg Thulare in Johannesburg, July 1984. Photograph taken by Paul Weinberg
Page 84	Letter issued by Tembisa Town Council permitting Gille de Vlieg to enter Tembisa, 1985.
Page 106	Near Sethokga hostel, 22 January 1989
Back cover	Horse and cart in Tembisa, 7 January 1993

Images courtesy of South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) / University of the Witwatersrand

Page 8	Letter addressed to Senator J.D. Rheinallt-Jones by Mr D.L. Smit, official in the Department of Native Affairs, 27 March 1939. <i>Archived as WHLP collection AD 843/RJ/B1.4 (Box 291)</i>
Page 11, 12	Letter addressed to Senator Jones by Mr Cowly, Town Clerk of Edenvale Village Council, 1 October 1941. <i>Archived as WHLP collection AD 843/RJ/Sb.3.37 (Box 291)</i>

Images from SAHA collection AL3274 (The Gille de Vlieg Photographic collection)

Page 3	Grandfather and grandson living on open land near Oakmoor station in Tembisa, November 1989. <i>Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_G39.1</i>
Page 4	Mrs Mazibuko holds the bloody T-Shirt of her son Flint, who was shot and killed by police, June 1985. <i>Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_C26.2</i>
Page 16	Early morning tea on open land near Oakmoor station in Tembisa, November 1989. <i>Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_G41.3</i>
Page 19	Hloni Thulare in tree in Tembisa, January 1985. <i>Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_C03</i>
Page 23	Youth in brass band march through the streets of Tembisa, October 1989. <i>Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_G32.2</i>
Page 25	Informal panel beater in Tembisa, September 1988. <i>Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_F27.3</i>

- Page 31 Goal! Soccer in the streets of Tembisa, September 1988. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_F27.2*
- Page 32 Singing their way home from church in Tembisa, January 1989. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_G4.3*
- Page 40 Child watching shebeen players in Tembisa, March 1989. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_G13*
- Page 45 Andrew Mapheto at an ANC rally in Tembisa, November 1990. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_H1.4*
- Page 51 Patrons at beerhall in Xubeni, Tembisa, June 1985. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_C26*
- Page 53 'Organise for people's war!' Graffiti on burnt combi in Tembisa, April 1985. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_C16.3*
- Page 55 Rutted street in Tembisa, April 1985. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_C16.4*
- Page 59 Overfull rubbish dumpster in street in Tembisa, September 1988. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_F27.5*
- Page 60 TEYCO march with Barbara Hogan in Tembisa, May 1990. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_H1.1*
- Page 65 Students reading the UDF News during the Tembisa school boycott, August 1984. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_B27.1*
- Page 66 Banners at Hendrik Nkuna's funeral procession in Tembisa, August 1984. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_B27.4*
- Page 70 Amandlas at Hendrik Nkuna's funeral in Tembisa, August 1984. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_B27.3*
- Page 70 Sandile Qwabe, Rosina Marakalala with grandchild and kitten in Tembisa, September 1988. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_F27.1*
- Page 78 Nurse's March in Tembisa, January 1985. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_C5.1*
- Page 81 Women busy dressmaking outside a home in Tembisa, February 1985. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_C9*
- Page 87 Woman washing at the back of house in Tembisa, January 1985. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_C4*
- Page 89 Elias Mpanda's coffin being carried to the grave site in Tembisa, November 1984. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_B28.1*
- Page 90 Flint Mazibuko's grave site in Tembisa, June 1985. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_C26.4*
- Page 93 Plasticview overview, Tembisa, May 1990. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_H1.2*
- Page 94 Xhosa/Zulu unrest in hostels in Tembisa, September 1990. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_H1.3*
- Page 95 Catherine Thulare at Xubeni voting queue, Tembisa, April 1994. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_H3*
- Page 103 Flint Mazibuko's funeral procession in Tembisa, June 1985. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3274_C26.3*

Images from SAHA collection AL3288 (The 'Voices from Below' Tembisa Oral History collection)

- Page 37 The dompas of a Tembisa resident. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3288_D2*
- Page 98 (Middle) Poem 'My Home Town' by Sudan Gaddafi, 23 September 2011. *Archived as SAHA collection AL3288_E4.1*

Images from SAHA collection AL2446 (The SAHA Poster collection)

- Page 35 Offset litho poster, produced by the Medu Art Ensemble, date unknown. *Archived as SAHA collection AL2446_4928*
- Page 42 Silkscreened poster, issued by the Projects Committee, 1986. *Archived as SAHA collection AL2446_1119*

Other

- Page11 Scan of Tembisa collected by learners at Ingqayizivele High School for the SAHA oral history collection in 2011.



TRIBUTE

In gratitude to those in Tembisa who were willing to accept me and to allow themselves to be vulnerable in front of my camera. I honour the women who perhaps weren't on the streets, but who continued to perform the tasks that kept daily life normal in times of hardship. I honour all those who sacrificed aspects of their lives to create a different South Africa. You changed my life and enabled me to become more human. – Gille de Vlieg



For more information about this project, please visit the SAHA virtual exhibition on Tembisa at www.saha.org.za/tembisa